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# *Intimacy*

*To be completely loved  
while fully known.*

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face;  
now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

1 Corinthians 13.12



## Why Pursue A Grand Unified Theology?

### **1** Understanding the “Big Picture” helps us make sense of the details.

Proverbs 9.10: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

### **2** A comprehensive theology dictates the spirit in which we fulfill our prime directives.

Our comprehensive theology will dictate whether we advance God’s kingdom in a spirit of love, or in a spirit of militant self-righteousness.

### **3** A comprehensive theology provides the hermeneutic for ambiguous passages of Scripture.

For example, even with the precision of Greek, Acts 2.38 can grammatically be interpreted two ways: “Repent for the forgiveness of sins,” or, “Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.” A comprehensive theology of reconciliation dictates which interpretation is correct.

### **4** A comprehensive theology will help us prioritize our tasks in the work of the kingdom.

A comprehensive theology should point us to what is ultimately important. We will never have our lives and ministries properly aligned until we have settled on what is the one thing that is more important than anything else, because it is God’s ultimate intention.

Jesus said to them,  
“The attendants of the bridegroom  
cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they?  
But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them,  
and then they will fast.”

Matthew 9.15

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## How Shall We Assess A Comprehensive Theology?

### **1 Is it biblical?**

Is it consistent with the clear statements in Scripture regarding God's acts and purposes? Are all of its theses complimentary to the central teachings of the historic Christian faith? If Scripture does not declare the core idea explicitly, is the core idea the **inference to the best explanation** in light of the biblical data (see Moreland and Craig, p. 55).

### **2 Is it anchored in God's eternal character?**

Does it describe God as primarily acting according to His eternal intentions rather than simply responding to developments in human history? Will it still have force throughout the coming ages, after the Great Commission is fulfilled?

### **3 Does it have strong explanatory power?**

Does it provide answers for historically challenging questions; will it help us answer any of mankind's **ultimate questions** (see next page)? Does it answer more questions than it raises? Does it integrate a high percentage of the established truths of historic Christianity?

### **4 Is it a practical improvement over other theologies?**

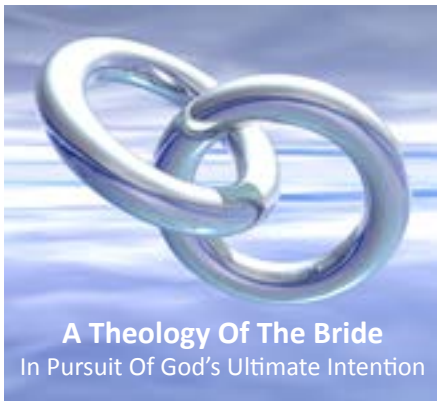
Is it more apt to promote holiness among God's people, and does it provide fresh impetus for fulfilling the Great Commission?

### **5 Does it exalt Christ and His interests above human concerns?**

Does it provide a greater purpose for the Church beyond the priority of "getting people saved"?

"He who has the bride is the bridegroom;  
but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him,  
rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.  
So this joy of mine has been made full."

John The Baptist, John 3.29



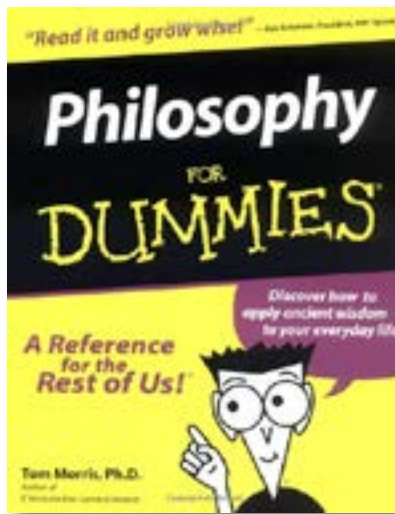
## The Ultimate Questions That People Have Asked

1. **Teleology:** What is the purpose and meaning of life?
2. **Happiness:** What is the most direct path to true fulfillment?
3. **Ethics:** What is right and what is wrong?
4. **Theology:** What is God's nature and character?
5. **History**
  - A. Why has history unfolded as it has? Why is evil in the world?
  - B. What are the ultimate origins of competing religious myths?
6. **Epistemology**
  - A. What forms of knowledge are reliable?
  - B. Can the observable universe be rationally understood?
7. **Ontology**
  - A. What is the nature of existence?
  - B. Is there a supernatural realm?
  - C. What was the origin of life?
  - D. What does it mean to be human?

The ultimate questions are those whose answers provide a working framework for life. As such, they are integral to what we call our worldview. A worldview is simply the mental grid or lens through which we think about and understand the world and our place in it. The more directly we study the ultimate questions, the more consciously, consistently and effectively we will live out our worldview.

Few people do the hard work to answer all the ultimate questions, but every person either answers them or makes assumptions about them in order to function as a human being. For a much fuller explanation of the ultimate questions, please download the pdf document, in which I introduce them: [http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/THE\\_THEO\\_A.pdf](http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/THE_THEO_A.pdf)

If you would like to explore these questions further, I highly recommend starting with a copy of Tom Morris's book, misleadingly titled, *Philosophy For Dummies*. A better title for this book would be *Philosophy Well Taught*.





# The Theology Of The Bride

## A Synopsis

### THE THEOLOGY STATED

The reason for all creation is the overflow of the Father's love for the Son. The expression of the Father's love for the Son will be multiplied through the building (cf. LXX of Gen 2.2 with GNT of Mat 16.18) of a suitable, corporate bride, who loves much for having been forgiven much (cf. Luk 7.47). The preparation of the bride (Rev 19.7) involves

the Father's love being perfected in her (1Jo 4.12) as she learns deep obedience to the greatest commandment (Mat 22.37-38), and does all things for God's glory (1Co 10.31) in order to attract others to the heavenly Bridegroom (Rev 22.17). In this theology, Eve is the archetypal bride, Israel is the prototype of the corporate bride, and the Church is the bride in her fullness who absorbs the other two.

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE BRIDE IS BASED UPON THESE TRUTHS:

1. God has no inherent lack or deficiency.
2. God is inherently relational, i.e., a Trinity.
3. God is love (1John 4.16).
4. The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world (John 17. 24).
5. The eternal Son of God became man without ceasing to be God (John 1.1-3,14).
6. The greatest commandment is not to glorify God, but to love God (Matthew 22.37-38). Scripture commands us to do all things for God's glory (1Corinthians 10.31), but this mandate is ancillary to the greater commandment.
7. Among all His creatures, God created only one species in His relational image (Genesis 1.26-28).

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE BRIDE DEPENDS UPON:

1. Monotheism (contra pagan polytheism).
2. An inherently relational God (taught by biblical Trinitarianism, but downplayed by Economic Trinitarianism, and contra Hinduism and Islam).
3. A God who is love personified (1John 4.16).
4. A God-Man who is unique among all other human beings (cf. John 3.29-30; contra Gnosticism and New Age).
5. Christocentrism (contra Secular Humanism).
6. Creatures made in God's relational image (contra Darwinism).
7. A high view of marriage (contra Gnosticism; contra post-modern sexual ethics).

# Biblical Terms With Nuptial Connotations

Creating a **Logos**® Bible Software visual filter using the following terms will cause them to be highlighted wherever they occur in Scripture. This will change the way you read the Bible.

Adorn	Engage	Marry
Adornment	Engaged	Nuptial
Adulterer	Espousal	One Flesh
Adulteress	Espouse	Ornament
Adultery	Faithful	Place
Anoint	Faithless	Pledge
Array	Feast	Prepare
Banquet	Garland	Rest
Barter (Psa 16.4)	Garment	Ring
Bathe	Gift	Robe
Betroth	Give	Spouse
Body	Harlot	Stick
Bone [and] Flesh	Headdress	Supper
Bridal	Hold Fast	Swear
Bride	Home	Table
Bridegroom	House	Torch
Canopy	Household	Turban
Chalice	Husband	Unfaithful
Chamber	Intimacy	Unveiled
Cleave	Intimate	Veil
Cling	Invitation	Veiled
Clothes	Invite	Virgin
Clothing	Jealous	Wash
Conjugal	Jealousy	Wedding
Covenant	Jewel	Widow
Covering	Jewelry	Wife
Crown	Join	Wine
Cup	Kiss	Wives
Divorce	Know	Woman
Dowry	Knowledge	
Dwelling	Lamp	
Earring	Love	
Embroider	Marriage	





## Jewish Festivals And The Theology Of The Bride

Tim Hegg proposes that the five biblical festivals were decreed by God as illustrations of His love for His people, and hence follow the pattern of a wedding.<sup>1</sup> The significance of the feasts is not limited to their nuptial allusions/connotations, but this aspect of the holidays is often overlooked. The Passover (*Pesach*) begins the cycle, followed by the Feast of Pentecost (*Shavuot*), Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*), Yom Kippur, and Booths (*Sukkot*).

The Passover commemorates the redemption of Israel, and foreshadows the redemption of all the elect, by the God who chose the nation and purchased it for a price (cf. 1Co 6.20,23). This festival parallels the eastern custom of the groom and his father paying a bride price, as the first step in the betrothal process.

The first Pentecost occurred at Mt. Sinai, and commemorates the giving of the law, an event that parallels the presentation of the *ketubbah*, marriage contract, at a Jewish wedding. The biblical prophets, and Jewish rabbis to this day, consider the making of the Sinai covenant as the betrothal or marriage of God to Israel.

Jewish people understand the blowing of the trumpets (*shofars*) at *Rosh Hashanah* as a call to return and repent. In the betrothal/marriage between God and Israel, this is understood as God graciously exercising His right to call His wayward bride back to faithfulness.

Ten days after *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, is a day of cleansing. Perhaps this mirrors the ritual bath of the bride immediately prior to the wedding. Paul alludes to this nuptial washing in Eph 5.25 where he attributes the brides cleansing to the word of the gospel.

The Feast of Booths (*Sukkot*) commemorates the time in the wilderness when God made the Israelites live in tents or booths (Lev 23.42-43), even as He dwelt with them in the tabernacle. This feast also looks forward to the time when God will fully dwell with His people (Rev 21.3). When will this occur? Immediately after the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19.7-9)!

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<sup>1</sup> Hegg, Tim. *Introduction To Torah Living*, (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2010), pp. 134-137.

# The Redemption Connection

## Widowed Humanity

### Leviticus 25 (NIV)

23 “The land must not be sold permanently, because **the land is mine** and you are but aliens and my tenants.  
24 Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.  
25 “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. 26 If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, 27 he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property.  
28 But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.

Eschatological parallels to the kinsman-redeemer scenario from Lev 25.23-28 and Jer 32.1-15:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| A. A man receives a property as a perpetual inheritance.                      | • Adam receives dominion of the earth, Genesis 1.26.                             |
| B. The man sells his inheritance and does not have the means to redeem it.    | • Adam & Eve “sell out” their domain to Satan, Genesis 3.6.                      |
| C. A near relative buys (redeems) the property to keep it in the family.      | • Christ pays man’s debt at the cross, 1 Corinthians 1.30.                       |
| D. The deed is sealed and witnessed.  | • Redemption sealed by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1.13,14.                       |
| E. Sometime later the sealed deed is brought forth.                           | • The sealed scroll held forth in heaven, Revelation 5.1.                        |
| F. The redeemer takes possession of the property.                             | • Christ takes possession of the earth, Revelation 11.15.                        |
| G. Widow without heir is married to redeemer.                                 | • <b>Humanity, widowed from law, married to the Lamb, Rom. 7.4; Rev. 19.7-9.</b> |
| H. The original family line once again exercises authority over the property. | • Holy humanity again rules the earth, Revelation 5.10.                          |



# Typological Passages

## Undergirding The Theology Of The Bride

**The Forming Of Adam And Building Of Eve** — Genesis 2; cf. Matthew 16.18.

**Abraham (Exalted Father) Obtains A Bride For His Only Begotten Son** — Genesis 24; cf. Hebrews 11.17.

**Suffering Joseph Saves His World And Wins A Priestly Bride** — Genesis 41.

**The Sojourning Shepherd-Prince Marries A Priestly Bride** — Exodus 2.16-22.

**The Marriage of God and Israel At Mount Sinai, With Concluding Marriage Supper** — Exodus 19-24.

**The Redeemer Responsible For The Fruitfulness Of The Widowed Bride** — Deu 25.5-10; cf. Romans 7.2-4.

**Rahab The Harlot, Redeemed With Her Family, Becomes A Bride In Israel** — Joshua 2; 6.17-25; Matthew 1.5.

**Othniel Wins The Bride** — Joshua 15.15-19; Judges 1.12-15.

**The Redeemer Marries The Humble Widow** — Ruth

**The Anointed David Marries Abigail (Delight Of The Father), Widowed From Nabal (Futility)** — 1Samuel 25.

**The Royal Bride Who Who Intercedes For Her People** — Esther

**Marriage Of The King** — Psalm 45.

**Woman Of Peace, King Of Peace And The Pursuit Of Intimacy** — Song of Songs.

**Parable Of The Wedding Feast** — Matthew 22.2-14.

**A Woman With A Non-Husband And The Man Who Fulfills** — John 4.1-42.

**A Tale Of Two Cities: The Great Prostitute And The Bride Of The Lamb** — Revelation.

## Prophetic Foundations

**The Bridegroom Like The Sun** — Psalm 19.

**The Shepherd Bridegroom Brings The Bride To His Home** — Psalm 23.5-6; cf. John 14.2-3.

**Jerusalem The Bridal Crown** — Isaiah 62.1-7.

**Messiah In Wedding Garments** — Isaiah 61.10-11.

**Remembering The Honeymoon In The Wilderness** — Jeremiah 2.1-3.

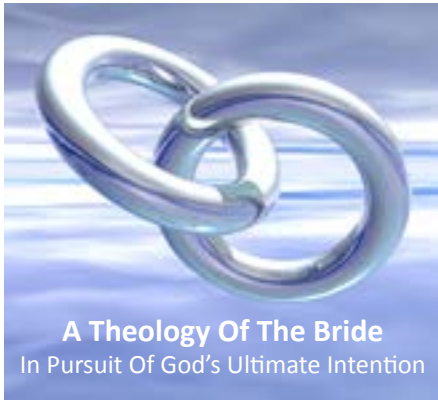
**God's Betrothal Of The Proto-Bride** — Ezekiel 16.1-14.

**God Calls For The Return Of His Wayward Bride** — Hosea.

**Wise And Foolish Virgins** — Matthew 25.1-13.

**A Reminder From The Friend Of The Bridegroom** — 2 Corinthians 11.2

**The Glorious Promise** — Revelation 19.7-9.



## The Theology Of The Bride Reflections Through The Centuries

**O**de 38.7 But Truth was proceeding on the upright way,  
and whatever I did not understand he declared to me:  
8 All the drugs of error,  
and pains of death which are considered sweetness.  
9 And the corrupting of the Corruptor,  
I saw when the Bride who was corrupting was adorned,

and the Bridegroom who corrupts and is corrupted.

10 And I asked the Truth, Who are these?

And he said to me: This is the Deceiver and the Error.

11 And they imitate the Beloved and his Bride,  
and they cause the world to err and corrupt it.

12 And they invite many to the wedding feast,  
and allowed them to drink the wine of their intoxication;

13 So they cause them to vomit up their wisdom and their knowledge,  
and make them senseless.

14 Then they abandon them; and so they stumble about like mad and corrupted men.

15 Since there is no understanding in them, neither do they seek it.

16 But I have been made wise so as not to fall into the hands of the deceivers,  
and I myself rejoiced because the Truth had gone with me. — *Odes Of Solomon*, c. 100.

**O**de 42.8 Like the arm of the bridegroom over the bride,  
so is my yoke over those who know me.

9 And as the bridal feast is spread out by the bridal pair's home,  
so is my love by those who believe in me. — *Odes Of Solomon*, c. 100.

**L**o! a maiden met me, 'adorned as if coming forth from the bridal chamber,' all in white  
and with white sandals, veiled to the forehead, and a turban for a head-dress, but her  
hair was white. I recognised from the former visions that it was the Church, and I rejoiced  
... — *Shepherd of Hermas*, Vision 4.2.1-2, "The Ancient Lady," c. 150.

**A**n Epithalamion:

1. My Church is the daughter of light,  
the splendour of kings is hers.
2. Charming and winsome is her aspect,  
fair and adorned with every good work.
3. Her garments are like flowers  
whose smell is fragrant and sweet....
  11. Her bridal chamber is lit up  
and full of the fragrance of salvation.

12. A censer is prepared in its midst,  
love and faith and hope gladdening all.

13. Within is steadfastness, all humble;  
her gates are adorned with truth.

14. Her groomsmen surround her,  
all whom she has invited,

15. and her pure bridesmaids  
go before her, uttering praise.

16. The living minister before her  
and look for their Bridegroom to come,

17. and they shall shine with his glory  
and shall be with him in the kingdom

which never passes away ... — From the Syriac *Acts Of Judas Thomas*, c. 250.

**T**hekla, standing in the midst of the virgins on the right of Arete, decorously sang; but the rest, standing together in a circle after the manner of a chorus, responded to her: “I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.”

THEKLA. 1. From above, O virgins, the sound of a noise that wakes the dead has come, bidding us all to meet the Bridegroom in white robes, and with torches towards the east. Arise, before the King enters within the gates.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 2. Fleeing from the sorrowful happiness of mortals, and having despised the luxuriant delights of life and its love, I desire to be protected under Thy life-giving arms, and to behold Thy beauty for ever, O blessed One.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee....

THEKLA. 5. I forget my own country, O Lord, through desire of Thy grace. I forget, also, the company of virgins, my fellows, the desire even of mother and of kindred, for Thou, O Christ, art all things to me.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee....

THEKLA. 20. In hymns, O blessed spouse of God, we attendants of the Bride honour Thee, O undefiled virgin Church of snow-white form, dark haired, chaste, spotless, beloved.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee....

THEKLA. 24. O blessed One, who inhabited the undefiled seats of heaven without beginning, who governed all things by everlasting power, O Father, with Thy Son, we are here, receive us also within the gates of life.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee. — Methodius, “Hymn To The Bridegroom,” *The Banquet Of The Ten Virgins* 11.2, c. 300.

**H**e is the Bridegroom and the Apostles are the ‘Betrothers’, and we are the Bride; let us prepare our dowry. — Aphrahat, c. 340.



**B**e jealous over me who am Thine, and to Thee, O my Lord: I am I betrothed! The Apostle who betrothed me to Thee, told me that Thou art jealous. For as a wall to chaste wives is the jealousy of their husbands. — Ephrem, *The Nisibene Hymns*, c. 350.

**B**lessed art thou, Bride and crowned one, to whom came the Bridegroom whom Zion hated! — Ephrem, *Hymn On Shechem*, c. 350.

**B**ut now the Song of Songs is a certain spiritual pleasure of holy minds, in the marriage of that King and Queen-city, that is, Christ and the Church. But this pleasure is wrapped up in allegorical veils, that the Bridegroom may be more ardently desired, and more joyfully unveiled ... — Augustine, *City Of God* 17.20.11, 426.

**T**hat we may not forsake the pure wedlock and marriage of our husband and noble bridegroom, Jesus Christ, Son of the King of heaven and earth, for the impure wedlock of a servant of his, so that our soul and body may be a consecrated temple to the Holy Spirit, that we may accompany the blameless lamb, that we may sing the song that only the virgins sing, that we may merit the crown of eternal glory in the unity of the company of heaven, in the presence of the Trinity, forever and ever. Amen. — *Celtic Litany Of The Virgin And All Saints*, c. 770.

**H**is visits with the inward man are frequent, His communion sweet and full of consolation, His peace great, and His intimacy wonderful indeed. Therefore, faithful soul, prepare your heart for this Bridegroom that He may come and dwell within you .... — Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation Of Christ* 2.1. c. 1420.

**T**he church of Christ is the bride of Christ, and he will not that his bride conceive but of the incorruptible seed, 1 Pet. 1:23, as Paul says, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,” 2 Cor. 11:2. Yea, Paul would have the bride or church so pure, that if there were any who caused divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they had learned, they should be avoided. — Menno Simons, *Letter 1*, c. 1550.

**F**or, in order to overcome our desires, and to deny ourselves in all things, our love and inclination for which are wont so to inflame the will that it delights therein, we require another and greater fire of another and nobler love—that of the Bridegroom—so that having all our joy in Him, and deriving from Him all our strength, we may gain such resolution and courage as shall enable us easily to abandon and deny all besides. It was necessary, in order to subdue our sensual desires, not only to have this love for the Bridegroom, but also to be on fire therewith.... — St. John of the Cross, *Ascent Of Mount Carmel*, 1579.

**T**his, This is the main intent and business of the Evangelical Ministry. The Ministers of the Gospel are those Friends of the Bridegroom, that have a Work to do upon that Noble Design; To Espouse the Souls of their People, unto a Glorious Christ, who is willing to become an Husband unto them....

The SPIRIT of GOD inclining the Soul to say unto the SAVIOUR, the Justifier, the Sanctifier, Oh! when will thou come unto me! He does thereby make that Soul a Bride for the SON of GOD. It is the Bride that says COME! ...

Verily all the joy that can be wish'd for, belongs unto thee, if thou art Espoused unto CHRIST JESUS. Thou art now Espoused unto One, who is the Most High Possessor of Heaven and Earth; Espoused unto One, who has unsearchable Riches. O Wealthy Soul! O Happy Soul! The Great GOD now sends this Advice unto thee, Be of good Cheer; thy Sins are forgiven thee! The Spouse of his own SON can't ly under a Sentence of Death. Yea, He has taken all thy Filthy Garments from thee; and being the KINGS Daughter, he makes thee All Glorious within, and thy Covering is of Spangled Robes which are Inlaid with Gold; In Robes of Needle Work, thou shalt be brought in unto the King. He that sits on the Throne of GOD calls thee His Hephzibah, and says, my Delight is in thee. Yea, He will make all the Heavens to know that He has Loved thee. O Happy Soul! Being Espoused unto thy SAVIOUR, His FATHER becomes thy FATHER; His GOD becomes thy GOD. — Cotton Mather, "The Mystical Marriage," 1728.

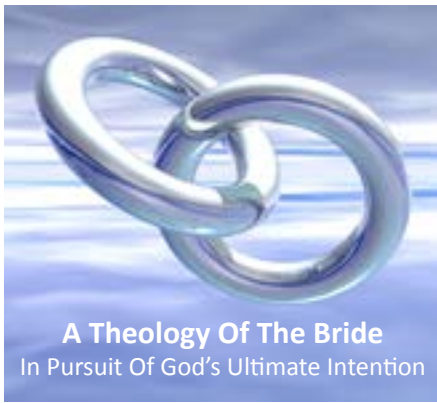
**T**hus it appears reasonable to suppose, that it was God's last end, that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fullness of good *ad extra*, or without himself, and that the disposition to communicate himself, or diffuse his own fullness, was what moved him to create the world. — Jonathan Edwards, *The End For Which God Created The World*, c. 1745.

**T**he Saint's Conversion is rather like the betrothing of the intended Bride to her Bridegroom before they come together; but the Time of the Saint's Glorification is the Time when that shall be fulfilled in Psal. 45. 15. With Gladness and Rejoycing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's Palace. That is the Time when those that Christ loved, and gave himself for, that he might sanctify and cleanse them, as with the washing of Water by the Word, shall be presented to him in Glory, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any such Thing. The Time wherein the Church shall be brought to the full Enjoyment of her Bridegroom, having all Tears wiped away from her Eyes; and there shall be no more Distance or Absence. She shall then be brought to the Entertainments of an eternal Wedding-Feast, and to dwell eternally with her Bridegroom; yea to dwell eternally in his Embraces. Then Christ will give her his Loves; and she shall drink her Fill, yea she shall swim in the Ocean of his Love. — Jonathan Edwards, "The Church's Marriage to her Sons, and to her GOD," 1746.

**T**he creation of the world seems to have been especially for this end, that the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse towards whom he might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of his nature, and to whom he might, as it were, open and pour forth all that immense fountain of condescension, love, and grace that was in his heart, and that in this way. — Ibid.

**A**nd indeed it must give every true and faithful Minister a very painful and affecting Concern to see ... them that they have laboured to espouse to one Husband, Christ, snared and led away after other Lovers; for how shall they present such as a chaste Virgin to Christ. That they may be the happy Instruments of Souls being espoused to Christ, and present them finally, to





him, pure, holy and spotless is the great Design of their Office.... — Peter Powers, “The Espousing of Souls to Christ the great End of the Gospel Ministry,” 1765.

**T**hus there can be no doubt that God’s nature of love was central to His purpose in creating men and women. In some mysterious depths of God’s own nature, there seems to have been a desire for other spiritual personalities (other than within the Godhead itself) on whom He could bestow His love....

God must have had a good reason for “building up” Eve in this peculiar way. From the New Testament we infer that there were certain great spiritual truths which were being pictured in this symbolic action, as well as the more immediately meaningful truth that Adam and Eve were truly “one flesh” and should thus serve their Creator together in unity and singleness of heart. — Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings*, 1976.

**A**ll life is courtship .... — Peter Kreeft, *Three Philosophies Of Life*, p.94, 1989.

**I**n the Song of Songs it must be the groom and not the bride who symbolizes God, the bride and not the groom who symbolizes the soul. The reason for this “sexism” is not that male is superior but that when God touches us he performs the male, not the female, function, analogically: he impregnates the soul, not vice versa. That is the deepest reason why throughout the Bible the human image for God is male, never female. It is only an image, of course, and not literal; God has no body and thus no biological sex at all. But the image images something, and that something is the relationship that the inventors of these images experienced: they all experienced God as the husband of the soul. The fact that God spiritually impregnates us and not vice versa, the fact that God creates new life in us and not vice versa, and the fact that God comes into us and not vice versa, cannot be changed any more than the fact that a man impregnates a woman and not vice versa can be changed. No matter how much we rant and rave, we cannot change the essential, eternal laws of the very structure of reality to conform to our latest ideological fashions and fancies. — *Ibid.*, p. 138.

**S**ong of Songs ... finds a place in the Torah, so Judaism has always maintained, because the collection of love songs in fact speaks about the relationship between God and Israel. — Jacob Neusner, *Midrash Reader*, 1990.

**S**ong of Songs ... has held a significant place in the affections of the synagogue and the church. In Israel the book came to be associated liturgically with the greatest Hebrew festival, being read on the eighth day of Passover. During the first fifteen centuries of the Christian church, most major Christian writers turned their attentions to this little work. Neither Jews nor Christians have been able to ignore it. Pope, with reason, says that no other composition of comparable size (117 verses) in world literature “has provoked or inspired such a volume and variety of comment and interpretation” (p. 17). His commentary amply documents his statement. — Dennis F. Kinlaw, “Song of Songs,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 1991.

Throughout his instructions to wives (vv. 22–24) and to husbands (vv. 25–30), he draws parallels between the Christian marriage of a man and a wife and the ultimate marriage of Christ and his church. It follows that the betrothal of the church to Christ (2 Cor. 11:1–3), and the union of the believer with Christ (1 Cor. 6:16–17), are not mere metaphors. They are the reality to which a Christian marriage points when it demonstrates the beauty described in Ephesians 5. In 1 Corinthians 7:27–38 Paul affirms that marriage is good, but also that the greatest human allegiance is to Christ himself....

... It is the heavenly marriage that warrants and dignifies an earthly marriage. In Paul's reasoning, therefore, human marriage is not the reality for which Christ and the church provide a sermonic illustration, but the reverse. Human marriage is the earthly type, pointing towards the spiritual reality.... — R. C. Ortlund, Jr., "Marriage," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2000.

The Lord of the seven churches encourages His faithful ones to purity and patient endurance by describing the hope that they have of participating in the New Jerusalem, the virginal and serene bridal city of the Lamb (21:2). — Warren Austin Gage, *John's Gospel: A Neglected Key to Revelation?* 2001.

This wedding frame to the whole biblical narrative makes the history of redemption into a great romance....

The pattern for the biblical story of redemption is the eastern wedding. The Lord Jesus made this comparison in His parables of the wedding feast and the wise and foolish virgins. For example, Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son" (Matt 22:2). In the ancient East it was the father who chose the bride for his son, a bride who would be both an appropriate daughter for the family and a suitable spouse for his son, one who would fulfill every desire of his son's heart. Once the bride was betrothed to his son, however, the couple waited for a year apart from each other for the bride to prove her probity. This was the circumstance encountered by Joseph, for example, when he suspected impurity on the part of his espoused bride, Mary (Matt 1:18). If the bride was proven to have been impure, a divorce was justly permitted in law to the aggrieved groom (Matt 1:19). If the bride proved faithful, a bridal price was paid by the groom to the bride's family (the "mohar," Gen 34:12, Exod 22:17, 1 Sam 18:25). Upon the appointed day, the groom came for the bride, as recounted in the parable of the wise virgins (Matt 25:1–13). The bride went with her groom to the marriage feast which the groom's father had prepared for the invited guests (Matt 22:4). The groom then took his bride to his own house, and she became his wife and he became her husband (Rev 19:6–9, 21:2)....

In this light the account of biblical redemption began with the choice of Father God of a bride for His Son. He chose an elect bride who would be the great delight of His Son's heart. But this bride, so favored of heaven, fell into great immorality and lost her purity. She who had been betrothed as a virgin became a whore. As a consequence, the Son could have justly divorced her. But in a remarkable and wholly unexpected turn, the Father having chosen the bride for the Son, the Son loved her for His Father's choice. And so He paid an enormous sum as her dowry price, a price so great that this whorish bride was loved back to a sincere fidelity to her first espousals, and turned from harlotry to holiness. Now this bride, having made herself ready for her wed-



ding day, her purity being perfectly restored, awaits the Son of heaven. And He will surely come for her on the day when Father God presents His greatest gift to His Son, a bride whose redeemed beauty will yet stir every passion of His Son's heart. And she will be His bride, and He will be her Husband, and they will receive each other as heirs of life forever. — Warren Austin Gage, *Theological Poetics: Typology, Symbol and the Christ*, 2010.

The four women listed in Matthew's genealogy share a reputation (at least) of immorality, underscoring the evangelist's encouragement that Jesus will deliver the repentant from judgment, just as Joshua had spared Rahab. Taken together, the stories of these women from Matthew's genealogy prefigure a royal prince of Judah who will take a bride with an "irregular" history. Thematically, Matthew presents the gospel of the True Joshua, who rescues Rahab, and what is greater, takes her for a bride! — Warren Austin Gage, *Gospel Typology in Joshua and Revelation: A Whore and Her Scarlet, Seven Trumpets Sound, A Great City Falls*, 2013.

One of the greatest joys I find in teaching young ministers at a theological seminary is helping them shape a style of ministry. I encourage each of them to fashion a specific philosophy of ministry as they pursue the highest of all callings: the ministry of the church of the Lord Jesus. Many styles of ministry are worthy. Some ministers want to be a good shepherd. One who will seek and save the lost, heal the broken, defend against the lion and the bear, and teach the flock to hear the voice of the True Shepherd. Others develop a sense of calling that is best expressed in the role of the servant. One who humbles himself out of love for God's people and thus demonstrates the love of Jesus to the people he serves. Both of these ministry visions are worthy in their own right. But the noblest ministry calling, it seems to me, is to identify as the friend of the Bridegroom: one who, like Paul, consciously "espouses" his people to Christ and seeks their purity (2 Cor 11:2); one who, like John the Baptist, self-consciously understands that his role is to decrease as Christ increases in the hearts of God's people (John 3:27–30). — Warren Austin Gage, *The Romance of Redemption: Biblical Types of the Bride of Christ*, 2014.

## A Fresh Way To See The Sections Of The Bible

### **P**entateuch

The first section of the Bible records God's creation of the environment in which the great romance can unfold, and the origins of the archetype bride, Eve, and the prototype bride, Israel. It reveals the Bridegroom as a Holy Redeemer, and calls the Bride to priestly dominion (Exodus 19.6).

### **H**istory

The history section of the Bible is about the Bride being called to join her warrior Bridegroom (see Exodus 15.3) in the battle to reclaim dominion (see Judges 2.1-3.4).

### **P**oetry

The five books of poetry teach relational principles. They rehearse the glories of the Bridegroom (e.g., Job 38.1-42.6; Song of Songs 5.9-16) and call the Bride to fruitfulness (Job 42.7-17; Song of Songs 4.16).

### **P**rophecy

The books of prophecy underscore the faithfulness of the Bridegroom and the necessity of holiness in the Bride.

### **G**ospels and Acts

The first five books of the New Testament introduce the person of the long awaited Bridegroom. The two surprises are that the Bridegroom is *a servant* and the Bride He seeks is one who is *forgiven* (cf. Luke 7.47). These books record the explicit invitations to the wedding.

### **E**pistles

The epistles are about the wedding preparations. They underscore the graciousness of the Bridegroom, and the need for the Bride to become a servant like Him.

### **R**evelation

The Revelation proclaims the marriage of the Lamb and its necessary antecedents in human history. At last the victorious Bridegroom and the Ruling Bride are fully revealed.



# Chronological Anchor Points

For The Theology Of The Bride

## BC —Biblical And Other Jewish Authors

15,000-4,000 Proposed dates for Creation. The relational God makes creatures in His image; He builds (בְּנֵה) Eve, the archetypal bride, and institutes marriage.

1446 or 1275 God makes covenant with Israelites at Mt. Sinai, understood as a marriage between God and Israel, the prototype bride.

- c. 940 Solomon composes the Song of Songs.
- c. 750 Prophet Hosea calls God's wayward bride to repentance.
- c. 150 The apocryphal folktale of the faithful bride, Susanna, appended to the LXX version of Daniel.
- c. 100 The pseudepigraphal story of Joseph and Aseneth, provides an allegory of Messiah and converted Gentile(s) as the Bridegroom and the Bride.

## AD The Apostles, Fathers and Later Theologians

- 50-66 Paul's letters: Mystery of marriage has "reference to Christ and the church" (Eph 5).
- c. 95 The epistle of 1 Clement to the Corinthians provides a call to holiness and righteous living, but reveals no sense of bridal theology.  
The apocryphal Second Book of Esdras (aka IV Ezra), a Jewish work influenced by the NT, and perhaps with Christian interpolations, predicts a time when "the bride shall appear, and the city shine forth, that now is withdrawn."<sup>1</sup>
- c. 96 Book of Revelation: "the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready" (Rev 19.7-8).
- c. 100 The composition of the early Jewish-Christian psalms, known collectively as the *Odes of Solomon*, which not only speak of Christ as the bridegroom, but also make reference to the anti-Bridegroom and anti-Bride.<sup>2</sup>
- c. 150 2 Clement shows familiarity with the marriage motif in Scripture, but reveals no sense of Christ as Bridegroom.

*The Shepherd Of Hermas* written. In this work, the church appears

1 Lange, John Peter, Philip Schaff, and Edwin Cone Bissell, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Apocrypha* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008).  
2 Charlesworth, James H., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, Vol. 2, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985).

in visions to Hermas as a woman, at first older and afterwards younger. In the fourth vision, ch. 2, he sees the church as a virgin, “adorned as if she were proceeding from the bridal chamber, clothed entirely in white and with white sandals, veiled to the forehead,” and wearing a turban for a head-dress. The author had a sense of the Church’s bridal identity but did not develop it further.

Gnostic influenced *Acts Of John* decries human marriage in favor of marriage to “the one true incomparable bridegroom from heaven, even Christ, the everlasting bridegroom.”<sup>3</sup>

c. 204 Hippolytus in his *Commentary On Daniel* interprets Susanna as “the Church, the Bride of Christ, persecuted by two peoples, the Jews and the pagans.”<sup>4</sup> In another fragment of his writings, he interprets the maid-servant who supplants her mistress in Pro 30.23 as the bride of Christ.

c. 230 Hippolytus, *A Treatise On The Song Of Songs*.

c. 250 Gnostic influence is apparent in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* that contain anti-matrimonial legends, calling for chaste commitment to Jesus as the true bridegroom.<sup>5</sup> A hymn added in the Syriac version describes the Church with bridal imagery.<sup>6</sup>

The Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* speaks of the Church as a “Bride adorned for the Lord God.”<sup>7</sup> Also about this time, Origen writes his *Commentarium in Canticum canticorum*.

337-345 Syriac *Tractates* of Aphrahat, the Persian ascetic, who wrote to church bishops, in Demonstration 14, “You are apostles, ‘Betrothers’ of the Bride Adorned,” and “He is the Bridegroom and the Apostles are the ‘Betrothers’, and we are the Bride; let us prepare our dowry.”<sup>8</sup> Aphrahat saw Joseph as a type of Christ who married the Gentiles, and David as the type of Christ who married “two daughters of kings, the congregation of the People and the congregation of the Gentiles.”<sup>9</sup>

c. 365 The marriage of Christ and his Church a frequent theme in the hymns

3 James, Montague Rhodes, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament: Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

4 W. A. Jurgens, trans., *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970–1979), p. 163.

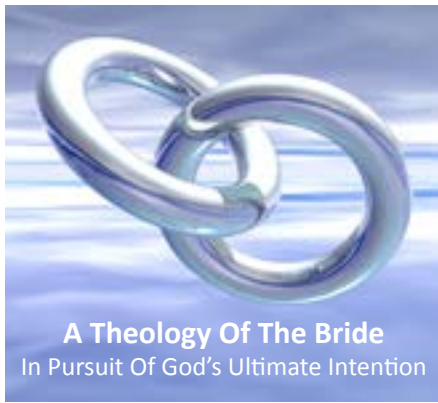
5 James, Montague Rhodes, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament: Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924). Also, Orr, James, ed., *New Testament Apocryphal Writings*, The Temple Bible (London; Philadelphia: J. M. Dent & Co.; J. B. Lippincott Co., 1903).

6 Murray, Robert, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom : A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 1975), pp. 133-134.

7 Gibson, Margaret Dunlop, tran., *The Didascalia Apostolorum in English*, *Horae Semiticae* (London: Cambridge University Press Warehouse; C. J. Clay and Sons, 1903).

8 Murray, Robert, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom : A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 1975).

9 Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace, eds., *Gregory the Great (Part II), Ephraim Syrus, Aphrahat*, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Vol 13, (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1898).



of Ephrem the Syrian.<sup>10</sup> Ephrem tended to emphasize the rejection of the Jewish bride, and the “trueness” and “innocence,” etc., of the Gentile Church.<sup>11</sup> In Syrian Christian tradition, crowning (a marriage custom) used at baptism to mark the espousal of a soul to Christ.<sup>12</sup>

- c. 370 Gregory of Elvira: *Explanation Of The Song Of Songs*.
- c. 380 Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies On The Song Of Songs*.
- c. 411 Aponius, *Exposition Of Song Of Songs*.
- c. 420 Nilus of Ancyra, *Commentary On The Song Of Songs*. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary On The Song Of Songs*.
- 553 Second Council of Constantinople anathematizes Theodore of Mopsuestia, condemning his writings that include a disavowal of the Song of Songs as having any theological meaning.<sup>13</sup>
- c. 585 Gregory the Great, *Commentary On The Song Of Songs*. Leander of Seville, *Homily On The Triumph Of The Church*.
- 600-1400 The Church considered the Bride, but due to countless nominal Christians, the Saints and Religious are seen as nearest to the Bridegroom.
- c. 710 Bede, *In Cantica canticoru*.
- c. 770 Celtic devotional texts include the “Litany of the Virgin and All Saints,” referring to “our husband and noble bridegroom, Jesus Christ, Son of the King of heaven and earth ....”
- 1127-1145 William of St-Thierry, expositions on the Song of Songs.
- 1483-1546 Life of the Martin Luther. Luther developed a theology of the cross, teaching the crucifixion as the lens through which we must know God and understand the biblical revelation.
- c. 1150 St. Bernard’s 86 sermons on the Song of Solomon.
- c. 1550 Menno Simons warns: keep the bride of Christ pure from papal error (*Complete Works* Vol. 1).
- 16<sup>th</sup> cent. Rise of Puritanism. Some of the Puritans would balance Luther’s “theol-

10 Murray, Robert, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom : A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 1975), p. 138.

11 Ibid., pp. 139-140.

12 Ibid., p. 141. See Ephrem’s, “HYMN CONCERNING OUR LORD AND JOHN” in Ephrem the Syrian, “Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany,” in *Gregory the Great (Part II), Ephraim Syrus, Aphrahat*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. by A. Edward Johnston, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Vol. 13, (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1898).

13 See L. D. Johnson, *Layman’s Bible Book Commentary: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song Of Solomon*, Vol. 9, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1982), p. 130.

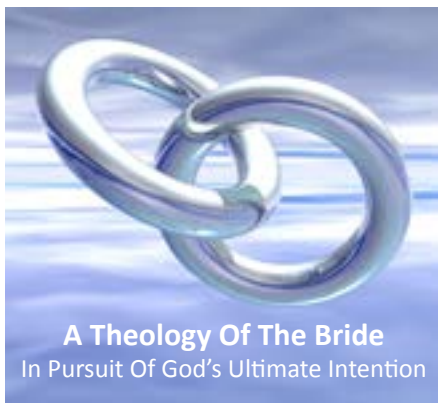
ogy of the cross” with a “theology of glory” that taught the realization of power and joy in the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

- 1580 St. John of the Cross writes *Ascent Of Mount Carmel*.
- c. 1690 Catholic proponent of quietism, Madame Jeanne Guyon, writes her influential commentary on the Song of Songs. She is soon arrested and imprisoned, probably for her perceived indifference to the sacraments.
- 1719-1728 New England Puritan and intellect, Cotton Mather, wrote essays on “A Glorious Espousal,” and “Mystical Marriage,” that gloried in the wonder of redeemed sinners being betrothed to Christ, and encouraged Christians to behave in their earthly marriages as befitting their spiritual marriage.
- 1727 Baptist hyper-Calvinist John Gill completes his allegorically over-the-top *Exposition Of The Book Of Solomon’s Song, Commonly Called Canticles*.
- 1732 The Moravians begin missionary endeavors; founder Zinzendorf teaches that the Moravian community “and each member of it are spiritual brides of Christ” (See Kurtz, *Church History*).
- 1746 Jonathan Edwards’ sermon: “The Church’s Marriage To Her Sons, And To Her God.”
- 1765 New England minister, Peter Powers, preaches a sermon on “The Espousing of Souls to Christ the Great End of the Gospel Ministry.” This was a call to ministers to be faithful “friends of the Bridegroom.”
- 1971 Richard A. Batey publishes *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*.
- 1989 Catholic philosopher-theologian, Peter Kreeft, publishes *Three Philosophies Of Life*: “all of life is courtship....”
- 1993 Nelly Stienstra publishes *YHWH Is The Husband Of His People: Analysis Of A Biblical Metaphor With Special Reference To Translation*.
- 1996 The International House of Prayer launches a twenty-part teaching series on topics relating to the Bride of Christ, entitled, “Pictures of the Bride in the Old Testament.”
- 1997 *The Catechism Of The Catholic Church* (CCC), states, in section 796, “The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride. The theme of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist. The Lord referred to himself as the ‘bridegroom.’ The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride ‘betrothed’ to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him. The Church is

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14 Bloesch, Donald G. *The Holy Spirit: Works & Gifts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, p. 119.





the spotless bride of the spotless Lamb.

2000 The Amsterdam Declaration states, "The church is the people of God, the body and the bride of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit... the church includes all the redeemed of all the ages...." (See Drummond, *The Canvas Cathedral*).

2002 Seock-Tae Sohn publishes *YHWH, The Husband Of Israel: The Metaphor Of Marriage Between YHWH And Israel*.

2006 Rhonda Calhoun, founder with her husband of the women's rescue ministry, Harvest Home, Inc., publishes, *The Bride: An Allegory Based On The Song Of Solomon*.

2010 The International House of Prayer launched a ten-part study entitled, "Studies on the Bride of Christ." The first installment states:

God's ultimate purpose for His creation is to provide a family for Himself and a Bride for His Son as His eternal companion to reign with Him forever (Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 19:7-9). The guiding principle of the Father's activity throughout history has been to raise up a prepared Bride for His worthy Son. He has been training the Bride to rule the earth with Jesus (Rev. 3:21; 5:10).

Warren Gage, *Theological Poetics*: "This wedding frame to the whole biblical narrative makes the history of redemption into a great romance."

2015 Mike and Anne Rizzo publish *Vertical Marriage* with a chapter on "Marriage Within The Bridal Paradigm."

## Questions That Can Be Addressed By The Theology Of The Bride

1. What is central to God's nature and character?
2. What is God's ultimate intention?
3. Why is loving God the greatest commandment (instead of glorifying God)?
4. Why did Lucifer rebel? If from envy, of what was he envious?
5. Why did God create; what is the purpose of everything (all creation)?
6. Why did God make creatures in His own image?
7. Why, in contrast to his forming of the other creatures, did God give special attention to building a suitable counterpart for Adam?
8. Why did God institute marriage and family for mankind?
9. Why is homosexual practice abominable?
10. What is the true basis for determining right and wrong?
11. Why did God allow evil to enter the universe and planet earth?
12. Why are there so many religions in the world, and what makes us think Christianity is the right one?
13. Why did God allow the fall of man into sin?
14. What was the "joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12.2; cf. Isaiah 61.10; 62.5; Zephaniah 3.17)?
15. What is "His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1.18)?
16. Why has God purposed to produce sons of God and siblings of Christ (Romans 8.19,29)?
17. Why is the Song of Songs in the canon, and how should it be interpreted?
18. Why is it that the essence of eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ (John 17.3)?
19. Why is true happiness found in loving God and loving people?
20. What does it mean to be human?



**A Theology Of The Bride**  
In Pursuit Of God's Ultimate Intention

## **Ideas I'm Taking Home** Applying The Theology Of The Bride

### **Personal Growth**

### **Teaching & Preaching**

### **Worship**

**Prayer**

**Outreach**

**Counseling**



## Select Bibliography

### Relating To The Theology Of The Bride

**Note: Inclusion in this bibliography does not imply complete endorsement of a work's contents by Roderick Graciano or Timothy Ministries.**

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— *The Bride of Christ* (Study Manual), (Grandview, MO: Heart Publishing, 2005). In this manual, along with her interpretation of the Song of Songs, Calhoun has correctly identified a good many scriptural passages with nuptial connotations that we have too often read with insufficient attention. The final section of her manual describes the parallels between Jewish betrothal customs and our covenant with Christ; this section is helpful but lacks source information for verifying the accuracy of the customs she describes.

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## Parting Thoughts On The Theology Of The Bride

“Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” (Jeremiah 2.32) Yet the #BrideOfChrist rarely thinks of her approaching wedding. — Roderick Graciano, tweet on 17 April 2016

The church relying on the imputed “#RighteousnessOfChrist” while eschewing repentance will be the hollow, desolate bride of Jeremiah 4.30. — Roderick Graciano, tweet on 17 April 2016

You can glorify God without loving Him (Exodus 14.17-18), but you can't love God without glorifying Him (Psalm 40.16). #GreatestCommandment — Roderick Graciano, tweet on 12 March 2016

Repeat what the friend of the Bridegroom says instead of drawing attention to yourself and away from the Bridegroom. — Augustine, SERMON 292.8

It was a notable saying of a holy man, *Quench Hell, and burn Heaven, yet I will love and fear my God.* — John Dod, *Old Mr. Dod's Sayings*, (Cambridge MA: Marmaduke Johnson, 1673)