

# PORTRAIT OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

## CALLED IN CHRIST

I love fairy-tales, romantic ones in particular; like sleeping beauty, Snow-white and the seven dwarfs, where a beautiful prince goes on a search for a beautiful princess and - after he finds her, they live happily ever after.

I believe that some of those classic romantic tales were inspired by God who wants us to know and understand the romance of the ages that was in His heart even before the world began: **the love relationship of the believer with Jesus, the Bridegroom , culminating in the wedding between Him and the Church.**

We were - in facts - created to be the Bride of God's Son: Jesus, the Prince of Peace. As children of God, therefore, we won't really fulfill our destiny until we realize this ultimate intention in the heart of God for creating the human being.

In order to better understand God's ways in creating humanity, we need to reflect on the Eastern Custom of Bible times regarding marriage.

The couple to be married was chosen by the parents - sometime when the two of them were still children. [The Bible tells us that we were chosen **in Him** before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4 ). This choice became binding at the Betrothal ceremony, when vows were exchanged and the girl took the name of the boy and the two "legally" became espoused to each other.

They did not begin to live together at this time. They hardly knew each other, therefore - before the marriage could be consummated - they spent an adequate period of time together - chaperoned by the friend of the bridegroom - during which they got to know each other and gradually fall in love with one another.

(This was the status of Mary and Joseph when Mary became pregnant with Jesus by the Holy Ghost. Mary was legally Joseph's wife, although the marriage had not been consummated. Likewise, Jesus binds Himself in betrothal to the believer by His blood at conversion and He enters into covenant with us.

However, when we first accept Him, we are not "in love" with Him yet. We meet Him as our Savior and Lord but we hardly know Him or love Him as our Bridegroom. With the passing of time however, and guided by the Holy Spirit (the friend of the

Bridegroom who reveals Him to us throughout the experiences of life), we keep falling in love with Him over and over again).

Finally, when the man felt that the girl had become mature enough to be a responsible wife, he arranged the marriage feast and came to meet her - announced by those who saw him coming with the shout "Behold the bridegroom comes!" Then the bride would rush to make herself ready, clothing herself with the wedding dress that the Bridegroom supplied (*...And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright {and} clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* Rev 19:8 - NAS)

## EVE, A TYPE OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Much like the woman was **in Adam** at creation SO the Bride was in Christ before the world began.

Adam is the name God gave to the human being He created after His image. He named Adam both the male and the female. "*... Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.*" Gen 5:1-2

"*...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.* Gen 1:27.

Later, God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and He took the woman out of his rib and Adam said of the woman, "*she is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh*". Genesis 2:23

A deep sleep fell also on Jesus when he gave his Life on the Cross for us and the Church, His Bride, was born out of His side, close to His heart. However she came not from His rib, but out the water and the blood flowing from of the wound on His side. So now "*... we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones*" Eph 5:30.

In the letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul uses the analogy of the "human" marriage to disclose the mystery concerning the marriage of Jesus with His Church and he concludes by saying: "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and **they two shall be one flesh.** This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning **Christ and the church.***" Eph 5:32 (emphasis mine).

Oneness with Jesus - in intimate relationship - is then the end of our journey, the mark to press toward, even as Paul states in Philippians 3:14 "*I press toward the mark for the prize of **the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.***" (emphasis mine).

# CHOSEN

The bible is full of narratives where the central characters typify the Holy Spirit's highest mission on the earth: to find and prepare a Bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. In each of them the careful reader can deduct that she is chosen among many because she has met the qualifications required for such a position. Let's look at some of those stories.

## GENESIS 24

In this chapter Abraham is a type of God the Father, Isaac a type of Jesus, the servant (Eliezer) a type of the Holy Spirit, and Rebecca a type of the church.

When Abraham was old, he sent his servant on a search for a bride for his son Isaac, among his relative, within his own family. In these last days of the church age, the Holy Spirit is searching, wooing, calling out from among God's people that company of saints that will comprise the Bride of Christ.

- **Eliezer found Rebecca by a well.** The well speaks of God's word and of God's Spirit, the Spirit of God revealed through the Word, the Word illuminated by the Spirit. The well is a place of refreshing and satisfaction that can only be found in Him. It's the place of encounter with Jesus (He met the Samaritan woman by a well). Do we go there to know Him? Do we ask the Holy Spirit to open the word to us to reveal Him? The word is all about Jesus; He is concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New.
- **Rebecca shows humility and unselfishness in giving a drink to the servant and to his camels.** The Bride of Christ ministers to the Lord first, then those who may not look attractive to the eye, like the camels, who nevertheless carry the gifts needed to equip and adorn the Bride for her wedding. She discerned God's vessels as they came forth, odd as they were. ♦
- **She was set apart by the gifts she received:** silver for redemption, gold for divine nature or glory of God, earrings for the capacity to hear and gain knowledge (Isaiah 50:4-5), bracelets (verse 22). to beautify the works of her hands and give her a capacity to act with discretion and sensitivity, a necklace for the fear of God and authority released through submission to Christ, her head, a nose ring for discernment, ring on her finger for consecration.
- **She was willing to leave all and follow him through the wilderness**(vss. 58, 61). The servant became Rebecca's guide to take her to the bridegroom. He became the only source of information regarding Isaac and he carried the messages between the two.

The journey across the desert was long, hard and painful at times, yet it was a time of separation and solitude where the heart was circumcised and where she learned complete dependence on Him; much like the Shulamite girl (another type of the Bride of Christ) who came out of the wilderness “leaning” on her beloved - Song of Solomon 8:5. The desert offered provision as the dryness forced her to look for water in His Word. She learned to extract honey from the Rock (Deut.32:10-13), by spending time listening to the sweetness of the Word spoken by the servant as He revealed to her the Beauty of the Bridegroom. In the desert her heart ignited with love for the lover of her soul and she was made ready to meet Him at last.

## **THE BOOK OF ESTHER**

Chapter One. When the time came for the rich king Ahasuerus to show the glory of His kingdom (a type of king Jesus at the start of His millennium rule), he prepared a splendid feast with royal wine in abundance (the new wine of Revival) and invited queen Vasthi (a type of the organized church). He wanted to show her beauty to the invited guests, but she refused to come because she had organized her own feast and was busy “doing her own thing”. Therefore, king Ahasuerus chose Esther over Vasthi .

Esther (a type of the Bride of Christ) was chosen because she was willing to go through the time of preparation and beautification required and provided for her.

(In Matt. 22:2-14, Jesus tells the parable of the king who prepared the marriage feast for His Son and invited many to come, but they refused, like Vasthi. Therefore the king gave orders to his servant to look for guests in the highways among the good and the bad; but when one came not wearing the wedding garment that he had provided, he cast him out saying: many are called but few are chosen).

From these two accounts we see again that the Bride is chosen among God’s people because of certain qualifications being met. God is the King who looks for the appropriate Bride for His Son. She must have royal qualities and must not be one who will marry for money, but one who is in love with the Bridegroom.

Much more can be said about Esther whose willingness to pay the price for the anointing propelled her into a time of purification spent in isolation under the custody of the two eunuchs who typify the Holy Spirit. Suffice to say that the name of one, Hegai, meant “meditation” and the name of the other, Shaashgaz, “weaning”. Part of her purification, like in Rebecca’s case, consisted in getting to know the King in deep meditation in the Word and in becoming detached from the things of this world

(weaning). Perfumes and oil of myrrh were also given her. These were the spices of the anointing oil:

- Myrrh, a bitter spice, fragrant when crushed speaks of the fellowship in Christ suffering.
- Cinnamon - a name derived from two Hebrew words : “kinna”, jealousy and “min”, a form or appearance - reminds us of the appearance of jealousy, the burning zeal demonstrated by Jesus for the house of God and for the name of the Lord.
- Calamus, an aromatic stem that grows in miry soil and that perfumes the air as it grows straight and tall, points to the uprightness of heart maintained in a world of sin.
- Cassia, a plant that grows to great heights yet it bends easily under a light wind, indicates the ability to ascend into the heavens for heavenly counsel and yet remain humble.

The same analogies considered thus far, can be made from the life of another familiar woman in the Bible: Ruth.

## **THE BOOK OF RUTH**

In the story of Ruth, Naomi typifies the Holy Spirit who chooses Ruth over Orpah because she was willing to stick close and follow her mother in law who later introduced her to Boaz, the kinsman redeemer who became her husband. Ruth followed the advice of Naomi to the threshing floor of Boaz where she found provision, abundance, covering and protection.

Like Rebecca and Esther, Ruth points to the Bride of Christ who is chosen among other believers because of her willingness to pay the price of consecration, to forsake all including family and earthly affection in order to follow the Holy Spirit’s leadings even into the wilderness where she learns how to love Jesus above all.

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## **THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS**

In Matthew 25 Jesus tells the parable of the 5 wise virgins and the 5 foolish ones. This narrative also points to the fact that not all believers are the Bride. Only those who are willing to go the full length and who maintain a supply of oil, will make it through the wilderness, on our way to meet the Bridegroom. Our life is like an oil lamp ( ye are he

light of the world). To keep the flame burning in our heart we need to draw on the Holy Spirit. The wilderness is a time to be taught and guided by the Holy Spirit. He is the One who shows the way but our obedience to His directions provides the light for the path to follow. The lamp in this case is God's Word ( "thy word is a lamp unto my feet") but if the Word lacks the illumination of the Holy Spirit, it cannot give the light we need to see the Bridegroom who comes at midnight.

## FAITHFUL<sup>1</sup>

Proverb 31 summarizes the description of the Bride of Christ that we have uncovered by peeking into the lives of renowned women in the Bible. The Bride's industriousness, unselfishness, integrity, devotion and chastity are praised in her portrayal of verses 10 to 28.

Verse 11 and 12 in particular tell of her faithfulness :” *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.*” Her husband has no reason to be jealous because she has never betrayed him.

The Bride has no other lover, she is a virgin: no idolatry in her. She doesn't sleep with the world because she is free of the lust of the flesh. She has eyes only for Him!

*“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”.* I John 2:16

*“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.”* Song 1:15

The bible calls “faithful “ those who do not bow to Baal (**I K.19:18; Dan.3:18**), those that fear God and not man (Neh.7:2) and those that follow Him and are with Him ( Rev. 17:14). We have seen these qualities in Rebecca - she followed Eliezer, esteeming the pursuit of love above all earthly affections, so did the queen of Ophir who “forgot her father's house” (Psalm 45:10) and Ruth in following Naomi.

*“...and Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me”.*  
Ruth 1:16-17

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<sup>1</sup> Isa 1:21; Mat.24:45; 25:23

In Song of Solomon the Bride is described as having “dove’s” eyes. (Song 1:15). She has, in other words, eyes just for Him. It denotes a strong love. She loves Him for Himself alone and not for what He gives. **Mat.7:6, Heb.11:6.**

She is faithful: she stays with Him even when all hope seem to be gone. She goes to the tomb like Mary Magdalene = still seeking Him when death is all around, then LOVE (Jesus) came to her **John 20:14-18.**

“...and Esther is another example: she said :” If I perish, I perish = loving Him more than fearing death.

*they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” Revelation 17:14*

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We are approaching midnight, the cry is still being heard :”... *Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him*” Matt.25:6. Have you heard it? Not all believers will be part of the “Bride” company. We must ask and repent of neglecting His calling to intimacy. We have put time, family, work ahead , even ministry ahead of relationship with the Bridegroom. Ask God to change our heart, to put in it a strong desire to know Him, to have eyes only for Him. Come out to meet Him, come out of the places of hiding: out of slumber, indifference, guilt, shame, doubt... let His love beautify you with holiness.

It’s a choice. Let aside all, adorn yourself with Him alone, “*So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty...*” (Psalm 45:11).

Amen, Lord Jesus.

Laura Pedota

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