

The Mystery of the Bride of Christ: Betrothal; Purification at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ, 1 Cor 3:10-15; the Wedding Party's "Allelouia," Rev 19:5-6

- 8) The mystery of the Bride of Christ. The mystery of the Church Age marriage demonstrates the relationship of Christ to His Church and the Church's reciprocal relationship to Christ. Prior to the Rapture of the Church, believers function as the Body of Christ, each having his unique contribution to the Invisible War.

At the Rapture, a sequence of events occurs that transpires over the course of seven years:

- 1) At the Rapture, Christ "descends from heaven" and the "dead in Christ will rise first." Then, those "who are alive and remain will be caught up with them" as they all "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- 2) Before the marriage can take place the Bride must make herself ready. Although forgiven of all her sins through faith alone in Christ alone, there remains the problem of human good and evil. These dalliances on the Dark Side must be removed through testing which occurs at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ.
- 3) The purification of the Bride occurs through examination of what has been built on the foundation of Christ. Paul states that "each man must be careful how he builds on this foundation." If the building is constructed with "gold, silver, and precious stones," emblematic of the production of divine good, such a person "will receive a reward," many of which are described in Revelation 2-3.

If his building is constructed with "wood, hay, and straw," characterizing human good and evil, then he will "suffer loss" of reward but not of salvation. "Each man's works become evident" as they are "revealed with fire" which removes the dross of human good and evil thus purifying each believer who makes up the body of the Bride. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)
- 4) Only following this purification can the Bridegroom Christ consummate His marriage with the Church. In order to assume rulership over the earth during His millennial reign He is to be coronated as King of kings:

Revelation 19:5 - Then a voice [of the seraph-rank King of Arms] came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all of you His servants, all of you who revere Him, both the small [those who did not receive rewards at the Evaluation Tribunal] and the great [those who did received rewards]."

- 5) Those being addressed are three groups of believers that make up the wedding party: (1) the Bride: Church Age believers now purified, (2) Old Testament saints and tribulational martyrs, and (3) tribulational survivors.
- 6) Old Testament saints and tribulational martyrs are classified as friends of the Groom, while tribulational survivors are those who are friends of the Bride.

Revelation 19:6 - Then I heard what sounded like a large crowd of people [the Bride: Church Age believers] and what sounded like many waters [friends of the Groom: Old Testament saints and tribulational martyrs], and what sounded like many peals of thunder [friends of the Bride: tribulational survivors], shouting, "Praise the Lord [Ἀλληλουία, *Allēlouia*]! Because the Lord our God, the omnipotent One [Παντοκράτωρ, *Pantokratōr*: the All-powerful One] has begun to reign!

- 7) The participants in this acclamation are those who now participate in the coronation of Christ and the marriage of the Bride. Their participation emulates the sequence of events that occurred during marriages in the first century A.D.:
 - 1) The betrothal is similar to what we refer to as an engagement except it was a legally binding contract. The bride was usually chosen by the groom's family. For believers this contract is effective at salvation.
 - 2) The events surrounding the nuptials begin with the groom coming to the home of the bride's family to pick her up and spirit her away. For the Church this occurs at the Rapture.
 - 3) The groom immediately escorts the bride away from her home, a picture of the Church's transfer to the third heaven.
 - 4) The Bride then undergoes preparation for the wedding, accomplished by events at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ where purification from dead works occurs.

- 5) While this is taking place in heaven, the Tribulation is underway on earth during which Jews are converted to Christianity through faith in Christ while Gentile unbelievers are likewise converted.
- 6) At the conclusion of the tribunal, Jesus Christ organizes His Second Advent when He takes His Bride to His home in Jerusalem.
- 7) After the events surrounding the Lord's defeat of the four international armies at the Battle of Armageddon, the Lord returns to Jerusalem in victory.
- 8) As he rides into Jerusalem, Christ is accompanied by His Bride made up of all Church Age believers, the friends of the Groom, Old Testament saints and tribulational martyrs, and begins preparation for the wedding banquet.
- 9) Upon arrival at the groom's home, friends of the bride await the couple with lighted lamps to illuminate the way, representative of the surviving believers of the Tribulation.
- 10) As the couple enters the home they are met by friends of the groom who are prepared to celebrate the couple's marriage. This is a picture of Old Testament believers and tribulational martyrs who await their resurrection bodies at the Second Advent.
- 11) As the Lord and His Bride enter the castle in Jerusalem, the entire wedding party shouts in unison:

Revelation 19:7 - "Let us be happy and celebrate, because the marriage supper [γάμος, **gamos: wedding banquet**] of the Lamb has come and the Bride has prepared herself.

- 8) The preparation of the Bride was accomplished at the evaluation tribunal and resulted in the form of attire each believer wears at the Second Advent and the wedding banquet:

Revelation 19:8 - Furthermore, it was given [the culminative aorist of δίδωμι, **didōmi: the main verb**] to her that [ἵνα, **hina**] she should be dressed [περιβάλλω, **periballō**] in fine linen [βύσσινος, **bussinos**], bright [λαμπρός, **lamtros**] and others clean [καθαρός, **katharos**]: for the fine linen is the fulfillment of the justification [δικαίωμα, **dikaiōma**] of the saints.

