

Revelation 19–22

The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

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Babylon and Jerusalem: Old and New

In the OT the literal Babylon on the plain of Shinar appears in contrast with Jerusalem. In the NT we hear of a still more portentous Babylon on seven mountains, the great harlot on whose forehead was written "mystery," which is in no way said or true of the Chaldeans' pride {Rev. 17}. No principle is more unintelligent and unfounded than to assume that the Revelation, in borrowing names of persons, places, or other objects from the ancient oracles, is bound to the letter and takes no larger views. To confound the new things with the old in that twofold treasure is to prove oneself a scribe un-instructed to the kingdom of the heavens. For in the new things, whatever the allusion to the old, the Spirit of God conveys something beyond and above what the old contained; otherwise what sense would there be in calling it "new"?

So in Revelation 21 the New Jerusalem is declared to be "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Jerusalem is authoritatively declared to be "the city of the great King"; it is a great honor that He will reign over it as nowhere else here below. But the church is the Bride, the Lamb's wife, who, suffering with Him on earth, shall be glorified with Him on high. To confound these relationships is to lose the key to their distinctive force as revealed in scripture.

The New Jerusalem: The Bride as the City

It is "a city," a holy city, which John is shown. This is thought to exclude the church, Christ's body. But God declares it to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife, which we have learned to be the church, and nothing else. It is not even the city wherein the bride dwells. The bride is the city -- a truth of the deepest significance. As the earthly Jerusalem was the center of God's government over Israel and the nations on earth, so the heavenly Jerusalem, the church glorified, will be the center of Christ's government over all creation in the age to come.

It is "a city" in the sense of ordered community and corporate life, but it is the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in the sense of personal relationship and love. Both are true: the corporate and the personal, the governmental and the affectionate. This is the glory that awaits the church -- not merely heaven as a place of rest and bliss, but a place of active service and government in association with the Lord Jesus Christ over all things heavenly and earthly.

The great N. T. prophecy shows us (Rev. 21:9 to the end) the bride the Lamb's wife the center of heavenly and universal glory; as the O. T. is equally clear that Zion will be for all the peoples of the earth, then owning Israel to be the seed which Jehovah has blessed and set at the head of all nations under the Great King, Himself Jehovah-Messiah.

2, 3. It is evident from Eph. 5, Rev. 19, 22, that the figure of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," equally applies to the Church. Eve, in Gen. 2, and Rebekah, in Gen. 24, &c., revealed nothing of the mystery. They told their own profitable tale of old, but nobody ever did or could draw from them alone the union of the Church with Christ in heaven. When the truth of the Church, Christ's body and bride, came to view, then these scriptures yielded a further deeper meaning in God's wisdom, though even then the union of Jew and Gentile in one new man, the body of Christ, the head of all things in heaven and earth went far beyond any or all these types. But the reference is distinct in Eph. 5 to Adam and Eve on this point. "It is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."