

The Bride of Christ

Things to Know When Interpreting a Metaphor in Scripture.

Each Metaphor Stands on its Own.

Mixing metaphors is a logical “no-no” in the English language. For example, one metaphor shows that the church is the body of Christ. Also, being His body is much more powerful than simply being his bride. Another metaphor shows how the church has characteristics of a bride. Asking the question *Will a man marry his own body?* is mixing metaphors. It’s like asking will *Christ marry sheep?* since the Church is sometimes referred to as sheep in Scripture.

Who is the *Bride of Christ* scripturally?

- **References to New Jerusalem as the *Bride*.**

Rev. 21.9-10 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,...

While there is a *Lamb's wife, the bride of Christ*, it is not the church—Revelation 21.9-10 clearly states that the *the bride, the Lamb's wife* is the *holy Jerusalem*. If the Church were *the bride, the Lamb's wife*, then the angel in Revelation 21:9-10 would have shown *the Church*, not the *holy Jerusalem*.

Galatians 4:26 (*But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all*) relates the New Jerusalem to a woman. So which is the metaphor referring to? The bride or the city? Or are they both metaphors for a new covenant or people? This has been a matter of much discussion, and the answers may not be known for certain this side of Heaven.

What we do know is that a people and a place are often identified virtually interchangeably, both in the Bible and in modern culture. e.g. Jerusalem or Babylon or Portland are used in the sense of a place, and also a people (*Jerusalem suffered at the hands of Babylon, or Portland is a liberal city*).

The bottom line is this: **the Revelation passage is imagery.** It is what John saw while on the island of Patmos. He did not say what he saw was on the island of Patmos. He said it was *a view to the future*. The book of Revelation must be interpreted in light of all Scripture.

The answer could be both. It does not need to be either/or, it could be both/and. A people and the place where that people dwell are inseparably linked. That’s even true of God and heaven. The prodigal son said *I have sinned against Heaven*. Of course, that was the same as saying *I have sinned against God*.

It is a false assumption that the bride of Christ must be referring to either the church (God's people) or the New Jerusalem. In fact, according to Scripture it is both.¹

- **References to the Church as the *Bride*.**

In some Bible passages the Church is compared to a *Bride* and Jesus to a *Bridegroom*.

2 Cor. 11.2-3 ² *For I am zealous for you [jealous over you] with a godly eagerness and a divine jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one Husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. ³ But [now] I am fearful, lest that even as the serpent beguiled Eve by his cunning, so your minds may be corrupted and seduced from wholehearted and sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

Although 2 Corinthians 11.2-3 does not say outright that the church is the bride, Paul **relates** the church to Christ's bride **metaphorically** here. He says, "I promised you to one *husband*, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin."²

What does the word say about the "Bride of Christ"? Nothing really. The term "Bride of Christ" is nowhere in the Bible. Aside from being first coined by the Roman Catholic Church, this term has been invented out of perceived inferences of certain passages that says God's relationship to us is "as a bride". **These passages are all parables or similes.** They are simply making a comparison of our relationship to Him. He loves us and has made covenant promises to us, similar to how a husband loves and upholds promises to his wife. You probably know the clergy or priests of the Roman Catholic Church "marries" their church, taking an oath to celibacy. As a result, the term "Bride of Christ" was eventually coined in relation to this practice. Today, this concept and terminology has spilled over into our own fundamental Christian doctrines.³

Eph. 5:24-27 ²⁴**Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.**²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her,* ²⁶ **So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word,** ²⁷ **That He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such things [that she might be holy and faultless].** How did He do that? **Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, So that He might sanctify her,** by the righteousness He gave us by paying the penalty of our sins and giving us His righteousness:

2 Corinthians 5:21 "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

2 Corinthians 11.2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.

In Ephesians 5.21-33, Paul is talking to the Ephesian church about marriage, and again relating Christ's relationship to the Church as an example.

- As Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her to sanctify her (set her apart), so should husbands love their wives.

- As Christ cleansed the church by the washing of water with the Word to present it to Himself *in glorious splendor*, so should men sacrifice themselves to give themselves to being attentive to present their wives *in glorious splendor, holy and faultless*, helping them to *walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...* The power of the cross allows us to be presented holy and blameless. Washed in the blood of Jesus, we are a perfect virgin bride. What an amazing picture of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross! Our past mistakes... it's as if they never happened.
- Paul is referencing the importance of the purity of the church to Christ as a metaphor to husbands to consider the focus of the purity of marriage.

Revelation 19.7-10 (Amp) Let us rejoice and shout for joy [exulting and triumphant]! Let us celebrate *and* ascribe to Him glory *and* honor, for the marriage of the Lamb [at last] has come, and His bride has prepared herself. ⁸She has been permitted to dress in fine (radiant) linen, dazzling and white—for the fine linen is (signifies, represents) the righteousness (the upright, just, and godly living, deeds, and conduct, and right standing with God) of the saints (God's holy people). ⁹Then [the angel] said to me, Write this down: Blessed (happy, to be envied) are those who are summoned (invited, called) to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me [further], These are the true words (the genuine and exact declarations) of God. ¹⁰Then I fell prostrate at his feet to worship (to pay divine honors) to him, but he [restrained me] and said, Refrain! [You must not do that!] I am [only] another servant with you and your brethren who have [accepted and hold] the testimony borne by Jesus. Worship God! For the substance (essence) of the truth revealed by Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy [the vital breath, the inspiration of all inspired preaching and interpretation of the divine will and purpose, including both mine and yours].

Though I do not believe that the "Bride of Christ" refers to the church, I do think that the comparison of our relationship to God with the covenants, promises, or vows made in marriage is immensely helpful and relatable. **The Word does make those comparisons.** God has made a lot of promises to us similar to those we make to each other when we get married.⁴

- **Things that are Analogous to the Church as the *Bride*.**

- **As the bride of Christ, we were chosen.**⁵
- **As the bride of Christ, we are pure and holy.**

*As the bride of Christ, we'll one day be face-to-face with our Groom;
And because of the cross, we'll be a worthy bride.*

- John 3.29 John the Baptist says **He that hath the bride is the bridegroom.** This relationship is personified in the beautiful love story between Christ and His Church in Song of Songs and in various other Scriptures.

Song of Solomon 2:16 My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies.

Song of Solomon 7:10 I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me.

Hosea 2:19-20 So I will betroth you to Me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in loving devotion and compassion. / And I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD.”

Isaiah 54:5 For your husband is your Maker—the LORD of Hosts is His name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth.

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with loving devotion.

The Preparation of the Bride

1. The Church is a metaphor for the Bride in some parts of Scripture, although New Jerusalem is mentioned as the Bride in others. As you can see from the lesson, the Bride can refer to both.
2. Some Bible teachers that oppose the Church as being the *sole* object as the Bride mention that the Bride does not make herself ready, but the Holy Spirit does.
3. We need to remember that although we are saved by faith, and not by works, as we learned from looking at Scripture for all our past lessons, we *do have an active role in preparation* because what we **do** (our “works”) demonstrate what we **believe** (our faith). This is most clearly seen from James chapter 2. Although it is not our “works” that earn our salvation, our “works” (what we **do**) do demonstrate what we actually believe.
4. In looking at the Tribulation, we saw that the purpose of tribulation is to strengthen and equip us. See Romans 5, and Romans 6-8. Also, **Acts 14:22** *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*
5. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken (Hebrews 12.27) and judgment begins at the house of God (1 Peter 4.17). *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober* (1 Thessalonians 5.6, also see 1 Thessalonians 5.7-8).

Matthew 5:⁴⁴*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*⁴⁵*Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?*⁴⁶*Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

- **So Is the *Bride of Christ* New Jerusalem or the Church?**

We see the bride of Christ being referenced to the Church (a people) metaphorically, and we see it being referenced to the New Jerusalem, a place where people will live. Is either of these an *actual* "bride of Christ?" Some considerations are in your footnotes.⁶

Other Problems with the "Bride of Church" Doctrine

- Especially now, the teachings on the *Bride of Christ* have become a fundamental concern. There are several different considerations for this, including:
 - Concerns that the terminology that the *Bride must make herself ready* implies trusting in ones *works* in order to become *without spot or wrinkle*. Are we *always ready* by God's grace and gift of righteousness, or do we need to *make ourselves ready*? Is it God's grace and gift of righteousness, or is it all about works? A teaching that implies that the sole responsibility is on the *Bride to be ready* is inconsistent with the entire Pauline Revelation of the Gospel of Grace. The Galatians were all about works. What did Paul call those Galatians? He called them fools.
 - We need to consider that Jesus did not teach that his body is also his bride. Paul didn't teach it either, **although he compared a marriage relationship metaphorically to Christ and His Church**. Christians are repeatedly called *sons of God*, the *body of Christ*, and *the church* throughout the New Testament, but are never called the *Bride of Christ*.
 - **The parables of the *Bride of Christ* are limited**. It is as expounded in the book of James: we are *saved* by faith, but our *faith* demonstrates itself by what we *do* (*our works*). We are righteous in Christ, and that righteousness has us calling Him Lord and taking heed to the things He says. It is not an *either/or* proposition. Metaphorically we can learn a lot about the relationship about Christ and His Church when he compare the relationship of a Bridegroom and a Bride to it. And since the Word of God says in Revelations 21.9-12 that the *Bride* is Holy Jerusalem, we need to consider that as well. We need to *put all these things together* and consider the theological construct to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

This passage does not say the body of Christ is the Lamb's wife. It does not say Israel is the Lamb's wife. It clearly states however that "that great city, the Holy Jerusalem" is the Lamb's wife. In verse 10, it also says that John the Revelator saw that great city descending down from heaven adorned **as a bride**. He doesn't even refer to it as the bride but that it is adorned **as a bride**.

- Jesus did not teach that his body is also his bride. Paul didn't teach it either.

- Christians are repeatedly called "sons of God," "the body of Christ," and "the church" throughout the New Testament but are never called "the bride of Christ."
- Because of the free gift of grace, we are already righteous and without spot nor blemish in the Lord's sight. We are already ready! Therefore, it stands to reason that the church can't be the one "getting herself ready." The "Bride of Christ" then must refer to something or someone else! The "bride" must refer, not to the church, but to the Holy Jerusalem, just as the Word of God says in Revelations 21:9-12.

Notice the following passages:

Rev. 19.7 Let us rejoice and shout for joy [exulting and triumphant]! Let us celebrate and ascribe to Him glory and honor, for the marriage of the Lamb [at last] has come, and His bride has prepared herself.

Rev. 19.8 She has been permitted to dress in fine (radiant) linen, dazzling and white—for the fine linen is (signifies, represents) the righteousness (the upright, just, and godly living, deeds, and conduct, and right standing with God) of the saints (God's holy people).

In the above passages, in verse 7, we see the betrothed wife — the Bride — has made herself ready. Notice that it was the wife who made the preparation. We also see in context, that the Lamb speaks of our Bridegroom-Messiah, and His (Betrothed) Wife speaks of the company of those Believers who choose to make themselves ready.

In verse 8, we see her 'array' (her clothing and covering) was granted, or given to her, by the Holy Spirit. We also see that this clothing is of linen, which we are told speaks of the *righteousness* <1345> ["righteous deeds; actions"] of the set-apart believers. Here we can see that the preparation of the Bride involves the Bride's action, as well as the action of the Holy Spirit. Both are necessary.⁷

- **As the idea that the Church has replaced Israel as God's people became dominant,⁸ it is becoming quite common to see the metaphors marriage in the Scriptures extended exclusively to mean the Church is the Bride of Christ. The idea of the metaphorical transfer of the church as the bride of Christ as the dominant metaphor in Scripture is founded on the basis of replacement theology (even if it is implied). It is imperative for anyone who rejects replacement theology to study and know the metaphorical connotations to the *Bride of Christ* in Scripture and be able to rightly divide the Word of Truth.**

Origins of the *Bride of Christ* Doctrine

The term *Bride of Christ* has its roots in the Roman Catholic Church. You probably know the clergy or priests of the Roman Catholic Church "marries" their church, taking an oath to celibacy. As a result, the term *Bride of Christ* was eventually coined in relation to this practice. Today, this concept and terminology has spilled over into our own fundamental Christian doctrines.⁹

Conclusion

Again, we need to get back to the message of the Word of God woven throughout His Word to us. Let's remember the main messages in the Word of God that you and I would remain ***committed and conscious of the reality that Jesus is coming***. We don't know when that day will be, but I can assure you it will happen. Let's stand devoted to our Lord and obey Him with a heart to be *pure and holy*, so that on the day of his coming we will be ready to meet Him.

Let's keep the analogies of the ***Bride of Christ*** Scriptural and not extrapolate from Scripture to add or take away from it. Let's stand devoted to our Lord and obey Him with a heart to be *pure and holy*, so that on the day of his coming we will be ready to meet Him.

¹ <https://www.epm.org/resources/2010/Feb/1/why-do-you-say-bride-christ-church/>

Isaiah 62:4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

Some have said the Lord would not marry a city, but here the Lord is married to the land. It is not a stretch that He could be married to a city if He wants, as has been indicated in Revelation 21:9-10 (quoted above). (1/28/24, 10:14 PM The "Bride of Christ" Is Not the Church – Owlcation)

² There seems to be a reference to Leviticus 21.14, that the high priest must not marry any one that was not a *pure virgin*. Here, then, *Christ* is the high priest, the *spouse* or *husband*; the *Corinthian Church* the *pure virgin* to be espoused.

- Paul is talking to the local Corinthian church, making it is clear that Paul is using a marriage metaphor to speak of the relationship of Christ and the church.
- Just as a bride was to be a *chaste virgin* and have *wholehearted and sincere and pure devotion* to her husband, so should the Church have *wholehearted and sincere and pure devotion* to Christ.
- Paul references that *he has betrothed you to one Husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*. (There were two people at each wedding that the Greeks called the *paranymphe*: one waited on the bride, the other on the bridegroom. The business of the *paranymphe* was to serve. Paul is metaphorically referring to this.)
- Paul is stating the importance to not be seduced that our minds may be corrupted from wholehearted pure devotion to Christ, perhaps referencing scriptures that God is a jealous God. (Exodus 34.14, Deuteronomy 4.24, Deuteronomy 32.16.)

³ <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Who-Is-The-Bride-of-Christ>

⁴ <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Who-Is-The-Bride-of-Christ>

⁵ Here's a simple truth about being a bride... *brides are typically chosen*. Even in situations when a marriage is arranged, *someone* chose the bride. It's not by chance. The Bible tells us that we were chosen by God. God could have given up on us long ago. After all, we were sinful human beings and undeserving of His grace. *But He chose to save us in His love*.

According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will... Ephesians 1.4-5

And the best part of all is that this saving grace is available to all who would receive Him. God's heart is for all men to be saved... for all of mankind to be a part of the bride of Christ.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3.9

⁶ **In Jeremiah, God Is Already Married to Israel**

Jeremiah 3:14

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

In the Old Testament, the church of Christ had not yet been established. Therefore, there was no church yet; furthermore, the prophet says God is *already* married to Israel! There is never any mention of a wedding for Jesus, simply to the Lamb's wife.

We Don't Marry Nor Are Given In Marriage After Resurrection According to Scripture

Luke 20:35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.

The Word says that we don't marry in heaven. If we won't *be given in marriage in heaven*, can it even be possible to be married to Jesus?

- **Taking an Allegory/Metaphor/Comparison Too Far or Out of Context**

When you take the message of each individual metaphor out of context and stretch the metaphor to mean something outside of the point being made therein, you can stretch yourself right into *cherry-picking Scripture* and contradicting the theological construct (putting together of *several* Scriptures to get the *whole picture*) that gives a balanced teaching on the principles being taught and demonstrated by the metaphor.

- **Every Time a Metaphor Involves a Wedding It Does Not Necessarily Refer to Christ and Jerusalem or the Church**

Because several parables and metaphors involved *weddings*, people are quick to lump them all together as referring to Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as the Bride. Here are some Bible passages about weddings where Jesus as Bridegroom and Jerusalem or His Church as Bride don't fit the context and are outside of what Jesus is showing in the metaphor.

- Matthew 22:1-14 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

The guests are the subject of the story; it is clearly not the bride. The similitude Jesus is getting at is clear:

One common accepted interpretation of this parable by the proponents of the "Bride of Christ" concept is that the guests represent the church. Judging by the amount of discussion on this question, people must understand the importance of it. **Jesus said in the summary to his parable that "many are called, but few are chosen."** The king looked over those who had been called to make the final selection of who was chosen. He noticed a man who did not meet the criteria to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He did not have wedding clothes on. That was serious enough for him to be cast out into darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, which seems to be a description of hell. The question is what did this man do or not do to merit such an awful punishment? Fortunately, the Bible from beginning to end makes it very clear.

Revelation

The clothing frequently mentioned in Revelation is white robes. Jesus warned the church in Sardis:

3.2 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent.

Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 4 'But

you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

And to the Laodiceans:

3.18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and **white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.** 19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Do we see? Are we listening?

Who are the people in white robes in Revelation 7?

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" 14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They wanted salvation badly enough that they were willing to resist all temptation to conform to the demands of the world and even die for it. They were determined to endure to the end.

Finally, Chapter 19 clearly describes the necessary attire for the marriage feast of the Son.

19.7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 **And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.** Raising your hand and saying, "Pick me!" is not enough to get you into heaven. Saying you believe in Jesus is not enough, because even the demons believe and tremble. Please! We need to stop telling people that all they need to do to be saved is just show up [just as you are] and Jesus will be overjoyed. **Yes, come as you are, but don't plan to stay that way.** We must consistently live a life that is pleasing to God by accepting His righteousness and making Him Lord. That is the only way we can avoid the risk of a terrible shock and instead hear the words which will flood us with unspeakable joy, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Taken from <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/30725/what-is-signified-by-the-man-without-wedding-clothes-in-matthew-2211-13>.

- ◆ In context, Jesus has been speaking against the religious teachers, and of how prostitutes and tax collectors would enter into heaven before them. (Matt 21.31) Here He is referring to the man who is dressed in worldly clothing as one who does not respect the dignity of the King, or recognize the greatness of the occasion. They are present in body but not in spirit. They come to the King but they are not humbled by the occasion.
- ◆ They are like the Pharisees that seem to be present in the kingdom of God, but in reality they do not recognize the king's son, and nor do they honor him, or keep the king's laws. They are law breakers. And Jesus is warning them that even though they appear to have religious clothing on, they are really wearing filthy rags and they will be thrown into Hell.

John 3:27-30 ²⁷John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. ²⁸e yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. ²⁹He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled: ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease.

Here John is using an analogy to show the relationship he has to Christ. People were looking to John thinking he was Christ, the one promised of the Father, but John is clarifying that his role is as *the friend of the bridegroom*, who *rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice*, and whose *joy is therefore fulfilled as the bridegroom increases and [he] must decrease*. This is the role of a *paranymp* at Greek weddings in that culture. There were two at the weddings: one that waited on the bride, the other on the bridegroom. The business of the *paranymp* was to serve. John is metaphorically referring to this to make a distinction between his role and Christ's.

- **Matt 25.1-13** Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their

lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The disciples came to Jesus and asked Him, *Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* (Matthew 24.3) Jesus then relates *many* parables and metaphors to answer that question, of which this one is a part. Reading *before* and *after* this parable will give you solid insight as to what Jesus is saying. He opens this metaphor by saying that the kingdom of heaven is *like* ten virgins who went out to meet their bridegroom.

Again, the similitude Jesus is getting at is clear:

- ◆ This parable is a call to be prepared for the "*unknown*" day and hour of one's death and judgment.
- ◆ The point of this simile is to *be ready*, to live life prepared to meet the Savior.
- ◆ Jesus ends the parable with the command to "*keep watch!*" ***Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.***

It goes without saying that the ten virgins are not this groom's wife. They are only guests trying to get into the wedding. Once again, taking the leap from the ten virgins being guests to them being the bride and representing "the Bride of bride Christ" can't be done. This story is about being ready to be accepted into the kingdom of heaven. How is that done? By accepting Jesus as our Lord.

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Who-Is-The-Bride-of-Christ>

Jesus is using this metaphor to teach a truth. To take this out of context and stretch it to mean that Jesus will have 10 wives is broadening the simile beyond the point Jesus is making.

Luke 12:35-40 KJV (35) ***Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; (36) And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. (37) Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. (38) And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. (39) And this know, that if the Goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. (40) Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.***

Again, the similitude Jesus is getting at is clear: The parable is introduced by Jesus wanting to warn His disciples about the *leaven of the Pharisees*.

Luke 12:1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

- ◆ The point is to be *ready*, with *your lights burning*, *...like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding*, so that when *he comes and knocks*, they may open to him immediately.
- ◆ The summary of the parable is in v. 40: ***Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.***

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⁷ This two-fold process is confirmed in Esther:

Esther 2:9 And the maiden pleased [Hegai] and obtained his favor. And he speedily gave her the things for her purification and her portion of food and the seven chosen maids to be given her from the king's palace; and he removed her and her maids to the best [apartment] in the harem.

Here we see that Hegai, the eunuch, as well as the seven maidens given to her, all picture the Holy Spirit, given to the Bride to provide help, and to provide everything that is needed to the Bride for her purification — her preparation. In Esther 2:9, notice the two-fold process that made up her preparation: (1) “he speedily gave her;” and (2) “with such things as belonged to her.”

The preparation of the Bride of Messiah is a co-operation between the Holy Spirit, and the Bride.
(<https://thewayprepared.com/bride-made-ready/>)

⁸ One group that believes in such *Replacement Theology*, among other doctrines unsupported by Scripture, is the New Apostolic Reformation, which believes that the Church has replaced Israel in Scripture. The NAR is growing at a rate of 9 million adherents per year as noted in 2012.

(chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=church-history-pubs>). Because of the belief in *Replacement Theology*, a growing number of people are being taught that the Scriptures concerning Israel are now allegorical and refer to the Church instead. Because of this, there is a heavy focus on the *Bride of Christ* being solely and physically the *Church* of Christ.

⁹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that all nuns are mystically betrothed to Jesus Christ. In this actual marriage ceremony a young woman dressed in white, makes a public vow to the Church. After this public profession, the young woman is told that she has become the bride of Christ and must consecrate herself to God “until death”. In this subtle the Catholic Church is offering to the young woman a substitute for marriage to a real man. Although the concept of the *Bride of Christ* is found in Scripture, I challenge you to see whom the Lord is calling the Bride of Christ.

The Catechism Says:

923 Virgins who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite, are betrothed mystically to Christ, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church.” By this solemn rite (Consecratio virginum), the virgin is “constituted . . . a sacred person, a transcendent sign of the Church’s love for Christ, and an eschatological image of this heavenly Bride of Christ and of the life to come.

The Bible Says:

1 Timothy 4: 1-3 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

<https://whateverycatholicshouldknow.com/bride-of-christ/>