

THE BRIDE AND THE MONSTER



Anything can happen in a dream. Animals morph into people. A familiar door in your childhood home leads to an unfamiliar city. A lifelong friend turns into a frightening stranger. It all seems perfectly natural in a dream.

Some dreams visit when we are in a deep sleep. Others invade our souls when we're wide awake. A vision can overwhelm us while we're simply staring out the window at the rain.

A dream is visiting me now, as I sit here wondering how you and I fit into it.

I see a young woman leaning on a balustrade, looking out over the ocean. No words could do justice to her beauty. Yet impatience is written on her face, for in my dream I know that she is soon to be married. She opens a letter, reads it, folds it, and looks away. Tears fill her eyes.

"How much longer?" she sighs.

The chief village of the small island where she lives is built around a ponderous stone temple. I see the young woman approaching the temple. Three men in long black robes stand at the entrance with their arms akimbo. As she tries to enter, they bar her way.

The young woman turns back, passing through the crooked lanes of the village. Now she stoops to lift a crippled child in her arms, and carries him to a fountain at the end of the lane. Quietly she dips the child's withered leg in the water, and places him gently on the flagstone path. "Walk, Child," she commands, and suddenly the boy is leaping and dancing and shouting for joy. A crowd gathers in amazement.

"I want you all to come to my wedding," says the young woman to the awed gathering. "There will be a place for each of you at the feast."

But where is the Bridegroom? The wedding cannot begin until he arrives.

In my dream I see the centuries flow by like a river. Still there is no sign of the Bridegroom. From a distance the Bride looks as young as ever. But as she comes closer, I gasp, "This cannot be the Bride!" Deep lines frame her mouth. The softness is gone from her eyes, which are now empty and colorless.

Once again she approaches the temple. This time the three black robed men step aside and bow deeply. The woman enters the Temple as a high priestess, moves slowly up the aisle, climbs five steps and takes her seat on an ornate throne. Before her is an immense stone altar covered with a profusion of jewelry--- glistening gold, precious stones, chains, rings, bracelets. She adorns herself with six necklaces, thirteen bracelets, a ring for every finger.

"Are you the Bride who once invited us to your wedding?" I ask. She turns toward me with a face that would frighten Satan. Her eyes are two stagnant pools; her mouth curls into a sneer.

"What do you think?" she replies, and proceeds to sort the jewelry piled on the stone altar. "Where is the Bride? What happened to the Bride?" I demand. In my dream the woman turns toward me again, totally transformed. The jewelry is gone. Her face is young and beautiful. "Have you been looking for me?" she asks in a cheerful voice, clear as a mountain spring.

It appears that two women inhabit the same body.

One is young, pure, and clothed in kindness.

The other is hard, treacherous, cold as ice.

Is the young Bride captive in the body of this Monster?

The village clock strikes twelve noon. The temple begins to fill with people. Now they wait for the jeweled priestess to begin her rituals as the three men in black move slowly up the aisle and kneel before her. Suddenly the priestess begins to writhe in agony. With great effort she lifts her hands in "blessing" as the congregation falls to its knees.

"What happened to the Bride?" I cry. "Where has she gone? You are not Bride!"

The three men robed in black rise from their knees, and approach me with fire in their eyes, when suddenly the priestess begins to tremble violently. She grasps the stone altar, clinging to it with all her strength, breathing heavily, while she surveys the congregation with those vacant eyes. Beads of perspiration drop from her forehead. Is she about to give birth? Something within seems to be tearing her apart. "No!" she cries. "No! No! No!"

Now I see something that can only happen in a dream. While the priestess clutches the stone altar, another form emerges from the outline of her body. A young woman exactly her size steps from the shadow of the priestess and descends the stairs. Without a word the young woman walks down the aisle and moves into the sunlight.

A final shudder passes through the body of the priestess. She stands, erect and calm before the astonished congregation. "Now, at last, I am free to grow!" she shouts. Before our eyes the priestess grows larger and larger until her head is ten feet above the tallest person in the temple. "My hour has come. We shall now take possession of this island," she announces. The three men in black robes fall on faces and the congregation follows their example.

I am seized with terror. Whoever this Monster-Priestess may be, I know I need to flee. I run down the aisle and out into the sunlight.

And there, surrounded by a cluster of joyful people, is the Bride.

"My days of captivity are over," she says. "I am free from the Monster at last. Follow me beyond the village wall.

It's time to prepare for the arrival of the Bridegroom."



Where is the Bride?

The instant you were joined to Jesus you became part of his Body.

You became a member of a fellowship created by the living God.

You were united with men and women whose lives are nailed to Christ's cross---spoiled for the world --- and whose hearts are ignited with the resurrection power of God's Spirit.

This fellowship differs so vastly from what is commonly thought of as "church" that we hesitate to use the word. Yet that's what Jesus calls it. He calls it "my Church."

***"...On this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."
Matthew 16:18***

At present the Bride of Christ is concealed from human eyes,
held captive in the body of the Monster.

But soon her captivity will end.

By the time the Bridegroom arrives, the Bride will be magnificent and free.

The Lord Jesus gave himself up to death for her. He sanctified her by the power of his Spirit. He cleansed her "by the washing of water with the word." And he will present her to himself "in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, holy and without blemish."

Ephesians 5:25-26

At the Wedding Feast the Bridegroom and the Bride rejoice together.

***Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude,
like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder peals,
crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
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;
It was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"---
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.***

Revelation 19:6-8

The Bride has been on the earth since the day of Pentecost. There hasn't been a day in all the passing centuries when this miraculous fellowship has forgotten to give glory to its Master. Tens of thousands have laid down their lives for him. Numberless martyrs have suffered for his name, joyfully giving testimony to the crucified and risen Lamb.

Yet all through the centuries...

 this Church has existed as wheat growing among tares.

It has lived inside a monster,

 a religious system which proclaims Jesus with its mouth,
 while demeaning him in its heart.

The Bride is the creation of Christ alone. He called her into existence by the power of his Word. He sustains and guides her by the light of his Spirit. She lives under the shadow of his cross. She has been crucified to the world and the world to her. Her life is hid with Christ in God, so that when Christ, the Bridegroom, appears, she will appear with him in glory.

The Monster, on the other hand, is the creation of man. She is the product of human vanity, always usurping the authority of the One who alone builds his Church. Too often the Monster is mistaken for the Bride. The monster claims to be the Bride and strives to appear as the Bride. But watch how she behaves. Though she is a skilled actress, she cannot help being what she is. You will know her by her fruits.

Since the earliest days of the Church the Bride and the Monster have shared the same body. In our Lord's warnings to five of the seven churches in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3 we see the Monster at work, distracting the believers.

"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first."

Revelation 2:4

"But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality."

Revelation 2:4

"But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols."

Revelation 2:20

"I know your works: you have the name of being alive, and you are dead. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. Remember then what you have received and heard; keep that, and repent."

Revelation 3: 1b-3a

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked."

Revelation 3:15-17

In these assemblies the Bride and the Monster were both present.

The Bride was preparing herself for the return of her Master.

The Monster was busy distracting believers from their calling....
flattering, seducing, causing division.

All through the centuries the struggle has continued. Humble broken hearts draw their strength from the Lord who never fails those who gather in his name. At the same time, religious flesh has been busy building a "church" which bears no resemblance to the One who is meek and lowly of heart.

All human attempts to reform the Church have ended in defeat.
Each divine cleansing in the church has been followed by a rip tide of compromise.

The Monster and the Bride are destined to inhabit the same body until God separates them.
We humans have neither the wisdom nor the power to extricate the Bride from the Monster.

But the Monster is now beginning to tremble. She has taken hold of the stone altar with a fierce grip. Her knuckles are white, her face glistens with a fearful sweat. She is in agony. Has the hour of separation come at last?

Only God knows.

But when it happens, it will happen without our help.

It will happen suddenly.

Meanwhile, many of us are having trouble finding our place in his Body of Christ.

Jesus we know and love.

But his Church is so often a disappointment.

We know that the Church is made up of ordinary people like we are, redeemed sinners still being sanctified.

But something isn't right!

Where is the integrity?

Where is the sense of the HOLY?

Where is the love?

If we seriously seek his Kingdom, the Lord will guide us to believers whose lives are nailed to the cross, who are seeking to follow the Master through all the confusion.

Jesus is able to sustain us, wherever he chooses to place us in his Body.

Yes, the Professing Church is in crisis. Judgment has begun at the household of God. The light which will soon uncover every secret has begun to penetrate the Church. The Monster is finding it ever more difficult to pose as the Bride. And the Bride is finding it ever more difficult to function within the Monster.

Stand in awe, and let God do it!

New ministries are forever trying to revive the Church. Time and again the Monster simply reaches out enfolding these ministries in her arms of vanity.

Only God can revive the Church. The Lord alone will set his Bride free.



"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Psalm 127

While the Monster trembles and writhes in agony, we stand back and let God do what only he can do. God does not need our help to separate the Bride from the Monster.

Signs of Separation

Long before the Church became “official” in the Roman Empire, the Monster was at work building its own kingdom in, through, and around the Church. Side by side with deeply committed servants of the Master were people who came into the Body with another agenda. Listen to Paul, writing to the Church at Rome:

I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded.

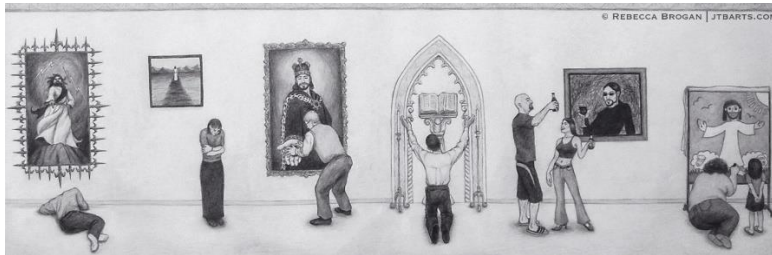
Romans 16:17-18

The spirit of the Antichrist was already at work enticing believers to put their trust in form, ceremony, observing certain days, avoiding certain foods, pursuing ecstasy for its own sake.

But always in the mercy of God, the Monster was allowed to go only so far before it was restrained. As the power of the Emperors declined, the political power of the Church increased. By the Eleventh Century the spiritual power of the Church was vastly diminished, but its political power was immense. The Monster seemed to be unstoppable.

Then in 1054 the Church in the East and the Church in the West broke fellowship and became two separate entities. Five centuries later the Reformation brought more divisions, until today the number of church structures is almost beyond counting.

The Bride has been kept humble, and the Monster has become weak, as the outward visible Church remains splintered into denominations, sects, movements, associations, hierarchies.



But now, after inhabiting the same body for centuries, the Bride and the Monster are beginning to disengage. Believers are finding unity with each other across all barriers. Baptists, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Lutherans, etc. are discovering that they have a unity with each other around Jesus that is far more important than loyalty to their official brand. These people are not trying to form a new "church." They are already "one body in Christ and individually members one of another." (Romans 12:5) They are satisfied to keep serving the Master wherever he has put them until he is ready to raise up his Bride.

At the same time the Monster is engaged in its own “unity movement” which also crosses denominational barriers. One could say that the Monster is following the agenda of the Antichrist. The Monster installs its own authority in place of the authority of Jesus’ simple commands.

Ancient church bodies with traditions rooted in the Lordship of Jesus are subtly shifting their theology to accommodate anybody who will help them survive.

Once the Monster is free of the Bride's restraining power it will begin to market its "gospel" with such effectiveness that Apple and Google will marvel.

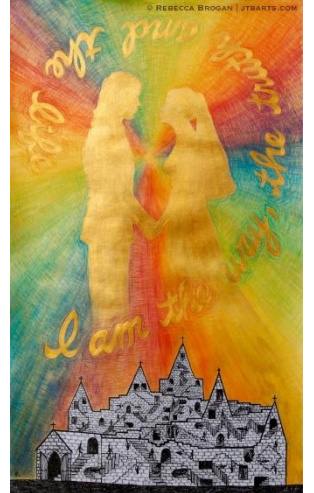
Then the Monster will begin to grow.

You and I did not choose to be born into this hour of history. But here we are; and there is no way we can avoid the choice we have to make.

Which Church will we be part of?

Will we follow Jesus "outside the camp" where he is preparing his Bride for the Wedding Feast?

Or will we yield to the Monster, who, behind a mask of unearthly beauty, clothed in a shining robe, will welcome the waning world to her embrace?



Prayer

Holy Lord, we ask you to set us, your bride, your church, free from the monster. Protect us from being deceived, flattered, divided and seduced by the monster. In every way, may we resemble you, meek and lowly of heart, nailed to your cross out of love for you. Keep us united to each other, serving together in that love wherever you have put us. Lord Jesus, ignite us with your spirit and your deep love, give us the insight, faith, patience and wisdom to continue to seek you outside the camp, clothed for our matrimony, until you, our Magnificent Bridegroom arrives and we enter into your feast with great joy.

Written: REB unknown date
Art: All by Rebecca Brogan <https://jtbarst.com/>

Maranatha Mirror Messages

mmirror.net
maranathamirror18@gmail.com
586-530-6983 (text or call)

