

The Church, The Engaged of Christ

The Head has a Helper

2 Cor. 11:2 *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

The Bridegroom paid a price and is coming to purify the bride. A warning to the adulterous.

Jam. 4:4 *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

The Bride price / Mohar has been paid - the blood of Christ (Ex. 22:16-17, 1 Cor. 6:20, 1 Pet.1:18-19).

The Ketubah has been written and signed.

Heb. 8:10 *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

Luke 22:20 *Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."*

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Mary was with child before she knew Joseph (Matt. 1:18). Similarly we are with Christ's Spirit before we see His face. No fornication. Just faith.

We are not just employees. We are espoused. Divorce was permitted in Moses (Deut. 24:1-4), but Christ's covenant cannot be dissolved by human actions (Rom. 8:38-39). Only we can break betrothal by adultery.

Heb. 10:26-29 ²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses's law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

So, stay salty, stay engaged.

Since Christ is not a man full of lies, we will boast that this engagement will result to our

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wedding at last as we continue to express our dependence on Him, come rain or shine. In Old Testament times, the law allowed divorce in some cases (Deut. 24:1-4). But some prophets disagreed, arguing that marriage reflects God's covenant with Israel – a relationship meant to be permanent and faithful (Mal. 2:14-16). In New Testament times, what is similar, which the relationship that existed between God and the physical Israel has illustrated, is the covenant relationship between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:22, 23). If, after Jesus's engagement of us who have believed in His atoning message, we thereafter desert Him by going back to immoral living, then we become like salt which cannot be salted once it has lost its saltiness (Matt. 5:13), and we are not good again for the wedding. It is worth mentioning here that, since marriage was created by God, it cannot be dissolved by human action, but by God Himself.

When Jesus came to the earth, He met an arrangement where, to marry, two families – the bride's and the bridegroom's – negotiate a betrothal between their children in a more serious and solemn manner than the courtship or dating of many traditions today. This is the

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sense in the lead text (2 Cor. 11:2). It was also allowed for younger children (who would today be termed ‘minors’) to be betrothed, something which is definitely not the norm in modern Western countries.

The marriage would sooner or later be finalized when the prospective bridegroom would come to take the bride from her parents to his home, having been considered to be mature enough for it. The betrothal never included a sexual relationship, which is why Joseph was not comfortable when he saw Mary with Jesus in her womb (Matt. 1:18-19).

Parents of the prospective bridegroom played a pivotal role in the determination of when their child would go to bring the bride back home – consider Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 24:1-8). This was the extant arrangement when Christ said that the time of His second advent will be determined by the Father to take us, His engaged, home with Him (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32).

In conclusion, we who call on Jesus as Lord and Saviour must be aware that our Lord will appear again no longer with flesh and blood, but flesh

and bone, and never to die again but ultimately to save those who are waiting for Him (Heb. 9:28). The fact that His body, that served both as a house and a vehicle for His sojourn here when He first came, was taken to heaven, is enough to convince us that He will come again with that same body.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. The mystery we see in 'Eph. 5' is that humans can have a closeness with God in such a way a husband and wife have. True or False?

Why?

- * True. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother... and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:31-32)
- * Why? Marriage was created as a prophecy of Christ-Church union. Gen. 2:24 → Eph. 5:31-32. The intimacy, oneness, covenant, faithfulness of marriage is the intimacy God desires with us. "I will betroth you to Me forever." (Hos. 2:19-20)

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If God used marriage to describe Israel (Mal. 2:14), how much more the Church? We are not employees. We are espoused.

2. As husbands and wives replenish the earth with human beings, that is how Christ and His Church replenish heaven with spirit beings. True or False? How?

- * True. John 1:12-13 “to them He gave the right to become children of God... born, not of blood... but of God.”
- * How:
 - Evangelism: “be fruitful and multiply”, Gen. 1:28 fulfilled spiritually. Every convert is a new spirit being born (John 3:6).
 - Discipleship: “teaching them to observe” (Matt. 28:19-20), raised to maturity (Eph. 4:13).
 - Death: “absent from the body... present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). Each saint is a citizen added to heaven (Phil. 3:20).
- * Husbands / wives make babies. Christ / Church make believers. “The Lord added to the Church daily.” (Acts 2:47)
- * Heaven is being replenished now.

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3. God has used the physical family as preparatory ground for the graduation of humans into society, for society's good. Even so, He has used the spiritual family (Church) for the graduation of Christians into heaven. True or False. How?

* True: "household of God, which is the church... pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

* How:

- Character school: "Learn of Me" (Matt. 11:29). The Church teaches "righteousness, peace, joy" (Rom. 14:17) – heaven's curriculum.
- Service training: "If you have not been faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust true riches?" (Luke 16:11) How you handle money, people, offence in Church is like an examination for heaven's responsibility.
- Suffering preparation: "If we endure, we shall also reign." (2 Tim. 2:12)
The Church is a boot camp for thrones (Rev. 3:21). Physical family prepares you for society, Spiritual family prepares you for eternity. "You have come to... the church of the firstborn registered in heaven." (Heb. 12:22-23)

Prayer

Father, We thank You that the Church is not a widow, but the Engaged Bride of Christ. Thank You that the Head, Jesus, has not left her alone. You gave the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to teach, lead, comfort and make us ready for the Bridegroom.

Seal this truth in us, Lord: We are engaged to One, kept by One, and led by One. Let every page of this book turn our eyes to Jesus the Head, and make us tender to the Spirit the Helper.

Keep us faithful until the wedding feast.
Maranatha.

In Jesus's name, Amen.