

LESSON 9



JESUS IS THE BRIDEGROOM

Scripture Texts: *Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-9*

God created man in His own image. He gave man a nature, faculties, relationships, and characteristics similar to His own. This is almost too great for us to realize. One step in this was to establish the family—a man, a wife, and children joined in a functioning unit. Our earthly family is a reflection of the divine union of Christ and His church. Throughout the Bible Jesus is often referred to as the Bridegroom: **He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom . . . rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice** (John 3:29).

Because of love Christ died for the church, cleansed her and made her His bride, His body. As the bride, the church loves, obeys, and serves Christ her Head. Today we study some teaching about Christ and His church as a husband-and-wife relationship.

MEMORY VERSE: *For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. Isaiah 54:5*

The Church Married to Christ

Romans 7:4 When Christ died we were made **dead to the law**, that is, not under obligation to keep the law of Moses, not married to the old Law any longer. A better, perfect law has taken its place (Hebrews 7:19). Now we are to be **married . . . to him who is raised from the dead**, Jesus Christ. The purpose of this marriage is to **bring forth fruit unto God**. The fruit God desires is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). It is borne in the heart of one married to Christ. That one brings others to be part of His bride and to bear spiritual fruit also. Thus the fruit multiplies.

The Church Subject to Christ

Ephesians 5:23-24 Similar to a human husband and wife, **Christ is the head** and the church is to obey Him, be **subject** unto Him. This is not a one-way street. The basis for this is His love for the church which sets the standard. This is not a subjection forced upon us by fear, but the loving compliance of weakness with strength, of ignorance with wisdom, of love answering love. It is harmony and fulfillment. Wives should obey their husbands as the church obeys Christ. Husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the church.

Jesus Loves His Church

Ephesians 5:25-27 The basis for every true marriage is love. **Christ also loved the church**. Because He loves her He wants her for His own. The church is His flesh and body (1 Corinthians 12:27). Adam's wife was from his body, part of himself, his flesh and bone. Christ's wife is also His body.

Because of love for the church Christ **gave himself for it to sanctify and cleanse it** from sin. The cleansing or

washing is the first step in preparing for Christ to move into our lives and abide with us. The objective of Christ in dying for His bride is to make for Himself **a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;** (morally and spiritually clean) . . . **holy and without blemish.** No sin—sin blemishes lives. Sin can be removed by the blood of Jesus, but the scar is left permanently. His joy is to do this, hers is to have it done, to cooperate with and yield to Him.

Ephesians 5:28-32 We are members of his body . . . flesh . . . bones. Jesus and His redeemed ones have the closest possible relationship. Having made them holy, Jesus lives in them and they in Him (John 14:20; 15:4). Through this close relationship children are brought forth into the kingdom. He nourishes the church with spiritual food and life and ability. She is His hands and feet and voice to do His work. **And they two shall be one flesh.** Verse 31 is a quotation of Genesis 2:24. Spiritually the **one flesh** takes on a much broader and deeper unity than that which is merely physical.

Centuries before Jesus came to earth God revealed to Isaiah this union of Jesus and His church (Isaiah 54:5). The relationship of husband and wife is the closest earth knows. God gave it as a permanent commitment not to be dissolved as long as both live. Likewise, the relationship of the heavenly Bridegroom and His bride is to continue forever.

Love the Basis for Marriage

Because of love for the church Jesus died. For love He took her as His bride. Love is the strongest of bonds. A successful marriage is built on love. Love is not shattered by inconvenience, hardship, or problems. Divorce is prevalent these days. Many are failing to recognize the necessity of love. Or the difference between infatuation and love. Between lust and love. The object of love is the good of the loved one, not of self.

As there are avenues of interest and accomplishment open to the working together of husband and wife, so with Christ and the church there are great purposes to be fulfilled. We must know His purposes and be ready to fill our place as His body here on earth. It is a service of love. Marriage is a beginning, not an end.

Revelation 19:7-9 Picture the glorious marriage supper of the Lamb and the church—Jesus the conquering, omnipotent Lord of all, the Bridegroom, taking to Himself His bride dressed in **fine linen, clean and white . . . the righteousness of saints.** This is the grand consummation of the love and commitment of the saints and Jesus Christ to each other. This is the goal Jesus desired enough to die for. The saints desire it enough to give up all else for it. Joyful hope has a large place in earthly weddings. The union of saints with Christ includes more than joy. Along the path trials, temptations, sacrifice, suffering, and persecution may be met. How will we meet them? What part has Christ in meeting them?

JUST A THOUGHT

"A guilty conscience is a restless bedfellow."

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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