

(Pdf Book) Bride of Christ / 5 Chapters

by Basilea Schlink

Basilea Schlink's sermon explores the profound relationship between believers and Jesus as the Bridegroom, emphasizing the transformative power of bridal love and the anticipation of the heavenly wedding feast.

Scripture: Revelation 19:7

Topics: "Ebooks", "Bridal Love", "Relationship With Christ"

Description

Basilea Schlink shares her profound journey of discovering her identity as the bride of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the transformative power of love and repentance in her relationship with Him. She recounts her initial struggles with faith and the eventual awakening of a deep, bridal love for Jesus, which became the cornerstone of her spiritual life. Schlink highlights the significance of this love, not only as a personal experience but as a divine calling for all believers to embrace their identity as the bride of Christ. She encourages others to seek this intimate relationship with Jesus, which leads to a life filled with joy, purpose, and the promise of eternal union with Him. Ultimately, she portrays the wedding feast of the Lamb as the culmination of this divine love story, where believers will celebrate their eternal bond with Christ.

Transcript

Bride of Jesus Christ

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After I Found Him

Chosen to be a bride of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. For me, nothing is so wonderful, so precious, as this aspect of the Christian experience. It was, and still is, the greatest discovery in my life. And so this little book is not an intellectual discussion about what it means to be a bride of Jesus Christ; rather it is a personal testimony, written against the background of Holy Scripture.

In my childhood Jesus was only a name for me. I did not have a personal relationship to Him. But later in my teens when my many questions, doubts and problems brought me to the end of my own resources, I had an encounter with Jesus one night as my crucified Lord and Saviour. He drew so close to me in His

great love that my whole heart was set aflame with joy and love for Him.

I did not confide my secret to anyone. Nor was I sure of the next step now that I had found Jesus, for I did not know any other believers. The long- ing to share more fully in Him--His life, His love and all that is His--determined the further stages of my education. Through the Lord's leading I met

\fpeople who helped me to understand His Word better. Finally, in an old book I found something about "first love," bridal love, for Jesus, the Lamb of God, which made a deep impression on me, and the tiny flame of bridal love began to grow. But then a Christian in a position of responsibility cautioned me against such "extremism." So I didn't dare allow myself another thought in this direction.

A long and painful time of searching now began. Various Christian teachings presented themselves to me, and I wanted to explore them in the hope they would lead me into a deeper relationship with Jesus. My spiritual life was very much influenced by the intellect, and I agonized over the question whether world-affirmation or world-renunciation is the right way for committed Christians. But to this I could find no answer in the various trends, which at times were mutually incompatible. Another difficulty was that some who represented these teachings were unable to convince me, because their lives did not measure up to what they taught.

Despite this disappointment, the inexpressible longing in my heart burned all the more: "Nearer, my God, my Lord Jesus, to You... draw me nearer to Yourself, so that You can reveal Your heart to me and I may have a deeper and more loving relationship with You."

And Jesus responded to the secret longing of my heart, though differently than I had expected. He convicted me of my failure to react with love when I had to suffer much injustice and awak- ened repentance in me. Repentance then drove

\fme into the arms of Jesus, for Jesus and the penitent sinner belong together. Now He met me in His great love and began to reveal Himself to me as the Bride- groom. My questions about teachings, the issue of world-affirmation and world-denial, were no longer decisive. He Himself was present and set my heart aflame. My intellectual problems evaporated like a morning haze in the sun. Now my one desire was to love with all the ardour and tenderness of my heart the One who had forgiven my sins, saved me and loved me so inexpressibly.

All of a sudden Jesus, "the fairest of the sons of men" (Psalm 45:2 RSV), had become the great love of my life. How could I help but love Him first and foremost: the all-glorious, sinless Son of God, Love divine, the joy of joys, the jewel of my heart! I wrote in my Bible:

God is the greatest, the fairest, the best.

God is the sweetest and

the most dependable.

The most noble treasure of all is He.

Paul Gerhardt

He is indeed the sweetest--He of whom the psalmist writes: "You give them drink from your river of delights" (Psalm 36:8). I had drunk from this river, and this led me to love Him more and more. From God's

Word we see that for Him this love is the all-important factor. When asked how to attain eternal life, Jesus referred to the first commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" (Luke 10:27).

But we can love Jesus and God the Father only because God first loved us. I was deeply moved by the verses I found in the Bible about God's love for us and about first love, bridal love, for Him. In the book of Jeremiah, for instance, we read about God's relationship to His chosen people:

I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.

Jeremiah 2:2

Bridal love for the Lord is not the same as the love between a bride and bridegroom in a human relationship. It is divine love--pure, genuine and truly satisfying. Nonetheless, in the Old Testament God repeatedly uses this imagery when speaking of His covenant people. He refers to them as His "bride" and "beloved" and even as His "wife:"

I will betroth you to me forever. Hosea 2:19 As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will

your God rejoice over you. Isaiah 62:5

Your Maker is your husband--the Lord Almighty is his name... The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit.

Isaiah 54:5,6

In the New Testament our Lord Jesus calls Himself the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15), and the apostle Paul speaks of this incomprehensible, yet very real, offer of God's love -- the marriage covenant of Christ with His Church:

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two

shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:31,32 RAV

In the book of Revelation we read of the bride of the Lamb and of her special significance for the end times. This period, which has already begun, will bring the day of which it is said:

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready... Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!

Revelation 19:7,9

Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:9

What wonderful statements of Holy Scripture! This love for God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit evoked in me, actually gave me a deeper revelation of God. Through bridal love for

Jesus I found the key to the heart of God-- the greatest happiness imaginable.

Ever since receiving this key to His heart, I have had the privilege of going through life with Jesus as my Bridegroom--over fifty years now. Secrets of His love and sufferings have been made known to me in an overwhelming way. I have been able to help many young people, spiritual daughters and sons, to enter into this love for themselves. In a number of writings and in various other ways I could express the deep joy of first love for Jesus. I could praise Him and His love in many new songs. And to this day I have not exhausted this theme. The whole of eternity

will not suffice to fathom the heights and depths of the divine heart, which is love itself.

And now I would like to spare many, especially young people, all those years of searching and the time I wasted as a result of various warnings. Undeniably, those who cautioned me believed in Jesus, but they did not know the secret of the bride of the Lamb, the secret of first love for Jesus.

Of course, it is necessary to be wary that bridal love is not blended with soulish elements or repressed drives. Having studied psychology, I am well aware of these dangers. But for this very reason I can affirm: First love--true bridal love--for Jesus has nothing whatsoever to do with this! It is soundly rooted in repentance, which means seeing your sins, being sorry about them and making a clean break with them.

This has been my experience and the experience of others. Genuine, pure, ardent love for Jesus grows out of contrition and the experience of His forgiveness, as Holy Scripture demonstrates in the story of the great sinner, who came to love her Saviour with a deep devotion (Luke 7:47). And this love is a divine gift of grace.

I can testify that the discovery of bridal love for Jesus marked the turning point in my life; this personal and loving relationship with Jesus helped me to know Him more and more deeply. So I found everything I had sought in vain the years before--and infinitely more as well.

The purpose of the following pages is to describe what it means to be a bride of Jesus Christ and to have a relationship of bridal love with Him;

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To show who is called to this and how to confirm such a calling. I pray that the Lord will bring this testimony into the hands of those who are seeking Him, the heavenly Bridegroom. May it also reach those who have never heard about the reality and uniqueness of the gift that God has prepared for us in His love.

The Wedding Feast of the Lamb

Marriage is the goal of a bride and her bridegroom. All their thoughts and conversations revolve around the day when they will finally be united forever. As they prepare for the event, they are gripped with a sense of joyful expectancy. It will be the fulfillment of their deepest longing for their lives. Yet this earthly occasion is but a pale reflection of that grand event called the wedding of the Lamb, which Jesus will celebrate with His bride in heaven amid untold joy and splendour.

From the very beginning all God's eternal plans and purposes were directed towards this goal. And now in the pre-antichristian era, the beginning of the end times, we are rapidly approaching this glorious event, the climax of the ages. The wedding of the Lamb--what a marvellous thought conceived in the heart of

God, surpassing all human understanding and yet revealed to us in His Word! May we never take it for granted but be filled ever anew with a sense of awe and wonder.

All over the world those who love Jesus are preparing themselves. Since the term "the bride of Jesus Christ" or "the bride of the Lamb" denotes a whole group, it follows that each individual is filled with the first love, bridal love, for

Jesus, the Lamb of God. Scripture is referring to them when it says, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

Words are insufficient to capture the glory of the heavenly wedding, as we can sense from the description of John:

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."

Revelation 19:6,7

What a tremendous event! What inexpressible jubilation will fill the heavens when the wedding feast of the Lamb begins! After thousands of years of waiting, that day has finally come because the condition is fulfilled: the bridal host is complete in number and spiritual maturity. Jesus laid down His life, so that these firstfruits of mankind, now freed from the power of sin, might reflect their Maker. The Father's joy will be indescribable when He sees the outcome of His Son's suffering: the bridal host, a group of sinners transformed into the likeness of the Son through His sacrificial death at Calvary. Who can measure the joy of the Son as He presents His bride to the Father! The bride, awed at the sight of her heavenly Bridegroom and Lord, will fall down and worship Him. But He will lift her up to His side and present her adorned with the finest gold (Psalm 45:9), because her faith and love, refined in the fire of

tribulation, now shine forth like gold with heavenly

lustre and radiance.

As a triumph of Jesus' act of redemption, the bride is conformed to His likeness, reflecting His heavenly loveliness and purity. She has overcome, because she washed her robe ever anew in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14) and let chastening and suffering do their transforming work in her. Now she is raised to a heavenly dignity at His side.

Who can recognize the sinner in a bride like this? Royally clad in a white robe and wearing the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), she is privileged to celebrate the wedding with the King of kings, to share His throne (Revelation 3:21) and even to rule with Him over the nations (Revelation 20:6). Will not all of heaven be filled with glorious songs of joy and worship for the One who brought about this day--Jesus!

Heavenly radiance rests upon Christ's bride arrayed in splendour. Cherubim and seraphim

Make haste to pay her honour. All of heaven beholds in awe The bride, so pure and lovely, With reverence saluting her, Who now reflects God's beauty.

But the bride has eyes alone For Jesus, her Beloved.

Feasting on His countenance, Her soul is captivated.

She gazes to her heart's content Upon this sight most lovely,

Lost in worship, awe and praise-- Fulfilled are all her longings.

If Jesus, source of all loveliness, glory of heaven, delight of the Father and of the bride, the very essence of love--to this day He bears the scars of His wounds, the tokens of His love and of His suffering for our redemption. They are His greatest distinction, for they speak of His love--a love that is willing to be wounded by us sinners to the present day and not just once long ago during His Passion. He continues to love us, in spite of all that He has to endure from the sons of men. So for the bridal host, the firstfruits, the wounds of Jesus are the seal on His suffering love, which was victorious. They declare that Jesus has triumphed: those who walked in sin and darkness are being changed into people of light and love.

The love of Jesus has power over everything. It was victorious in His earthly life when in the face of slander and disgrace He continued to love and even gave His life for us. His love will also be victorious in the end times when the world is increasingly dominated by the forces of hatred. And the bridal host, those "purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4), will be the first to manifest this victory.

His love has triumphed!--this is what the wedding of the Lamb declares. It is the supreme feast of love and thus of overflowing joy, for here love, true love, is celebrated: all-merciful, gracious, all-forgiving love. This love reigns in heaven, the City of God, enrapturing everyone. Love, nothing but love, radiates from Jesus as He sits with His bride at the wedding feast. Shining like the sun in His love, He walks with His bride along

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If the golden streets of the City of God, which the Father Himself built (Hebrews 11:10) and which the Son once left for love of us.

So heaven gazes lovingly, expectantly, at every bride of Jesus. Each one will help to hasten the day when, after thousands of years, the wedding of the Lamb can finally begin, because the bridal host is complete in number and spiritual maturity.

Bridal Love for Jesus

--Who Can Find It?

Bridal love for Jesus is a blissful secret you carry in your heart like an earthly bride who has found someone who not only loves her but whom she loves in return, having come to see him as the one most deserving of love. He has won her heart completely. Her sole longing is to share his innermost concerns. Human love, even if it is genuine, can never be more than a pale shadow of the true bridal love between a soul and our Lord Jesus Christ. This divine love is indescribably deeper and more ardent.

It is truly the "pearl of great value," the "treasure hidden in a field." No price is too high to gain it. Those who long for this love will find it if they seek with all their hearts, for God said He would be found by everyone who wholeheartedly seeks Him (Jeremiah 29:13)--and, by implication, this bridal love. Although Jesus rules the whole world together with the Father and carries millions upon millions of people in

His heart, His special love is reserved for His bride and He longs for her love in return.

This has nothing to do with emotionalism. The love of Jesus is something very real and unsentimental, and at the same time it is infinitely warm, fervent and tender--and so, too, the love He inspires in His bride. Often it is young people who experience that Jesus enkindles them with His love, so that their hearts are set ablaze with love for Him alone. Filled with expectancy, they listen attentively for a call from Him, for a sign whether His heart really longs for them personally.

And so down through the ages countless numbers have been challenged by the words: Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honour him, for he is your lord. Psalm 45:10,11 Jesus has many ways to answer the secret longing of a soul, so that it knows beyond all doubt: Loving Jesus means owning the most precious treasure in heaven and on earth and giving Him your all in return as a sacrifice. "My all for Him" is the motto of a bride of Jesus, for either you love Jesus with an undivided heart, or you do not love Him in truth.

This is why young people experiencing bridal love often feel moved to forsake and sacrifice everything. They are constrained to surrender to the Lord all other wishes, including the desire for marriage and children, if He is clearly calling them to do so. They want the Lord to be able to delight Himself in His bride. In their love they have eyes and ears for Him alone. Their feet guide them in His footsteps. Their hands are swift to serve Him. Their tongues are never still in declaring their love to Him with the most tender expressions.

His name is always on their lips. Many choose to be single, because they want to live solely to "please the Lord," as Scripture says (1 Corinthians 7:32 RAV). For the sake of His great love Jesus can expect us to be willing to forgo marriage and children in response to His call and out of love for Him. Similarly, He can expect parents to release their child for His service. Or He may require of His followers a different sacrifice--the opportunity to study at university, their career, income, possessions or something else they hold dear--all for love of Him.

Jesus is a royal Bridegroom, who is not only worthy of such sacrifices but who rewards His disciples a hundredfold in return (Mark 10:29,30). Speaking for myself as well as for my spiritual daughters and sons and many others, I can testify that in Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, we have found the answer to all our longings. How often we sing, "The Lord himself is my inheritance, my prize... my highest joy" (Psalm 16:5 LB)! We wouldn't wish to exchange our wonderful calling as a bride of Jesus Christ for anything in the world.

Yet in all of this there is a mystery, as Jesus Himself indicated: Others do not marry for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. Let him who can accept this teaching do so. Matthew 19:12 GNB The apostle Paul and, after him, many others in church history--in particular, St. Francis of Assisi--are an example of how bridal love also grips men, influencing their entire lives so that

all human reasoning is submerged in the "foolishness of love." For this reason they chose to be single. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul made it very clear what it meant to him to be completely free for his Lord and Bridegroom:

I would prefer that all of you were as I am... Now, to the unmarried and to the widows I say that it would be better for you to continue to live alone as I do.

1 Corinthians 7:7,8 GNB

When Paul recommended the single state, mentioning its advantages for the Christian, he added that this was not a command from the Lord but his personal opinion:

I think it is better for a man to stay as he is...

Are you unmarried? Then don't look for a wife... An unmarried woman or a virgin concerns herself with the Lord's work, because she wants to be dedicated both in body and spirit... I am saying this because I want to help you... I want you...

to give yourselves completely to the Lord's service without any reservation... So the man who marries does well, but the one who doesn't marry

does even better. 1 Corinthians 7:26-38 GNB

There are also married people whose hearts are kindled with first love for Jesus. From the Gospels we know that a number of married women, too, were completely devoted to Jesus (Luke 8:2,3). They cared for His needs, ministered to Him out of their own means and did not mind the disgrace they incurred when accompanying Him on His journeys through the country. They wanted to spend as much time as possible in the presence of the One they loved. Some of them stood with His

mother by the cross. They prepared the spices and perfumes for His burial and thus became the first messengers of His resurrection.

Among the most outstanding women in church history were married women who loved the Lord with a bridal love. There was, for instance, Madame Guyon, a seventeenth-century Frenchwoman whose writings have blessed many to this day. Wholly devoted to the Lord, she at the same time fulfilled her family responsibilities in an exemplary way. Her deep love for Jesus gave her the strength to endure in the most trying circumstances, including persecution.

There are many family men who have loved Jesus above all else and dedicated their families to Him. And often those who discover bridal love later on in life love Jesus especially dearly. And so Jesus' bridal host is drawn from all walks of life, from every background and age group. Whatever our situation, we can love Jesus--there is nothing to prevent us.

The Matchless Love of Jesus

The bride of Jesus Christ has found in Him the One to whom all power has been given in heaven and on earth, the One with a capacity to love as no earthly bridegroom could ever love, the One who is eternal love itself. The bride has found in Jesus a love that is faithful, a love that never ceases. Even though an earthly bridegroom promises at the altar to be faithful to his bride, and the bride promises the same to him, there is so much marital unfaithfulness and divorce. But Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, who is also called "Faithful and True" in Revelation 19:11, will be true to His bride: He will never abandon her. The love of the heavenly Bridegroom is unchanging in good times and bad times. Even when the bride grieves her Bridegroom with her sins, Jesus contin-

ues to love her.

This constantly evokes a sense of wonder in her. For could there be a greater contrast? Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, is sinless, pure. He is endowed with power and glory, dignity and majesty. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; and for His bride, He chooses a human being disfigured by sin.

Such love cannot be found in an earthly bridegroom. What man would choose as his bride the most unattractive girl with many negative qualities? Yet for His bride, Jesus--the fairest and purest of all, the Son of God--singles out unlovely, sinful human beings whose "every inclination... is evil from childhood" (Genesis 8:21) and in whom "nothing good lives" (Romans 7:18). In His own body He paid the penalty for our wickedness on His bitter way of the cross. How great must be His love for His bride!

Particularly in her sin and wretchedness the bride of Jesus discovers who her Bridegroom is: love, nothing but love, and full of compassion for us in our weaknesses. He is far more patient with us than an earthly bridegroom would ever be with his bride. As the heavenly Bridegroom, He is the mighty Deliverer, who conquered sin and Satan on the cross of Golgotha. Even if the bride is held in Satan's iron grip, with chains of sin binding her, she can appeal to Jesus Christ, the risen Prince of Victory and Vanquisher of Satan, and she will experience release. Despite failures and defeats, her life is marked by victory: the love of Jesus guarantees that. As long as the bride doesn't decide of her own accord to part with her Bridegroom, He will give her the strength to remain faithful to Him to the end. And Jesus is a Perfecter. He will lead His bride on to the goal of glory.

The difference between a human bridal relationship and the relationship of a bride of Jesus with her heavenly Bridegroom will become especially evident at death. Human love, even the

deepest and most beautiful of its kind, is limited to this life. Death parts us from those we love.

For a bride of Jesus Christ, however, the loving communion she enjoys with her Bridegroom does not end at death. She experiences that she is His and belongs to Him. Love unites her with Him in life, in death and after death. During her earthly existence she was united with Him only by faith, often without sensing anything of His nearness; but after death she will be granted a new and perfect union of love with Jesus. She will be permitted to see Him face to face, to sit with Him at the wedding feast and to rule the nations with Him from His throne. His presence will continually fill her with delight (Psalm 17:15 GNB). It will be the fulfillment of her deepest longing--to be united with Jesus for all eternity, the greatest joy imaginable.

So after death, when a bride has lost her bride-

groom, or a wife her husband, and they are separated, the union of a bride of Jesus with her heavenly Bridegroom will be inexpressibly more wonderful and everlasting. She will see her Bridegroom coming to her--His reward with Him, as Scripture says (Revelation 22:12)--to repay her all that she suffered for His sake.

It's not hard to imagine that among the festivals celebrated in heaven there will be harvest festivals and festivals with rewards. Every sacrifice and act of dedication "sown" here by His bride will bear heavenly fruit. Jesus will display to her the wonderful harvest that has come from the sufferings she endured with Him and for Him--the times she trusted Him in darkest spiritual night, her ever

new repentance, the paths of lowliness she chose to tread, the sacrifices prompted by love for Him, and the disgrace she bore for His sake. All the love she showed Him and others, including her enemies, is transformed by Jesus into glory, which He now confers on her. In the words of the psalmist:

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

Psalms 126:5,6

A Bride Worthy of the King

Jesus loves His bride so dearly that He has planned something inexpressibly wonderful for her. Raised to a heavenly dignity at His side, she is to reflect His glory for all eternity, even being conformed to His likeness, as the Word of God says:

Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son... Those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Romans 8:29,30

If such a statement were not in the Bible, we would never let it cross our lips. But incredible though these words are, they are expressive of the love of Jesus. He can transform us into His image, because He has paid the full price for our redemption. During His earthly life, particularly from Gethsemane to Calvary, He suffered immeasurably. There seemed to be no end to His suffering. Jesus continually had to endure new agony in body, soul and spirit. Many times He was near death before crying out on the cross, "It is finished!"

But if the sufferings of Jesus were immeasurably great, so were the benefits He obtained for us through them. It would have been enough for all eternity if Jesus had atoned for our sins and forgiven them, so that God would remember them no more. But He even wants to mould us sinners into His own image, the loveliest of all. Who can believe it! We are to be flawless, raised to His side, full of glory, reflecting the great love shining from His face, the joy pervading the City of God, and perfect humility. Unbelievable when we think of ourselves and our pride!

Yet this humility will adorn the bride in the City of God, ennobling her; and the Lord will rejoice over her with gladness (see Zephaniah 3:17). All the angels will worship and cry out: O Lamb of God, this You accomplished through Your suffering and the shedding of Your precious blood. How infinitely great Your suffering must have been to make a new creation of such sinners! We praise and adore You, O Lamb that was slain. Through Your work of redemption You have made it possible for souls actually to bear Your image, reflect the glory of God and dwell in the City of God, where they now reign with You from Your throne.

For all eternity the bride will live in His kingdom of everlasting beauty. Jesus went there ahead of her, as He said, to prepare her a place (John 14:3), a dwelling at the sight of which she will feel as if she were dreaming. Then Jesus will reveal to her His heart, and she will come to know Him as she never did on earth. Her love and thanksgiving will be so kindled as a result that

Her heart would burst if she still possessed an earthly body.

Another special experience awaits the bride, who has been conformed to His image. On earth she had a foretaste of it. Time and again in the midst of suffering she knew what it meant to be a beloved child of the Father through Jesus Christ. As the Son's bride she experienced the tenderness of the Father's love, the warmth of His comfort, and miraculous instances of help--though, naturally, discipline and testings as

well. And we can well imagine that now in heaven Jesus Himself will present His bride to the Father. What a unique moment that will be when the Father beholds His child, the bride of the Lamb, transformed into the likeness of His Son and radiantly beautiful! Then His heart will overflow with joy and all of heaven will resound with adoration and rejoicing: From a depraved humanity God has selected His firstfruits, who are enkindled with a bridal love for Jesus. Through the suffering and dying of His Son, He has prepared them so that He can now celebrate the wedding with them.

In amazement the bride will fall down ever anew before the Lamb of God, her Bridegroom, as she sees Him in His majesty. She will be unable to comprehend that a sinner like herself may bear the image of Jesus. Because she is now transformed into His likeness, she has the privilege of sharing her Bridegroom's life in His kingdom--the concerns of His heart, including His loving purposes for the world. She will participate in the infinite joy and happiness to be found only in

heaven. On earth such bliss would be more than she could bear. Her life in the world to come, her eternal and real life, will be a thousand times more wonderful than all the joys of an earthly bridal love, for she will be united eternally with Jesus in perfect love.

In the City of God the bride will receive overwhelming tokens of honour from her Bridegroom and all the angelic world. But her sole desire will be that tribute be paid to the One who excels all else and who alone is worthy of the greatest honour--Jesus. And so she will join in the thundering chorus of adoration that will make the heavens ring: "Glory, glory to the Lamb!"

Yes, she will want to worship Him as the wounded Lamb of God, who through His sacrificial death redeemed the bride and glorified her, enabling her to partake of the glory of God, His various attributes. For her, this is something so tremendous and inconceivable that she never ceases to be amazed: "A sinner like me chosen to be a bride of Jesus Christ and called to the wedding of the Lamb! How can it be!" Such grace both elates and awes her. She will never be able to fathom this most sublime mystery--God's marriage covenant with His Church, Jesus' covenant with His bride.

Joy and delight will overwhelm the bride when she now experiences in all its fullness what the Lord promised her in His Word:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

There will probably be a celebration with great rejoicing every time a bride enters heaven--one in whom Jesus was able to complete His work and whom He could change into His image. Then Jesus will be praised for having accomplished this through His sufferings. Homage will be paid to the Sovereign Lord on His throne. Joy beyond compare will fill "the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23), all those who have already reached the heavenly goal and are privileged to live in the City of God. Multitudes will come streaming "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its thousands of angels" and join in the "joyful gathering" (Hebrews 12:22,23 GNB). The angels will be filled with amazement and great joy to see the glory of those whom they had known as weak, often loathsome, sinners. And all of heaven will join in the adoration of the Lamb.

But how much more will Jesus, the Bride- groom, rejoice at the sight of His bride! And per- haps He will address her in the words of the Song of Songs: "You are all fair, my love; there is no flaw in you" (4:7 RSV).

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