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ARE YOU THE BRIDE?

A popular Christian-based group has a tradition that at the end of each of their gatherings, someone asks, “Who is the church?” In response, the entire group proclaims, “We are the church!” This particular group is made up of Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Atheists, as well as adherents to other, less popular religions. Are they the church? I don’t know. Maybe. The word “church” stems from the name of an ancient Teutonic deity, and the Germanic origin of the word itself is *kirke*. Maybe they are that, but they, as well as most Christian-based faiths nowadays, also equate being the church with being the bride of Scripture – and that they clearly are not. The church and the bride are very different entities.

Recently, I asked my own congregation which of them thought they were a part of the bride. About half of the hands in the room went up immediately. Some others thought they probably were not part of the bride, and many were uncertain of the correct answer to the question. Later, it was told to me that if my own community was so divided and uncertain on this issue, many others probably are too, and that I needed to write this article for you, our readers and brethren. It is not an article I look forward to writing. It is a thorny issue and will upset more than a few apple carts. In response to this hesitation on my part, I was told these apple carts probably need to be upset and the truth be told. I couldn’t argue with that.

Do you think you are part of the bride? Really? The short answer to this question is that you probably are not. Does that ruffle your feathers? If it does, maybe you aren’t interested in the truth of the matter at all, but only in finding words to support your present notions of who you are or wish to be. You likely won’t get that here. I won’t “tickle” your ears.

Who is the bride? Again, a short answer: The bride is Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). Search the scriptures thoroughly (with sufficient context, please), and you will find that, in every single instance, the bride is the Set-apart City where YHWH has chosen to place His name.

What, then, exactly, is Yerushalayim? In the TaNak, the Set-apart City seems, at first glance, to be only a physical city of brick, mortar, metal and stone. However, upon deeper study, it becomes apparent that she is much more than that. More than just building materials, she is also constructed of people, and not just any people – the righteous servants of YHWH. Yerushalayim is personified as an ideal – a metaphor for the entirety of YHWH’s most special people and the place in which they meet and dwell with Him.

There are presently two versions of the Set-apart City of Yerushalayim:

the shadow and imperfect copy here on earth. It is the one inhabited and operated according to Torah law by only the tribe of Levi and the sons of Aharon.

the true and perfect original in the heavens. It is the one inhabited and operated according to the “New Covenant” by Yehoshua himself and the angels with Him. Both YHWH and Yehoshua have testified that, at some time in the future, the earthly copy of Yerushalayim will be completely destroyed and replaced with the perfect heavenly original. In essence, this will cause a final joining of heaven and earth. At that time, all things will be made right, and YHWH will finally close the chasm of separation between Himself and those of mankind who survive.

For now, any Temple built in the earthly Yerushalayim is required by YHWH’s command in Torah to be operated exclusively by the Aharonic Priesthood and attended by the tribe of Levi. Once the earthly version is destroyed, however, the need for an Aharonic Priesthood and Levitical attendants will be eliminated. Just as Yehoshua and the angels cannot lawfully serve in an earthly Yerushalayim, neither can the sons of Aharon and Levi serve in the heavenly.

This begs the question: “Where do the people who constitute a part of the bride fit into this equation, and exactly who are they?” In Scripture they are called the *Q’doshym* – set-apart ones. They are the set-apart seed of the woman described in *Chazon*, chapter twelve and in *Yeshayahu*, chapter 54, and she is the bride. Just as Aharon served as *koheyn gadol* in the copy, so does Yehoshua serve in the true Yerushalayim. As the *Levi’ym* served in attendance of Aharon, so do the angels for Yehoshua. And as Aharon’s brethren served with him as fellow *kohanim*, so Yehoshua’s own brethren, the *Q’doshym*, will serve as *kohanim* of YHWH along with Him.

How can we know who are the *Q’doshym*, and what sets them apart from the rest of mankind who will be saved? According to scripture, they are those who guard the commandments of Elohim and have the witness of Yehoshua Hamashiach. They refuse to compromise their faith and refuse to receive the mark of the beast on their bodies. Rather, they receive instead the seal of the Father’s name upon their foreheads. They follow the Lamb wherever He leads them. They sing the song of Moshe the servant of Elohim and the song of the Lamb. They are blessed and stay awake, guarding their garments, keeping them clean and white through works of

righteousness. They are called chosen and trustworthy. Many will be beheaded and killed because of their witness of Yehoshua and because of the Word of Elohim. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Now, do you still think you are part of the bride? Maybe you are. Most of us, though, cannot yet claim that level of perfection and righteousness. That doesn't mean we won't be saved to enter life in YHWH's kingdom: many other parts must be played in this unfolding drama. Along with the friends of the bride and her wedding guests, the great multitude who follow the Q'doshym through great tribulation, and those gentile nations that cleave to YHWH and the greater commonwealth of Yisrael, avoid ultimate destruction. All of these will be saved, but not all will be part of the bride.

On the other hand, it is probably within your power to attain even the lofty status of the *Q'doshym* – if it is truly that important to you, and you are willing to make of every moment in your life a sacrifice to YHWH and His kingdom. I hope it is, I hope you do, and I hope to join you. May YHWH give us all the faith, strength and resolve to love Him in every moment with all our hearts, all of our souls, all of our strengths, and to walk perfectly in the footsteps of Yehoshua Hamashiach.

Study for yourself, the revelation of the bride. You can find an excellent start in Yeshayahu, chapters fifty-four to sixty-six, the book of Chazon, and the book of Ivrym. For further help in understanding these concepts, request Sabbath Keeper's Fellowship's new book: *Ivrym – A Concise Commentary on the Book of Hebrews*.

THE BRIDE

“Who does find a virtuous wife? For she is worth far more than rubies. The heart of her husband shall trust in her, and he has no lack of gain. She shall do him excellence, and not evil, all the days of her life. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband too, and he praises her: ‘Many daughters have done nobly, but you have risen over them all.’ Loveliness is deceptive and prettiness is vain, a woman who fears YHWH is to be praised.”

“And I shall betroth you unto Me forever, and I shall betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgement, and mercy and compassion. And I shall betroth you unto Me in faithfulness, and you shall know YHWH.”

“Halleluyah, for YHWH El Shaddai reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him praise, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife prepared herself. And to her it was given to be dressed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the Q'doshym.”

B'Shalom,

Ovadyah