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## In Search of the Lost Bride of Christ

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The man hunt was on. Police were joined by volunteers searching for the 32-year-old missing bride. A \$100,000 reward was being offered by her family. Fortunately, she was found fine. Later, she confessed that she had not been kidnaped, she just ran out on her groom. Run-away brides are not that uncommon.

Another bride is missing. It is the Bride of Christ. No, we are not alluding to Dan Brown's fictitious story in *The Da Vinci Code* of Mary Magdalene being Christ's secret wife. So what if He was married. Being married and even having children is not a sin. Nor would these keep Him from resurrecting or being our Savior.

Though Jesus Christ never had a physical bride on this earth He does have a spiritual Bride: The Church (Revelation 21:2,9; Eph. 5:23ff). Finding this type of bride does not require us to look into ancient books and art, but to start the search at the last known location of His Bride which was in the New Testament. To find someone who is missing requires the right identification markers, such as, the right age, place of birth, Social Security number, physical characteristics, etc. From the New Testament we can learn what identifying characteristics to look for in our search to find which church is really the Bride of Christ and which one's are imposters.

### Identification Characteristics of Christ's Bride

#### Right Name

What's in a name? Names help identify and reflect relationships. My wife would not appreciate it if I started calling her "Bertha" instead of "Beverley." Once we were signing some official legal documents. Whoever drew up the forms made the common mistake of spelling her name with two "e's" instead of three. New documents had to be prepared and the signing had to start all over again.

According to the New Testament the Bride of Christ was called by His name. "*Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you*" (Rom. 16:16). Christ's Bride is not called Lutheran or Baptist. Martin Luther is not the groom of the church, Christ is the groom and His Bride bears His name. The church is not the bride of John

the Baptist. My wife would not like to be called Mrs. John Smith because that does not properly reflect her marriage relationship. Likewise, the Lord's Bride which He died for should not be known as Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Nazarene, Mormon, etc.

Several hundred years before the coming of Christ and His Church Isaiah prophesied that God's people would be known by a new name. "*For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name*" (Is. 61:1,2). At a church filled with Gentile disciples this prophecy was fulfilled. "*It was first in Antioch that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians*" (Acts 11:26b, New World Trans.) This is why God's children are only known as "Christians".

#### Right Age

If someone were in search for my lost bride, telling them the right age would be important. If they came back with a 92-year-old woman named Beverley or a 22-year-old known as Mrs. Vess I would have to send them back. The same is true about the church. To be the Bride of Christ it has to be at 2000 years old otherwise it is an imposter.

When interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream Daniel informed him the during the time of the fourth empire a kingdom made without hands would consume all the nations. "*And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever*" (Dan. 2:44). Furthermore, Isaiah pointed to Jerusalem as the place where it would be established (Is. 2:2-4). Peter quoted from Joel and declared that the kingdom of promise, the church was being fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in 30 AD (Acts 2:16-21). Daniel 2, Isaiah 2, Joel 2 all point to Acts 2 as the birthday of the Bride of Christ. The Bride of Christ is nearly 2000 years old (and doesn't look too bad for her age).

All other churches are too young to be His Bride.

Catholic established in 606 A.D.

Lutheran established in 1530 A.D.

Methodist established in 1729 A.D.

Presbyterian established in 1535 A.D.

Baptist established in 1607 A.D.

Nazarene established in 1895 A.D.

Mormon established in 1830 A.D.

#### Right Birthplace

As mentioned above, Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem was to be the birthplace of the Lord's Bride. "*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*" (Is. 2:2,3). Jesus, Himself, pointed to Jerusalem as the starting place of His Kingdom. "*Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high'*" (Luke 24:46-49).

A woman who has the right age and name cannot come forward and claim to be the missing bride if she does not have the right place of birth. All denominations have the wrong place of birth to be the Bride of Christ.

Catholic began in Rome

Lutheran began in Augsburg, Germany

Methodist began in London

Presbyterian began in Switzerland

Baptist began in London

Nazarene began in Los Angeles

Mormon began in Seneca, New York

#### Right Groom

Christ is the bridegroom. He is the Head of the Church. "*And He is the head of the body, the church,*" (Col. 1:18; cf. Eph. 5:23). Christ is the one who founded this marriage with the Bride. He promised Peter, "*and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. 16:18). He took her to be His bride "*that He might present it to Himself a glorious church*" (Eph. 5:27).

All other churches have a different groom than that of Christ.

Catholic Church was founded by Pope Boniface III

Lutheran Church was founded by Martin Luther

Methodist Church was founded by John Wesley  
 Presbyterian Church was founded by John Calvin  
 Baptist Church was founded by John Smyth  
 Nazarene Church was founded by P. F. Bresee  
 Mormon Church was founded by Joseph Smith

**Right Redemption Price**

Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). The apostles tell us exactly what the purchasing price was for His Bride, the church. "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Christ did not die for any man-made church. He only died for the Church of the New Testament. All man-made denominations were bought and paid for with the blood, sweat, and tears of mere mortal and sinful men. Only the Church of Christ was brought with blood of the sinless Son of God.

**Right Number**

From the very beginning God ruled out men having multiple wives when he made Eve for Adam. Although He could have, God did not make Eve, Betty, Sue, Gertrude, etc. for Adam. As God created only one woman Eve, for the one man Adam, so He brought forth only one church for Christ's bride (Eph. 5:23-28). Christ has only one Bride or Church not many.

Again Paul wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God" (Eph. 4:4-6). What did he mean by "one body"? In the first chapter of the Ephesian letter Paul said, "and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Eph. 1:22,23). Nothing could be plainer. Since there is just one body, and the body is the church, there must be one church.

Some will argue that there is one body but it is divided up into many different denominations. When the first sign of denominationalism reared its divisive head Paul condemned it. "Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:12,13a). Later he wrote, "so that there may be no division in the body, but {that} the

members may have the same care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25). This verse proves that the Bride was not made up of many churches but many members or individuals. Christ and the church are united. They are one and inseparable. Christ is not married to a Bride that has been chopped up into 2000 different pieces.

Christ is not a polygamist. He does not have over 2000 brides. His brides are not the Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Nazarene, Mormon, etc. churches. Christ only has one Bride: the church of Christ.

If you were searching for your missing bride you would not fall for the argument: "one bride is just as good as another." You would not accept just any woman as your lost wife. If she were missing you would want people to realize that you only have one and she has specific traits that will identify her as your one and only.

When it comes to the Bride of Christ the argument that one church is as good as another will not work. Can a church with a man-made name be as good as one bearing the name of Christ? Could a 200-year-old church be as good as a 2000-year-old church? Could a church founded in Utah be as good as one founded in the place of prophecy: Jerusalem? Could a church founded by mere men be as good as one redeemed with the blood of God's Son? No one really believes that one church is good as another. If you want to be a part of the real Bride of Christ, search for the one that is like the church described in the New Testament.

The Bride of Christ is not really lost, but you are without her. There is a Bride or Church of Christ near you which has all these identification traits. Remember, Christ is her only Savior (Eph. 5:23). If you want to have a Savior you need to be a part of the Bride of Christ.

- Daniel R. Vess

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**Service Times**

Sunday Bible Study.....9:30 am  
 Sunday Worship Service.....10:30 am  
 Sunday Worship Service.....5:00 pm  
 Wednesday Bible Study.....7:30 pm

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by Daniel R. Vess