

## The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

Rev. 19: 7, 8; Rev. 21: 1-9

Reading with G. Davison

Our subject is the Assembly as called by these two characteristic titles, "the Bride" and "the Wife". Some time ago a request was made that we look into the matter together to see what the distinction is between these two titles. It may be that in our great appreciation of the love of Christ for His own, and in dwelling so much upon the thought of the Bride, we have forgotten this other title, the Wife. I think we shall see that it is of equal importance and we should enquire — Why has the Spirit been pleased to use these two titles of the Assembly in her association with Christ?

It has been remarked that in the thought of the Bride we have the fruit of the love of Christ, but in the thought of the wife we have the fruit of His work. Is that so?

Both, I think, are the fruit of His work, but perhaps the Wife describes more the work of Christ **in** us in view of the world to come. The Bride hardly speaks of capability or competence, but the Wife does suggest this and seems to me to be the fruit of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in formation in us. It is all with a view to fitting us to share with Him in His Lordship and Headship in display in the world to come.

So the world to come is the end to which this work is moving, the Wife character first, and the Bride character in eternity. Is that right?

Not quite, for they both come together in the day of display, as we shall see in these passages we have read. In our first passage in Rev. 19, just prior to the moment of manifestation, we read it is the marriage of the Lamb and "His WIFE hath made herself ready". Then, in Rev. 21: 9 we read, "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife". both are seen in display. Again, looking back to the opening verses of Rev. 21 where the new heaven and the new earth are in view, we read, "as a Bride adorned for her husband". So the Assembly is married as a wife, displayed as a Bride; and abides as Bride when the Wife character has passed away.

The Bride character then is that which abides after the world to come — she is the object of His affection.

I think that is the point. The world to come is the sphere where God will display His triumph when He has solved all difficulties and overcome all opposition to His will. We know from the general teaching of Scripture that the Assembly will be the vessel which He will use for this display. She comes under the Headship of Christ for this, as we read at the end of Ephesians 1, "and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all".

It is the wife in Ephesians 5?

That is what led us to take up this subject. "Husbands, love your wives"; it does not say "your brides". We do not want to destroy one thought by another, for we shall see they are both of equal importance, but we do want to grasp the distinction and see what the Spirit has in mind in using both these terms to describe the Assembly. It was that statement which first led me to think over this matter and, in view of the exhortation given us there, it led me to suggest that the wife is the fruit of the work of Christ **in** us as well as his work **for** us. I gather the work going on in us by His daily care has in view the forming of a competent vessel to display His glory in the world to come.

It has been said that Adam and Eve are the only types in the Old Testament which are cited in the New Testament as a figure of Christ and the Church.

We might have said the Man and the Woman are the only types, for I believe there is a distinction between these terms — the Man and the Woman, and Adam and Eve — though of course they are the same persons. The name Eve does not appear until after the fall but the "Woman" was named before the fall.

What is the distinction?

It is God Who says, "I will make him an help meet for him", and, taking the rib from the man He builded a woman (Gen. 2: 22, Margin). In Gen. 5: 2 we read that God "called **their** name Adam". Adam called her "Woman" for she was taken out of Man; but after the fall he called her name "Eve" — which means "life" for "she was the mother of all living". We might have said, She is the mother of all dying, but Adam had grasped the thought of God in the promise He made as to the seed and he "called his wife's name Eve". Not, mark, his bride's name, but "his wife's name Eve". So, the woman shows the original thought of God, a help meet for the man; Eve, the vessel through whom He is going to operate to recover all that had been lost.

In relation to the first few verses of Revelation 21, I understood you to say that the abiding thought is the bride.

That is right, for the Scripture uses that title.

It has been said that we can qualify for a place in the world to come, but we cannot qualify for a place in the eternal state. Do you think that is so?

That appears to me to be the general teaching of Scripture. Scripture assures us that corresponding to our service and labour in the world today, we shall have a suitable reward in the kingdom in the world to come. It does not say this about eternal conditions. So far as the thought in "wife" is concerned, we can be dogmatic about that, for it is clear from this Scripture. We read here "His wife hath made herself ready". I suppose this is the result of our fidelity to Christ.

You were suggesting that while it is clear there will be differences between the saints according to the degree of faithfulness today, these differences will have ceased to exist in eternity. What about 1 Corinthians 15, where it speaks of star differing from star in glory and then adds, "so also is the resurrection"?

What I am trying to establish is that I think what the saints have done in their faithfulness today has altogether to do with this present order of creation, not the eternal state. I gather that when we reach the eternal state there will be nothing there that has come to light as the result of the faithfulness of saints. It seems to me that we shall have reached just the place which in the purpose of God we should reach, altogether as the fruit of **His** work and not the fruit of our own.

But you would not imply that there is uniformity between one saint and another throughout eternity in view of 1 Cor. 15?

That chapter is connected with the world to come and not with eternity. It has display in view; but I did not use the word uniformity.

I suppose in the eternal state we shall all be conformed to the image of God's Son?

We shall be that in the world to come, for that will come when the saints are raised or changed at the coming of Christ. Of course, I think it must go on eternally, but it will be true of us at His coming.

Are there not Scriptures which suggest that whatever enlargement there is in the way of capacity now will remain for all eternity? The impressions that you and I have received of Christ now have enlarged our capacity to take in spiritual things. Surely that will remain for all eternity? Another's capacity may be greater than mine but all will be filled, for there will be no envying of one another, but I believe that the capacity will remain.

If we asked you for your Scripture for that remark, to which would you turn us?

I would turn you to the Epistle to the Galatians, where it says "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting".

But that is an exhortation for today. It is the way to enjoy eternal life today. We do not reap eternal life originally, it is the gift of God; but the whole point of that passage is that if I am to enjoy it I shall have to go the road in which it can be enjoyed and that is, by the Spirit.

Does the body of Christ exist eternally?

That the Assembly will go into eternity as such is clear from these Scriptures, but I am not aware of any Scripture which says the body will be there as such.

I thought that was the meaning of Ephesians 1?

It is the world to come at the end of Ephesians 1, not the eternal state.

We do reach the eternal state in Ephesians 3 but not in Ephesians 1. "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages", is the eternal state. There is no idea of rule here but rather a reflex in that company of the glory of God for His eternal pleasure. Growth, rule and such like things connected with the responsibility of the saints will have passed, so far as I understand it. Many think as our brother about capacity, but some of us think these things have only to do with the kingdom in its display. I believe when we reach the new heaven all growth God intended to be there will be there in each one of us, and all the fruit of His work not our own. What **we** do will have an answer in the world to come, in the kingdom; but I gather that when we reach the point of these verses in the opening of Rev. 21 and the passage we are quoting in Ephesians 3, all thought of faithfulness will have ended with the day of display and what God has wrought will abide. But I do not press the point, as many think as our brother does.

Why does it not say in Rev. 19 that the marriage of the Lion of the tribe of Judah has come, or of the Faithful and True, but of the Lamb?

We are viewed first as the product of the work of Christ and the beginning of that work was that He died for us on the cross. It is "the Lamb's wife". His work for her is still going on, as Ephesians 5 assures us, but it began at the cross. Here is a help meet, a fitting return for all He has done and a wife who will delight His heart and share with Him in His administration in the kingdom.

This is indicated as far back as Genesis 2, when the man was put into a deep sleep and as the result of that the woman was formed.

Yes! and the word there is, "the man and his wife". In Ephesians we are told it is a great mystery, Christ and the Assembly, and here we have the same thought, "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready".

Do you get the thought of the Bride at all in Rev. 19?

Not that I am aware of. We often listen to addresses upon the subject of the Bride taken from Rebekah and Isaac, or David and Abigail, but in every case you will find they are called wives, not brides. I do

not object to the use of these terms in ministry but when one is asked what the distinctions between the words are, it is another matter.

In speaking of the judgment seat you are not suggesting that it is there we are prepared? That preparation is going on now.

It is, but it is established there in view of display. It will be revealed then what place each person has qualified for in the kingdom.

What you have in mind is the statement, "And to her was granted"; she is said to be worthy of that robe of practical righteousness. What a triumph that, in spite of all our weakness and failures, it will be established at the end that there have been so many right things about the saints that this robe has been produced. It has been pointed out concerning that robe of fine linen that God will not clothe with glory anything that is inconsistent with Himself. If the Lamb's wife is to be clothed with glory, as we read in Rev. 21, she must have fundamentally this garment of righteousness.

There are two outstanding things which will merit reward at the judgment seat, righteousness and faithfulness; two rare qualities in the world today.

That is something the saints have attained to?

Yes! in practice in this world. That is why our brother said it will not be produced then, it is being produced today, but it will be acclaimed then and suitably rewarded.

The first recorded words of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew are, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" — practical righteousness. This is the path He trod and the one which we ought to tread.

It has been said that the Jewish bride prepares her own wedding dress.

Probably that is the simile used here. In our way of stating these things naturally, we speak of a bride before a wife, but the Spirit puts these terms the other way round.