

THE SON OF GOD AND HIS BRIDE IN TIME AND ETERNITY

By Rick McKinney, 2024

(Scripture quotes and references are from New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

The Psalmist declares, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork (Ps. 19:1). Indeed, all creation is designed to give glory to God. The Psalmist also writes, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon, and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor" (Ps. 8:3-5). Unique among all God's creation human beings are made in God's image and likeness; male and female He created them (Gen. 1:26-27). What is or perhaps Who is this image and likeness of God?

Well, God the Father has an only begotten, uncreated Son who is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of His very being (Heb. 1:3). He indeed is God's self-image of Himself, for whoever has seen the Son has seen the Father (Jn. 14:9). This mystery is related in the Gospel of John. which commences with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being (Jn. 1:1-3). Jesus, the Son of God, existed with the Father before the beginning (or outside) of the created order of time and space. For indeed, God, the all-knowing one, sees everything and everyone before the world began. That knowledge before all time would undoubtedly include the earthly body incarnation, birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ as well as His risen or heavenly-like body resurrection, ascension, and enthronement at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, the Son of David, the son of Mary, the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Mt. 16:13-16, 20:31, Lk. 1:30-35, Rev. 17:14). God the Father's image of Himself before all time is His Son, one who is humble, compassionate, loving, obedient, trusting, and self-sacrificial as is wonderfully and singularly exemplified in the passion and death of His beloved Son, Jesus on the cross, which is the fulcrum of all history.

In the Gospel of John it is written, "Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (Jn. 17:24). This is the plan of God from all eternity, as St. Paul relates, "he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph. 1:4), and "who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, and this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" (2 Tm. 1:9). Thus we, His beloved ones, were already included in Christ, the Son of God, before the world began. The plan of God was that He would share our human nature so that we,

mere but special creatures, could share in His divine nature (2 Pt. 1:4), a nature that is holy like God in His loving divinity, but also human in body, blood, and soul. Such sharing is what and Whom we participate in during Holy Communion (Jn. 6:53-55, 1 Cor. 10:16).

Of course, all the work and, all the glory goes to God, who, through the Holy Spirit, makes real both objectively and subjectively our tangible experience of living our lives in Christ as cooperative recipients of God's merciful grace both now and in eternity. We were made in His image and likeness for His holy calling and God's gifts and His calling are free, but we have an independent freedom to accept or reject that calling which is also the calling of the Holy Bridegroom who is wooing His bride, the church, by laying down His life for her out of love. In writing about human marriage, St. Paul proclaims, "This is a great mystery, but I am speaking about Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). The marriage of Christ and His bride, the church, was laid out before time began, and we who live in the fullness of time behold it rushing on to its consummation (Mt. 28:19-20, 1 Cor. 10:11).

In the book of Genesis it is related how the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner" (Gen. 2:18) However, God does not give the man a partner right away, yet instead brings to him every animal and every bird to see what he would name them, but for the man there was not found a helper to be his partner (Gen. 2:19-20). It is then written, "So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he (God) took one of his ribs and closed-up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken" (Gen. 2:21-23). Could it be that after millions of years of His developing creation, when the Son of God encountered human beings, He said to Himself, "this at last 'shall be' bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This being I will incarnate. This being 'shall be' my bride." Jesus, the Son of God is from all eternity, and it may be that even our bodies as well as our souls (mind, heart, will) and spirits were, in a sense, made in His image and likeness and that the Son of God would pursue His beloved even after trust was willfully broken and our spirits became deaf to His voice.

Millions or even billions of years may seem to us mortals to be a very long time to wait for a bride, but God is patient, longsuffering and divinely providential. And we know that the wedding feast and nuptial union of the Son of God and His faultless bride is near (Rev. 19:7-9); as it is written, "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", and "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.' And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes, take the water of life as a gift" (Rev. 21:2, 22:17). "Come to wedding banquet" (Mt. 22:4). "O taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8).