

# Rev. 21:9. the Glorious Bride

by Horatius Bonar

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*The sermon explores the church's relationship with Christ as the bride, highlighting the Father's eternal choice, the Son's love, and the Holy Spirit's work in preparing and adorning the church for eternal union with Christ.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 54:5, Revelation 21:9

**Topics:** "The Church as the Bride of Christ", "God's Sovereign Love"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar expounds on Revelation 21:9, illustrating the Church's dual identity as both the bride and the wife of Christ. He emphasizes the Church's humble beginnings as an unlovable outcast, chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son, who undertakes to free her from sin and death. Bonar highlights the preparation and adornment of the Church by the Holy Spirit, culminating in the glorious future marriage to the Lamb. He invites all to accept the proposal of this divine Bridegroom, urging them to embrace the honor of becoming part of the Lamb's wife. The sermon concludes with a call to recognize the boundless love of God that transforms the redeemed into heirs of His glory.

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## Transcript

"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 here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."--Revelation 21:9.

These are two names for the church of God, the redeemed from among men. They are not the same in meaning, though both referring to the Church's peculiar relationship to Christ. They point out her two successive states, her present and her future, in the former of which she is the bride, in the latter the wife. First she is the bride--then the wife. The 'bride' up until the day of the Bridegroom's return--after that the 'wife'--the 'Lamb's wife.'

She is represented here as the new Jerusalem; but this is in a figure, just as God speaks of the old Jerusalem as His wife--meaning thereby the people, the dwellers in that city, His chosen Israel, whom He had betrothed to Himself by an everlasting covenant (Isaiah 54:5-10). In the wilderness, Israel was the bride or betrothed one (Jeremiah 2:2); in Jerusalem, she was the 'married wife' (Isaiah 54:1, 62:5)--so is it with the Church. In this, her wilderness state, she is the bride; in her coming city-state, or Jerusalem-state of glory, she shall be the wife--the days of betrothment being ended, and the marriage come. Hence, it is that the bride addressing the Bridegroom says, 'Come!' and the Spirit, who had been preparing and adorning her for the marriage day, joins her in desiring its arrival--'The Spirit and the bride say, Come' (Revelation 22:17).

Regarding this 'bride' or 'wife'--for we consider her as both in what follows. We inquire--

I. Who and what she was before she became the bride. She had no high descent to boast of. Her lineage was not royal, but low and base. Of the old Jerusalem it was said, 'Your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite' (Ezekiel 16:2, 3); all this, and much more may be said of the Church. She was an outcast, utterly poor and unknown--no, defiled and hateful. Without goodness, without beauty; without personal or family recommendation; unloving and unlovable; an alien, a captive, a rebel. She lacked everything that could make her lovely in the eyes of one seeking a bride; she possessed everything that could forbid and repel. Such were you once, O saint; such are you still, O sinner!

II. How and why she was fixed upon. The Father chose her; that is all that we can say. 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.' In the good pleasure of His goodness, and according to the exceeding riches of His grace, He fixed on her--the unlikeliest of all--to be the bride of His Son. Of the 'how' and the 'why' of this sovereign purpose, what can we say but this--that in one so unlovable and worthless it found opportunity and scope for the outflow and display of free love, such as could be found in no other? She is the object of the Father's eternal choice, as Rebekah was the choice of Abraham for his son. She is also the object of the Son's choice and love, as Rachel was Jacob's choice, and as Pharaoh's daughter was Solomon's. It was the Father's free choice, and the Son's free choice, that made her what she is now--the bride, and what she is through eternity to be--'the Lamb's wife.'

III. How she was obtained. She is a captive, and must be set free. This the Bridegroom undertakes to do; for her sake becoming a captive. She is a criminal, under wrath, and must be delivered from condemnation and death. This also the Bridegroom undertakes; for her sake submitting to condemnation and death, that so her pardon may be secured, her fetters broken, and life made hers forever. Thus she is plucked from the dungeon and the curse and the wrath--which were her portion.

IV. How she was betrothed. The Bridegroom Himself came down in lowly guise to woo and win her for Himself. But now He is carrying on His suite in absence, through the intervention of others, as Isaac's proposals to Rebekah were carried on through the faithful Eleazar of Damascus. It was with this suit that Paul felt himself charged, when he went about 'preaching Christ'; for, speaking to the Corinthians, he says--'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2 Corinthians 11:2). So it is with this suit that ministers are charged--no, all friends of the Bridegroom. We come to sinners as did Eleazar to Rebekah. We tell of our Isaac's noble lineage, His riches, His honors, His worth. We tell of all that He has done to win your love, and set before you the glory of His person, that you may see how worthy He is of all this love--how blessed, how honorable it would be for you to be the bride of such a bridegroom--and we say, 'Will you go with the man?'

V. How she is prepared and adorned. It is through the Holy Spirit that this is carried out. This Spirit having overcome her unwillingness, and persuaded her to consent to the glorious betrothment--immediately commences His work of preparation. He strips her of her rags--and puts on royal apparel. He cleanses her from her filthiness--and makes her whiter than the snow. Having taken her out of the horrible pit and the miry clay--having drawn her with the cords of love and the bands of a man--He proceeds to divest her of everything that made her unlovable--and to bestow on her everything that could make her lovely and attractive in the eyes of the Bridegroom.

Part of the preparation is now in this present world--but much is reserved for the future, and especially for the day of the first resurrection. White robes are given her--not purple, or scarlet, or glittering jewels, such

as the harlot Church is decked with--but the fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. For her a throne is prepared; a beautiful crown set upon her head; a royal banquet is made ready; and all this in the Bridegroom's own glorious city, the new Jerusalem!

Of this wondrous future we know but little now. It does not yet appear what we shall be. But we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. To that day when the marriage shall take place, and the long-waiting bride shall become the Lamb's wife, Scripture has bidden us look forward as our hope. And it is a blessed hope. For then shall the long absence cease, and we shall see Him face to face, whom not having seen we loved. Then shall the day break and the shadows flee away. Then shall the everlasting festival begin in the great palace hall of the new Jerusalem. Then shall the Bridegroom rejoice over the bride. 'He shall rest in His love, He shall joy over her with singing.' Then shall the Song of Songs be sung and understood, in a way such as it could not be sung or understood before; and we shall hear the Bridegroom call his bride the 'fairest among women,' 'His love, His dove, His undefiled;' and we shall hear her call Him 'the Chief among ten thousand!'

Such then is the honor in store for the redeemed--to be 'the bride, the Lamb's wife!' As such He writes upon her the name of His God, and the name of the city of His God, and His own 'new name;' so that after the marriage is completed, the bride loses her own and takes her Husband's name; the Lamb and the Lamb's wife becoming more indissolubly one--one in name, and nature, and glory, and honor, and dominion--forever! To get the tree of life and the hidden manna--to get the white stone, and white clothing, and the morning star--all that is much. But to be the bride, the Lamb's wife, and as such to be partaker of His love, and blessedness, and glory--this is surely more--how much more only the day of the Bridegroom's coming will reveal!

Such is the love of God. It is the love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father chooses in His own sovereignty; the Son washes in His own blood; the Spirit purifies and prepares by His mighty power. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us! It is free love! Sovereign love! Eternal love! Unchanging love! Boundless love! Love which not merely delivers from wrath--but which makes the delivered one an heir of God, more--the bride, the Lamb's wife!

This is the day when the proposals are made to the sons of men; when, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we urge the blessed entreaty upon sinners, that they may be partakers of this infinite honor. We set before you all the worth, and the glory, and the love of this divine Bridegroom--and ask you to accept the proposal and ally yourself to this glorious One. Among men, to be offered the prince's hand in marriage is counted no small honor; what then must be the offered hand of the King of Kings?

O men, accept the glory! Listen to the proposals made to you in the name of the Son of God. We describe His excellency and beauty. We tell you also of the honor for which the church is destined. We say, 'Come here, and I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife!' We point you to the resplendent glory of that city, which is after all but part of her dowry, part of her adorning; and we invite you to a share in its glory! We make known the Father's testimony concerning His own free love, and concerning the blood and righteousness of His Son. We demand your present acceptance of that testimony, that in the belief of it you may become a sharer of the glory and the kingdom!

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