

Who Is the Bride of Christ?

When asked this question, almost everyone answers, “The Church,” or “The Body of Christ,” meaning of course, all saved people. However, these people never give scripture to back this statement, nor is it possible for them to do so; for nowhere in the Bible is the Church called the bride of Christ. The Church is called His Body in Ephesians 1:22-23; but the body and the bride are not synonymous as has been supposed.

If we observe the “rule of first mention,” a term with which all students of the Bible are familiar, and keep in mind that the things written in the Old Testament are types and examples for our learning, (Rom. 15:4, I Cor. 10:11) we can see that the bride is taken out of the body. Two examples from the Old Testament illustrate this truth, as well as many others: The first bride, Eve was not the body of Adam, but was taken out of his body. Adam is a type of Christ (Gen. 2:21-23). In the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Genesis we have the story of Abraham who sent his servant to take a bride for his son, Isaac. Most people use this as a type of God the Father sending the Holy Spirit into the world for the calling out of the church. It is true that He does this; however, this is not the teaching of Genesis 24. The gospel is to go into all the world, but in this story, Abraham told the servant not to go to the Canaanites but to go to his own people and take a bride for his son. The person familiar with Bible types can readily see that in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis we have set forth the following: Abraham, a type of the Father, sending the servant, a type of the Holy Spirit to his own people, a type of the Church, to take a bride for Isaac, a type of Christ. When the message of salvation goes forth, it goes to all; but when God calls for service, surrender, fellowship, purity of life, love, devotion and the many other terms which are applicable to the word “bride”; He calls not the world, but His own people, or His family.

Our Lord used the term “family” because of its meaning to us in our physical life. We are born the first time into a physical family. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him who died in our place, we are born again, into the family of God. I believe the word “bride” is used in the same sense as the word “family.” We know what the blessings of family life involve. We also know that the bride and groom, while in the family, share a closeness and an intimacy, which is not shared by other members of the family. With these thoughts in mind, we can see how the Lord calls those who are His to come up closer. It is not to this world, but to His own that He says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:1-2). Not many Christians will heed this direct command. Many who are saved never experience sweet communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus; and like Esau, forfeit future spiritual rewards for present carnal gratification.

In writing to the carnal Corinthians, Paul tells them that they are espoused to one husband, that is, they are promised in marriage or as we would say, engaged. This certainly shows us the possibility of all Christians being the bride of Christ. He continues by saying that he fears lest they be beguiled by Satan and have their minds corrupted. This is the state of many Christians today. This shows the probability of many failing to meet the qualifications for being called out to be the bride of Christ. This word espoused is the same word used in Matthew 1:18 where we read of Mary being espoused to Joseph. Before they came together, he was minded to put her away because he thought she had been unfaithful. Many believers today are unfaithful and there is a sense in which the Lord will "put these away." This does not mean the loss of salvation. In Rev. 16:15 we read, "Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame." This refers not to His righteousness with which He clothes us for salvation (Isa. 61:10) but a garment of good works which may be maintained with a profitable result, or which may be lost to our shame and loss of rewards at His appearing. (See I John 2:28, Titus 3:8, II John 1:8) Rev. 19:7 shows that the bride makes herself ready for the marriage and the marriage supper by providing herself a garment of good works. In the days when this was written, the bride literally made her wedding garment, putting many hours of hard work into it. All Christians do not work for Christ, therefore all will not be the bride, The absence of this garment will cause an unfaithful Christian to be "put away" as it were, in the darkness outside the wedding feast. Out darkness is not representative of hell we have unprofitable servants there. In the darkness outside the feast where unfaithful will be, while those who have been faithful, will be enjoying a communion and fellowship not shared by all. Matt. 25:14-30 the Lord is dealing with His own servants and we find the unprofitable servants cast into the out darkness. We have a parallel passage Matthew 22 where one without a wedding garment is cast into the darkness outside. Keep in mind that he would not be there if he did not belong to the Lord. This has to do with that time after rapture of the Church when we as Christians will give an account of the deeds done in the body whether good or bad (II Cor. 5:10). No doubt unconcerned unfaithful Christians will weep over their failures for it is only after Millennial reign of Christ that God will wipe away all tears from their eyes (Rev. 21:4).

Revelation 3:18 tells us to buy white raiment that we may be clothed and that the shame of our nakedness not appear. As we have already seen, the white raiment represents righteous acts and deeds of God's people. The word buy used to indicate to the child of God that it will cost him to be among those will make up the bride of Christ. Yes, separated, surrendered life is costly but how great will be the reward of those who dare to pay the price. Isaiah 55 speaks of buying without money. We do not speak of money; but the Christian who has purposed in his heart to live completely for the Lord Jesus Christ knows that it costs plenty. It may cost one friends; for many do not walk the separated way. It will cost in hours of Bible study, prayer and witnessing. Speaking of witnessing, Rev. 22:17 says, The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come . . . ' " All Christians do not work for the Lord, providing themselves a garment of good works, neither do all

Christians invite others to come to Christ. Therefore, all Christians can not be the bride of Christ.

The word "body" is used to show unity. Today Christians are scattered throughout the world; yet there is only one body. One day, and I believe very soon, the Lord Jesus Christ will come in the air and take every child of His out of this world; and we will be with Him forever. (I Thess. 4:15-18). We will give an account of our lives and be rewarded accordingly (II Cor. 5:10). Christians work and serve the Lord in varying degrees and will be rewarded in this manner. Some do not serve Him at all and these will SUFFER the loss of rewards. Those who have not provided themselves a wedding garment will be spiritually naked and ashamed but not lost. In Romans 8:35-39 we learn that even nakedness, which refers to the loss of our garment of good works, will not separate us from His love. However, Titus 3:8 tells us that to maintain good works is profitable. The profit, or loss as the case may be, will be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ where every Christian will give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad.

Salvation is a gift of God. It is eternal and cannot be lost. Rewards, crowns and an inheritance in the kingdom are based upon our faithfulness to Him. The highest reward is to be among those who make up the bride of Christ. This is a figurative term and simply refers to those who have been clean, pure, yielded to Him and who have lived in communion and fellowship with Him, in other words those who have been to their Lord all that is implied in the word "bride".

It was this to which Paul referred in Phil. 3:11. He certainly had no fear of missing the resurrection but he desired to be among those called Out from among those resurrected to receive the prize of the high calling of God. Salvation is not a prize but a gift of eternal life.

May I say again that the Church is one body, made up of all believers in Christ. It is to the Church that the Epistles are written. The Church at Corinth, as well as all others, was composed of two classes of believers, the carnal and the spiritual. (Read I Cor. 3). Many, although in the Church will remain carnal until the end and will be saved as if through fire. Let not Christians such as this think they will be the bride of Christ. Who then is the bride? Those who are providing themselves a wedding garment of good works and those who are inviting others to come to Christ. Let's face it, Christian friend, all will not qualify.

WILL YOU?

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