

How Beautiful the Bride of Christ!

✠ **We live together with God.** (vv.1-4)

✠ **We trust His worthy Word.** (vv.5-8)

✠ **We shine in His glorious grace.** (vv.9-14)

In the name of Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, dear Cari and Christopher, with loved ones all:

You're such a beautiful bride. And I'm not just talking about Cari. I'm talking about Christopher too – in fact, about everyone who believes in Jesus as his personal Savior from sin, death and hell. All believers are spoken of throughout God's Holy Book and especially in these final chapters of the last book of Revelation as the **Bride of Christ**. It seems only fitting that on this gorgeous day we should praise our gracious God for what He has made us in His sight: **How Beautiful the Bride of Christ!**

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One of the things that scares people away from God's divine design for marriage is not knowing what to expect in the years after their vows. Even the disciples when Jesus informed them that marriage is meant for life, flatly stated, *"If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."* *Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given."* (Matthew 19:10f NIV) One of the things that makes you such a beautiful couple is that God has given you sincere acceptance of this Word. He gave you such deep conviction about the sanctity of marriage, such an earnest desire to honor your heavenly Bridegroom, that if I had suggested you should move in together a few months ago, I would not be allowed to perform this wedding. You would have looked for a preacher who would not lie and deceive by God's Name. God's Word is your greatest joy because your parents taught you that every day **We live together with God** and honor Him in our private lives too.

And because of that certainty you know exactly what to expect in your married life. No, you can't peg the details to dates on the calendar. But you do know there will be tears and heartaches, some caused by circumstances beyond your control and some by two sinners living together under the same roof. Yet again, you know what to do when you disappoint each other. You will go off alone to confess to your Lord Jesus that by your impatience and the selfishness that burns inside every human heart, you have disappointed your God. And what does the heavenly Bridegroom do when His dear bride comes tearfully confessing her sin and unworthiness? With nail-pierced hands He dries your tears, reminds you of the bath He gave you in your Baptism, a clothes you once again with the sparkling wedding clothes of His holiness and righteousness. **We live together with God** in His grace and mercy hour-by-hour.

This faith in Jesus as your Savior is what makes you the *"new Jerusalem"* here described in the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ which He gave to His Apostle John. As the **Beautiful Bride of Christ**, you both know that your marriage could last a very short time simply because the last trumpet may sound any moment when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead. He has told us His one criterion: *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."* (Mark 16:16 NIV) Together you look forward to eternal life with God in heaven because as the **Beautiful Bride of Christ**,

✠ **We trust His worthy Word.** (vv.5-8)

It strikes me what a world of distrust awaits you in the scientific community. Many intellectuals of all disciplines are confident that with the right discoveries and adjustments in medicine, geophysics, law and politics they can produce a perfect world. That part they like. It's the thing about Jesus Christ and God's control over His creation that simply does not fit their template of progressive, chance evolution. When **We trust His worthy Word**, we're swimming against a hurricane of human opinion.

You may have heard the story of Martin Spanholz, one of our science professors at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. In the 1960's, he was rising star in the scientific world with some rather impressive credentials and discoveries in Antarctica. But when he dared to state that he considered a God-directed worldwide flood a possibility, Spanholz found that invitations and support just dried up.

Every couple in marriage is blessed in situations like that because we can divide the sorrows and double the joys together. But as the **Beautiful Bride of Christ**, you are blessed beyond imagination because together you **trust His worthy Word**. When Jesus says through John, *“There was no longer any sea,”* you don't question how the Creator can do that because this is God's world. When Jesus says, *“He will wipe every tear from [your] eyes,”* that *“there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away,”* you trust Him as *“the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,”* i.e. the finish line and goal of our life here and hereafter.

No matter how challenging the coming years may be especially struggling through school, degrees and interviews, you remain wealthy beyond imagination. Jesus the *“trustworthy and true”* Word has promised, *“He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”* Everywhere people are seeking gods in the stock market, fame and fortune, all within the narrow confines of their own cranium. In our society we Americans worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship. But the **Beautiful Bride of Christ** has only one goal in life: to thank God for making us right with Him by grace through faith in Jesus alone as our Savior and heavenly Bridegroom.

Outside is something else. In His absolutely **worthy Word** our Lord has warned: *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”* From this our heavenly Bridegroom has saved us in order in order that ...

✠ **We shine in His glorious grace.** (vv.9-14)

You can tell Jesus loves being married. And His angels have the same kind of joy as we have celebrating with the two of you here today. John writes: *One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the [s]pirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.*

At first a good scientist would be tempted to ask, “How can jasper be ‘clear as crystal’?” More questions follow in the verses after our text about the city shaped like a cube: 14,000 miles high, wide and long. But that would miss the point of the picture language signaled in the opening verses of Revelation and still illustrating God's truth here. These figurative details teach the same lesson as Solomon in his song of ascents, Psalm 127. King Solomon had built the beautiful temple of the LORD in Jerusalem 1000 years before Christ, but he still had to honestly confess: *“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”* (v.1)

Your marriage will be a success as you let the LORD do the building and the guarding. All the concern belongs to Him who brought you together as **the Beautiful Bride of Christ**. *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”* (1 Peter 5:7 NIV) In the holy city of your inheritance precious stones are used for pavement and the guards at the gates have no enemies opposing them. Solid security is measured in the thickness of the walls, but the gates standing open give full access to God's people from all directions. Such shining splendor as this is ours today as **We shine in His glorious grace** of God in Christ. As single Christians you have made a beautiful beginning. But **How Beautiful the Bride of Christ** as you join your hearts and lives together at God's altar today. The goal of your marriage is clearly the new Jerusalem from God, and taking along every one you can reach with God's Word. May our heavenly Bridegroom bless you to **shine** with His **glorious grace** in Jesus' precious Name. Amen.