

The Church- The Lord's Bride

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For all the expressions used concerning the church of the Lord—body, kingdom, etc.—those likening the church to the family or household of God have special significance to those who love the Bible. They understand family, and they then can readily see the church as the family, or household, of God (I Tim. 3: 15). God pursues the matter further in letting us see the relationship of Christ and the church as being that of husband and wife. Certainly, then, an intimacy bound in great love! Paul speaks to the point of the husband-wife relationship in Ephesians 5, and parallels his points with the Christ-church relationship. As to the marvel of it all, he states this: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (v. 32). One of the Lord's greatest parables was built on the fact that "the bridegroom cometh" (Matt. 25:6). He illustrated the inappropriateness of his disciples fasting "while the bridegroom is with them" (Luke 5:34). To the Corinthians, Paul furthered the idea in stating his godly jealousy over them: "...for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. II: 2). The triumph of the saints, the church, at last is seen as being called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). Indeed, the church is the bride of Christ.

Let us now make some points as to the church as the Lord's bride:

(1) She is bound to her husband. As the marriage bond is permanent (Rom. 7: 1,2), so we are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47), and we are there to remain with the Lord until that time when the kingdom is delivered unto God the Father to be with him eternally (I Cor. 15:24).

(2) She is subject to her husband. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord... the church is subject unto Christ..." (Eph. 5:22,24). Leadership and headship is given, in the family, to the husband. Headship in the church belongs to Christ (Col. I: 18), and the church is to be subject to his will. His will, after all, is the basis by which we one day will be judged (John 12:48).

(3) She is to be faithful to her husband. She knows, as he knows, that they are now made "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) and neither of them may be lawfully joined to another. The relationship is one of faithfulness to each other. The Lord never defaults in this, and the church, the Lord's body, must put forth the greatest effort always to abide in faithfulness to Christ, the head.

(4) She is to wear his name. Three times in the New Testament "Christian" is set forth as the proper name for the followers of the Lord (Acts II: 26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4: 16). It is the name divinely given (Isa. 62:2). As in marriage, the wife takes the name of the husband, and if love is there, she proudly and faithfully takes that name and honors it. So we, in the church, are known as "Christians." More, the designations set forth in the New Testament for the church are those honoring God and the Christ. "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16: 16). How pleased we should be, as the family of God, to be known by the name of him who died for us, and thus purchased us (Acts 20:28).

The church is the bride of Christ, and the relationship between Christ and the church is that of husband and bride, but of course is of deeper significance because we are dealing with a relationship involving souls and eternity! The human marital relationship is, broken and ends when life ends here. The relationship of the Christ and the church lasts throughout this life, and then will last eternally!