

Note: this study skips Chapter 5 of Ironside's book. Chapter 5 seeks to convince readers that the prison epistles did not contain information of a new dispensation which were not found in Paul's previous epistles. In this regard, the chapter is accurate. However, the chapter also takes Ironside's previous assumption that the dispensation began at Pentecost, though he is unable to articulate the new revelation, and in this regard the chapter has inaccuracies. For the purpose of this study, we will say that Chapter 5 is 'more of the same' as found in Chapter 4.

IRONSIDE'S ARGUMENT

- They point out, what all Bible students readily admit, that in the Old Testament, Israel is called the bride and the wife of Jehovah. "Then," they exclaim, "how can the Lord have two wives without being guilty of the very thing that He Himself condemns in His creatures here on earth?" (Pg. 50)
 - The reader should insist that Ironside be able to answer this question: *can the Lord have two wives?*
- Ironside's objections to Israel as the bride:
 - He declares Himself to be both the *Father* of Israel and that Israel is His *son*.
 - Ironside quotes Hosea 11:1, not noting that this is a *Messianic* reference.
 - Ironside quotes Exodus 11:22-23, not mentioning that the Hebrew word *ben* is only masculine when context demands it to be so, and at its heart means "child."
 - The issue of the *Father* marrying the *child* does not go away if you make the *church* to be the bride.
 - He declares Israel to be both the *wife* and Himself to be the *divorced husband* of Israel.
 - He declares Israel to be a vine and also a nation of priests, can he also be a bride? (Ironside gives this argument to counteract the argument that says the church cannot be both the *body* and the *bride*.)
- "Paul sees no incongruity whatever in changing the figure from that of the Body to the Bride." (pg. 52)
 - While this is true, one should compare the clarity of Paul's discussion about the church as the *body* versus that of the church as *bride*. 1 Cor. 12:27 versus *not a single verse* that says the church is the bride (2 Corinthians 11:2 would be the closest, but when compared to the parable of the 10 virgins it certainly doesn't make any declarations).
- "These invited guests are distinguished from the Bride herself. They of course are another group of redeemed sinners, namely, Old Testament saints, and possibly some Tribulation saints who have been martyred for Christ's sake. These are the friends of the Bridegroom who rejoice in His happiness when He takes His Bride to Himself." (pgs. 53-54).
 - The Old Testament saints are simply guests at the wedding? This is an untenable position (without rejecting the entire tenor of the Hebrew Scriptures).
 - Were the Disciples part of the church before the day of Pentecost? If not, how does one reconcile Matthew 9:15 with Ironside's position? (Also Mark 2:19-20, Luke 5:34-35)
 - Ironside's reference to "friends of the Bridegroom" is a perversion of the Biblical passage. John claims to be a "friend" (singular) of the bridegroom, and his only point is that he is NOT the Christ. He says *nothing* of the identity of the bride, and certainly does not say that Israel are the *friends*. The passage is solely a reference to John the Baptist. (The book of Song of Solomon speaks of friends of the bridegroom, and these friends are always other nations friendly to Israel (see Song of Solomon 5:1).
- "How much we would lose if we lost this! And yet one is pained sometimes to realize how insensible Christians who ought to know better, can be as to its preciousness." (Pg. 54).
 - What would we lose if we lost this?
 - I know of no fundamental doctrine that is dependent upon this position.
 - What has it caused?
 - Replacement theology and anti-semitism.
 - Grotesque opulence of the church.

- Grounds for the position of nuns (who are claimed to be a visual representation of the bride, actually having a ceremony in which she is married to Christ).
 - Bad interpretations of the Song of Solomon.
- “But after all, if Israel is a divorced wife to be restored some day, and the Church is also a bride, is there not ground for what some have called “spiritual polygamy?” Certainly not. Similar figures may be used in each dispensation to illustrate spiritual realities; and then it is important to see that Israel is distinctively called the wife of Jehovah, whereas the Church is the Bride of the Lamb. Israel’s nuptial relationship is with God Himself apart altogether from any question of incarnation. The Church is the Bride of the Incarnate One who became the Lamb of God for our redemption. Who would want to lose the blessedness of this?” (pg. 54).
 - Note that "Israel is distinctively called the wife of Jehovah" but "the church is the Bride of the Lamb." Subtlety, Ironside leaves out the "distinctively called" portion concerning the church, because it would not be true.
 - Furthermore, does God the Father have a different wife from God the Son?
- “In verse 16, our Lord Jesus declares Himself as the Coming One, saying, “I am the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” In the very next verse we are told, “And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” Here we have the Church’s response to our Lord’s declaration that He is the Morning Star. The morning star shines out before the rising of the sun. It is as the Morning Star Christ comes for His Church.” (pg. 55)
 - The idea that the "Morning Star" is related solely to the church is another "theologian only" doctrine. The reference is only given in Revelation, found here and in Revelation 2:28, and in neither place is it definitive and clearly for the church.
 - A better argument could be given that it has its basis in Numbers 24:17, in reference to the Jewish Messiah. To use this passage as any kind of argument or support for the church as bride simply shows the lack of a foundation for the supposed-doctrine.
- “I cannot conceive of anything more Satanic than this.” –concerning the fact that Bullinger and others teach that the churches of the Revelation are future assemblies. (pg. 55). “Surely this is a masterpiece of Satanic strategy” (pg. 56)
 - Ironside is showing his anger more than his intellect.
 - Ironside has so adopted a man-made argument (that the current dispensation began at Pentecost) that he refuses to put any intellectual integrity into the argument. Rather, he simply uses rhetoric to bully-out a defense. May this never be said of us!

RANDY WHITE’S ARGUMENT

- When did this teaching arise?
 - The first reference to the “Bride of Christ” in the so-called “church fathers” is from Hippolytus, in the 3rd Century.
 - It was not until the 4th Century that the term came to be used consistently in reference to the church. It was also during this era that an allegorical method of interpretation was infiltrating the church.
 - I am almost certain that a full-spectrum of research would reveal that the doctrine is tied to the early catholic (Augustinian) church and solidified in Catholic doctrine, then continued in the reformation.
- Simple teachings lay the foundation, and the Bible simply and clearly tells us about the bride.
 - Hosea 2:19-20, Isaiah 54:5, 62:3-5, Jeremiah 3:14, John 3:29, etc.
 - The Song of Solomon is *not* a book about the church, but about the bride, and her description is perfect for *the land of Israel* but grotesque for the church.
- The “bride” references to the church are *inferential* only and cannot be used to build a doctrine.
 - Ephesians 5:29-32
 - Are these verses a declaration that the church is *married* to Christ?

- First principle: simple Scripture interprets difficult Scripture, and many passages give reference (clear and plain) to Israel as the bride.
- Second, verses 29-32 speak of the unity of the church as **members of his body**, both male and female, as **one flesh** (which is His body).
 - 2 Corinthians 11:2
 - Revelation 19:7-9
- My conclusion: The church as the bride of Christ is *eisegesis* (or even *narcigesis*).

Next session: Do Baptism and the Lord's Supper have any place in this dispensation?