

# The Book of Revelation is Like a Good Western—See Jesus in a powerful, new way—as the good guy in the white garment riding the white horse!



*And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse;  
and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True,  
and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

**Revelation 19:11**

## Friday Night Special #11

I once heard a story that resonated with me. A man was sitting in the sanctuary reading his Bible. The minister walked by and noticed he was reading from The Revelation of Jesus and questioned his logic. “Don’t you know this book causes confusion and controversy in the church? Do you not know that men of great learning have made this book their life’s study and cannot comprehend it? Do you really think you have any understanding in this matter?”

The man considered the questions and respectfully, but confidently replied, “Yes, I do understand.” The minister said with a measure of derision, “Then you can explain it to me?” The man turned from the passage to make eye contact with the minister and softly said, “We win!”

I have been to many Revelation studies where it seemed the teacher’s primary intent was to scare the pants off the entire audience and leave us trembling in our boots. At times, I was that teacher. Jesus told us to fear not and chastised us when we had little faith. It is my great desire this evening to give you confidence in knowing that indeed we win. No matter what happens between this day and the day of His coming please remember, “We win!”

### The Marriage Ceremony

<sup>1</sup> *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:*

<sup>2</sup> *For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*

<sup>3</sup> *And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

<sup>4</sup> *And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

<sup>5</sup> *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.*

<sup>6</sup> *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude,*

*and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

<sup>7</sup> *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.*

<sup>8</sup> *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

<sup>9</sup> *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

<sup>10</sup> *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Revelation 19:1-10*

There is a party in Heaven, and everybody that is anybody is there! We are invited to the wedding and grand reception that surpasses that of any earthly monarch. To say this is the event of the season is understated; it is the desire of the ages.

Our story begins with a tale of two women. It will be the best of times; it will be the worst of times. It will be the age of wisdom; it will be the age of rebellion—days of awful and awesome. One woman has been condemned and the other has been redeemed resulting in a great celebration in Heaven. One is a prostitute and the other is the bride of Christ.

The bride has spent time preparing for her wedding day as all brides do; therefore, she is ready for the coming of the groom. She is wearing garments given to her. It is imperative that we take note regarding the woman’s garments. Her righteous wedding garment is not one she bought or earned, but is a gift.

These two women represent places of worship or religions. In consideration of the great quantity of religions numbering at least in the hundreds, it is surprising they can be narrowed down to two. One religion reminds us to do the right thing and the other encourages us to do the self-serving thing.

Mankind is designed to worship and all men and women do. Many will deny their need to worship, but each worships something or someone even if it is self. All claim to seek truth, but with a predetermined idea regarding the way we think truth ought to look, we often miss it in passing.

We are easily deceived and to prove it, God has given us a very good example in John. When the angelic being comes to John in all the glory of a heavenly creature, John falls down to worship him as if he was God, twice! *Revelation 19:10; 22:8* Please consider that John is not just any truth seeker.

John was a disciple of Christ and wrote 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> John, the Gospel of John and Revelation. When all the other male disciples fled at the crucifixion of Jesus, John and the women were at the foot of the cross. If John can be deceived, so can any of us. Therefore, Jesus tells us that when the antichrist comes, we are not to seek after him because it is such a delusion even the very elect might be tempted to bow down. *Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22*

The Creator has an enemy and because God is benevolent toward us, we also have the same enemy. The only sure way to recognize the enemy of God is to know God. God came to Mount Sinai to meet with the Israelite people. With lightening and a voice like thunder, the people were afraid of their all-powerful God. God wanted to speak with them, but they said, "Uh, nope! You go talk to Him Moses and come back and tell us everything we are to do and we will do it."

From their fear and doubt a religion was born. Israel could have had it all, but repeatedly settled for a portion. Religion is man's best attempt to worship a very big God. Determined to avoid maximizing over and above the minimum requirements, man demands rules and regulations. Therefore, God gives them to us in frustration because we will not graciously invest more in the relationship than is required.

The Creator does not esteem our religions, but greatly values relationships. He is looking for a friend, and we need a good one. *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. James 2:23* These two women are sources of information regarding this matter. Each has a philosophy defined by the one they serve. All men and women have the God-given free will to choose, but none is exempt from choosing because no one can serve two masters since he will hate one and love the other. You cannot worship both and you do not have the privilege of serving neither.

When the children of the prostitute seek wisdom regarding human behavior, she says, "Does it feel good?" At our affirmative, she then replies, "Then doooo it!" The children of the prostitute feel free and unconfined; therefore, they are eager to worship at her feet. They love her *if it feels good, do it* philosophy that compliments their personal heart's

desires and rebels against the rights of another.

Have you ever visited a home where the children are undisciplined? It is neither a pleasant place for you nor a safe place for your children. Without restraint, children become a threat even to themselves and those they love. When all the children of the world come of age and fulfill their perverse desires, the world will not be a pleasant or safe place for any of us. It will then be as it was in the days of Noah.

When asked by the Jewish religious leaders to name the greatest commandment, Jesus said the first commandment is to love God with an undivided heart and the second is to love our neighbor as our self. *Matthew 22:36-40* Knowing this is the premise for lasting happiness the bride of Christ asks her children to give some consideration before taking action.

She says, "How will it feel to others, and therefore, how will it affect your relationship with your Creator? The bride of Christ encourages discipline in her children based upon Biblical principles, fair practices and good will.

Worship, both proper and improper, is a very personal thing between the individual and his God or gods. When one of us finds a friend in God or the gods, we then begin to define perceived proper worship for the rest of the world and a religion is born.

It would be so helpful if Heaven would put a picture over the entryway of each house of worship. Enter in if you see a picture of the bride, but run if you see a picture of the prostitute. However, God fights for our right of free will, and our personal belief systems are not only personal, but very complex.

I have a preferred place of worship and enjoy assembling with people of like faith. One evening while working in North Carolina I met a woman. We were the only ones in the break room when I asked her if she was religious. She said, "Yes, I am Pagan, and I sense that you are Christian." I affirmed her assessment. She said, "So, is your God mad at me?" I replied, "I don't know, but if He is my God, He is your God and our God has befriended many Pagans. If not, He and I would not be such good friends now."

Abraham was Pagan until he met God. God spoke to the Pagan Pharaoh in a dream about the famine coming to Egypt. The Pagan Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar was given dreams from God regarding his kingdom. This created an opportunity for the king and Daniel to develop a friendship that would last a lifetime. Both men were greatly beloved by God.

When Daniel was set free from the lion's den, Darius, a Pagan Median king declared the God of Daniel to be the true Creator God of the universe! *Daniel 6:25-28* Cyrus was the king of Persia who set the people of God free from Babylonian captivity. God befriended Cyrus before he was even born. *Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4*

God is a friend of Pagans and hugs them to Himself without embracing Paganism. Our God is a God

of broken people, but never broken promises. Jesus was criticized for being a friend to publicans and sinners. The people in the world need a friend. Jesus is the best among friends. *John 15:13*

It is possible that in religions of both proper and improper worship there resides a pure heart? God dwells in the pure heart beckoning them from the world. God can be found in surprising places. It is also of a greater possibility that delusion has set up housekeeping in every religion as well.

When the relationship with God fails to transcend to the next generation, religion becomes like water and seeks its lowest point. All religions can fall under a Satanic influence and potentially become stagnant, stale and specious. However, genuine relationships stand the test of time. Man will seek high and low to nurture his belief system; his efforts would be better spent seeking God and serving mankind.

With the intent of adding confusion, the prostitute religion also sometimes wears white garments to look like the bride. Her faux righteousness will often fool even truth seekers. It is a very effective ploy and encourages even the children of God to become very self-righteous and indignant toward others bringing their hypocrisy right into the house of God.

Self-righteous hypocrisy is only one side of a two-lane highway to hell with nowhere to turn around and is a constant companion to perverse wickedness. Both are deep ditches acting as toll-roads traveling beside the truth byway. The enemy of God will entice (and sometimes push) us into a ditch. He is delighted no matter the ditch. Not only are we confused by the faux righteous garments the prostitute made for herself, but the bride of Christ was also once a prostitute. I hear you screaming, "You cannot call Christ's bride a whore!" I didn't say she is a whore, I said she was one.

The bride of Christ represents all of us born into circumstance made worse by personal choices, but impossible to escape. Then the Lord finds us and says, "Do you like the life you are living?" We respond with, "No way! If I had a way out, I would take it." Christ says, "Let me be your way!" The prostitute in this story represents those of us given the same opportunity and said, "Thanks, but no thanks! I am the me I want to be!" Please come anyway, just as you are. You will be so glad you did!

### 1 Kings 3:6-28

This is another tale of two women that came to the throne for judgment and will give us insight to the women in *Revelation 19*. Both live in the same house of prostitution—a house of ill repute. The baby of one woman dies when she rolls over on him during the night. She gets up and switches her dead baby for the other woman's baby. This mother does not have natural affection for her child. The following explains how I know that about her.

When a mother has lost a child, we sometimes ask silly questions. *Do they have other children? Can they have more children?* Any mother with natural affection toward her child knows you cannot replace one child with another and ease the suffering of a mother's heart. In this matter, replacement theology has no real place. Only full redemption in the form of resurrection of the dead child will stop the pain in the heart of a mother with natural affection.

In the night, the other woman wakes up to nurse her child and discovers the dead child. When daylight comes, she realizes the dead child is not her own and the mother of the dead child has her son. Both women explain their dilemma to young King Solomon with language highly charged with emotion. The king considers his dilemma because how can a young man begin to understand the heart of a mother. Fortunately for all involved, God asked Solomon to request anything. Instead of asking for fame and fortune, Solomon asked for wisdom. God granted him wisdom, fame and fortune.

Using this wisdom, Solomon demanded a sword. The swordsman grabs the living son by the ankle and rears back his sword in preparation to split the child in two. One woman runs to the swordsman crying, "Please do not harm the child; give him to the other woman!" The other woman yells, "No, cut him in half and give one part to me and the other part to her!" Solomon immediately recognizes his mother.

Both women are prostitutes living in the house of their sins. However, one woman has a heart after God's own. She represents the bride of Christ having natural affection for the ones God loves. The other woman is under the influence of her lifestyle prohibiting natural affection toward her own child. She even wants to kill the other woman's son representing the prostitute John saw.

*For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. Revelation 19:2*

The greatest identifier of the children of the prostitute is the shedding of innocent blood. They have a taste for murder and a thirst for blood. When you see this woman and her children of any era or area and nation or notion using the devil's methods to do what they claim is the work of God, you know they are liars.

### 1 Kings 11 & 12

The nation of the twelve tribes descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob split after the death of Solomon. Solomon had an extravagant lifestyle supported by the grace of God until he started serving the foreign gods of his wives. God cut off the funds; therefore, he had to find an alternative form of revenue and found it in the heavy taxation of his people.



At Solomon's death, they asked his son Rehoboam to reduce their taxes. The older councilmen advised him to do so and the people would love and serve him forever. The younger councilmen reminded Rehoboam that he was king and the people were servants. Sadly, Rehoboam followed their advice and doubled the taxes and the people rebelled.

Jeroboam was an enemy of Solomon and when Rehoboam, the heir to the throne, would not relieve the burden of taxation on the people, the ten northern tribes looked for another leader. Under the leadership of Jeroboam the ten northern tribes united as the kingdom of Israel. The tribe of Benjamin folded into the tribe of Judah and all the people of the southern kingdom were called Jews.

To keep his people from worshiping in Jerusalem, Jeroboam set up false places of worship in Israel. The Israeli people fell into gross idolatry worsened by time. They refused to repent; therefore, God refused to defend them against the Assyrians—a ferociously barbaric tribe north of Israel. *Hosea 9:1-3*

## Hosea

God called the prophet Hosea to help him turn the heart of Israel back to God, but she would not. He told Hosea to marry an adulteress woman. Hosea did as the Lord asked, but he grew so weary loving this woman and told the Lord he wanted a divorce. The Lord told Hosea to take this woman back as long as she would come back. In addition, if she did not come back Hosea was told to pursue her and persuade her to come back.

The relationship between Hosea and his wife Gomer is an illustration of God and us. We go astray and pollute our relationship with God, but He is ever willing to take us back when we repent. If Israel would have turned to God, he would have fought the Assyrians for her just as he had in the past.

The problem for us is that each time we refuse God's call; our heart becomes hard toward Him. Eventually, your heart will become so hard you will refuse to return to Him even when he beckons you. This is what happened to Israel. God still wanted her, but she only wanted Him under her conditions and went past the point of judgment. God does not do ultimatums. Come on now—He is God!

The Israelites taken into captivity were dispersed throughout the Assyrian empire to places of unfamiliar culture and languages and are today known as the lost tribes. This was a common method used by the Assyrians to prevent uprisings. They then filled the vacant places in Israel with Assyrian nobles giving them the nicest houses and best vineyards. Over time the Israelites that were left behind intermingled with the Assyrians and other transplanted people to become commonly known as the Samaritans.

The Samaritans became despised by the Jews because of their mixed blood and polluted religion. It

was so bad that by the time Jesus came to Judah, a Jew would not even go through Samaria. Perhaps you are familiar with the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus told a story about a man who was robbed and left for dead. None from Judah, not even a Rabbi, would stop and help this man—only a Samaritan! *Luke 10:29-37*

## John 4:1-42

When Jesus said He had to go through Samaria, His disciples were perplexed. Jesus went to Samaria to meet the woman at the well. He wanted to speak to her alone so He sent the disciples to buy food He did not even eat once they came back.

The woman at the well is a social outcast. She comes to the well at noon to draw water in a desert land where the temperature at noon can rise way above our comfort zone. It is a woman's duty to draw water for her family every day. However, the other women have come and gone because they came in the early to mid-morning.

This woman did not want to come to the well with the other women. They do not think well of her—no pun intended! The Samaritan women would have rudely disrespected her. Some of them would have been just plain mean, and might have thrown rocks at her. Under the law, she was considered deserving of being stoned to death. Therefore, she avoids their company by coming at noon.

When Jesus sees her, he asks for a drink. She is stunned. Men do not speak to women in public—not even their wives! Also, she has a bad rep and what will people think? Finally, Jesus is a Jew and they dislike Samaritans.

When I was a girl, my grandmothers on both sides drew water from a well and we all drank from the same dipper. We thought nothing of it, but for a Jewish man to ask to drink from a Samaritan's dipper is unheard of. No one, not even another Samaritan would drink from her dipper. Yet, here is this man asking to drink from her cup!

She is skeptical and questions Him. He tells her that if she knew who He was, she would want to drink from the living water He offered—water that will quench the thirst of anyone. Again, she questions the fact that he has no way to draw water from the well. Being in His presence and knowing He accepts her gives her a little spunk. She reminds Him this is Jacob's well.

Jacob is the father of all twelve tribes, and she is descended from Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph. She is subtly reminding Jesus that He may be a Jew from the self-important tribe of Judah, but her forefather is Joseph the favorite son of his father Jacob. This is also a subtle reminder to us that though it is human nature to believe we are God's favorite, you never know who the Heavenly Father of us all will bestow His favor upon.

This woman desires the water He offers so she will not have to come to this well and draw water again. When she asks for it, Jesus tells her to go call her husband. She replies she doesn't have a husband, and He is pleased with her honesty. He tells her she has had five husbands and the one she is with is not her husband.

This woman has been rejected in the most hurtful way for a female. One man's rejection is enough to damage a woman's self-worth, but this woman has been rejected five times wringing every ounce of femininity from her being. The sixth man she is with now will not even honor her by legitimizing their current relationship.

When Jesus reveals her past, she believes He is a prophet. She states her people, like the Jews, are looking for the Messiah to come and tell them all things. When Jesus tells her that He is the Messiah, the Christ, she believes Him. This kind of faith is hard to find in Judah. Jesus came unto His own from the tribe of Judah, and His own did not receive Him as the King of the Jews. However, this woman of Samaria knows Him and senses He is here to bestow some great honor upon her. Jesus is here to be her seventh husband!

I am speaking metaphorically. I had an experience like that myself. When my husband died I found myself in a very desperate situation financially, and I was challenged with raising a teenage son on my own. I was seriously praying to the Lord. On my knees beside my bed with my hand on the Bible, I was pleading with God to remember me and my children.

I turned randomly in the Bible and my eyes rested on the following passage. *A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. Psalm 68:5* God just made a promise to me; *and* when I got off my knees, I knew I was God's girl. Next to my born again experience, this moment in God's presence may be the most empowering experience of my life.

When the disciples returned to the well and found Jesus talking to the woman, they were concerned, but dared not say anything. The woman could tell by the looks on their faces they did not approve, but she did not care at all for their opinion. She left the water she came to draw and went running back to her kinsman shouting, "I have found a man!" Of course, they think, "Okay...What's new?" She says, "No, I have found a man that knows everything I ever did."

She found a man that knows her past and loves her anyway. What woman or man wouldn't want that? Apparently, the elation in eyes normally cast down must have convinced them to come see because at the woman's witness the Samaritan men came to Jesus.

In the meantime, Jesus tells the disciples to look at the fields because they are white with harvest. What field is He referring to? They are in Samaria so it is the people of Samaria that are ready

to harvest. This would be hard for a Jew to accept since they considered Samaritans godless. Yet, when the Samaritan men come to Jesus and receive Him as the Promised One, the disciples get the lesson. This lesson is also for us. We cannot proclaim anyone godless or unworthy of good news. Why, weren't we all godless until God found us?

Jesus demonstrated to the disciples that without discernment we do not know where to harvest. Neither are we very good at recognizing harvesters. God used the least of the least of the least to harvest a field they would not work. He did not use a Jewish man to work this field, nor a Samaritan man, but a Samaritan woman of low reputation to declare His presence. I can assure you, she will never be the same again.

Certainly, she has no hesitation in making eye contact with anyone from this day forward. Surely, her head is held up and her shoulders are thrown back as she walks into a crowd of others. This woman is not haughty, but confident enough to tell her current man to put a ring on it. If he has any sense at all, he will know this woman is a keeper.

All dejected men and women know what a soothing balm it is to be redeemed. Jesus is the redeemer and will save us all if we will let Him. So all mankind will know how much He loves us, men are commanded to love their woman like a verb as Christ loves the church. So a man LOVES the way you look, feel and smell, but will his love move him to act on your behalf? If not, perhaps he loves himself and merely the way he feels when your scent reminds him of your lovely face. Mankind's eros fades, but the agape of God will last.

## Genesis 2 & 3

I read in Genesis about Adam and Eve eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God said, "Oh, Adam. What have you done?" Adam said, "It was the woman you gave me!" I thought Adam was a punk for a long, long time. However, some things must be spiritually discerned. Another time I read the same thing and heard something else. As I was reading about Adam, the Spirit of God spoke to me and I heard Percy Sledge sing "*When a Man Loves a Woman*"—not really, but something like that.

My thoughts were not fair to Adam. He was hoping the Father would understand His decision when He realized he chose the woman who was flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. He was hoping to express how much he loved the special gift of the woman given to man by God. He hoped the Father would understand when Adam told Him he would rather die with her than live without her.

I have heard men say, "Why didn't Adam just let God make him another woman? He had lots of ribs!" On the surface, this question appears logical. However, it is not based upon Christ's redemption, but the devil's replacement theology promoted by the harlot lacking natural affection for her children.

Just as a child is part of the woman giving birth, Eve was part of Adam. For Adam, no other woman will ever be Eve. Replacement theology will not ease the pain in Adam's heart at her loss. Only redemption of the woman will work. When Adam said he would rather die with her than live without her, he became the first type of our Intercessor and God said, "Amen!"

A child will sometimes say or do something or hold their head just right and you will see yourself in him/her. When Adam told God he would rather die with Eve than live without her, the entire universe could clearly see God in Adam. All the heavenly beings declared, "He looks just like the Father!" The first man loved the first woman supremely—the same way Jesus loves His bride. Adam lost his godly image, yet in his love for Eve he never looked more like God.

Adam's great love for his wife is the expression of God's love for us. The better question to ask is why doesn't God wipe us off the face of the earth and make Him some grateful children? His love for you is just too great to be pacified with the presence of another. No other you exists anywhere in the entire universe. You are uniquely one of a kind and if you pass from existence, God's grief at your loss cannot be appeased by a replacement. Therefore, He offers you redemption at great cost to Him.

### **Who is the Bride of Christ?**

Who is this woman that Christ loves so much? There are many scriptural references to her in both the Old and New Testament and many professing to know who the bride of Christ is. I would like to share something with you for consideration that you may not have heard.

The woman is asked to birth children for Christ before the wedding ceremony. Wise women will not accept these terms from most men. However, Christ comes to redeem the woman and her children. If she will not birth children before His coming, there will not be any children to redeem. In fact, the bride of Christ is commanded to bear the fruit of the womb or she has no part in Him. *John 15:1-17*

### **The Fruit of the Tree vs the Fruit of the Womb**

Eve saw the fruit of the tree and desired it. From her first bite of the fruit of the tree of good and evil her destiny determined a desire for the man allowing him to rule over her. She will also now have pain in childbirth. *Genesis 3:6, 16* Eve brought a lot of suffering into the world upon women in general and in particular upon the bride of Christ. Therefore, God's chastisement for her reflects all the sorrow that will result from her decision to eat from the good looking and good tasting, but bad fruit. We can all relate to Eve's situation since we have all partaken of bad fruit.

The first part of Eve's curse is that pain, both emotional and physical, will increase regarding childbirth. That is because children can now only be born

unto the bride of Christ through much suffering. In this world, there is a spirit of evil that desires to slay the babies of believers in God. Pharaoh cast the infants of Israel, God's firstborn, into the Nile, and Herod put the babes in Bethlehem to the sword. The world does not welcome the fruit of the womb greatly beloved by God. Therefore, the woman that God loves suffers to bring His children into the world.

When Eve took of the fruit, man also partook of the evil of the fruit and marred His personal image of the Heavenly Father. Although Adam's great love for the woman is to be commended, his lack of faith in the Father changed the nature of all men from every generation making it difficult for women and their children to recall the face of God before the fall of man.

The handsome face formed by the hand of God loses the benevolent look of a lover and is replaced with ugly scowls. The woman watches the hand that touched her ever so gently in the making of their children become harsh and hurtful. His treatment of the woman and their offspring is despicable. You would think more women would surely reject the men in their lives resulting in no children being born except for one small consideration. The woman desires *the* man, and therefore, he rules over her.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were given dominion. Eve was not just a queen; she was a king. She and Adam were the first kings of the earth. However, when she let the serpent beguile her, she gave her dominion to the serpent and persuaded the man to do so as well. Now evil reigns in this world with profane purpose—to rule over the bride of Christ forcing her to bear children unto evil instead of good.

The evil in this world is determined to prostitute the bride of Christ in the most vile ways; but He promised to rescue her and His own. *1 Timothy 2:15* There is now great enmity between the serpent and the seed of the woman. *Genesis 3:15* The serpent will bruise His heel and stomp His woman, but the Seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. *Revelation 12*

It is one thing to desire salvation for yourself, but the bride of Christ wants salvation for all her children from all the nations. She will risk herself repeatedly to bring God's own into the world and bring them up in the Word. Small wonder He loves her so dearly. She willingly does this for Him before the wedding ceremony. God is honorable and bestows great honor on those He loves. The woman has been given some great covenant, legal and binding within Heaven's court, or He would not ask her to do such a thing.

Among Israelites, a ketubah is a legal, binding contractual agreement between two people considering marriage. The man pays to have the contract drawn up and pays again to have it beautifully designed as an original. If the prospective bride accepts this contract, she will proudly display it on the wall of their home. Anyone that enters the house will know she has legal claim within the man's household.



The bride of Christ has been promised to Him since the foundation of the world. *Revelation 13:8* He died to redeem her before she knew His name. He has given her a place of honor within the House of God...the one in Heaven! *Hebrews 4:14-16* The woman and her children come boldly into the most holy place into the very presence of God. She obviously has a legal claim within the house of God. A ketubah would give her this legal right and we can expect to find evidence of it in The Revelation of Jesus.

A ketubah is binding upon both parties, but it is a unilateral agreement. The woman either agrees or declines. However, it is not a bill of sale making a woman the man's property. It is a document offered for the protection of the woman and her children in the event of divorce and/or death. It is a charter of the woman's rights in marriage and the duties of the man making provision for the wife of food, clothing and conjugal rights.

Conjugal rights is the one area a woman can make certain stipulations. She is under legal obligation to produce heirs. Therefore, she has the right to determine how often the husband must visit his wife so it will be possible for her to conceive. It was the Spirit of God that came upon Mary when she conceived the son of God. It is the spirit of God that comes unto the bride of Christ. <sup>26</sup> *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: John 15:26*

The Spirit of God comes upon the body of believers so they bear the fruits of the Spirit which produces the fruit of the womb—sons and daughters of God. How many times per week does the Spirit of God come unto the bride of Christ? He is ever present at her beck and call. *Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20*

It goes against our traditions and our expectations regarding Godly matters that the bride of Christ, or any bride, is expected to bear children before marriage. The performance of most confessing faith in God requires delivery not promise. It is especially strange that men of God are also expected to bear children. For you manly men struggling with such a notion, consider the apostle Paul delivered children to God. *Galatians 4:19* It is good and right that the church bear children unto God or she is a barren fig tree fit for the fire.

In further study of the ketubah, it is not a ceremonial document but is written in the Aramaic legal language of the Talmudic law as a legally binding document. It is not a state document since it does not seek confirmation of a code or society. The ketubah falls under a higher jurisdiction than this world. It is a Heavenly order. The ketubah is not just for the privileged class but is obligatory upon everyone in Jewish society. The ketubah is not a declaration of perpetual love, but is a statement of law providing a framework for mutual respect and genuine affection.

The ketubah is not a representation of the husband and wife, but their witnesses. With this instrument, they signify and testify to the groom's actions, promises and statements and the bride's willing acceptance of the proposal. Without a ketubah and its honorable witnesses the woman is without honor. As a concubine and not a wife, she has no legal recourse and her children have no promised inheritance. In the ketubah a man gives his word of promise to a woman. On behalf of the woman, The Word binds the man.

In looking for the ketubah in The Revelation of Jesus, we must first look for the witnesses. Jesus reveals His great love for His bride by calling upon the entire cosmos to bear witness to the ketubah. The ketubah is witnessed by the Father, earthly beings and heavenly beings. Jesus the faithful witness bears record of His own Ketubah. However, it is Christ's angel that serves as His witness as Heaven's emissary. John, as a representative from earth, bears witness for the bride. *Rev 1:1-2*

All in Heaven and on earth know this woman is the bride of Christ. Any that would dare touch her will reap retribution. The ketubah agreement includes certain basic information that should be found within The Revelation of Jesus written down by John—if indeed the bride of Christ has one.

- ♦ Witnesses: *The Angel of Christ and John the Revelator Rev 1:1-2*
- ♦ Date and time: *the time is at hand Rev 1:3*
- ♦ Names of the groom and bride: *Alpha & Omega and the seven churches in Asia Rev 1:11*
- ♦ Her attributes that attract Him: *Rev 2:2-3 & 6, 9-10, 13, 19 & 24-25; 3:1 & 4, 8-10*
- ♦ Deal breakers, things repugnant to Him: *Rev 2:5, 14-16, 20-23; 3:2-3, 15-20*
- ♦ Promises to the woman cognizant of the deal breakers: *Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21*

The church is being offered a ketubah (covenant) as the bride of Christ. The church established by Christ at His crucifixion and resurrection has existed for more than 2,000 years. However, the word "church" is used to represent the body of believers God entrusted with His covenant and commissioned to extend the covenant invitation to all mankind since the beginning and while still in the garden.

The term church is the Greek word *Ekklesia* (G1577) which can also be used as assembly, gathering, congregation, etc. *It is a derivative of (G2564) a calling out, i.e. (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both) : -assembly, church. Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.*

Christians tend to think the church is only a New Testament opportunity in opposition to Old Testament condemnation. This type of thinking is erroneous on

many levels and has caused much heartache through anti-Semitism and other biases within the religion of Christianity. Our mindset changes and our preconceived notions are modified when we realize that God has had a "church" or congregation long before Jacob assembled his sons to hear his prophetic words regarding their future.

As the head elder of the first church after the flood, Noah got off the ark, built an altar and offered a living sacrifice for the entire congregation including himself, his wife, his sons and his sons' wives as well as their unborn children. God smelled the sweetness of the aroma and blessed their worship service with His presence.

Abraham is the forefather to the Jew, Arab and Christian, but Noah is the forefather of every nation. Noah made a sacrifice on behalf of all coming forth from those within the ark—including you and me. Anyone can be a member of Noah's church if they accept the blood sacrifice made by Noah representative of Christ and received by God. All believers are by default members of Noah's congregation.

The church actually had its beginning in Eden when God invited Adam and Eve to rest with Him at a specified time in the open tabernacle of the garden. We also find in the garden the first time the church was restored in part through complete redemption. God demonstrated His love toward mankind through the shedding of innocent blood making this the original Passover. *John 3:16* The nakedness of Adam and Eve was concealed by the covering of the innocent.

Right after the blood sacrifice was made the church had its first split congregation. Cain and Abel both came to a set time and place to worship God, but their sacrifices were not equally pleasing. God has always desired a relationship with humanity and is faithfully seeking a people that will demonstrate His desires; yet, while God's heart is bent toward us, our heart is bent in a different direction.

We do not by nature desire Godliness preferring darkness instead. Those that choose light over darkness have entered into a special group transcending era, area, color, gender, and nationality. The body of believers willing to receive the acceptable sacrifice is and has always been called the congregation or church.

When Jesus comes, He is coming for His church. The church includes those alive at His coming and all the dead that rise in Christ. This resurrected body of believers will consist of all the faithful ones from all the ages. These two groups, those living at His coming and those made alive at His coming, are His church and His bride.

In Israel a couple wanting to live together got married. However, if circumstances prevented or delayed the ceremony, the woman of promise had the ketubah establishing her rights as a legal wife. A

woman may live with a man before the wedding ceremony, but any free woman of respect did not live with a man until she had the promise of the written word—the ketubah. Sarah had the equivalent of a ketubah; Hagar did not. Therefore, Sarah's children were children of promise; Ishmael was not. *Galatians 4:21-31*

Jesus is the Word. His Word is good and His promises are worthy. The church must willingly allow Christ to come unto us and dwell within us today with the sure promise of the wedding ceremony. She must in confidence bear His children during great adversity believing He will fulfill all promises to His bride and her offspring. For those committed to Him, Jesus has made a place for her in His Father's house where the ketubah resides and she will soon dwell.

### **The Rescue of the Woman**

*11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

*12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

*13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

*14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

*15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

*16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

*17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;*

*18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*

*19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.*

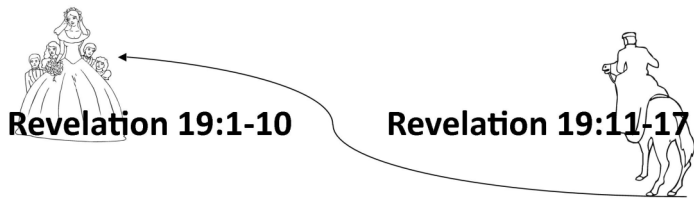
*20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

*21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

*Revelation 19:11-17*



The first part of *Revelation 19* describes the wedding ceremony occurring after the rescue of His bride. The second half of *Revelation 19* describes the rescue. This is an unacceptable consideration for the Western mind since it is told out of sequence for us.



**Revelation 19:1-10**

**Revelation 19:11-17**

The books of the Bible were written by men with an Eastern mindset for Eastern readers of their day. The operation of the Eastern mind verses the Western mind is distinctly different one from the other.

In the West we tell a story succinctly and orderly from beginning to end and do not encourage questions until the end of the story. Within education we call this type of presentation a lecture. This is our preferred way to disseminate information in the West under the influence of Greek and Roman thought highly influenced by Paganism. Telling a story from cause to effect is a linear way of thinking. We even provide lessons within our educational setting to teach our young children to think in this manner.

In the East a story is told from the end result (effect) to immediately capture the interest of an audience. The effects of an event are declared resulting in the listeners asking, "What caused that?" As the teller reveals information based upon the questions from the listener, the story cycles around as the facts become expanded and enlarged. Telling a story from effect to cause has the natural result of engaging all participants in the story telling event. This is the way the Bible stories are delivered especially within prophetic verses and eschatological passages.

In *Revelation 19* the story teller begins by sharing that the bride is ready. Therefore, Heaven is bursting with attendees at this grand event. Everyone knows the woman was in bondage being held for ransom in a faraway land. The story teller knows John is delighted to hear about the consummation of the promises between the Bride Groom and His bride.

Having an Eastern mindset, John's first questions will be about the rescue. He wants to know about her release from bondage and her arrival in Heaven. The latter part of *Revelation 19* reveals this information to John and us.

The story of *Revelation 19* is about Christ's great love for His bride and is very much like a good western. I grew up watching them and still enjoy a good western from time to time. Westerns usually have a common theme of good versus evil. Good conquers evil and involves a woman or two most of the time. I have no affirmative that God is a cowboy, but when Jesus comes He will certainly get a little western.

The book of Revelation is like a good western because it is all about Jesus coming to get His woman. He has paid the bride price. The woman has been redeemed at the agreed upon price. He paid for her with the most precious commodity known—his own redemptive blood. Satan will not readily let her go and Jesus knows it. Satan is the destroyer, but his hatred of the woman results in his own destruction.

At the beckoning of the voice of the spirit and the bride, the great tribulation is an opportunity for the children of the prostituted religion to come to Christ as a firstborn. *Revelation 22:17* However, when they harm the bride of Christ and her children, Jesus wipes them off the face of the earth leaving the prostitute a barren widow. *Revelation 17 & 18*

We know Satan, the prostitute and their children will not just let the woman go. We have an example in the Bible. God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go and Pharaoh resisted. By the tenth plague with the death of Egypt's first born, Pharaoh was sick of the Israelites and told Moses to take them, but to bless Pharaoh before he left. If Pharaoh had left it at that, Egypt would have continued being one of the most powerful nations in the world—the head and not the tail. However, Pharaoh considered the effects of the missing Israelites upon the Egyptian economy, and decided to pursue God's own.

Pharaoh caught up with the Israelites when they faced the sea and had a rock wall to their back. He thought he had them trapped, but God opened the sea by parting the waves. When the people went over on dry ground, Pharaoh followed them. You know the story. The walls of the water came crashing in on the mightiest army of the then known world and destroyed them and their famous chariots. God will deliver His people again, and *Revelation 19* tells the story.

I hope you are not offended by my comparison between the coming of Jesus and the redemption of His woman with the redemption of the cowboy's woman. The analogy is that the woman is of ill repute and no value by the world she lives in, but she is greatly beloved and priceless to the man that redeems her. The cowboy loves the redeemed prostitute in the way Adam loved Eve and the way Hosea loved Gomer, his harlot wife.

Each of these men typify the way God loves Israel though she went far, far astray. All men are commanded to love their wives the way Christ loves the church. Lucky is the woman with a man that loves her in this manner. However, can any man love a woman to the degree that Christ loves His church; even while we are still in sin and steeped in Paganism?

It is implied in the story of the cowboy that the woman will become a faithful spouse to the man that redeems her. Christ's love for the church is the mystery of mercy best compared to a man's love for a certain woman making her pure and undefiled. At Christ's redemption, it is as if we were never impure.

Christ and the cowboy each come seeking a prostitute but for different purposes—one to redeem and restore the other to use and abuse. The primary comparison is that each soiled woman is made new by the love of a man. The cowboy dares anyone to malign his woman over her past, but only Christ can throw our past into the depths of the sea never to be remembered. In staying with our western theme, please notice Jesus comes to rescue his woman riding a white horse!

### **The Cowboy and the Redeemed Woman**

The cowboy has been on the dusty trail ride that ends in the next town. As soon as he gets there he is going to want a cool drink and a warm body; in that order. When he walks into the saloon, he sees her and knows she is the one. After sauntering over to her, he begins talking and realizes she's not only pretty, but real sweet, too. The cowboy decides he doesn't just want a trick or a turn and makes arrangements to purchase her company for the night.

He does the same the next night, and the next. He spends every evening he's in town in her company. Finally, the cows are all sold and the men all paid. It is time to hit the trail back home, and the cowboy realizes he will miss this woman. As he thinks about it, he realizes he is going to miss this woman a lot more than he planned. Suddenly, he decides he will just take her home with him.

That evening he walks into the saloon and asks the woman if she likes this lifestyle. She says, "Of course not. I'm here by circumstance and choices I no longer have control of with no way out. I would get out if I could." He invites her home with him telling her they can share a life and a family. The woman is so happy because she just never expected this to happen to her. Just as she is about to agree, she remembers and says, "I can't go with you."

The woman's eyes fill with regret as she tells her story. She came westward with her parents in a covered wagon. They became ill and she nursed them till they died. With nowhere to go, the barkeep gave the woman a place to stay and a job. He charges her room and board. Life is hard and liquor helps ease the pain so she also has a bar tab. She works as hard as she can, but she can't seem to pay off the debt. It is growing larger no matter what she does. There is no way she will ever pay off this debt.

The cowboy says, "I'll pay the debt." The woman is hopeful, but too afraid to believe until the cowboy says, "I'll be your way out. Come home with me." The cowboy walks up to the barkeep and says, "How much for the woman?" The cowboy pays the agreed upon price and follows the woman up the stairs to get her meager belongings. The barkeep begins to realize that cowboy really likes that girl and would have paid more money. He just sold her too cheap and becomes convinced he's been cheated.

When the cowboy and the woman come down the stairs, the barkeep is at the bottom with a shotgun. The men of the town think she's real sweet and pretty too. She's their favorite and they don't want the cowboy to take her with him so they back-up the barkeep.

The cowboy says, "I paid the price for the woman and she's going with me." The barkeep and his back-up don't realize it, but this is no ordinary cowboy. He has weapons and he knows how to use them. As he steps off the last step, he shoots the barkeep. He shoots up the place and everybody in it. As the cowboy and the woman ride off into the sunset to live happily ever after, they never look back, but we see the whole place go up in smoke.

When the cowboy reaches home with his woman, all those at home will have questions. He certainly has a tale to tell. When we read the first half of Revelation 19 about the redemption of the woman, it also leaves us with some questions. Like how will the woman be redeemed? Will everything go up in smoke like the story of the cowboy and his woman? We want details about how this grand event comes to pass. The last half of Revelation 19 answers our questions.

### **Christ and His Redeemed Woman**

Satan stole dominion from the man and the woman in the garden. Since then he has usurped the throne as the one with the right of dominion. That explains why he took Jesus to the top of the mountain and offered Him dominion over the cities of the earth if He would bow down to Satan. *Matthew 4:8* Since the fall of mankind, Satan has been the prince of this dark world. *2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; John 12:31* Christ refused his offer, but will come in all His glory and take what has always been rightfully His from the foundation of the world.

The earth is His by right of design as God and by right of redemption as man. *Revelation 13:8* However, Christ must conquer Satan, and He will. Rebellion has been in Heaven since creation. Satan has been daring Christ to challenge his right to reign over mankind from the beginning. *Jude 1:9* Eventually, and in God's time when all things come of age, Jesus will claim the earth and reveal His plan to redeem all that is His initiating the war in Heaven.

In *Revelation 10*, a mighty heavenly being comes down from Heaven and puts one foot on the sea and one foot on the land. This mighty one is Jesus declaring Himself the rightful heir to the throne of David and all the earth. Through The Revelation of Jesus we see the dominion theme. In many passages we see entities wearing crowns.

Satan currently reigns in this world as the dark prince; therefore, agents of Satan wear the diadem in *Revelation 12 & 13*. Jesus wears crowns many times in Revelation, but usually the stephanos. The stephanos is a crown of victory because Christ overcame

sin and death, and therefore, the ordinance of sin and death that is against us. *Col 2:14* When He comes riding the white horse in *Rev 19* we see Jesus wearing the diadem(s) with ruling authority for the first time.

Remember Eve being cursed with the man ruling over her? She gave up her dominion for a taste of evil, as did Adam. In His foreknowledge, God made provision for their deception and rebellion. If Adam had trusted his Father before he ate the fruit, the way through the wilderness and back to God would not have been so long and laborious for the family of man.

We assume God cursed Adam, Eve and the serpent. They cursed themselves as we all do. God just stated the result of bad choice. We fail to hear God plead with us to cease playing in the busy streets and broad way. In opening the door for evil to rule in the earth, Eve licensed now hard-hearted men to lord over women, especially the bride of Christ. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus prayed God's will be done on the earth as it is in Heaven on behalf of every man and his bride including His own.

When the rebellion in Heaven results in war, Satan will no longer have access to the portal between Heaven and earth. Once cast down, he is so angry at Christ he takes all his vengeance out on the woman. It was in vengeance Nebuchadnezzar heated the fiery furnace seven times over when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not bow down. The hatred Satan has for the woman from the beginning increases exponentially. In vengeance he pursues her children.

The knowledge of Jesus in Heaven preparing the place for His bride and her children lost by Satan drives him to implement plans of vengeance for the children of the woman. Through the actions of evil men, Satan rules over and persecutes the woman Christ loves. *Revelation 12* However, in *Revelation 19* Jesus is the conquering warrior and King of Kings of the Earth predetermined by promise to rescue the woman and her children.

When Christ died, the veil between the holy and most holy place within the temple was torn from the top to the bottom demonstrating the promise of a day when there would be nothing separating God and His people. We are told to enter in boldly even today into the throne room of God. Jesus is there now beckoning us to the Father. He promised the disciples, He will come again and bring us to the place prepared for us in the presence of God. *Revelation 19:11; 6:12-17*

The veil in the temple is a type of the veil of the night sky separating us from our God. When Jesus comes, he splits it just like the veil in the temple. We see Him coming on His white horse to make war determined to redeem the woman at all cost. Satan, his prostituted religion and their offspring will war against Jesus just as Pharaoh made war against Moses. God prevailed then, and He will prevail again. *Revelation 19:19; 16:13-16* The righteous two thirds of Heaven's angels that did not rebel against God

during the War in Heaven will come with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

When Israel was surrounded by a vast army, the servant of Elisha was afraid. Elisha prayed that God would reveal the armies of Heaven to his servant. *2 Kings 6:15-17* The tribulation of the last days is a fearful time, I pray that our God will let us see the mighty power of the Armies of the Lord so we will be encouraged in the days to come.

Power, prosperity and prestige will not save mankind in the day of the Lord—nor gold, silver or a preferred currency. Aligning with the rich and famous will not be of benefit at the coming of Christ. Those who do not RSVP the marriage supper invitation will be fodder for the birds of prey. *Revelation 19:17-21*

Matthew and Luke tell us that the end of the ages will be like the days of Noah. We have pondered about that comparison since it was first written down. The people in the days of Noah were rebellious. Certainly, the people of the last ages will be a rebellious generation.

However, at Christ's coming the earth is destroyed by natural disastrous events just as it was in the days of Noah. In the days of Noah, it didn't just rain. There is evidence on the surface of the earth and the moon that there were catastrophic natural events. The earth and moon were pelted by asteroids leaving scars as evidence so mankind will recognize the validity of the event of the flood and the violent manner in which it occurred.

*Matthew 24* and *Luke 17* tell us that in the days of Noah there were some taken and some left. Reading these passages carefully, we recognize those *taken* were taken by death and destruction. Those that were left remained alive in the ark. The last days will be like that. Death will take many, but those of us that are alive and remain standing when the plagues pass over will ascend into the Heavens to be with the Lord. *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

*Luke 17:37* records the disciples asking Jesus where they will be taken. His reply is, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." In this passage, Jesus is referring to the supper of the birds. *Revelation 19:17-21* The birds of prey will attend the supper of the birds and feast upon the bodies that are slain by the Lord.

In times of war, the bodies of the victors were usually given proper burial but not so the bodies of the enemies. They were left on the battlefield for the creatures to dispose of. The bodies of the dead in Christ will be given resurrection! The bodies of the saints are precious to the Creator of us all; however, the bodies of the rebellious ones are discarded as if they do not matter.

When the world sees Jesus and the armies of Heaven coming in the clouds, they perceive them as alien to this world. It is ironic the world will see their Creator as having no place in the world He spoke into



being. Satan will easily persuade the kings of the earth to collectively use their armies to fight against Jesus as if He were a usurper.

Hollywood has been producing movies while the gaming industry has been producing action packed video games preparing young minds to be deceived at the coming of Jesus. Many will war against Him as alien to our world in the battle of Armageddon. Satan comes first as a great delusion and all those that fall for his deception will not recognize Christ as delivery but destruction. *Revelation 19:19-21; 16:12-16*

Pharaoh was not willing to let the Israelites escape slavery so he pursued them. God used the waves of the same water that provided walls for the Israelites to destroy Pharaoh's army. He will use fire and the two edged sword that comes out of His mouth to destroy the armies of the kings of the earth in the final day. *2 Peter 3:7, 10-12* The sword that comes out of the mouth of Jesus is the Word of God—the foundational promises within the woman's ketubah.

If you will receive it today, your hard heart will be pierced giving you a heart that is pliable and beating with renewed purpose. However, if you do not let Christ circumcise your heart today in the day of salvation, that same sword will slay you. Satan values you only as a slave with nowhere to cash his empty promises. Christ considers you worthy of His own spilled blood. He died to make you a free agent with free will and the freedom to choose. Choose life.

### **Genesis 16:1-16; 21:1-21**

I briefly mentioned Hagar did not have a ketubah within the house of Abraham. Both Sarah and Hagar loved this man. Contention would be natural in his house. When Sarah saw that Hagar was a woman of Abraham's heart, she became very jealous and abused Hagar. When God found Hagar at the well, He asked her, "What are you running from and where are you going?" So many times we feel a need to run with nowhere to go. A time will come when you must stop and take a stand.

God told Hagar to return to bondage. His good news for her was that she was with child and to name him Ishmael because God had heard his mother's cries. Ishmael may be born outside the promises made to his father, but God just made a promise of inclusion to his mother!

After the birth of Isaac, Sarah, having no use for the bond woman or her son, demanded Abraham send them away. Abraham pleaded with God to let Ishmael be *the* son of promise, but God refused. Abraham made a legal, binding commitment to Sarah and God made a promise to Sarah—both would keep their word. He told Abraham to send Hagar and her young son out into the desert! How could a merciful God do such a thing? Surely He knew they would die in the desert with Abraham's limited provisions.

Hagar assumed God led them into the desert to

die and therefore, the God of Abraham must hate her and the child. As the boy lay there dying, Hagar pleaded unto the Lord to remember His promise to hear her cries as the mother of the child He named Ishmael meaning *God will hear*. God came to Hagar and led her to water while in a dry, thirsty land.

God previously made promises to Abraham that He would make kings of the sons of his son Ishmael; that his offspring would be mighty and many. Many consider Ishmael the result of the mistaken notions of Sarah and Abraham only complicating their lives, but God obviously loves him. If Ishmael was a mere oops, this would have been the time to remove the effects of Ishmael upon the lives of Sarah and the sons of her son, Isaac. Instead, God preserved him as a promise to his mother and his father. Surely, this son is also a promised one.

So why did God lead Hagar and Ishmael out into the wilderness of the desert? To free them. Just as He later led the grandsons of Sarah out into the desert to free them from the bondage of Pharaoh's house. They too believed God hated them. *Numbers 21:5; Deuteronomy 1:27* The way to the land of promise goes by way of the wilderness. Evil made it a dry, desolate journey; but God made a way.

Abraham could only offer bondage to the slave woman and her son; freedom was not his to give. In mercy and love, God brought Hagar and Ishmael into the desert to bring them into His own house. Only God can offer true freedom to any of us. In the desert, he made Hagar an offer. She was no longer Abraham's concubine, but God's girl. Hagar's son can bemoan his lost heritage as son of Abraham born into bondage, or rejoice as son of God full of promise.

The next time you enter the throne room of God look for it. You will see Hagar is no longer a concubine to a man, even the great Abraham. She is of the bride of Christ with a ketubah hanging on the most hallowed halls of Heaven above the mercy seat of God making provision for her and her children.

There are many today perishing in the fields and the byways walking in the wilderness also wondering if God hates them. Yet, many believers of the current age consider the final days too hostile for the church when they discover the journey to the Promised Land goes only by way of the wilderness. Is the church of this age more fragile than of previous generations? If so, we must confess our weakness and be made strong. The population of the earth is maximizing and the bride of Christ is called to birth many believers in the adversity of the final age. Our God will deliver us!

<sup>8</sup>...as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. <sup>9</sup> Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. *Isaiah 66:8-9*

**Study by: K. Robinson**  
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