

THE BAPTIST BRIDE

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(1924 - 2004)**

This December, 2006 Printing
Authorized by:
Philadelphia Baptist Church
Decatur, Alabama 35602

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FOREWORD

The Baptist Bride!! What an awesome truth. The Bride of Christ is a Baptist Bride, chosen, prepared, arrayed, and made ready for this role, and fitted to this prescribed end and the consequent glory that shall be experienced.

Surely, those who are Baptists should be aware of this great future, and they should be properly and submissively conducting themselves as befits the Bride that is soon to be wedded to God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Imagine the consummation of this stupendous event, when Christ shall take unto Himself His Bride, whom He has chosen, purchased, ransomed, and prepared. Could any other be found to be suitable to be married to Him, Who is the Perfection of all that is called God?

In this brief work, Elder Mink has done a masterful job of presenting The Baptist Bride. With much humility, he has reached into the Scriptures and has literally plucked for our reading joy these many jewels of truth. His style is, as usual, an in depth searching of the numerous **thus saith the Lord**. His frequent use of these precious Scriptures has authenticated his writing, thus diminishing the ability of the many and varied gainsayers of the world to find legitimate fault with the thesis that is set forth. Scripturally, I see little room for fault finding, for who among men can stand against God and His Word?

There is, to be sure, much controversy among professing Christendom concerning this subject. But I would ask those who hold opposing views to read this book with a willingness to measure every precept by the final authority, the Bible. When God has established a precept, He faithfully and consistently maintains that position, and in this matter, it is evident that God does not change, nor does He modify His plans. God is not a pragmatist. He operates on principle. Absolute principle.

Clearly, those who may disagree with the position that Elder Mink holds on this subject do so because they are, generally speaking, not Baptists themselves. Many claim to be Baptists who, in reality, are simply Protestants in disguise. Thus, the exclusivity that God exercises in the choice of a Bride for His Son is not well received by non-Baptists. And this, humanly speaking, is understandable. To such, the idea of a Baptist Bride is not pleasant, for it excludes them from participation in the Brideship. It leaves them out.

A careful, prayerful, yearning for truth attitude should be exhibited by all who claim to be Christian. If this be the case, then one must either submit to the Bible and all that it teaches on this subject, or be found to be in rebellion against God. Again, a careful, prayerful yearning for truth will produce an attitude of acquiescence, and the truth will prevail.

May God, in His abundant grace, be pleased to lead every reader of this work to study it carefully and prayerfully. To do so, we believe, will yield the peaceable fruit that manifests proper relationship and proper fellowship with God and with His Word.

Wm. Doyal Thomas
March 24, 1994

PREFACE

All four of the Gospels and the Apostle Paul agree that God chose and sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Israel's Messiah, Who would, by the sacrifice of Himself, prepare the way of the Gentiles (**Isaiah 42:6,7; Luke 2:32; Acts 13:24,25, 46-48; Hebrews 9:26**). John was a friend of the Messianic Bridegroom (**John 3:29**), and people from all regions round about came to hear John preach (**Matthew 3:5**). John preached repentance for the remission of sins, and he made repentance a prerequisite for baptism (**Matthew 3:7,8**). Even though the ministry of John the Baptist was brief, it was in length of time sufficient to accomplish the purpose for which he was sent by the sovereign God of heaven and earth; and that express purpose was to baptize the penitent and make disciples for Christ.

John was Israel's last prophet (**Luke 16:16**), and it was John who verbally introduced the gospel age (**John 1:29,36**). With the martyrdom of John and the crucifixion of Christ, the law of Moses reached its terminus, and Israel as a theocratic nation was set aside. However, God has not left Himself without a witness in the earth, for Christ took the disciples which John had made for Him, and with them established His church (**John 1:35-49**). John, speaking of the church which Jesus started, said: **He that hath** (present tense) **the Bride is the Bridegroom** (**John 3:29**). Just prior to Christ's departure from earth, and His ascension unto His heavenly Father, He gave His Bridal church the age long promise of His perpetuating power and comforting presence (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

God, the Creator of heaven and earth, has determined that His beloved and nail scarred Son have a supremely magnificent wedding, and heaven's marriage hall is gloriously decorated, and there is nothing lacking in this infinitely superb arrangement. But how about the Bride? Is she fully prepared for this awesome event? Affirmed.

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready (**Revelation 19:7**).

New Testament Baptist churches are not bibliolatrists; they do not worship the Bible, but they worship the infallible Author of the Bible, that is GOD. And they honor His counsel with the utmost sincerity. Their blessed Head and Groom has admonished them, saying: **Prove all things: hold fast that which is good; ... Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine; ... Try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world** (**I Thessalonians 5:21; Titus 2:1; I John 4:1**).

The Lord's Bridal church appreciates intellectual acumen, but New Testament Baptists know the natural intellect is restricted in its perception to carnal matters. Official Conventions, Associations, and Councils are not a stay against error, but are, in fact, promoters of compromises that are insidious and hurtful to the cause of God and truth. The primary purpose of the Lord's Bridal church in this world is to glorify her Groom, and in order to achieve this exalted end, her autonomy must NEVER be compromised. Therefore, the church must take the strictest heed to the Word of God, and be ready to give any and all men that asketh a reason of the hope that God has given it.

The Romanists, Protestants, and Bapto-protestants' distortion of the facts of ecclesiastical history, wherein the origin and perpetuity of the Lord's Bridal church(es) are not merely obscured, but obliterated, has not made scriptural Baptists obdurate or deficient in love for depraved mankind. However, New Testament Baptists know it is not their incessant perpetuity, nor their countless martyrdoms, nor their evangelicalism, nor their commendable confessions and creeds that merits God's approbation. But it is their tenacious adherence to His infallible word, and the rejection of the ecclesiastical inventions of men, that has won for them the glorious **Well done** of their loving and faithful Groom.

CHAPTER ONE THE BAPTIST BRIDE

John 3:29 - He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom: ”

The words of the text were spoken by the first Baptist, whose name was John, and I call your attention to the textual terms **Bride** and **Bridegroom**, for the thrust of this message will be a consideration of the ecclesiastical Bride and her Bridegroom. There cannot be a fully orb'd study of Christology without giving a large place to ecclesiology. Hence, the text necessitates a study of the Lord's church and her glorious head, Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiastical scholarship so-called, in the majority part, agree that the terms **Bride** and **Bridegroom** used in our text are metaphoric references to Christ and His church. But in conceding this, they have bought no favor with God, for their notion as to what the Lord's church is, and what the Bible teaches it to be, is as far apart as the east is from the west, and is, therefore, a great detriment to church truth.

Scholarship, no matter the science, must be anchored in truth. If not, it is scholarship falsely so-called. Many allow that Augustine, Luther, and Calvin were scholars in the science of soteriology, that is, in the way God saves His people. This I disallow, and to support my variance, I ask one question: Why did they sprinkle infants and call it baptism? The simple answer is: They believed in sacramental salvation, and sacramentalism is antithetical to the scriptural doctrine of salvation by the free and unmerited favor of God.

The Lord's church and the Bride of Christ are one and the same. But in saying this, I haven't said very much, for all of professing Christendom gives unreserved credence to that contention. However, if you or I say: The Bride of Christ is a Baptist Bride, we had better be equal to the test, for the ecclesiastics of the contrary part will turn on us with verbal slander, inspired of Satan.

The Baptist contention that each local church was (is) an autonomous entity, and that scriptural baptism demanded immersion, brought the fury of the papal church upon them, and millions of them during the dark ages were viciously tortured and burned at the stake. When the so-called reformation came in the early 16th century, the Roman church was joined by Protestants in her effort to annihilate all Baptists. Both Romanism and Protestantism were permeated with the spirit of legalism, and Baptists suffered the two-pronged brunt of their unyielding intolerance.

The riots in the German city of Munster (1535-6 AD) were provoked by Thomas Munzer, a militant leader of the peasants, who was a Protestant. He never claimed any ecclesiastical union with the Anabaptists. The tumult was more political than religious, for it primarily had to do with the unfair treatment of the peasants by the German government. It has never been denied by Baptists that there were Anabaptists in the city of Munster at the time of the riots, but Baptists deny the accusation that they took part in the peasants' insurrection against the German government. One reason among many is, the Anabaptists at the time had a strong aversion to war and getting their church involved in political or civil matters.

To quell the riots in Munster, Catholic and Lutheran troops united and fought side by side in freeing the city from the fanatical Thomas Munzer. But along with Munzer and his followers, all Anabaptists in the city were to be destroyed, and so they were. (For an in-depth study of the Munster Anabaptists, see: A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS, Volume 1, Chapter 13, by J. T. Christian.)

Zwingli drowned Anabaptists at Zurich in horrible parody of their insistence about adult baptism. ” (CHAPTERS IN CHURCH HISTORY, Page 146, by P. M. Dawley). Contemporary Protestant Popes hate Baptist baptism as much as their militant predecessors, and if it were not for civil restraint, Baptist blood would once again redden the earth.

The Baptist Bride doctrine has its root or origin in the New Testament. Romanism, Protestantism, and Protestants with a Baptist name laughingly object to that statement, saying: There was no such thing as a Baptist church before the fifteenth century. Moreover, the church is universal and invisible. I am caused to wonder how Rome and her daughters murdered fifty million invisible Baptists. The only thing I know about the invisible church is, that I know nothing about it. I know very little about invisible things, and nothing about that which has no existence.

There is an adage that says: You do not change the nature of a thing by calling it something other than what it is. Example: How many legs would a horse have if you or I called the horse's tail a leg? It would still have only four legs, because calling it something that it is not does not change the thing. Another example: Sprinkling is

sprinkling, no matter how many people call it baptism. It is still what it was, and that is sprinkling. Rantizio will never become baptizio in any language.

Baptist churches went by various names through the first fourteen centuries of their history, and most of these names were given them by their enemies, the purpose being to deride them. They have been called Montanists, Novationists, etc. The name that prevailed for the longest period was Waldenses but none of the names ever changed the fact that all the while they were Baptist churches.

There are no five-legged horses, and there are no invisible brides. When the Lord comes for His Bride, He will find that she has persevered through time, and she is joyously ready for the consummation of her age long espousal to her loving Head and Bridegroom. I do not mean to imply that the rapture is split, but I do emphatically say: The Bride will be the first to welcome His coming, for she shares an intimacy with Christ that no other people can ever experience.

While the heavenly Bride and Groom are not one and the same, there will not be a greater oneness in eternity, other than the tri-unity of the Godhead. So it is, the Bride of Christ is going to live closer to the throne of God in glory than any other people. James and John, the sons of Zebedee (**Matthew 4:21**), will not sit the one on the right hand and the other on the left (**Matthew 20:23**); but they will sit very close to the throne of the Groom, for they are a part of His blood bought Bride (**Acts 20:28**).

The Bridalship of the Lord's church has no expiration date, for her heavenly Spouse has promised her that the gates of hell would not deter their betrothal, much less destroy it (**Matthew 16:18**). One of the prenuptial vows the Lord made unto His beloved Bride before He went away was, **I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also** (**John 14:3**). The long and many centuries wherein the Bride of Christ has atrociously suffered has not bedimmed her hope of His coming, nor put any wrinkles on her brow. She is as radiant today as when she walked with Him along the shores of Galilee and sat at His feet in the Mount. She is as faithful today as she was when He first went away, for she has never been identified with the harlot system, and she will, in due season, be presented to Christ **a chaste virgin ... arrayed in fine linen, clean and white** (**II Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:8**).

The common vow which is most usually a part of marriage ceremonies in this world reads: 'Til death do us part', but this vow cannot apply to the Bride and Groom of our text (**John 3:29**); for the Groom (Christ) is **alive forevermore** (**Revelation 1:18**), and speaking of His Bride and the wedding in heaven, He says: **His wife hath made herself ready** (**Revelation 19:7**). There is nothing that can in any degree inhibit the marriage of the Bride and Groom of our text. And in spite of Satan's efforts to adulterate the Bride, the Lord is going to present His Bride to Himself **not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing** (**Ephesians 5:27**).

Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen ” (**Ephesians 3:21**). There are many God glorifying, Christ exalting, and church edifying truths in this brief text of Scripture, from which I will mention a few:

1. Christ glorifies God by being the Head of the church.
2. The church is edified by the unceasing presence of Christ with it.
3. God's glory in the church is eternal, **Throughout all ages, world without end.** ”
4. The Bride of Christ is given a written guarantee from the pen of Divine inspiration, of an endless perpetuity, for Christ the Groom is ever present with her, and He has made the church the primary medium of God's glory in the world.

CHAPTER TWO

AN OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BRIDE AND GROOM

The Old Testament is replete with types of the ecclesiastical Bride and Groom of the New Testament. However, for the sake of brevity and space, I will mention only one at this time, and that is the marriage of Abraham's son, Isaac, to Rebekah. The whole chapter of **Genesis 24** is given to this marriage.

In this marriage arrangement, Abraham is a type of God the Father. Isaac is a type of Christ. Eliezer, Abraham's faithful servant, is a type of the Holy Spirit (**Genesis 15:2**). And Rebekah is a type of the spotless and blemishless Bride of Christ. This is the greatest love story in the Old Testament, and it should never be overlooked or passed by in any study of the New Testament church.

Abraham's faithful servant, Eliezer, is sent by Abraham to find a particular bride for Isaac. The aspect of this particularism is seen in the words of Abraham to his servant, wherein he said: **Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac (Genesis 24:3,4).**

Abraham's servant was given means whereby to identify the bride of Isaac (**Genesis 24:43,44**), and Rebekah passed every detail of the identification test, including being a member of Abraham's family, for she was the granddaughter of Abraham's brother (**Genesis 24:15**). Abraham, the type of God the Father, did not choose his whole family to be the bride of his son, but he chose one from his family, the beautiful Rebekah, and she became the bride and wife of Isaac.

Baptism is the first ordinance of the church, and it is the paramount identification of a New Testament church. Paul admonished the Corinthian church, saying: **Keep the ordinances, as I delivered them unto you (I Corinthians 11:2)**. If a church does not pass this first and all important ID test, she is a false bride, a harlot, an enemy of the blood bought and virgin Bride of Christ. When a person professes faith in Christ, and petitions one of the Lord's churches for baptism, the church does not ask the petitioner: **Have you been immersed?** But she asks the would-be member: **Do you have New Testament Baptist baptism?** The question may be asked in a more direct manner, but to ask it in a less straightforward way may allow membership without scriptural baptism. **BAPTISTS BEWARE!**

There is not the least inference in Scripture which teaches that regeneration brings one into a Bridal relationship with Christ, but it does experientially make the subject a member of the family of God (**Ephesians 3:15; Revelation 19:9**). Being born again does not make one a Baptist, but it makes him/her a proper candidate for Bridalship, or membership in a New Testament Baptist church. **Acts 2:41 - Then they that gladly received His word (gospel), were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.** Baptism in this text is a secondary action, whereby they who had **received His word** (i.e., the gospel) were **added** to the church.

Acts 2:47 - The Lord added to the church daily, those that, were being saved. Weymouth, Williams, Beck and some others do not use the word **church** in their translation of this text, but they all use a term which indicates or signifies the same, i.e., their number. The point being made and emphasized in this text is that of repetition, for they were having a day by day revival, in which souls were being saved, and **added** to the church by baptism.

Acts 5:14 - And believers were the more added to the Lord. Note the repetitious verb, **added**, and notice also that they were **believers** before they were **added to the Lord**. They were **added to the Lord** in the sense of becoming subject to His ecclesiastical Headship, and thus being added to the Groom, were to become a member of His church and Bride, to whom He has promised His perpetual presence (**Matthew 28:20**). Being born again and being added to the Lord's church are two separate actions of and by the Holy Spirit. By the first action (regeneration), He adds to the family of God; and by the second action, that is scriptural baptism, He adds to the Lord's blood bought church.

Ephesians 3:14,15 - For (Paul) bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Abraham had a large family, and it was to his family he sent Eliezer to get Isaac's bride. The family of God is one thing, and the Bride which He has chosen for His Son is another. In the realm of nature, there is no problem with this, for the graphic distinction between the bride and her family is readily acknowledged. The Father, as Head of His family and representing His family, gives the Bride away. So it

was with Rebekah's father and family. They sent her on her way to become the bride and wife of Isaac. God the Father had His family on earth for four thousand years before He sent the Holy Spirit to bring forth from His family a Bride for His Son.

All who contend the church did not exist prior to the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**) must do away with a lot of Old Testament typology that vividly pictures Christ and His church. Boaz and Ruth are beautiful and striking types of Christ and His church, but this shining representation of the New Testament church must be relegated to oblivion if Christ did not have His ecclesiastical Bride before Pentecost (**Ruth 4:10-13**). However, there is abundant and indisputable evidence in the four Gospels attesting to the fact that Christ not only had His church before Pentecost, but that it was a faithful and functioning church.

In Luke's gospel, we are given the account whereby Christ called Peter, James, and John from their fishing business. The Lord encourages them, saying: **Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men** (**Luke 5:10**). (See also **Matthew 4:19**; **Mark 1:17**; **John 4:1,2**) With the calling of these first three disciples, Jesus had His infant church. But it did not long remain in this stage, for with quick succession the other nine disciples were called and added to the church.

No doubt, there is some variance of thought among pre-Pentecostal Baptists as to how many of the original twelve disciples the Lord called before He actually had His church. However, while I am convinced the church had its birth with the first three disciples of our Lord, it is not a question of great import. All New Testament Baptists know that the church existed during the early ministry of Christ, for the church was witnessing and baptizing in the beginning of Christ's ministry (**John 1:45**; **4:1,2**).

The contention that the New Testament church existed prior to the Pentecost of Acts 2 is an unmitigated truth, for as Paul says: **God hath set some in the church, first apostles** (**1 Corinthians. 12:28**). And the account wherein the apostolic office originated is recorded in Luke's gospel (**6:13**), and it reads on this wise: **And when it was day, He (Christ) called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom He also called apostles.** The church had to exist at the time for the Lord to **set** the apostles in it.

What happened on the day of Pentecost was not the incorporation of the church, but the empowering of the church for its worldwide and age long mission (**Acts 1:8**). The baptism that John the Baptist and Christ spoke of (**Matthew 3:11**; **Acts 1:5**) was not a baptism by the Spirit in the Spirit, but it was a baptism of the church by Christ in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the element into which Christ the Administrator immersed His church. Church membership applicants are baptized in (*en* in the Greek) water (not merely *with* water) by the authority of the Lord's church(es).

Prior to Pentecost, He had given His church disciplinary authority (**Matthew 18:17**) and the universal and age long commission to evangelize the earth (**Matthew 28:18-20**). The truth is, the church had the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper before Pentecost, as well as a democratic form of government (**Matthew 28:19**; **John 4:1,2**; **Luke 22:15-20**; **1 Corinthians 11:23-25**; **Acts 1:21-26**). The deaconship is about the only thing the post-Pentecostal church has that the pre-Pentecostal church did not have (**Acts 6:2,3**).

Isaac DID NOT marry Rebekah and all of her family. And that ecclesiastical marriage which God the Father has planned for His Son in glory will soon be consummated, and the church which Jesus bought with His own blood will, after these long and many years of betrothal, become the married Bride of her faithful, loving, and nail scarred Groom. At this glorious occasion, the ecstasy of the family of God will be second only to that of the Bride, and the family of God will shout, saying:

Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made herself ready (**Revelation 19:6,7**).

The **Song of Solomon** (Canticles) gives great typological emphasis to the doctrine of Baptist Brideship, but we must leave the Old Testament picture album with all of its beautiful portraits of Christ and His virgin church and take up the theme with its literalness in the New Testament.

CHAPTER THREE

JESUS, THE MISSIONARY BAPTIST BRIDEGROOM

Let me restate our original text. **He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom** (John 3:29). The verb is in the present tense, and it bespeaks possessiveness. The words of the text were spoken by John the Baptist, and in this same text, he identifies himself as a **friend of the Bridegroom**. In this friendship, John's joy was fulfilled, and his decrease was the increase of the Bridegroom. And God gloried in that fact.

Just recently, a Campbellite said to me: "The name of your church is not in the Bible. I have read the Bible with scrutiny and at great length, and as yet, I have not come across the name of the founder of the church commonly known as Campbellites; that is, Alexander Campbell. I found **John the Baptist**, but not John the Methodist. In my reply to the Campbellite, I said: "I am a Baptist, and everybody who knows me knows that I am a Baptist. When I baptize a person, every observer knows that that person comes out of the water a Baptist. Jesus knew that Baptist baptism was not merely important, but essential, to the ecclesiastical honor of God. So, He went to the first Baptist preacher, John the Baptist, and He was baptized by him in the river Jordan. I asked the Campbellite: "What does that make Jesus?"

Jesus was a Baptist preacher, and the Sovereign and exclusive Head of His church. Being a Baptist, He would not be satisfied with just any Bride. So it was, Jesus established His church, the first Bridal church, from, or out of, the disciples of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was sent from God, and his mission was to preach repentance, and to prepare the human building blocks from which Jesus would build His first church. The life of John the Baptist on earth was brief, but the powers of darkness could not terminate him before his mission was complete; which mission was to baptize Christ and make disciples for Him (Matthew 3:13-15; John 1:29-37). Speaking of false churches, we can in truth, say: "All roads lead to Rome and the Pope. But concerning the Lord's church, there is but one road. It is straight and narrow, and it leads to Jesus Christ and the new Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12; 21:2,10).

He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom. There has not been a day, no, not an hour, since the constitution of the first Baptist church, that Christ has been Brideless; nor shall the heavenly made betrothal ever be in danger of being terminated. Notwithstanding, the devil and his bride (Revelation 17:1,15,16; 19:2) have incessantly tried to bring it to a bloody climax. But the all glorious and Sovereign Head of His Bride made a promise to her before He went away, wherein He said: "The flood tides of hell shall not prevail against my beloved and faithful church" (Matthew 16:18).

Christ has a threefold ownership of the New Testament church.

- (1) He created it (I Corinthians 12:28).
- (2) He bought it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). There has never been a greater dowry paid for a bride.
- (3) It is His Bride and Wife to be (Revelation 19:7).

Paul, speaking to one of the Lord's churches, said: **But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us ... hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.** (Ephesians 2:4,6). In this text, Paul is speaking of a present tense experience of the Lord's churches.

The gospel commission which the Lord gave His church before He left the earth is clearly delineated by Him in four different books of the New Testament, i.e., **Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; and Acts 1:8**. Whatever else the church may be, one thing is absolutely sure; it is a missionary church. The church has paid a great cost for her faithfulness to this charge, but she knows her loving Head will reward her a hundred fold for her obedience to the worldwide and age long commission which He gave her in His affectionate farewell to her.

The most heavenly place on this earth a person can be in is in an assembly of one of the Lord's churches, for the omnipresent Lord has promised to be with His churches every time they assemble for worship. And worship of their blessed Head should be the supreme purpose of each and every meeting of the church. This is why I could never understand why any member of one of the Lord's churches would ignore the scriptural admonition not to forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:25), and go to a worldly event to have a good time. A New Testament Baptist church worship service is not paradise, but it is as close to it as a mortal can come.

Matthew 18:20 - For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. This is a glorious and comforting promise given to the Bride, by the Groom, and He that promised is faithful. But let not the Lord's churches take that **two or three** as a standard, and be satisfied with it. To do so

(God forbid) is to be hurtful to the church, and it is to bring reproach on our nail scarred Groom; for He has made missions and evangelism the interim work of the Bride.

Christ said to His virgin Bride: **I go to prepare a place for you** (John 14:2). And while I am gone, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.** (Mark 16:15). In obedience to this command, the Lord s'churches have successfully withstood the heresies of Arminianism and the slothfulness of Antinomianism. But in being faithful to her Groom, the Lord s'churches have suffered martyrdoms untold. And the contemporary Bride, while not so viciously persecuted, is homesick for heaven and desiring the consummation of her betrothal, joins her prayer to her blessed forerunners, saying: **Even so, come Lord Jesus** (Revelation 22:20).

CHAPTER FOUR SOME OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BRIDE

II Corinthians 2:9 - **For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.** Speaking of false prophets, Christ said to His church: **Ye shall know them by their fruits** (Matthew 7:16). Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, saying: **Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.** (I Thessalonians 1:4). In the context, he tells them how he knew they were **the elect of God.** ” The gospel had come unto them in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance (I Thessalonians 3:7). Timothy had brought Paul a good report of the Thessalonian church, whereupon Paul says to them: **Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith** (I Thessalonians 3:7). The **fruit** of the Thessalonian church was authentic in nature and sufficient in volume, not only to erase any doubt Paul might have had of them, but to elicit from him one of the greatest commendations ever accorded a New Testament Baptist church, i.e., **Knowing, brethren, your election of God.** John the Baptist, speaking to his disciples of Jesus, said: **Behold the Lamb of God** (John 1:36). John is no longer with us to point out the Bridegroom, but the Lord’s churches are not left without a guide, for they are blessed with the omniscient Director, of Whom the Lord spoke, saying to His church: **It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you . . . He will guide you into all truth . . . He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you** (John 16:7,13,14). The **Comforter** Whom the Lord referred to in this text is the Holy Spirit, and He, in His Overseership of the Lord’s churches, has given them the Divinely inspired Guide Book. And it is through this ONE and ONLY heaven originated Book on earth that the Holy Spirit makes the Scriptures profitable unto the Bride, for it is through this blessed medium that she is made intimately familiar with her infinitely sovereign and glorious Groom (II Timothy 3:16).

A. The first characteristic of the Bridal church I call your attention to, is:
Her origin and Founder.

The Bride of Christ, that is the New Testament church, although amply revealed in Old Testament types and shadows, had her material and earthly origin in the days of Christ and John the Baptist. John said: **He that hath** (present tense) **the Bride is the Bridegroom** (John 3:29). Christ is both the Founder and Foundation of His church (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). So, it unavoidably follows, any and all churches whose origin and founder postdates the New Testament are of illegitimate birth, having the wrong date of origin, and they have violated the Foundership of Jesus Christ. What shall we then say of the Popeish church and her harlot daughters? We simply say: They have the WRONG date of origin, the WRONG place of origin, and, BY FAR, the WRONG originator. ”

B. The second characteristic of the Bridal church:

Every member of the New Testament church made a verbal profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, there are no infants in the membership of the church (Acts 2:41; Acts 8:35-39). **But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women** (Acts 8:12).

Salvational competence is not in the power of the church, nor shall it ever be, for salvation belongs to the exclusive province of God’s sovereign grace, and it is the fruit of His unmerited favor (Ephesians 2:8). The Lord has given His churches irrefutable jurisdiction and custody of the ordinances, but as important as the ordinances of the church are, they have no salvational efficacy. And any affirmation to the contrary is a mockery of regenerative grace, an adulteration of the ordinances, and a dangerous deception of the subject.

Romanism and Protestantism are in error as to the way God saves His people, for they give saviourhood to the ordinances, and they have, by this grievous error, deceived multiplied millions of people. Conversely, Baptists hold fast to the truth that God is the solitary Communicator of saving grace, and they steadfastly contend that every effort of man to mix creature works with redemptive grace is a blasphemous exercise; and it aggravates man’s condemnation, rather than atoning for it.

C. The third characteristic of the church:

All members of the New Testament church were baptized upon the profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sprinkling and affusion (pouring) are religious inventions of men, and they came along centuries after the Lord established HIS church.

D. The fourth characteristic of the church:

The New Testament church, or Bride of Christ, consists only of believers who have been baptized by church authority.

Having one's name on the church Roll Book does not necessarily make that person a member of the Bride of Christ. A marriage license does not make a marriage, and neither does a baptismal certificate make the holder thereof betrothed to Christ.

Baptists have never taught that an unbaptized Christian cannot please God; but what they have, and yet teach is, that every saved person is commanded to be baptized (**Acts 2:38**). And failure to heed this commandment is a sin of great magnitude. Scriptural baptism should be sought without delay by every newly regenerated person, for it is a symbolic declaration of the believer's faith in Christ and admits the baptizee into membership of the Lord's Bridal church.

It has been said: Baptists have a lot of churchianity, and they have it at the expense of Christianity. Nothing could be further from the truth, for Baptists, more so than others, if not exclusively, contend without deviation that a person first must be a Christian before he can be a church member. And New Testament churches require of their members a deportment that emulates Christ. The imperative order with Baptists, and it has always been, first Christology, and then ecclesiology.

E. The fifth characteristic of the church:

New Testament Baptist churches practice membership discipline.

Baptist churches know the Lord has given them disciplinary authority, so as to keep their churches pure. And they further know, if they do not discipline their wayward members, the Lord will discipline the church for its indifference. Baptists know, it is either discipline or decay. So it is, their two thousand year history is proof positive of their perpetual discipline of their erring members (**Matthew 18:17**).

The term "excluded member" is a misnomer, for it is actually a contradiction of terms. When a person is excluded from the membership of a Baptist church, his or her membership in the excluding church has been eliminated. Exclusion does not mean the subject is no longer saved; but the awesome fact is, the excluded person is no longer a member of the Bridal church of Christ. Paul was a great analogist, and in **I Corinthians 12**, he used an analogy to show the correspondence of the members of the human body, to which he likened the church. Nevertheless, Paul was a strong advocate of excisive discipline, and he admonished this very same church (Corinthian) to exclude from their membership a man who was guilty of incestuous fornication (**I Corinthians 5:8-13**). In the physical realm, an amputated arm is no longer a part of the body. And the church being the spiritual body of Christ, occasions will arise when the church, for the preservation of its spiritual health, must, after due process, cut out of its membership any person or persons who have irreconcilably offended the church.

It is possible for a New Testament Baptist church to err in its practice of membership discipline, for Baptists, as individuals and as churches, know they are far from being infallible and may unjustly exclude a person from church membership. Such action is exceedingly rare, and when the church discovers it has erred in this regard, immediate and expeditious measures should be taken by the excluding church to correct the matter, making null and void the action whereby the person was excluded. The person wrongfully disciplined by the church is not reinstated to membership, for, in actuality, his membership has never been otherwise than intact. In forty years as a Baptist, I have only known of two cases in which a person's name was unjustly deleted from the membership roll of the church. And in both cases, the erring church discovered its mistake and, with eagerness, corrected it; and the tarnish on the names of the two people was joyously eradicated.

The problem is not so much with the excluding church and the person excluded, as it is with sister churches taking into their membership a person or persons whom they know has been justly excluded from the membership of a New Testament Baptist church. Such a practice, if persisted in, cannot help but bring painful discord between the churches involved. Furthermore, such disrespectful action on the part of the receiving church goes a long way in negating the autonomy of both the excluding and receiving church, for it gives the excluded person an undue liberty, which, in turn, gives him some measure of advantage over his membership church. The baneful philosophy of some pastors claiming to be New Testament Baptists, is: No circumstances should bar the receiving of any person who applies for membership, for if a person cannot worship with one church, he should be able to worship

with another. This is a glaring contradiction of the Bible doctrine of church discipline, and the transgressing church will, in due season, find her way is extremely hard.

F. The sixth characteristic of the church:

The Lord's Bridal church recognizes the authority of the local or immediate New Testament Baptist church as the highest ecclesiastical authority on earth, and that there are no courts of appeal beyond its God-ordained jurisdiction. The God-given autonomy of the church is unquestionable.

To emphasize the authority which the Lord had vested in His church, He verbally reiterated it, saying unto her:

Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). That is in essence to say: Every scriptural action of the church, whether it brings increase or decrease, is underwritten by the power of heaven itself. However, I restate, it does not include any action of the church which is contrary to the Scriptures. Therefore, EVERY CHURCH AND PASTOR should know how to rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).

By the third century, many false churches, who usurped and denounced the authority of the churches of Christ, had come into existence. And it was of these counterfeit churches the first ecclesiastical hierarchy was formed (AD 251). The Papal office, with its decretive power, was instituted in the year 606 AD and Boniface III became the first Pope. For the next nine hundred years, the Papal office of the Roman church assumed ecclesiastical Governorship of the earth. And any and all churches who would not recognize the Papal Headship must be, by any means necessary, brought to submission, the one alternative being extinction. Many of the Lord's churches were violently erased from the earth during this dark and fearful time, but the powers of darkness failed to eradicate the Lord's betrothed. And there was a remnant of God's elect churches providentially preserved during these cruel and bloody centuries, and the offsprings of these churches are known today as New Testament Baptist churches.

Calvin believed that Divine authority had been given the church to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and that he was God's chosen instrument to this end, the early fruits being Calvinistic and theocratic Geneva. But he was wrong in thinking that he had been chosen of God to lead the church in bringing in the theocratic kingdom, for neither the church, nor any creature, is to be the instrument whereby the theocratic state is to realize its origin or inception. The work of establishing the thousand-year theocracy on earth belongs exclusively and auspiciously to the King of Kings, Who is the Bridegroom of the church.

It is God that presents the Kingdom to His Son, Who is the Head and Bridegroom of His church, and His Bridal church shall share His throne with Him (Daniel 7:13,14; Revelation 3:21). It has never been the mission of the church to convert the world, but it is the mission of the church to preach the gospel to the world (Mark 16:15). And the church further knows that kingdom building, theocratic or otherwise, has never been a prescribed part of her earthly labors. Baptists have always believed in separation of church and state.

The Amillennialist and Postmillennialist theories of the parousia of Christ will reach its absolute terminus with the premillennial shout of the Groom from mid-air (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). And all the saved who are of this erroneous persuasion, whether they be in the church, or out of it, will be, of all the saints on the earth at that time, the most surprised at the Lord's premillennial appearing. They will at that time, and with great joy, fully embrace the Premillennial doctrine of the rapture and Christ's second coming to earth (Revelation 20:4-6).

The marriage supper of the Sovereign Groom and His virgin Bride (Revelation 19:9) is the primary event that initiates the Millennium; and it gives universal recognition and honor to the Brideship of the Lord's church, which has gone by the name Baptist for the last five hundred years. The rank and power of the Bride is eternally subordinate to her beloved Groom. Yet it will be ineffably glorious, for her binding and loosening faithfulness during her bitter tenure on earth will be recognized and, henceforth, made perfect.

G. The seventh characteristic of the church:

The New Testament church, through her two thousand-year history has kept, and yet keeps, the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as was delivered unto her by the Head of the church, which is her Bridegroom.

The keeping and observance of these two ordinances is, and was, infrangibly given to the Lord's Bridal church; and NO deviations in the observance of the ordinances are allowed. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are, in their every aspect, restricted to the local church.

H. The eighth characteristic of the church:

The New Testament church, which is unmistakably the Bride of Christ, had only one mission. And that was to be faithful to her Redeemer and loving Head, the faithfulness of which included the carrying out of the Great commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

I. The ninth characteristic of the church:

By love serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

This is the last characteristic that I will mention at this time, and it is, by far, not the least. Christ said to His church: **A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34)**. Paul, who was mightily used of the Lord in the establishment of His churches, wrote to the church at Ephesus, saying: **And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32)**. That is a lot of forgiveness, and it would enhance the spirituality and progress of the local church if its members would keep this truth in the forefront of their minds

The New Testament church was originally, and is today, local and visible in nature. It is a functioning organization, whose Divinely given authority is age long and cannot be successfully breached.

CHAPTER FIVE THE MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 19:7 - 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. ”

The marriage is come! The betrothal period has expired. Joyous anticipation has become reality, and all sorrows have faded into everlasting obscurity. The Bridal chamber is made ready, and every detail has, in perfect minuteness, been taken care of. Beloved little flocks, your troubles and trials are eternally behind you, and the joy of that royal day will erase all negative remembrances from your mind.

Ephesians 5:25-27 - Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 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. The marriage has come, and the Bride is ready. Her virginity and maidenhood has been preserved by tenacious adherence to the word and conjugal promise of her loving and faithful Groom.

The Bride knew that this most glorious of all days had been approaching since her Groom left the earth, and this bright prospect enlivened her patience and comforted her in suffering. All of her earthly adversities and afflictions were preparing her for this great day, and now she is ready, dressed in fine linen, clean and white (**Revelation 19:8**).

The Bridegroom, ere He left the scenes of time, gave His Bride many **I’ll** promises, one of which was: **I’ll come again and receive you unto Myself (John 14:3)**. I call your attention to the term **unto Myself** in the text. It is a term which denotes special endearment and designed exclusiveness. It is not addressed to Abraham, nor to Moses or David, nor to an archangel, but it applies solely to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom. It is to Him the Bride is to be gathered. And with Him, she shall eternally experience an intimacy that is infinite and cannot in so great a degree be experienced by any other. Nay, not Israel, the elect angels, nor the family of God, but it is unto **Himself**, and to none other, that Christ the Bridegroom gathers His virgin and precious Bride.

As Deity, or the God-man, Christ is going to present His meek and faithful Bride to Himself in the marriage chamber of glory, and her radiance will be second only to that of her glorious and incomparable Groom. By this heavenly marriage, the Bridal church is elevated to the very highest and solitary place that shall ever be accorded any of God’s creatures. But let us note, the Scripture says: **Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9)**. It is the universal consensus that a Bride does not need an invitation to her own wedding, but she has much to do with preparing the guest list.

Now, I ask: **If every saved person is in the Bride, where does this great host of guests come from? ”** Regeneration does not put one into the church, but it does, experientially, put the regenerated person into the family of God. Jesus said, speaking of His elect people: **I’am the door of the sheep (John 10:7)**, and there is no other door into the family of God. But the door into Brideship, that is, the church, is scriptural baptism.

A sarcastic critic of the Baptist doctrine of Landmarkism, asks: **Seeing that your churches have only one door into the church, that is, baptism, when a person is excluded from a Baptist church, what door does he go out? Do you unbaptize him? It is true, there is only one door of entrance into a New Testament Baptist church. But the Omniscient Architect, Who designed the ecclesiastical building, put an exit door in it, over which is written: DEFIANCE OF CHURCH AUTHORITY. And if he (any infractor) shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Matthew 18:17)**. Paul was much upset with the church at Corinth for condoning incestuous fornication, and he criticized the church for its dereliction in the matter. He admonished the church, saying: **Put away from among yourselves that wicked person (I Corinthians 5:13)**. The church heeded Paul’s admonition and excluded the impenitent fornicator. This discipline proved to be corrective, and Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthian church, advised the church to receive and restore the man to membership, for he had repented of the reproach he had brought on the church (**II Corinthians 2:6-8**). Biblically prescribed discipline is a laundering detergent, the use of which keeps the church clean and unspotted.

Now, let us return to our consideration of the marriage in heaven. The rapture of the saints and the sealing of the 144,000 Israelites are, in proximity of time, very close, if not simultaneous (**Revelation 7**). The message of these Jewish witnesses during the seven year tribulation period will be the means of turning a numberless host unto Christ. But their tribulation ministry does not add one person to the church, for the church, at this very time, is

attending her wedding in heaven. The tribulational saints are a part of the family of God, but they are not in the Bridal church, nor on the wedding guest list.

The Lord speaks to the tribulational earth, saying: **And the light of the candle** (i.e., the church) **(Revelation 1:20) shall shine no more in thee; and the voice of the Bridegroom and of the Bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants** (religious entrepreneurs permeating the earth with the harlotry of the ecumenical church) **were the great men of the earth; for by their sorceries were all nations deceived (Revelation 18:23).** The voice of the Bride is not heard during the seven year tribulation period, for the simple reason that she is at the time getting married to her beloved Groom in heaven.

The ecclesiology of the tribulation period will be Catholicism writ large, for the Protestant daughters of mother Rome have reunited with her; and she has united with the Dictator of the one world government, the personal antichrist. The Romanistic doctrine of a universal, visible church will, at that time, cover the earth, as waters cover the sea. But this doctrine will be, as it has always been, a rogue, for it robs the faithful and shining Bride of Christ of her precious family and beloved wedding guests. But this can never be, for her Sovereign and protective Groom has ordained otherwise, and she shall be blessed with family and guests.

Baptists should give a priority to their church membership, second only to their personal and private relationship to Christ; for without a faithful relationship to the Lord's church, all other relationships suffer. The question may be asked: How about a Baptist church member's relationship to his family, should not that relationship come first? The bond and ties of family members should be exceedingly strong and carefully preserved. A husband's love for his wife should equal that of Christ's love for His church (**Ephesians 5:25**), and the wife should submit herself unto her God-given husband, even as unto the Lord (**Ephesians 5:22**). Christ was, and is, pro-family, for, in His dying hour, He committed His mother unto the care of His beloved disciple, John. Godly parents will have a super-abounding love for their children, and children should obey their parents in the Lord (**Colossians 3:20**).

In the above and foregoing statements, I am not equating the church with Christ but the church is His blood-bought Bride; and He has, with His relationship to her, elevated her above that of His family. The person who is saved by the free and unmerited grace of God, and then added to His church by scriptural baptism, should, if the need arises, forsake all (family, friends, etc.) to be faithful to the Lord's blood-bought and precious church (**Matthew 10:38; Mark 10:29,30**).

CHAPTER SIX THE BRIDAL CITY

Hebrews 12:22,23 - But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. ”

Let us notice the phrase in the text which reads: **The general assembly and church of the firstborn.** The advocates of the universal church doctrine read this statement on this wise: The general assembly; the church of the firstborn. But that is not what this text says, for they omit the word **and**, which is a conjunction. And things which are the same do not need a conjunction to unite them, for they have never been separated. So, let us not evade or avoid the compound and intrinsic nature of the inspired separating element - **and** -; much less cast it asunder.

The **general assembly** and **the church of the firstborn** are two distinct and separate bodies. The Lord is not betrothed to the **general assembly**, but He has entered into a marriage contract with His church, and this contract will, in due season (which appears to be short), be consummated. The **general assembly** is the family of God, which He has, in great part, begotten through and by His Bride. The Lord said to His Bride, while He was as yet on the earth: **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. 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 (John 14:2,3).** There would be no need for **many mansions** if all the saved were in the Bride, for one city is sufficient for His Bride; and Christ went away to prepare the Bridal city, a city of incomparable splendor. This city is the home of the **living God**, the throne city, and the capital city of all the ages to come. This all glorious city will be the institutional home of the consummate Bride.

Every Baptist church departing this God-hating earth with faith in the promise of the Groom (**John 14:2,3**) will realize their eternal citizenship in the Bridal city, and they will, through the unending millenniums, sing the nuptial song which expresses the devotion and dedication of the Bride and Groom to each other (**Hebrews 2:12,13**). Every faithful husband and father loves his family, and his children are more precious to him than life. However, the husband has a peculiar love, a love which belongs exclusively to his wife. It is not a question of more or less love, but of kind and manifestation. The manifestation and variance in the husband's or father's love is of equal quality in both directions, and is the basis, or guarantee, of mutual respect in the whole family, even though this respect is different in kind (**Ephesians 5:28**).

The Groom's respect for His Bride is made inviolable by oath, and in the sense of love and duty, they become one flesh and share an intimacy that is special and peculiar to a faithful marriage. Love and attention will be given by the father unto his whole family, but the time and attention he gives to his faithful and loving bride is conspicuously more than what is shown to his family in general.

Baptists have been accused of being too churchly. Some people have gone as far as to say: Baptists worship the church, rather than God. These charges are utterly groundless, for Baptists are not churcholatrists, but like Paul, they are jealous over the church. This great Apostle said to one of the Lord's churches: **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 (II Corinthians 11:2).** Generally speaking, the fault with Baptists is not loving the church too much, but loving it too little.

Revelation 21:2 - And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband. ”

At this juncture, I will mention a few other things which the Bride of Christ knows about the city which is her future and eternal home.

1. Jesus the Groom is the light of the city (**Revelation 21:23**).

2. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into the Bridal city (**Revelation 21:24,26**). So, the unavoidable conclusion is: All the redeemed are not going to live in the city. The earth is not annihilated in the conflagration at the end of the millennium, but it is eternally purged from the curse of sin. And in this infinite purgation, all finite substance is everlastingly destroyed. God's elect millions shall live in their immortal bodies on the earth, which has been made new by sanctifying fire (**II Peter 3:12,13; Revelation 21:1**). The Bridal city will occupy a large part of the renewed earth (**Revelation 21:10-27**).

3. The wall of the city has the names of twelve Baptist preachers engraved thereon (**Revelation 21:14**). The thought may enter some inquisitive reader's mind: How does the writer know they were Baptist preachers? This knowledge comes from the fact that they followed the example of their beloved Groom, and they were baptized (not sprinkled) by the first Baptist preacher (**Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 7:28-30; Acts 1:22**). The indispensable requisite of the Bridegroom in establishing the first Bridal church was: Every charter member of it must have been baptized by John the Baptist, and this Divine criteria was fully satisfied. The first New Testament church was established of the original two or three disciples (**Matthew 18:20; Mark 14:20**), or it was composed of the twelve whom He named apostles (**Luke 6:13**), all of whom had been baptized by John the Baptist (**Acts 1:21,22**). Jesus would not be satisfied with anything less than a Baptist Bride, and neither should any Baptist, in civil matrimony or church relationship.

The baptism of Jesus superseded that of John the Baptist, for John's baptism reached its terminus with his death. But the baptismal ordinance which Jesus gave unto His church is age long, and it is to be administered by local church authority, and in the name of the sovereign and holy Trinity. Baptists have been accused of churlishness concerning their stand on baptism, but Baptists are not churlish in defense of any of their doctrine. And their courtesy and humility is an incontestable part of their glorious history. However, Baptists are unapologetically dogmatic in contending for the faith which was delivered unto them by their Head and Groom (**Jude 3**).

The problem stems from lack on our critics' part to distinguish between churlishness and dogmatism. It is not audacious or churlish to be dogmatic about that which is clearly and irrefutably spelled out in Scripture. New Testament Baptists will not compromise the doctrine which they believe, without doubt, that God has commissioned them to preach. But at the same time, no Holy Spirit led Baptist will, by his own design, make his God given doctrine repulsive to others. Then, too, Baptist hearers need to know and remember that dogmatism and cocksureness are two different things, for cocksureness is permeated with pride and arrogance. Dogmatism, when warranted by the Scriptures, brings gratitude toward God and humbleness in the heart of the saint.

Another question which our antagonists ask, is: Will Christ marry each local Baptist church that ever existed? I will answer the question with a question: Will all the redeemed families of the earth (thank God, there will be many) be in heaven as they were on earth, or will there be only one family in heaven, that is, the family of God? Marriage, family ties, and distinction is good for this corrupted earth, but not so in heaven (**Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34,35**). On earth, Baptist churches are distinct and autonomous entities, but not so in heaven; for there is only one Groom and one Bride, and one marriage in heaven. Local Baptist churches will lose their ecclesiastical individuality and become part of the consummate and eternal Bride of Christ. The separate Baptist churches are not organized into a heaven-wide Convention or Association, but they become one ecclesiastical or singular body, that is, the Bride of Christ. And they shall live in the gloriously indescribable city which her loving Groom has prepared for her (**John 14:2; Revelation 21:18**).

Baptists have never taught that Christ loves His Bride more than He loves His family, for they know God's love is infinite, eternal, and immutable. However, they have correctly and consistently taught that Christ, while on earth, spent the far greater part of His time with His beloved church. And they know with absolute certainty that He has been faithful to the promise of His age long presence with His churches during their earthly pilgrimage (**Matthew 28:20**). This may not be a prototype of the relationship of Christ to His church in the eternal ages, but, seeing that Christ and His church are going to live without any prolonged hiatus in the Bridal city, the inevitable conclusion is: He, as when on earth, will be with His Bride more than with the family of God. Nevertheless, perfect and eternal harmony will prevail, for jealousy shall never enter heaven's boundless and eternal domain.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 3:2-6 - If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery: (as I wrote afore in few words whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel . . . ”

The **mystery** which Paul refers to in the above Scripture is something other than a revelation that Gentiles would be saved and share in the blessings of the immortal state. The declaration of Gentile salvation is many times stated in the Old Testament, and Paul quotes a number of these references in his epistle to the Romans (**Romans 15:9-12**). While there are numerous references in the Old Testament which speak of Gentile salvation, it was through Israel, God's official body on earth (from Moses to Christ), that a great host of Gentiles realized their covenantship with God. But the **mystery** Paul refers to is the New Testament ecclesia, wherein Jews and Gentiles would be on equal footing, for the partitioning wall had been taken away by the sacrifice of Christ (**Ephesians 2:13-16; Galatians 3:26-28**).

Ephesians 3:9-11 - And to make all (kinds of) men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. The mystery which Paul refers to is the Lord's church, but it also includes the gospel, which the Lord commissioned His churches to preach. And it is the proclamation of the gospel of Christ that brings hope to the hearts of God's elect (**Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23-29**). The gospel was given to Israel in symbols and types, but, as a nation, Israel was never able to see what or who their animal sacrifices foreshadowed. Nor could they see or realize that the Lord would set them aside as a nation and give His glory to another and different institution; to whom He would give Bridal status, and in whom He would be glorified throughout all ages, world without end (**Ephesians 3:21**). Israel had utterly forsaken God, and, in so doing, breached her covenant with Him. This breach nullified her covenant, but it is not irreplaceable, for God will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (**Hebrews 8:8**). This reestablishment of Israel is a future event, but God is not left without a covenant people, for He has made an unimpeachable covenant with a people whom He refers to as My ecclesia (**Matthew 16:18**). And it is this very same people He metaphorically refers to as His Bride (**John 3:29; Revelation 21:2**).

The law which God gave Israel was both holy and just. But Israel was forevermore transgressing the law and was never able to see that the law, in and of itself, was never designed to bring salvation; but it was given to typically reveal the Lamb of God, Who would be the sacrificial substitute for all of God's people, both Jew and Gentile. It needs to be said, so as to avoid antinomianism, or any other erroneous conclusion: It was only the civil and ceremonial law of Israel that was abrogated. The moral law is eternal and binding forever, for only God can make a moral law. The moral law was given to restrain the evil nature of fallen man, and from such restraint, society in general would benefit. A moral law may be on the statute books of various governments, but no government can make or unmake a moral law. They can declare it, but they cannot make it. The New Testament church and its glorious gospel was hid from Israel, and it is yet today a mystery to that little and struggling nation. But one day soon, the veil will be lifted from the mind of Israel, and for the first time, the tribes of Israel will see the Messiah in all of His majesty and glory. Israel will see the scars of her redemption and repent of her part in condemning Him to the cross. Israel will, at the return of Christ to earth, own the veracity of the gospel and own her secondary position to that of the Lord's blood bought church. Israel will acknowledge that the affinity of the church with Christ is like that of a faithful Bride to her loving and protective Groom. The church and Israel will never unite and become one body. Neither will the church and the family of God merge and become a singular institution. Israel, the family of God, and the church will maintain their God given distinctness throughout the endless ages. There will be perfect accord and cooperation between them, but they will never become a corporation. As the church and its gospel is in our present age a mystery to the family of God and Israel, it inexorably follows that these separateness of these bodies in heaven is an enigma to them. Yet, it is truth; otherwise the many typical references in the Old Testament which depict the church as the Bride of Christ, and the various

New Testament references which give emphasis to the Bridal relationship of the church to Christ would be without significance or meaning.

The far greater part of Bible commentators give synonymy to the church and the family of God; not mere equation, but sameness. These same commentators compound their erroneous concept of the church by giving it a mystical nature, which simply means that the church is not apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence. And it is not merely obscure, but it is impossible to recognize. It is true, the Lord s'churches fled from the face of Rome s'hellish and brutal persecution to refuges of obscurity and seclusion, but they never became invisible or mystical. Since John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ (**Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-3**), pointed toward the Messiah and said to his disciples: **Behold the Lamb of God** (**John 1:36**), many of John s'disciples followed Jesus. And since that time until now, there has not been a day, no, not one, wherein there was not a visible Baptist church on earth; and the Lord s'churches will be here until their loving Groom calls them to the Bridal chamber in glory.

In a detailed study of the history of Baptist churches, from our present time unto the church which Jesus established in Jerusalem, we do not, and cannot, find any destructive inflection nor a nullifying lapse of continuity. So, it unequivocally follows: New Testament Baptist churches are still on the earth, and their presence on the earth is proof positive that they, as well as their ancestors, are keeping the faith once delivered unto them. This is a mystery to the religious world, but it is a known and comforting truth to His little flocks scattered throughout the earth.

CONCLUSION

One of the many hurtful and destructive heresies of Romanism and Protestantism is their making sacraments of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and their claim that the sacraments are inherently efficacious and necessary for salvation. This undue magnifying of the ordinances is an affront to God and a clear denial of salvation by the free and unmerited grace of God. Every effort of man to mix creature works with the redemptive grace of God is a dangerous and blasphemous exercise, and it aggravates man's condemnation, rather than atoning for it.

Redemptive sufficiency has never been in the power of man, neither is it in the power of any church, for **Salvation is of the Lord**, (Jonah 2:9) and that, exclusively. Human volition, be it ever so sincere, is utterly destitute of saving virtue, and, in its every exercise, is anti-God. **They that are in the flesh cannot please God** (Romans 8:8). The Lord has given exclusive custody of the ordinances to His church(es), and they are fully responsible for the purity and perpetuity of the ordinances. But as glorious and important as the ordinances are, they are utterly impotent in the conveyance of spiritual life, for they are totally lacking in regenerative grace.

There is NO room for apathy or indifference in New Testament Baptist churches concerning the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. For the Lord has annexed to the other duties of the church an awesome responsibility, which is plainly spelled out in the words of the Apostle Paul, wherewith he admonished the Corinthian church, saying: **Keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you** (I Corinthians 11:2). No deviations!

It was the defense of believer's baptism that sent millions of our Baptist forebears to the martyrs' stake to be burned, and to other means of death too cruel to describe. And for contemporary Baptists to be less strict in their handling of the ordinances, is to cast aspersion on our glorious heritage, vouchsafed to us by our faithful ancestors.

Every New Testament church is a Baptist church, but every church going by the name Baptist is not a New Testament church. These are something else, and it behooves every Baptist church to know the difference. Bible knowledge is attained by Divine revelation, and Baptists should, with great consistency, seek the wisdom of God. But we also need intellectual wisdom, or education, so as to manage our earthly affairs prudently. In both areas of wisdom, Baptists should never be guilty of belonging to a KNOW NOTHING CLUB. But they should know what it takes to constitute a Baptist church, so as to know one when he sees one.

In writing this message, I have tried to avoid abrasiveness; but in our day, Baptist doctrine is, on a large scale, offensive. Nevertheless, every Baptist must hold to the truth with an unbreakable tenacity, for to do otherwise, he would offend God and be rebuked by Him. This rebuke I must at any cost avoid. There is an old adage that says:

It is better to be divided by truth than to be united by error. I was comforted by this adage at the outset of this message, and I am, yet at the conclusion of the message, solaced by it.

All the churches of the New Testament were local, autonomous, and visible entities. They were not mystical or invisible, being shut up to the Bible for all spiritual truth, including ecclesiology. I must ask: When did the Lord's churches lose their CORPOREALITY and become mystical and invisible? I ask this question in light of the fact that two truths can never be contradictory to each other.

And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17). Do not get sidetracked by the term **whosoever will** in this text, for no person can come to God by their own will; for the Bible says in another Scripture: **So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy** (Romans 9:16). The edifying point the reader should not miss in this text (Revelation 22:17) is, that the Holy Spirit, in our dark and fearful hour, is yet using the Bride (church) of Christ in calling out God's elect people from the world.

All who would accuse Baptists of bigotry for their tenacious adherence to the Baptist Bride doctrine need to be aware of the fact that the Roman Catholic church, with inflexible rigidity, contends that she is the exclusive Bride of Christ. The Catholic church rises as the Bride of Christ, ever fresh and fair ... The church is the Bride of Christ (MY CATHOLIC FAITH, Pages 111, 149). Baptists are devoted to their own churches, but they are not bigots, for they are not intolerant of other churches.

That which is true of Catholicism concerning the doctrine of the Bride of Christ is also true of Protestantism. For Protestant churches have no reservation whatsoever in claiming ecclesiastical Brideship for themselves, and they are stringent in their claim. All that a concerned reader need do to be convinced of the Protestant claim of

Brideship is to read any of their Bible commentators on the subject of the Bride of Christ. Albert Barnes, whom Protestants esteem very highly as a Bible expositor, says: **The church is the Bride of the Messiah.** Barnes, in using the term **Bride** refers to the whole body of Protestantism, and that to the exclusion of Roman Catholicism and Baptists, for Baptists have never been, in a denominational sense, Protestants. (Barnes **NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT**, Page 280) (See Matthew Henry on the same subject, Volume 5, Page 894.)

The Lord's church is **The pillar and ground of the truth** (**I Timothy 3:15**), and on this **pillar and ground** rests **All the counsel of God** (**Acts 20:27**). The soteriology of both Romanism and Protestantism are antithetical to the **Counsel of God**, for both believe in salvation by human works, that is, by sacraments. What is true of Romanism and Protestantism regarding salvation by works is also true of the great majority of people going by the name **Baptist**. The only difference is in the brand of works which is required. These so-called Baptists teach that salvation is, in finality, the product of human will. Hence, these pseudonymous Baptists are as far from being the Bride of Christ as their deluded sisters.

The Baptist Bride preaches that God is absolutely sovereign, and that the only kind of grace proceeding from His August throne is Sovereign grace. God's grace never leaves His throne begging or limping, as the false churches claim. But He doeth according to His will in all of His creation, and every thought to the contrary is an heinous sin. It was to His Baptist Bride the Lord gave His work, and for this cause, he says: **The world hath hated them** (**John 17:14**). But soon, her earthly pilgrimage will be over, and she shall walk with her beloved Groom in her spotless gown as the ages roll on and on. So, take courage little flocks, for, while our Betrothed is meek and lowly, nail scarred, and rejected by Christendom so-called, He is our Sovereign, sinless, and merciful Bridegroom. Those loving arms that were stretched out and nailed to the cross of Calvary will soon again be stretched out. But this time, it will be to embrace His faithful Bride. And He will, in the sweetest voice she has ever heard, say to her: **Enter into My everlasting rest for you have borne My yoke faithfully** (**Matthew 11:28-30**). And His Bride will **rejoice greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice** (**John 3:29**), saying with ecstatic finality: **MY BELOVED IS MINE, AND I AM HIS** (**Song of Solomon 2:16**).

Soon, O so very soon, The Holy Spirit will say to the Lord's virgin churches: **Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him** (**Matthew 25:6**). Then, the exceeding bitter trials will be forever over, and the long and patient waiting of the Bride will be climaxed by the loving voice of her Groom, saying: **Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away** (**Song of Solomon 2:10**)

ALLELUIA: FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH; ... AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME (**Revelation 19:6; 22:17**).