

ISRAEL IS THE WIFE OF GOD AND NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Revelation 19:6-7

⁶ 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 thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ⁷ 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.

What follows is a brief discussion of the false doctrine that states that Israel is the Lamb's wife of Revelation 19. This is a doctrine taught by Anglican scholar E. W. Bullinger and many others including many other ultra (hyper) dispensationalists. We have placed the words of E. W. Bullinger in bold face type to distinguish them from the rest of the document.

We can never have a clear understanding of this heavenly utterance if we introduce the Church of the Pauline Epistles, i.e., the Great Mystery, here.

One would have thought it quite unnecessary to make this statement, considering that we have so many references to Israel, or Israel's elect remnant, in the Old Testament. And these, quite irrespective of the Church of God which is the subject of subsequent revelation.

As to the relationship of God with Israel, it is the resumption of a former relationship. The Old Testament Scriptures speak of the marriage between the Lord and His People again and again. As to the Church of God, the New Testament Scriptures state, as clearly as possible, that it was "hid in God." Mark, it does not say, hid in the Scriptures, but "hid in God," Himself. It is impossible, therefore, that the Mystery, of the Church of God, can be spoken of or revealed in the Old Testament.

Did pious Jews think of the Church of God when they read in Isa. liv. 5-8?

Isaiah 54:5-8

⁵ For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. ⁶ For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. ⁷ For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. ⁸ In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

Did they understand the Church when they read in Isa. lxii. 4, 5?

Isaiah 62:4-5

⁴ Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD

ISRAEL IS THE WIFE OF GOD AND NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. ⁵ For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

What did they understand, as they read Hosea ii. 16, and Jer. iii. 14?

Hosea 2:16-19

¹⁶ And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. ¹⁷ For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. ¹⁸ And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. ¹⁹ And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

Jeremiah 3:14

¹⁴ Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

This marriage is referred to in Isa. iv. 5. When Jehovah shall have purged away the filth of the daughters of Zion, it is added: "beyond all this glory there shall be the Chuppah": i.e., the marriage or bridal canopy mentioned elsewhere only in Ps. xix. 5, and Joel ii. 16; and referring to Isa. lxii. (quoted above). The chuppah is the bridal canopy beneath which Jewish nuptial ceremonies are performed to this day.

Isaiah 4:5

⁵ And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.

Psalm 19:5

⁵ Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

Joel 2:16

¹⁶ Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

ISRAEL IS THE WIFE OF GOD AND NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Isaiah 62:4-5

⁴Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. ⁵For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Why are we to do away with all these references by interpreting them in a way in which the original readers could never have understood them? Either they must have been wrong in understanding them of Israel, or we must be wrong in interpreting them of the Church of God. Both cannot be right.

The "wife" is earthly (xix.): the "Bride" is heavenly (xxi.).

The marriage of the one is on earth (though rejoiced over in heaven beforehand), and is consummated on earth for 1,000 years. All earthly or mortal relationships must run out by expiration along with the earth, before the other, the heavenly relationships, are entered upon. Thus, understanding Rev. xix. of Israel, and xxi. of the Elect Remnant, there is neither Polygamy on the one hand, nor Divorce on the other.

It is important to observe the various callings.

(1) There is the "earthly calling," which all Israel shares — the Wife, (...) (gune), Rev. xix. ("The sand," of Gen. xiii. 16);

(2) there is the "heavenly calling" of an elect remnant of Israel — the Bride, (...) (numphe), Rev. xxi. 9 ("The stars," of Gen. xv. 5); and

(3) there is the distinct calling of the Church of God — which is "The Christ" (i.e., the Mystery).

These three distinct callings have their separate standings; their different hopes, different promises, and different destinies.

We must rightly divide these "callings," or we shall get only confusion.

How, for example, can it be said of the Church that she "hath made herself ready." As members of the Body of Christ we are already "made meet" (Col. I. 12); God Himself hath made us meet: and even now we are "complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10); and are "perfect in Christ

ISRAEL IS THE WIFE OF GOD AND NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Jesus" (Col. I. 28); "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. I. 6).

We can never be more "ready" than He Himself hath made us. The language in Rev. xix. 7 is wholly foreign to the perfect standing of the church, which is in grace.

Bullinger makes much of the role of Israel in her Old Testament relationship to God, but he has nothing to say of Israel's spiritual harlotry that caused God to put her away as an adulterous wife. This divorce is described in Jeremiah 3:6-11 and Isaiah 50:1-3 which state:

Jeremiah 3:6-11

⁶ The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. ⁷ And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸ And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. ⁹ And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. ¹⁰ And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. ¹¹ And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

Isaiah 50:1-3

¹ Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. ² Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. ³ I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

The restoration of Israel as God's wife is spoken of very powerfully in the Book of Hosea in numerous passages. God's whole purpose in giving us the book of Hosea is to describe his relationship and love for an adulterous Israel, His putting away of Israel, and His glorious reconciliation with and restoration of Israel. God uses the prophet Hosea and his family relationships to present a very powerful picture of His relationship with Israel. Each person in Hosea represents an aspect of that relationship. Lo-Ruhamah (no mercy), the daughter, is a type of "no mercy" for Israel when she is put away. Lo-Ammi (not my people), the son, is a type of the prodigal son who is not a part of God's people when he has scattered himself in a far land. Both the daughter and the

ISRAEL IS THE WIFE OF GOD AND NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

son represent the cost paid by the children of those parents who have forsaken God. The term “Jezreel”, the first son, is a type of the scattered remnant of Israel that will be restored. The word “Jezreel” literally means scattered. Think about the mercy of God in the book of Hosea. From a purely human perspective, what man in his right mind would pursue after a whore to take her to wife. Yet that pursuit is a type of the mercy (Ruhamah) that God has shown through His son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in pursuing after vile men and women that have committed every sort of abomination against Him with the sole purpose of restoring them (Ammi) to him as a people. Let’s take a look at some passages in the book of Hosea:

Hosea 1:8-2:7

⁸ Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. ⁹ Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. ¹⁰ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. ¹¹ Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel. ¹ Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. ² Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; ³ Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. ⁴ And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. ⁵ For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. ⁶ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. ⁷ And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

Hosea 2:16-3:5

¹⁶ And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. ¹⁷ For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. ¹⁸ And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. ¹⁹ And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. ²⁰ I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. ²¹ And it shall come to pass in that

ISRAEL IS THE WIFE OF GOD AND NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; ²² And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. ²³ And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God. ¹ Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. ² So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: ³ And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee. ⁴ For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: ⁵ Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

Another reason Israel cannot be the Bride of Christ is because of the marital requirements that God has placed on the High Priest in Leviticus 21:10-15 which states:

Leviticus 21:10-15

¹⁰ And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; ¹¹ Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; ¹² Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD. ¹³ And he shall take a wife in her virginity. ¹⁴ A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife. ¹⁵ Neither shall he profane his seed among his people: for I the LORD do sanctify him.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our HIGH PRIEST. He could not marry a divorced wife. Also, according to the New Testament, the Bride of Christ is a chaste virgin which we have proven that the nation of Israel cannot be. Note the following passages:

John 14:1-3

¹ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

ISRAEL IS THE WIFE OF GOD AND NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 11:2

² For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Ephesians 5:22-33

²² Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ²⁴ Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹ For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: ³⁰ For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹ 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. ³² This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.