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F I R E

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TWO CITIES - TWO WOMEN

Revelation 21:2

2 Then I, John, saw **the holy city, New Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as **a bride adorned for her husband**.

Revelation 17:18

18 And **the woman** whom you saw is **that great city** which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

The last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, is a book filled with symbolic language. In the above two portions of scripture, we find *two cities* and *two women* being mentioned. To understand the meaning of these four spiritual entities, we must first gain an understanding of how scripture uses allegorical or symbolic language to communicate spiritual truth. It is in understanding a specific Bible vocabulary, of symbolic language, that we are afforded a greater understanding of spiritual reality and truth.

“And **the woman** whom you saw is **that great city**, ...”

SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Throughout scripture we find symbolic language used to communicate spiritual reality. Jesus constantly used parables as a means to convey spiritual truth. When He called fisherman to be His disciples, He said, He would make them fishers of men. To the thirsty, He called Himself, living water. He fed those who were hungry with loaves of bread and fishes and then called Himself the bread of life; spiritual food for the spiritually hungry. To the Shepard, He called Himself the door to the sheepfold, the true Shepard, whose voice the true sheep would follow. To the husbandman, He called himself the vine. To those who tilled the soil, He called His word seed.

Luke 8: 11

The seed is the word of God.

In scripture, a symbol is used to convey a particular attribute or characteristic it holds in common with the spiritual truth it is used to typify. For example, when Jesus calls His word seed, He uses symbolic language to communicate spiritual concepts demonstrated in the nature of natural seed. He spoke of Himself as the Word of God, that must first go into death in order to bring forth the resurrected life. He said, “*the grain of wheat must die before it can bring forth fruit.*”

Christ’s word, is like seed, in that it is sown to produce a harvest after its kind. The sower of the word

of God is the preacher, who sows the word of God in the hearts of men. It is preached and becomes like seed thrown to the wind. The hearer who receives this seed, or word, by believing it, has the word planted in his or her heart.

1 Peter 1:23

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever;

The believer is born of the Word of God. After this birth, the life developing and sustaining attribute of God's Word is likened unto milk and then solid food.

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.

The believer must feed on the Word of God to grow spiritually, from birth to maturity or to adulthood. The Word of God for the Christian infant is first called milk. It latter becomes a diet of solid food, or meat, served by the Holy Spirit, for the mature or adult believer in Christ.

Hebrews 5:12

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

14 But solid food belongs to those who are full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The word of God is also called bread. Christ called himself the bread of life and in John, chapter one He is called the Word of God. This allegory of bread, solid food and milk, is used to communicate the life sustaining quality of God's Word. Christ called Himself the bread of life, the living water, the true vine and His disciples the branches. All of these natural elements figure the spiritual principle of Christ as our source of real life.

From the book of Genesis, to the book of Revelation, we find this technique of type and shadow figuring spiritual truth. In Genesis God covered Adam and Eve with the skin of an animal, that He had to kill. It's blood was shed to become a picture, or type, of Christ's blood shed, as a sacrifice for the sin of the sons of Adam. The sacrifices of the patriarchs, Rahab's scarlet thread, the Passover lamb's blood sprinkled on the door posts and lintels of the homes of the children of Israel in Egypt, the materials used to construct the tabernacle in the wilderness, were all types and shadows of the redemptive work of Christ. The books of the law and the prophets are inspired, to weave symbolic language into a progressive tapestry of unfolding spiritual revelation.

The Palms of David and the Songs of Solomon are biblical books rich with language full of the use of

symbolism. The Songs of Solomon is a book entirely symbolic. It exonerates the love of the king and Shulamite virgin. Painting a poetically rich allegory of Christ's love for His bride, the church.

Throughout scripture, the marital relationship becomes a familiar allegorical type of God's relationship with man. In the Old Testament Israel is called the wife of Jehovah. In the New Testament the church is called the bride of Christ.

The language of scriptural revelation, becomes more and more familiar to the believer, as he or she studies the Word of God. Our familiarity with the use of this symbolic language and its specific vocabulary, equips us with a tool, that affords us a deeper, ongoing, or maturing insight, into the spiritual reality taught in God's word.

SPIRITUAL REALITY

Spiritual reality is, however, an all encompassing, all pervasive realm, and is not fixed in natural limitations like the symbols used to describe it. For example, there is no distance or time in the realm of the spirit.

2 Peter 3:8

One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Revelation 13:8

Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

God is eternal. He exists from infinity to infinity. His character or nature is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscience. Spiritual reality reflects the character of God. It is spiritual in nature. It can be omnipresent and without time restrictions. Concepts of spiritual realities described in Bible times, are the same today. These concepts are difficult for our minds centred in a natural reality, fixed in space and time, to understand. This is one reason why we are to renew our natural centred minds and put on the mind of Christ.

This is accomplished through the ascendancy of revelation knowledge over carnal or natural knowledge.

1 Corinthians 2:14

*14 But the **natural man** does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for **they are foolishness to him**; nor can he know them, because **they are spiritually discerned**.*

16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Man's fallen state has made him sinful, carnal or natural, and has placed him at odds with God, who is holy and spirit. In order for God to communicate with fallen man, the word of God uses the technique of

analogy or symbolic language. Our carnal minds are focussed in and on what is natural reality and this blinds us to spiritual reality. Symbolic language becomes the bridge that enables our natural centred minds, to transverse these two realities. We gain an insight into the nature of spiritual reality, through seeing attributes contained in natural phenomena that picture aspects of spiritual truth. This affords us a look into spiritual concepts that are at odds with our natural centred minds.

INTERPRETATION LITERAL

We can not however apply an allegorical interpretation to scripture and depart from a literal method of interpretation; the Bible means what it says. So although this technique is used to communicate spiritual reality it does not and should not undermine the obvious intent or meaning. When Jesus said, *“He was the bread of life”*, or that, *“We must eat His flesh”*, He did not, of course, mean this in the natural sense. When Christ told His disciples, *“He would suffer at the hands of sinful men, die and rise again on the third day”*, His words were to be taken literally; He was not speaking figuratively. However, when He said, *“Lazarus was not dead but just asleep,”* He was using sleep to figure Lazarus condition of natural death as a temporary condition. He was revealing the nature of death as only a temporary condition, a state between natural life and resurrection or eternal life. It is wrong to think that everything stated in the Bible has some hidden or allegorical meaning. This can undermine what is actually being clearly stated. We apply a common-sense literal manner of interpretation to language and writing. We must do the same with the Bible. We must recognize the use of allegory as a tool used in Scripture to communicate spiritual truth and at the same time understand that the overall interpretation is literal. This technique of allegorical language is used in our text, as we look at the two cities and the two women.

In scripture the church of Jesus Christ is called, A CITY, A SPIRITUAL HOUSE, THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE BRIDE OF CHRIST and THE HOLY CITY.

By examining the spiritual properties presented in allegories used to describe the church, we can gain insight into the nature of the TWO CITIES and the TWO WOMEN.

A CITY

Matthew 5:14

14 *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

The church is called a city in the sense that is constantly being built up. A city is always in a state of fluctuation, change and growth.

The Greek word for our English word, CITY, is POLIS. It is defined in Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, as a town with walls of greater or less size, - CITY.

Isaiah 60:18

*But you shall call your walls Salvation,
And your gates Praise.*

Isaiah 26:1

*“ We have a **strong city**;*

*God will appoint salvation for **walls and bulwarks***

*2 Open the **gates**,*

That the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in.

The city is a corporate container for the people of God. It is in a constant state of fluctuation, growth, and change. It is being built by God.

Hebrews 11:8

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

*10 for he waited for **the city** which has foundations, **whose builder and maker is God.***

The church is a house for the dwelling place of God a temple of God.

Ephesians 2:19-22

*19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, **but fellow citizens** with the saints and **members of the household of God,***

*20 **having been built** on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the **chief cornerstone,***

*21 in whom the **whole building**, being fitted together, grows into a **holy temple in the Lord,***

*22 in whom you also are **being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.***

A SPIRITUAL HOUSE

In the analogy of the Church as Christ's house, Christ is pictured as the chief corner stone.

Matthew 21:42

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

*‘ **The stone which the builders rejected***

Has become the chief cornerstone.

This was the LORD's doing,

And it is marvellous in our eyes'?

44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

Hebrews 3:6

6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

1 Peter 2:5

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

A city, a house, a temple, are all structural in nature containing residents. The residents in this Holy City are the people of God. The city is holy, and the people are holy, because they have become the vessels or containers of a Holy God. The temple is a living moving entity in the earth; the church of Jesus Christ, is a city, a building being built.

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

" I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore

" Come out from among them

And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you."

18 " I will be a Father to you,

And you shall be My sons and daughters,

Says the LORD Almighty."

John 2:13-17

13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.

15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make **My Father's house** a house of merchandise!"

17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "**Zeal for Your house** has eaten Me up."

The Greek word, used here for our English word, ZEAL, is ZELOS. It is defined in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible as jealousy, as of a husband (figured by God). It comes from the Greek word ZEO, which means to be hot (boil of liquids; glow of solids) to be fervent.

Christ entered His temple, the house of God, like a husband full of jealousy for His bride. Christ is fervent in demonstrating His love for His temple. He moves with zeal to remove all that robs Him of His bride. He boils with the anger of jealousy against all of her other lovers. The love of self, the love of money, the love of the world. All the thieves that steal her from Him, will feel the sting of His whip.

James 4:4-5

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that **friendship with the world is enmity with God**? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "**The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously**"?

The Spirit of God that dwells within His temple, yearns jealously back to God the Father. All the hindrances of a church in an adulterous love relationship with the world, must give way to the fervent love of Christ for a chaste and holy bride. His holy temple, His Father's house, His bride, must burn with an all consuming love for Him and Him alone.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 12:27

27 Now you are the **body of Christ**, and members individually.

Ephesians 5:30-32

30 For we are **members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.**

31 *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and **the two shall become one flesh.**”*

32 *This is a great mystery, but **I speak concerning Christ and the church.***

In this portion of scripture, Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, makes reference to the words Adam spoke, when God presented him with Eve. Paul does this to describe Christ’s relationship to His church. The relationship of a husband to his wife, or bride, becomes a picture of the intimacy and oneness of Christ and His church.

Ephesians 5:30

30 *For we are members of **His body**, of His flesh and of His bones.*

The woman was taken out of Man: Adam. The woman, the bride of Christ, is taken out of the second Adam: Jesus Christ. She is a reflection of His image. Her birth and her destiny are in Jesus Christ. She is formed in and built up in the spirit. She is not from the earth; she is from above, formed in the heavens. A city not built with human hands.

Genesis 2:21-23

1 *And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.*

22 *Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man **He MADE** (literally means to build, as a house or a city) into a woman, and He brought her to the man.*

23 *And Adam said:*

*“This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because **she was taken out of Man.**”*

The Father is building His church, His house, His temple, His holy city, the New Jerusalem, a bride, to present to His son the second Adam: Jesus Christ. A church without spot or wrinkle and clothed in the glory and majesty of Christ and Christ alone.

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,*

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

*13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of **the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;***

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

*16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes **growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.***

The edification of the church is the building of an holy edifice. The Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, are building the city of God. They are preaching, teaching and speaking, the living Word of Christ, that is doing the work and building His house.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Revelation 19:7-8

*7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **His wife has made herself ready.**”*

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Isaiah 62:5

5 For as a young man marries a virgin,

So shall your sons marry you;

*And as **the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,***

So shall your God rejoice over you.

2 Corinthians 11:2

*2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For **I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.***

This analogy of the bride, woman, and a city, as the church of Jesus Christ, appears in our text. Two women are spoken of, and become represented by two cities. The first one, the New Jerusalem, the second is ancient Babylon. The first woman is the bride of Christ; the second one is the great harlot. The cities are first literal places with fixed locations on earth. The New Jerusalem, that is spiritual in nature, is also clearly designated as a fixed place with a specified real spatial structure. It is also however designated as

a symbol used to communicate a spiritual entity: the body of Christ, the church, the redeemed of Christ.

THE HOLY CITY

Revelation 21:2

*2 Then I, John, saw **the holy city, New Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Revelation 21:9

*9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you **the bride**, the Lamb's wife."*

Revelation 19:7-8

*7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **His wife** has made herself ready."*

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

BABYLON

1 Corinthians 6:15-16

*15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of **a harlot**? Certainly not!*

*16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to **a harlot** is one body with her? For "**the two**," He says, "**shall become one flesh**."*

Revelation 17:18

*18 And **the woman** whom you saw is **that great city** (Babylon) which reigns over the kings of the earth."*

The cities are fixed in a particular historical context or geographical location. The spiritual concepts they are being used to communicate are not.

Babylon, a city with a real earthly address, also becomes heavens symbol, or designation, for a spiritual force or entity. This entity, like the Holy City, is also called a woman. It is, of course, pictured as a woman to communicate some attribute conducive to her spiritual make-up. She is a woman in that she was first joined to the Lord as the bride. This relationship however is revealed to be pseudo or false. She

is religious or pious in appearance, but not in purity. She looks like the bride but a closer examination shows her to be a harlot, drunk with the blood of the saints. She is intoxicated with the pleasures of the world, in love with self, and void of holiness unto the Lord. She is pictured as a woman that has entered into adultery with the world and the kings of the earth. She is the bride of Christ gone after many lovers. One woman, the bride, is from above. The other, the harlot, is from the earth. One city, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, is from above. The other, Babylon, is from the earth. One is spiritual the other is fleshly and natural. Babylon becomes the picture of a religious entity that is not a true lover of God. She appears outwardly to be so, in that she is pictured as a woman, sharing this characteristic with the bride. She was once in relationship with Christ, as His bride, the church, but has now forfeited that relationship to commit fornication with the kings and wealth of the earth. She is drunk with an unsoluble lust for wealth and power. She is not interested in living a chaste life, holy and separated from the world, waiting for the return of her bridegroom. She is in love with the world and what is of the earth. Her idolatry has made her a lover of kings and a hater of God.

James 4:4

*4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world **makes himself an enemy of God.***

2 Timothy 3:5

*5 having a form of godliness but denying its **power.** And from such **people** turn away!*

Babylon, as a spiritual reality surrounds us in the form of a huge religious body of people who have a form of Godliness but deny His life and power. She is a woman in type, however, she is not chaste or holy onto Christ. Her spirituality is exercised for her own gain. Because she sits on many waters, (*people*), she has always been used by the kings or rulers and powers of the earth to control and rule over (*sit upon*) the masses. Her power to reign through deception, over many, has made her a great asset to the rulers and kings of the earth. She endorses them and they endorse her. Because she reigns through deception, her only real enemy is the truth. She moves always to control and seduce the true bride, who reflects the truth of Christ's holy character. She hates the true bride of Christ and has persecuted her relentlessly down through the ages. She has sought the assistance of kings and rulers to vent her murderous hatred on the bride. Typified by the city, Babylon, she hates the holy city: Jerusalem.

Revelation 17:1-2

*1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of **the great harlot** who sits on many waters,*

2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

She will one day be used again, by the kings of the earth, as she hands over to them the many waters she sits upon. She will one day be used by ten kings. They will finally turn on her, because of their hatred for her religious facade. They will reveal that their desire for her, is only for the gain of her power over the souls of men.

Revelation 17:16

16 And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

In chapter eighteen, the judgment of Babylon is foretold. Notice that in verse nine, the kings live in fornication with the things of Babylon. This is a picture of the idolatry of materialism. In verse thirteen, it is revealed that Babylon trades in the souls of men with and by means of the merchandise of the earth.

Revelation 18:2

2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."

9 "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

11 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

*13 and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and **BODIES AND SOULS OF MEN.***

The picture of Babylon as a woman committing adultery with the wealth and temporal powers of the earth becomes a graphic picture of this spiritual entity. The picture painted reveals spiritual characteristics of this entity that become awesome in scope. We have already seen that she sits on many waters, or peoples. Her sway over the multitudes of the earth is amazing. She is called the great harlot. She is great in her power to hold captive the multitude through religious deception. They are under her rule and submitted to her authority. Those who live in adultery with the world, wealth and temporal powers have made themselves one with the great harlot. By bowing to her lovers, they have bowed to her. They have come into submission to her and have become her slave. She holds them in submission and agreement with her. Her grip over the true bride is exercised through religious deception. She masquerade as the bride of Christ and traffics in the mystery religions of the ancient city of Babylon.

Two women, the true bride of Christ and the great harlot, two cities, the new Jerusalem and Babylon, are set one in antithesis against the other. One is pure and chaste onto Christ, the other is a harlot and adulterous with materialism, greed, wealth and the kings or powers of the earth.

Revelation 18:4

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and

lest you receive of her plagues.

The call of the Spirit of God is to, “*Come out of her my people*”. My people, is a reference to the true bride, that through deception has yielded to the influence of the harlot church. She forfeits her freedom in Christ to come into bondage to the harlot and moves under her seduction and control. This call to come out of her, is a call to purity and holiness. It is a call to know Christ through a deep and intimate personal relationship. It is by knowing Christ that we come to know the truth. It is Christ alone, who is revealed in scripture to be the truth, that sets us free from the power of this deception. To be filled with the knowledge of the truth, is to be filled with the Spirit of Truth. It is this revelation of Him that separates us out from the deception of the great harlot and protects us from the judgement of her coming plagues. She rules through deceit and only the truth of Christ can set us free from bondage to her. It is through repentance from the sin of bowing to other lovers and other gods that the true bride is set free and delivered out from Babylon and oneness with the great harlot. The true bride must love Christ the truth with all her heart and be filled with the life and power of the Spirit of God. She must forsake the unclean harlot church and become a pure reflection of Christ alone. Holding forth His glory, His purity, His truth and His character. It is oneness with Christ that forges her separation and produces a robe without spot or wrinkle. The separation from the harlot is not always natural in nature, but it is always spiritual. The separation is revealed through the bride knowing Christ as her true husband and her only source. As she is separated unto Him she begins to know Him and reveal Him. She is robed in His righteousness, washed by His blood, reflecting His character and transmitting His glory to the world. She is the glorious church without spot or wrinkle. She has come out of spiritual Babylon to become one with Christ. Her destiny is revealed in the New Jerusalem that is formed from above. She is the city *who has foundations who's builder and maker is God*. She is the city that is set on a hill and cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:14

14 “**You** are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.