A Bride?

"For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." (Ephesians 5:23, ESV)

A bride?

A Christian man probably does not give much thought to being called a son of God. The language fits naturally. He reads about adoption as sons, hears that he is an heir with Christ, and understands immediately how the description applies to him.

A Christian woman may have to think about it differently. She knows she is a woman, yet Scripture includes her among the "sons of God." She must understand that sonship is telling her something about her standing and inheritance in Christ rather than calling her male.

Then the Bible turns the picture around.

The man discovers that he is a bride.

Not individually, of course. Scripture does not describe an individual Christian man as Christ's bride. It describes the Church collectively as the Bride of Christ, and every Christian man belongs to that Church.

Paul writes:

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (Ephesians 5:25, ESV)

Christ is the Bridegroom. The Church is His Bride.

That means the Christian man must do exactly what the Christian woman does when she encounters the language of sonship. He must ask what the biblical image is intended to teach rather than forcing every feature of the image to describe him literally.

He does not become female because he belongs to the Bride of Christ.

Neither does a woman become male because she is included among the sons of God.

Biblical images reveal relationships.

Sonship tells us about adoption, standing, and inheritance. The image of the Bride tells us something different. It speaks of covenant love, faithfulness, union, belonging, and the astonishing love of Christ for His Church.

And what love it is.

Christ did not merely choose His Bride. He gave Himself for her.

Paul continues:

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her." (Ephesians 5:25–26, ESV)

The Bride is loved sacrificially. She is being made holy. She belongs to Christ, and Christ has bound Himself to her in covenant faithfulness.

The picture reaches its magnificent conclusion in Revelation:

"Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:7, ESV)

Every believer will be there.

Men and women. Sons and daughters. Brothers and sisters. Together they are the Bride awaiting the Bridegroom.

Perhaps that helps us read some of the language of Scripture more carefully. We sometimes become uncomfortable when a biblical description does not seem to fit us personally. Our instinct may be to change the language until it sounds more natural.

But perhaps the better response is to ask why God chose that particular image.

A woman who reads that she is a son of God can ask what sonship teaches her about her inheritance.

A man who reads that he belongs to the Bride of Christ can ask what being the Bride teaches him about Christ's covenant love.

Neither loses anything by entering an image that initially seems to belong to the other sex.

Both gain something.

The daughter learns that she inherits as a son.

The son learns that he is loved as part of the Bride.

And together they discover that no single human picture can exhaust the richness of what it means to belong to Christ.

A bride?

Yes.

And the Bridegroom gave Himself for her.

Just a thought.

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