

# Who Is the Bride and Where Is the Wedding?

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## The Marriage Supper in Jerusalem, Not Heaven

### Introduction

One of the pillars of the pretribulational rapture system is its insistence on a rigid distinction between Israel and the Church. According to this doctrine, the Church is the Bride of Christ and is whisked away to heaven before the tribulation, where she enjoys the marriage supper of the Lamb. Meanwhile, Israel—the supposed “wife of Yehovah”—remains on earth to endure judgment. This vision not only divides what God has joined together but also results in deeply problematic theology. At its heart, it denies the unified biblical narrative of God’s covenant with His people and the location of the ultimate wedding feast. Scripture is clear: there is only one Bride, one Bridegroom, and one wedding banquet—on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

### God the Bridegroom and Israel His Bride

From the beginning, the Exodus story reveals God as the Bridegroom who takes Israel as His wife.

- *“I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God”* (Exodus 6:6–7).
- The key word “take” (*laqach*) is the same used throughout Scripture for a man taking a wife (Genesis 11:29; 24:67).
- At Sinai, the covenant was sealed with Israel’s acceptance (*Exodus 19:7–8*), consecration (*Exodus 19:10*), and covenant blood (*Exodus 24:7–8*).
- The scene mirrors a betrothal, complete with proposal, acceptance, covenant document, and covenant meal.

Later prophets describe this relationship explicitly:

- *“Indeed, your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of armies; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel”* (Isaiah 54:5).
- *“I will take you to be My wife forever... in righteousness and in justice, in favor and in compassion”* (Hosea 2:19–20).

- *“I spread My garment over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine” (Ezekiel 16:8).*

Israel is the Bride, and the covenant is the marriage.

## The Eschatological Wedding

The prophets not only describe Israel as God’s wife but also portray a future wedding banquet in Jerusalem:

- *“The LORD of armies will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain [Zion]... He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples” (Isaiah 25:6–7).*
- *“The LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion... a cloud by day and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy [chuppah]” (Isaiah 4:5).*

The canopy, the feast, and the location are clear: the marriage supper is on Mount Zion.

## Gentiles Brought Into the Marriage

Paul makes plain in Ephesians 2 that Gentiles who were once excluded are now included in the covenants of promise:

- *“But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ... so that in Himself He might make the two into one new person” (Ephesians 2:13–15).*
- *“So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household” (Ephesians 2:19).*

The Church does not replace Israel; rather, believing Gentiles are grafted into Israel’s covenant marriage. There is no “heavenly bride” distinct from an “earthly bride.” There is only one people of God.

## Jesus on the Coming Banquet

Jesus Himself locates the marriage feast not in heaven, but in the kingdom of God on earth:

- *“I say to you that many will come from east and west, and will recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11).*

- At the Last Supper He declared: *“I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God... I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes”* (Luke 22:16–18).

Paul echoes this eschatological hope:

- *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes”* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The banquet awaits His return to Zion, when the kingdom comes on earth.

## Only One Bride

Pretribulationism makes the grotesque claim that God has “two brides”—Israel for Yehovah and the Church for Christ. But Scripture never divides the Bridegroom. There is one Bridegroom, one Bride, and one marriage. Revelation confirms:

- *“The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has prepared herself”* (Revelation 19:7).
- *“I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”* (Revelation 21:2).

Notice: the Bride comes *down* to earth, not whisked *up* to heaven for a feast. The marriage supper culminates in the union of heaven and earth, in Jerusalem, when Messiah reigns.

## Refuting the Pretrib Cliché

Pretrib teachers often quip, “God would never beat up His bride,” as if tribulation proves the Church cannot go through it. Yet Scripture shows otherwise:

- Israel, God’s bride, endured the wilderness, the exile, and purification.
- Messiah Himself, the Bridegroom, endured the cross before entering glory.

The suffering of the saints is not evidence of abandonment but of covenant faithfulness. Through tribulation, the Bride is purified, awaiting her final union with the Bridegroom in Zion.

## Conclusion

The biblical portrait is consistent and unmistakable:

- Israel is the Bride.

- Gentile believers are grafted in.
- The wedding feast takes place on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, not in heaven.

The idea of a heavenly marriage supper while Israel suffers on earth fractures the unity of God's people and invents two brides where there is only one. The Scriptures instead hold out the glorious hope of one Bride, one Bridegroom, and one banquet—when Messiah returns to Zion and reigns over all the nations.

*“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9).*