

Representations

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. (Revelation 21:9)

Most would agree that the book of Revelation is one of most difficult books in the Bible to interpret. Many have sought and focused, almost exclusively, to understand its eschatological meaning. But the problem with this approach, is that we might miss many other things that the book of Revelation powerfully conveys.

The book of Revelation is a book of symbols. Revelation 1:1 says, "...he sent and signified [it]..." That is "to give a sign, to signify" or to "indicate" (Thayer). In other words, we could say that these symbols "represent" something that the people of God, living at that time, would have readily understood. These "symbols" seem so mysterious to us, but the original audience would have understood what they represented.

Revelation 21:9 says, "...Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." In verse 10, John is "carried away in the spirit to a great and high mountain." He saw "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Verse 11, He saw "a stone most precious..." Verse 12, "a wall great and high," and "twelve gates..." And in verse 14, John saw "twelve foundations..." Is the "bride" being described or is the "bride" yet to be introduced?

In verse 19, John is shown "the foundations of the wall of the city", and that they were "garnished with all manner of precious stones." He saw jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and an amethyst. Is the "bride" being described or is the "bride" yet to be introduced?

What do precious stones represent? The Bible says, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). "Lively stones" means, "1) to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead) 2) to enjoy real life..." (Thayer). In 1 Peter 2:6, our Lord, Jesus Christ is described as "a chief corner stone, elect, precious..."

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9). God, in fact, did raise up "stones" for we are the spiritual children of Abraham.

“And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:39, 40). Apostolics, for approximately two thousand years, have been crying out to God as “lively stones.”

But this, thus far, does not address how the Old Testament people of God would have understood the symbol in question. The following historical reference would have been common knowledge to the Jewish believers living at the time of John the apostle—for it was central to their soteriological experience. Exodus 28:15–16 says, “And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; *of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof.*”

“And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, *even* four rows of stones: *the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes*” (Exodus 28:17–21).

Isaiah 61:10 says, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.”

Malachi 3:17 says, “And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

Exodus 19:5 says, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine.”

There’s much more that could be considered, for example: what if God does not want us to adorn ourselves with jewels and precious stones because they represent something so dear to God? As a side note, the lament to Tyrus, found in Ezekiel 28, which is understood to also be a message to Satan himself, states that “every precious stone [was his] covering.”

One reason Satan fell was that his “heart was lifted up because of [his] beauty... by reason of [his] brightness.”

We see the saints of God with all their problems and weaknesses, but God sees “precious stones.” I’ m sure you’ ve heard of “diamonds in the rough.” But in order for these stones to become precious stones or valuable jewels, a process—a very difficult one at that, needs to take place to remove the flaws, the dirt, and the other impurities.

Many people are imitations. They are fake, plastic, or gaudy stones. But the stones the high priest carried with him, that represented the twelve tribes, and the stones found in the New Jerusalem, that represent the “bride,” the church of the living God, represent the real thing.

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