

Behold | Sermons through the Revelation

Sermon #46 | Revelation 21:9-23 | The Bride of the Lamb

Revelation 21:9-10 | Introducing the Bride

- If words mean *anything*, then verse 9 tells us that we are about to see the Bride of Christ.
 - If words can be interpreted in any manner desired by the reader, then we have no basis of communication.
 - Foundational to communication is words have an objective meaning and thus cannot be subjectively interpreted.
- Having been told that he would be shown the **bride, the Lamb's wife** (v. 9), John is then shown **that great city, the Holy Jerusalem** (v. 10). The meaning is clear: *New Jerusalem is the Bride of Christ*.
- One may object, *how can Christ be married to a city?* To which the response would be *how can Christ be married to all believers?*
- Clearly **bride** takes on a symbolic meaning of a never-ending love, commitment, devotion, all based on mutual vows.
- Those who deny that **bride** is symbolic simply *make it symbolic of something else*. Why don't we just let it be symbolic of *what the Bible tells us it is?*
- Does the scripture give any further evidence that the bride of Christ could be the New Jerusalem?
 - *Does it need to*, on a passage so clear?
 - Verse 2 shows the city **prepared as a bride**.
 - Isaiah 54:5 says that Israel's **maker is thy husband**.
 - Isaiah 62:5 says that the land of Israel will be called **Beulah**, which means *married*.
- But isn't the church the Bride of Christ?
 - This is an old (and threadbare) position that grew out of Catholic replacement theology.
 - It has been repeated and defended on so many occasions that it has become the *perceived truth*.
- What problems arise out of seeing the church as the bride?
 - The church fails to recognize its *real* identity.
 - The church participates in *replacement theology*, taking the place of Israel. When it does this, it then takes the Kingdom as its own (and thus the millennium as its own), the New Covenant as its own, and even the Old Covenant as its own.
 - The church takes on an arrogance that is confusing to the world that needs to hear the Gospel.

Revelation 21:11-23 | Description of the Bride

- The bride is described in both figurative and literal language. The figurative language is noted by words such as **like** (v. 11). The literal language presents the city with statements of fact.
- Literally, the city/bride is described as:
 - Having the glory of God (v. 11)
 - Being four-sided, with a Jasper wall (v. 18) and three gates on each side (v. 12).
 - The walls are approx. 1,380 miles in length (v. 16).
 - Each gate is named after one of the tribes of Israel (v. 13). Each gate is made of a **single pearl** (21).
 - The wall is about 300 feet high (v. 17). –the interesting note about **the measure of a man, that is, of the angel** refers to the measurement from the elbow to the tip of the finger, and could indicate that *men and angels have the same physical characteristics*, a position that could be supported by other passages.
 - Having 12 foundation stones, each named after one of the 12 apostles (v. 14). Each foundation stone was **garnished with all manner of precious stones** (vv. 19-20).
- Figuratively, the city/bride is described as:
 - Shining brightly like a crystal (v. 11)
 - Like **pure gold, clear as glass**. The city was **pure gold** like *glass is pure*. There is no translucent gold. The word **clear** is the same as the word **pure**. It is difficult to know whether the city is *physical gold* (a poor building material) or if this is symbolic of its beauty and purity.
 - The street is **pure gold, as it were transparent glass** (v. 21). The word **transparent** is διαφανής [diaphanas], “thoroughly shiny” or “thoroughly visible.”
- A conspicuous absence:
 - The city has no temple (v. 22). The presence of the **Lord God Almighty and of the Lamb** replace the millennial Temple.
 - The city has **no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it** (v. 23). While this does not say *there is no sun*, the implication is such. Light comes from **the glory of God**. This is a return to days 1-3 of creation, where there was light but no sun. However, in days 1-3 the light source (presumably the glory of God made visible) was from outside the earth, and because of the rotation of the earth there was day and night, even without sun. Now that God is dwelling on earth in the New Jerusalem, the rotation of the earth (if there is rotation) does not cause darkness (see v. 25).