

“Who Are We?”

Small Group Study

Study 3 – “We are the Bride of Christ”

1. Getting Started.

- a) What sort of preparations do you expect to see before a wedding? Share any personal experiences of problems getting ready for a wedding?

- b) Why are weddings usually such happy occasions?

2. The “Bride” Image.

Another of the key images that the New Testament uses to describe Christians is that we are “the Bride of Christ”.

- a) **Read Revelation 21:1-5.** When do you think the event described here is occurring? In general terms, how is the Bride described in these verses? Who is living in the ‘city’ here? (I think it is important to see here that the symbols of a ‘City’ and a ‘Bride’ are images that overlap in meaning).

- b) **Now read verses 6-14.** Describe the ‘Bride’ pictured here. What do you think might be the significance of the names written on its gates and foundations? (see also verse 27)

c) In what way, if at all, do these verses give God's people something to look forward to? (As background, it may be useful to remember that the people God is speaking to here, through the apostle John, were probably being persecuted for their faith). How do you feel about the picture of the Bride, in these verses? What does it mean for you, personally?

d) What does this image say about how God thinks about us? How does that differ from how we usually think about ourselves?

3. **Getting Practical.**

Weddings involve preparation, usually 'fine clothes' are worn by the Bride and Groom. Revelation pictures the people of God preparing for the wedding of the Lamb with this in mind.

a) **Read Revelation 19:6-9.** Why is this such a joyful scene? Discuss the reasons for your answer.

b) In what ways are those who are the "Bride of Christ" prepared for this event? What do you think this signifies?

c) Given that this event is what is ahead for Christians, what should we be concerned about now, as we prepare ourselves personally?

d) In what ways do you think expectation should influence how we think about other Christians? In practical terms, what might we do as a result? (Think of those in your small group, as well as those in the wider church).

e) Pray about how to do this.

4. **If you have time.**

Consider how this image works in Ephesians 5:22-33, and Matthew 22:1-14. Consider what in each case is emphasized by the use of the 'bride' image. At times, the Old Testament pictures God's people Israel as an unfaithful wife (see Hosea 2 and Ezek 16). In each case, God also speaks of a time to come when he will have a 'faithful wife' (Hosea 2:14ff, Ezekiel 16:59ff). How does this help us better understand the images in Revelation? What is the significance of this for us?

