

The Bride of Christ

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Chapter One In A Series On The Bride Of Christ

The Bride As Bones

HIS DEATH TO BRING FORTH HIS BRIDE

There has been much written concerning the death of Christ upon the Cross. Most of it emphasizes God's love for sinners and Jesus' work of atonement. Usually included in these writings is God's great work of defeating the devil by the Cross and "making an open show of him" (Col. 2:15). The wonder of God's love for undeserving sinners is incomparable. However, instead of embellishing upon these truths, I would like to present the Cross in a light that one may not have considered up to this point. This reality of the Cross is not primarily related to sin or atonement but involves the heart of the Lord Jesus and the bringing about of the thing that was dearest to Him.

There is an aspect of Christ's death that is related to the bringing forth of His Bride, the Church. In the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians concerning marriage, he makes reference to scriptures in Genesis. Those scriptures are found in Genesis chapter two and they speak about what happened to Adam in the bringing forth of Eve. Genesis 2:21-23 says, "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs; and closed up the flesh instead thereof: And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. 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." Of all the scriptures in the Bible that Paul could have chosen to best explain marriage, he chose to refer to the creation of woman in Genesis. Somehow he felt that THIS story would most clearly convey the marriage union between Christ and His Church. Ephesians 5:29-30 states, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

These particular scriptures in Ephesians and Genesis refer to a time before sin and before Satan. Looking closely at Ephesians 5:25 it says that, "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." This means that, before going to the Cross, Christ loved the Church and knowingly went to the Cross in order to give Himself **for her**. It is commonly understood that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. God loved the world and doesn't want sinners to go to hell.

Other scriptures mention that Jesus died for sinners, such as Romans 5:8.: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us". There is no question about these aspects of the truth. But Ephesians chapter five is speaking of something beyond just God and sinners. It says that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. Let's make something very clear. The Church is not unsaved sinners in the world. The Church is His Body; bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. The Church is Him because it is one with Him. Ephesians chapter five is making it clear that this death was for a bride, not for a filthy, lost sinner. And so, Paul is referring to a union (marriage) that was desired and would be brought forth through death without any mention of sin. Remember that this whole story that Paul is using as an example of Christ's love for the Church happened before the Fall caused by Satan. A bride was the main motivation for this "death" and not sin.

In order to bring about the bride, Adam was put into a deep sleep. Just as Adam was put to sleep to bring forth Eve, Christ was put to death (or sleep) to bring forth His Bride. In this sense it can be referred to as a sleep rather than a death. Why? Because death relates to sin and punishment. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezk. 18:4). God even said to Adam, "In the day you eat of the fruit, you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). However, Adam was not put to death to bring forth Eve but was put to sleep. This sleep was not required because of sin for it is a sleeping death. Let me explain further. Throughout the scriptures, those that are God's people didn't just die but they fell asleep. The disciples of Jesus kept trying to tell Him that Lazarus was dead, but Jesus kept using the expression that he had fallen asleep: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" (Jn. 11:11). In the Old Testament, the patriarchs always fell asleep and were gathered with the rest of the people of God (Deut. 31:16). And so, Adam was put to sleep not because of Eve's sin, because Eve did not yet exist. She did not yet have any sin. Adam was put to sleep because he desired to bring forth a bride and this was God's method of bringing one about.

THE BRIDE ALWAYS HIDDEN IN HIS HEART

Adam did not know his bride before she came forth, but Jesus knew His Bride beforehand. He loved her and gave Himself to bring her into manifestation. Notice that I said "to bring her into manifestation" instead of saying that He died to bring her into existence. Why? Because the Bride already existed in the heart of the Lord long before she was ever manifested. This is clearly seen in the example of Adam and his bride. Eve existed right next to Adam's heart from the very beginning. She was that unseen rib covering his heart (Gen. 2:21-22). Before there was a death, she was there. This bride had existed from the very beginning next to Adam's heart, but she was not yet seen by anyone else. Nobody saw her, yet she was there. She was not seen because she was in him. Now this is very significant for the Bible declares that we are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:4).

This bride was not hidden away in Adam's heart because of her uncomliness or lack, but until the time for the mystery of her existence to be revealed. Likewise, it was true that the reality of the Church was kept secret, even from the prophets, until God's chosen time (Rom. 16:25; I Pet. 1:10-12). In Christ all these realities begin to be comprehended. There, the shadows shown by Adam and Eve fade away and we begin to see the true

union as described in the words, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32).

This mystery is not referring to an organization but rather the church who is His Bride. This "great mystery" is the mystery of His Bride who was hidden in His heart from before the foundation of the world. Just as she was hidden, so also it was His desire and intent to give Himself to bring her forth. We may say that the Cross as a tool to bring forth the Bride of Christ was not yet public knowledge.

The only way she could exist was to come out from Him. Even though she was not yet seen outwardly, she was alive, real, and part of Him. To Him, no part of her was lacking though she was yet unseen and still unformed. Nothing in His heart towards her would change due to her yet hidden state. She may see the limitation of just being a rib instead of fully manifesting outwardly, but He sees her as "complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). To Him, though in rib form, she is purely of Him and cannot achieve a greater stature in His heart.

HIS LOVE BRINGS HER FORTH

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself to bring her forth. When the Bible says that He loved the church, it is not a picture of Jesus looking at her and saying, "I love you and I am going to give myself for you". Rather, it is a picture of Him looking within His heart and saying, "I love her and I am going to give myself to bring her forth". Therefore, the original death in His heart was not because of her sin, but to bring her into existence. Ultimately her existence in His heart will result in a manifestation outwardly. Jesus Christ died for the world, not only for their sins, but that they might become one with Him as His Bride.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH IN MARRIAGE UNION

There seems to be a niche in time where the Fall of man had not yet occurred, and yet the bride was being brought forth. Paul found this place in time when he referred to Genesis 2:21-24 in his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 5 verses 25-32. In these scriptures he is addressing husbands and wives, but also speaking about this great mystery concerning Christ and His Church. In this same passage he also speaks of the husband washing and cleansing his wife (see Eph. 5:26). This washing takes place before the entrance of sin that is spoken of in Genesis chapter three. In the passage in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul's only reference is to the scriptures in Genesis 2 which took place before the Fall. Therefore this washing is not for cleansing from sin but rather to form her with the Word of His heart pertaining to her true image as one with Him. This is made clear by the use of the "washing of the water by the Word" rather than washing her sins away by the blood. As the bride receives His Word she conforms to the image of Christ. The washing of the water of His Word is renewing her mind (Rom. 12:2). So, His Word is forming her. Out of the abundance of His heart He is speaking, and He is speaking to form what is

yet unformed in her concerning her true image. His death brought her into existence, and His Word washes her to renew her mind concerning her true identity and therefore form her into His image.

She has become bone of His bones and not just a saved sinner (Eph. 5:30). She literally is Him, taken right out from Him. We have not just received sinless humanity, but Eternal Life. Eternal Life is defined as this One Who was and is and is to come (see Rev. 1:4). That is the One whom we have received, but we have not simply received Him but are now joined to Him as one. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17). We are not Him-Him, but we are Him-her. In other words, while we have not become the person of Christ, we certainly are the Body of Christ and this is part of the great mystery that is being revealed. We are now in the time period in which He is washing her to renew her mind and bring her into all that she already is in Him. A union is taking place, yet in truth, the union is already a reality. What a mystery!

The union between Christ and His Bride is being formed and established in her through the renewing of her mind (Eph. 4:23; 5:26-27). We could call this "knowing". This is a real knowing that far surpasses head knowledge. It is a knowing that begins to comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of His love. It is established that we may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:18-19). It is a knowing of Him Whom we are joined unto and the oneness we have with Him.

Eve never was of the first creation that ended after the original seven days of creation. She came along AFTER God had rested and was unlike the first creation of man that was formed from the dirt of the earth. She is not dirt but is a New Creation. Adam may have been taken from the dirt but Eve was taken from the side of Adam. She never was dirt. Never!

Adam went into a sleep likened unto death to bring her forth, and afterwards she fell into sin. When Jesus came to the earth, this whole creation was already in sin and He had to die for that. Yet He also died to bring us out of sin and remembrance of the old, and into the New. He didn't just save "old creation beings" but made us a New Creation. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17a). And now, that which is risen with Christ is not dirt, but bone of His bone. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new. And all things are of God" (II Cor. 5:17b-18a). As the Church comes to know who she now is, all the grief, regret, and viewpoints of our past identity in the old creation will be washed away! Our definitions will change as this union awakens in our hearts an understanding. The Church is His Bride, His Body, His Bones, and she is not dirt. She has not been formed from the earth, but taken out from Him. She is bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh.

BRIDE IS IN THE FORM OF THE RISEN LORD

This Bride is now comprehended in the form of His risen Body. After His resurrection she is no longer the sinner of the old creation, but bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. She must come to know herself as she is now known by Him. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). He knows His Church as those who are raised in Him as Him; His Body and Bride (see Eph. 1:20-23).

This reality of the Bride presents the resurrection in a whole new view. Christians must comprehend more about the resurrection of Christ than just a physical body that once was dead but now is alive. The resurrection of Christ brought forth the Bride of His heart that had been hidden from ages and generations. In Luke 24:33-45, it is apparent that the disciples had not yet understood His resurrection in this way. Several different passages in the New Testament show us this but consider Luke 24:33: "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were asleep with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking bread. And as they spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have."

The disciples were terrified and frightened because they did not know Who He really was in resurrection but had only known Jesus in His earthly ministry. At this point, they did not know that they were raised in Him and were now one with Him. They may have known that He was now alive and not angry with them; but in their minds they were still separate from Him and of the old creation. And though the work was done and His view of them was now very different, yet, Jesus had to begin the task of opening their eyes to this reality.

THE LORD REASSURES THEM CONCERNING THIS RISEN UNION

The viewpoint of the risen Lord is that these believers are now His Body and Bride. Contrariwise, the viewpoint of the disciples was that they had seen a spirit and were afraid. From Jesus' perspective, they were closer than they ever could have been as disciples yet their reaction toward Him was more negative than before. For this reason He asks them, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" (Luke 24:38). Then He continues to speak to them: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have." Do you remember in Ephesians 5:30 where it refers to His bride as bones and flesh that is Him? Notice that the first words from His mouth pertain to His Body. He is speaking to them of His risen Body; a Body that has flesh and bones. He is speaking of Himself as He now is, joined to man in a New Creation. He is showing them that their fears are unfounded. They should no longer view themselves as separate from Him but now

comprehend themselves as His resurrected Body. He is telling them that they are now bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. The problem of communication that lies between Jesus and His disciples is based on the fact that they have believed in a resurrection that did not include them; and He is speaking to them of His true resurrection where they were raised in Him as one. The only way their fears will be relieved will be for them to comprehend the resurrection in greater terms than just a physical body rising out of a tomb.

In Luke 24:40-43, Jesus continues relating to these men as His Body and not as if they were separate from Him. "And when he had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb, And He took it, and did eat before them." Do you remember also in Ephesians chapter five what it says about His care for His bride and Body? It states, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church" (Eph. 5:29). Jesus' first act in resurrection was the feeding of His Body. As He ate the fish and honeycomb, He was manifesting that the disciples had no reason to fear Him but rather, to draw near to Him. He was demonstrating to them that He will feed and care for that which is His own Body. This was the risen Lord tenderly expressing the care that He has for them, if they could only now see that they are now His body and not separate. This revelation will remove all fear and cause them to embrace Jesus in a glorious new union.

If they could have only seen into His heart they would have seen that they were now the Bride and Body that Jesus had always wanted. Before the world was created, Jesus had conceived in His heart to bring forth this Bride that would be His Body. Up to this point, the disciples had only comprehended His body as the one in which the man Jesus of Nazareth walked. But the Lord was teaching them of His view concerning His body now after resurrection. He was declaring through His words and actions that a union had taken place and that these men are no longer just His followers but His very flesh and bones. It is the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ that came forth in His resurrection (see Eph. 1:20-23). She did not exist before that, except in His heart. The resurrection brought forth this Body that God had desired from before the foundation of the world: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Soon the Holy Spirit would be sent to reveal THIS resurrected Jesus (John 16:12-14). All that the disciples knew of Him in separateness would be washed away in a glorious new revelation of the risen Lord.

KNOWING THE RESURRECTED JESUS

When Paul was on the road to Damascus he asked Jesus, "Who art thou?" (Acts 9:4-5). Jesus' response concerning His identity was, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest". In Paul's mind, he had never persecuted Jesus personally; only Christians. But in Jesus' mind, these people were not simply believers any longer but were now His Bride and Body. Jesus was speaking from the viewpoint of the Body of His resurrection. He was basically saying, "I AM JESUS, yet not the one after the flesh, but I am Jesus in my Body." If you really want to know "Who are you Lord?" the Son will tell you by such

words as this: "If you persecute Christians, you persecute not just those that are mine but me" (Acts 9:4). Jesus doesn't just live in heaven; He lives in His Body (see Col. 1:27). It is a great mystery – the mystery of His Body and the mystery of the Bride of Christ and His Church (see Eph. 5:32). He Who was dead is now raised up and lives in us. Jesus doesn't just dwell at Jerusalem, but lives in the New Jerusalem, which is the Bride (Rev. 21:9-10). This Jerusalem is neither Greek nor Jew, but Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11). This Body is raised as One New Man and not many new men (see Eph. 4:14, 23-24).
