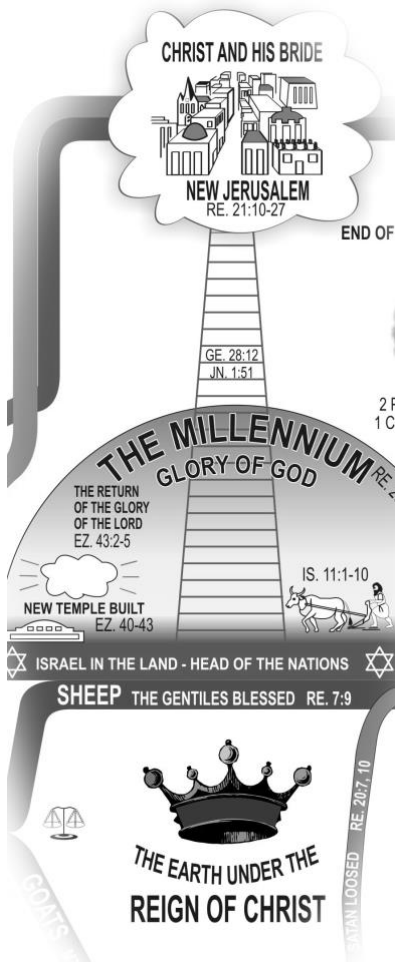


2.5 Israel and the Church – Christ’s Heavenly and Earthly Brides



Conclusion

Two brides are presented in scripture:

1. **Christ’s Heavenly Bride** - This is the church (or assembly) comprising all saints of the present dispensation. She is ‘of Him, like Him and for Him’. There will be a marriage in heaven described in Revelation 19:6-10 below.
2. **Christ’s Earthly Bride** – Israel in a future day. There is no marriage of this bride presented though it is implied in a ‘a certain king, which made a marriage for his son’ (Matthew 22:2).

2.5 Israel and the Church – Christ’s Heavenly and Earthly Brides

The Current Relationship between Christ and His Church

When is The Marriage of the Lamb?

The Marriage Celebration

The Heavenly Jerusalem as the Bride

Christ’s Earthly Bride

What is the difference between Christ’s heavenly and earthly bride?

King James Version	Darby Version
<p><i>And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 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. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.</i></p>	<p><i>And I heard as a voice of a great crowd, and as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of strong thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to himself kingly power. Let us rejoice and exult, and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. And he says to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb. And he says to me, These are the true words of God.</i></p>

Revelation 19:6-10 (KJV)	Revelation 19:6-10 (Darby)
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This passage describes the marriage.

The Current Relationship between Christ and His Church

The church came into existence when the Holy Spirit filled the 120 or so persons who were gathered in the upper room in Acts 2:2. The number soon grew to 5000. From the start, she was united to Christ, and even at this early date fully capable of fulfilling her function as the wife of Christ.

The epistles often refer to the church as Christ's body. The body comprises only those who are alive now, not to all who will form the bride. Nevertheless, the relationship between Christ and His assembly is clear: *'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'* (Ephesians 5:31-32).

It is not until Revelation that we have the Church described as a bride. His wife had made herself ready, so she was a wife before she was a bride. The church is now the wife looking after her Husband's affairs in His absence. She is His trustworthy confidante. Although the marriage ceremony has not yet taken place, the relationship already exists. There is perfect unity between Christ and His church. Christendom publicly is something else.

When is The Marriage of the Lamb?

Before the marriage celebration of the Lamb, Babylon – the rival – will have been overthrown and judged. It says, *'the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to himself kingly power'* (Revelation 19:6 Darby). He had taken the power, and was about to reign, but He was not actually reigning. Hence, we can say that this event would take place between the great tribulation and the Millennium

The judgment seat of Christ must precede the marriage. No doubt *'his wife hath made herself ready'* (v. 7) would refer in part to that. What remains is the bride's bright clothing – *the righteousnesses of the saints* (v. 8 Darby). – things that they had done which had met with God's approval. (Note KJV appears wrong again here – most modern translations (e.g. NIV and ESV) say 'righteous deeds or acts', which is correct – Greek *δικαιώματα/dikaiōmata/Strong-1345*). What qualifications the bride has!

The Marriage Celebration

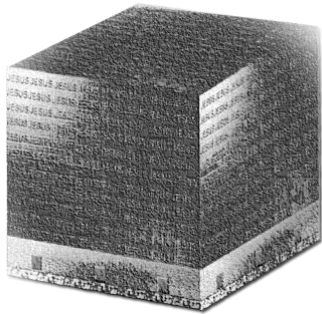
When a couple gets married, the persons will not have been united beforehand (at least if they have been conducting themselves according to God's explicit ordering). Traditions might vary, but in any marriage, there is generally a legal act and a celebration. The bride is the centre of attention, beautifully dressed (hopefully in a comely manner), and looking her best. A new household is established, the man and the woman having both left their

parental homes (see Genesis 2:24). The fact that the Holy Spirit introduced this concept so early in Genesis shows that the marriage relationship was always in God’s mind and purpose.

From what we have seen, this will be no ordinary marriage. We might say that the legal side has already taken place. Now it is time for a celebration of an existing relationship. Until Satan had been overcome publicly, it was not yet the time for her to be seen publicly in her beautiful radiance

It says, ‘*Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.*’ (Revelation 19:9). It has been suggested that Abraham and other Old Testament saints will be there as guests. They are children of the bridechamber, but they are not united to Christ as the church is.¹

The Heavenly Jerusalem as the Bride



The Bride is described as a city ‘*Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he [the angel] 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, having the glory of God...*’ (Revelation 21:9-11). However, this will be seen in the Millennium – the bride (or wife) of Christ, already married.

Christ’s Earthly Bride

The holy City Jerusalem is, of course, totally different from the millennial Jerusalem on earth, described in Ezekiel 40-44 and many other scriptures. The city we are referring to will not be physically on the earth – indeed its foundations will be visible. Revelation 21:6 describes the city as a cube 12,000 cubits (approx. 1380 miles or 2200km) in each dimension.

If there is a scripture which brings out the features, beauty and glory of the earthly bride it must be Psalm 45 – ‘*Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him... Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever*’ (Psalm 45:10-11 and 16-17). A clue must be in verse 16 – ‘*princes in all the earth*’ – not heaven. This is what the Lord enjoys here in the Millennium.

What is the difference between Christ’s heavenly and earthly bride?

The following table shows the difference between the two:

	<i>The Heavenly Bride</i>	<i>The Earthly Bride</i>
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¹ See Ministry of James Butler Stoney vol 6 page 116

What	The Church or Assembly	Israel
Key Scriptures	Revelation 19:6-9	Psalm 45
Where	In heaven – or at least over the earth	On earth (see Ezekiel 40:2)
Jerusalem	The holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)	I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain (Zechariah 8:3)
Relation to Christ	She adores her Head	She worships her Lord
When formed	Starting with the Spirit's coming, complete at the Rapture	Before Christ's Appearing and during the tribulation

Conclusion

We should guard ourselves against applying too much human logic and chronology to these holy matters. I have not wanted to be technical but have been feeling my way prayerfully through this sacred subject.

But it is a marvellous thing that we are part of this beautiful bride! Magazines are full of pictures of stunning women – images often enhanced digitally. No such outward improvement will be necessary for the bride of Christ. She will be just how Jesus wants it.

And we will be part!