

When you talk about the church and the bride, many people will think you are talking about one and the same thing and others will think there is no such thing as a bride (in spiritual terms). However, the scriptures indicate that there truly is a bride and that it stands entirely different and separate from a church.

Revelation 14 as from verse 1 contains the image of the bride in heaven:

Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's written on their foreheads.

And I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.

And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No-one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among the men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.

In Rom 8:23 the scriptures talk about the firstfruits of the Spirit – meaning the bride. There are many more scriptures but this testimony is not the place for them. Rom. 8:14 states ...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

We see that the promise was not made to the church, but to those who were led by the Holy Spirit.

The word church means the human structure of the congregation, which also includes the church building, but more than this it means the ecclesiastic government and the physical shape of the congregation of Christ. Through the years people have claimed the right to rule the congregation on behalf of the Lord and in due course human laws, institutions, traditions and ordinances started to dominate the church. The church even went so far as to kill, torture and burn people who contradicted the human doctrines of the church. Think of the Roman church, the inquisitions and the persecution of the children of God by the Jewish church (by Paul and against Paul after his conversion) and much later in the period of the Reformation as from 1517.

The Bible speaks of this church and the physical manifestation of the congregation of Christ as the woman and it is this woman with whom you may not be defiled. One may not partake in the governing and oppression of the children of God through human opinions and ordinances.

Spanish Inquisition - Torquemada burned 2000 people and imprisoned 25 000 after having tortured them.

Antichrist – means in the place of Christ.

Looking at Eph. 2:14, one sees that there was hostility between God and man, and that the Lord Jesus demolished this wall of hostility in the flesh...

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

The church in more than one respect rebuilt the hostility between man and God through their own law of commandments which exist in decrees.

It was with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and today still it is God's purpose to destroy this separation. Indeed, even from the earliest days of the Bible it was God's desire to meet with man in the spirit without laws.

- Think about how in the evenings He would come and speak to Adam and Eve. Time and again, when He saw that people were caught up in their circumstances, he would lead them out and we as his witnesses can testify how He still does so today.
- In the first place, we see Him leading Abraham away from his family in order to become involved with him on his own.
- When the Lord visited Abraham in his tent in the desert to talk about Lot and Sodom, He led Abraham out of his tent and showed him the stars.
- When the laws of the Egyptians became too much for the Israelites, the Lord led them out of Egypt.
- The Lord told the first converts and the disciples: Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation... (Go from your church)...

The implications of this are serious for each and everyone of us.

- In the first place, we, the bride, may not walk in the flesh.
- As congregation we may not do things on the authority of someone who walks in the flesh.
- We may not give advice to other loved ones if we have not held council with the Lord about it.
- We may not admonish someone when he acts contradictory to the church's tradition or institutions before having held council with the Lord about it.
- We may not follow the example of the Pharisees, as described in Mat. 22:4 – They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. V.5 Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; v.6 they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues.