

"... THE BRIDE, THE WIFE OF THE LAMB..." (Rev. 21: 9)

The book of Revelation, which has been the subject of innumerable expositions and explanations, ends with the presentation of one radiant Church, wholly satisfying her glorious Head. And it has a message for us all.

The revelation committed to John gave him a drawing aside of heaven's curtain to disclose to him the beloved Saviour, Who is here described so many times as The Lamb. The Lamb unspotted in His character, beautiful in His humility, and wholly selfless in His loving sacrifice, is the center, not only of this book, but of the whole universe. Our hearts are indeed captivated by this presentation of the centrality and supremacy of this One, Who is now designated, "The Lamb". He is here seen as the reigning Redeemer, the Master of world events, the Overcomer of all evils, and the rejoicing Bridegroom. To be His Bride is the Church's glorious destiny.

The Book begins with those seven churches of Asia, which as representatives of all local assemblies, were marked by virtues, disfigured by blemishes and rebuked for failures, and yet were the objects of the Lord's concern and love. They remind vividly and painfully too, of the present conditions, which prevail among the churches today. At long last we are permitted to view the end product of all the Lamb's activities: - "And I John saw the holy city the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband" (21 :2). So the purpose always in view and wonderfully realised at the end is the love union of Christ with His Church.

It is one of the wonders of union with the heavenly Bridegroom that it is eternally fresh. The symbols of the city reinforce this truth, for the picture is given of its main street being characterized by a great sparkling river proceeding from the Throne (Rev. 22:2). Stand in a river and the water, which passes over your feet, will never return again. The flow is constant, it is fresh and original.

The simple moral of this is that, as believers we need and can have -constant renewal. Think of Ephesus, so active and yet its love gone cold, (2:4) think of Sardis, with a name that it lived, but only a dead name (3:1), and worst of all, think of the lukewarm Laodiceans (3:15). What deep needs those epistles reveal, and all needs of renewal. But the Word of God is living and powerful. Even if the saints in Ephesus were not immediately affected by the Spirit's individual message to them, can we not hope that by the time they reached this great climax of the Revelation, their hearts were aroused to a revival of love for Christ. Years before, Paul had written to them of the length and breadth, the height and depth of Christ's surpassing love, (Eph.3: 18) and had set before them the promise of being presented to Him, without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:17). But now, perhaps, the very momentum of their activities and their zeal for correct doctrine had led them to think more of their church, than of their Lord. They needed to be delivered from stale orthodoxy and be filled with fresh love for Christ. The Lord on the Throne Who promised to make all things new, (21: 5) could do this for them.

What shall we say of the church in Sardis, which was living on a dead reputation? (3:1). Was there really any danger of having their names blotted out of the Book of life? We would hope not as mere words could not do, and brought victorious renewal to those ready to die. Concerning Laodicea, their words and expressions run similar and close to the boasts of the corrupt Babylon, which said, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (18:7). For they boasted, "I am rich... and have need of nothing"(3:17). We would like to think that this whole church might, have been revived from its greed and self- satisfaction, but, at least, we may believe that some of its members opened their hearts to the cleansing and renewal offered by their patient, gracious Lord.

No doubt, things of this kind could be said about most of the churches. They needed the miracle of spiritual renewal. We too need. Constantly to be renewed. if we are to measure up to our destiny as the Bride. In that day the Lord Who sits on the Throne will declare, "Behold, I make all things new" (21: 5). But since He is already on the Throne, He is able right now to renew us in the Spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:23). This will never happen automatically. We have got to work for it.

The Lord enable us all to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, lest we come short of this glorious destiny, -"the Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Phil.2: 12,13).