

Essay 3: The Two Shall Become One Flesh

Thanks to the Exodus, redemption and marriage are closely related (Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2; Isaiah 25-27). In the book of Ephesians, Paul talks a lot about the redemption of the body of Christ, the purchased possession. He speaks of the church growing up into the image of Jesus, and, in chapter five, he talks about this transformation from the standpoint of a wedding. It is this last point that will be the focus of this essay.

First, here is the entire passage with the relevant parts in bold:

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, **as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.** But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.** So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. **He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.** Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

Alright, now let's break down each section of this passage individually.

The Savior of the Body

“as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

The purchased possession, as Paul calls it in Ephesians 1:14, is the church which is the body of Christ.

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to **the church, which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22-23).

He is also head of **the body, the church**; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (Colossians 1:18).

It is within this body that both Jew and Gentile (the whole creation) are reconciled (Ephesians 2:16). Paul also says that there is one body, and this body was being built up through gifts (Ephesians 4:4, 8-16). It was growing up “in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). The body, through these various gifts bestowed upon the church by the Spirit, was being transformed into the image of Christ.

It is this body of which Christ is the Savior and the Redeemer, and it was this body that was under consideration in Ephesians 1:14 and Ephesians 4:30:

who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to **the redemption of God’s own possession**, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:14; cf. Acts 20:28)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for **the day of redemption**. (Ephesians 4:30)

This is the same redemption that is discussed in Romans 8, and the transformation of the body of Christ from flesh to Spirit is Paul’s focus in Ephesians 4 as well as the other passages we have noticed such as 2 Corinthians 3 and Colossians 3.

He Gave Himself Up for Her

“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word...”

The imagery here is taken from Ezekiel 16 which is a passage about God rescuing Israel and making her His bride.

“Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,” declares the Lord GOD. “Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil.” (Ezekiel 16:8–9).

Christ was doing the same thing with the church. The oil and water He washed her with, however, was the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit is what was preparing the church for the marriage of Christ and His bride.

“...that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

Paul considered himself as one who would present the church to Jesus at the time of the wedding when he wrote, “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; **for I betrothed you to one husband**, so that to Christ **I might present you as a pure virgin**” (2 Corinthians 11:2). In other words, the marriage had yet to be consummated. The wedding ceremony is presented in the book of Revelation.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready.**” It was given to her to **clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.** Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ ” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” (Revelation 19:7–9)

This marriage banquet is taken from Isaiah 25 which presents a similar scene. Read it and take note of any themes that seem familiar from passages I’ve cited in this essay. I’ll give you a little help in bold.

The LORD of hosts will **prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;** A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, And refined, aged wine. And **on this mountain** He will swallow up **the covering which is over all peoples,** Even **the veil which is stretched over all nations.** **He will swallow up death for all time,** And the Lord GOD will **wipe tears away from all faces,** And He will **remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;** For the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day, **“Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us.** This is the LORD for whom we have waited; **Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.”** (Isaiah 25:6–9)

So, the veil being taken away, death being destroyed, tears being wiped away, and salvation all coincide with the wedding banquet¹ that would take place “on this mountain.” The mountain under consideration is Mt Zion from Isaiah 2, and the Hebrews writer said that they had arrived at that very mountain (Hebrews 12:22).

¹ See Matthew 22 and Luke 14:12-24 for Jesus’ comments concerning the wedding banquet that would be shared at the resurrection in the kingdom of God.

The Hebrews writer also said that they had arrived at the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God (Hebrews 12:22). It is no mistake, then, that John pictures the arrival of the New Jerusalem as the arrival of a bride adorned for her husband.

Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, **made ready as a bride adorned for her husband**. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes**; and there will no longer be any **death**; there will no longer be any **mourning**, or **crying**, or **pain; the first things have passed away.**" And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, **I am making all things new.**" And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Revelation 21:1-5

This message is no different from the one in Isaiah 25, and again, the Hebrews writer said that they had arrived at that mountain upon which this banquet would be held. John also said in the first and the last chapters of Revelation that the book would be fulfilled shortly. This coincides with everything we have studied up to this point.

Christ Nourishes the Church

"He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body."

The nourishment was supplied by the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit that was leading them along to the New Jerusalem, and it was the Holy Spirit that was interceding on their behalf with words that cannot be uttered. It was also the Holy Spirit that was confirming them until the end.

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, **in all speech and all knowledge**, even as **the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you**, so that **you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who will also **confirm you to the end**, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:4-8)

The Two Shall Become One Flesh: A Great Mystery

“FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”

Christ and the church would become one flesh. This is the mystery of 1 Corinthians 15.

Now I say this, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.** Behold, I tell you a mystery; **we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet;** for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:50–52)

When would they be changed? When the two become one flesh. When the church is presented as a virgin to Christ. And all this would happen at the last trumpet. If there is a last trumpet, there must be a first trumpet, so what is that a reference to? Well, if one looks to the book of Revelation, one will see that there are actually seven trumpets, and here is what John writes about the last one:

Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that **there will be delay no longer,** but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, **then the mystery of God is finished,** as He preached to His servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:5–7)

And when does the seventh angel, the last angel, sound? At the fall of the city where the Lord was slain (Revelation 11:8, 15). And all of this was expected to take place before some of those at Corinth would die (1 Corinthians 15:50-52). But he made it plain that those who died prematurely would not miss out on the benefits of the coming of the Lord.

In fact, after the fall of Babylon, it can now be said, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on” (Revelation 14:13). What about the fall of “Babylon” changes the way those who are in the Lord die? Notice that it is not that they have no physical death at all, but their attitude towards death is radically transformed because they now understand fully what Paul meant when he said, “Whether we are awake or asleep, we

will live together with Him" (1 Thessalonians 5:10). They no longer worry about death because they understand the life they have in Christ regardless of their physical state (John 11:25-26).

The marriage between Christ and the church means that the church takes on the flesh of Christ. This marks the consummation of her transformation from glory to glory, from flesh to Spirit, and from life to death. This is the redemption of the body. This is the adoption of sons. And this is the resurrection.