

Understanding the Church as the Bride of Christ

Intro

- Biblical metaphors are important. Metaphors are more than metaphors → they reveal deeper meanings via cultural establishments (e.g. marriage, family, shepherding, sex)
- As the cultural establishments are lost or attacked, we lose the metaphor, and - therefore - the rich meaning that God intends for us to grasp
- Today's metaphor for the Church = the Bride of Christ (e.g. marriage)
 - The church married to Christ, the Lamb

GENESIS

- *Genesis 2:[18] Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." [19] Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.*
 - Helper doesn't mean lesser - same word used to describe God
 - Different, but valuable
- *[21] So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."*
 - Deep sleep, rib → Finally! This is the one!
- *[24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. [25] And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*
 - Designed to go together.
 - Man leaves his Father & cleave / weave
 - Unashamed → designed to be together
- Parallels w/ Jesus: *1 Corinthians 15:45 The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. 46 What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. 47 Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. 48 Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. 49 Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.*
- Scriptures tell us that Adam was a type or foreshadowing of Christ.
 - The First Adam was given dominion over all the earth; Christ has all authority under heaven and earth now as the resurrected King
 - God wanted a family (more on this next week) and although God is not alone (being triune) he wanted to share his glory with a family

- So, he put Himself to sleep (the sleep of death) on the cross
 - His side was pierced (by the Roman soldier)
 - Out of His side flowed blood and water (John 19:34) → new birth.
 - a) 1 John 5:8 → three that testify (blood, water, spirit)
- The first Adam was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). The Last Adam is “the visible image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15).
- The actions of the first Adam brought a reign of sin and death upon a once-perfect world (Romans 5:12). Because of the blood shed by the Last Adam, Jesus, the curse of sin and death will ultimately be removed and righteousness restored (Romans 5:15-21).
- As a man will leave his father to cleave with his bride (as opposed to dragging her to his family), Jesus left his Father to pursue his own bride
- Now what about Eve? The RC Church will say that Mary is the 2nd Eve, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. If we follow this thread God is weaving, Jesus Christ’s Church, his bride, is the second Eve.
 - Designed to go with him; Created from the sleep of death; Pulled from his side; For his good pleasure
 - As Eve is the mother of all in Genesis 3, the second Eve, the Church of Jesus Christ, brings forth millions of spiritual children

EPHESIANS

- *Ephesians 1:3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. 4 For he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love.*
 - Holy and blameless is a very unique phrase
 - Col 1:22, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him
 - 1 Thess 5:23, Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Ephesians 5:25-27, Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, so that he may present the church to himself as glorious—not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.
- *Ephesians 1:[7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [9] making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In Christ we too have been claimed as God’s own possession, since we were predestined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, would be to the praise of his glory. 13 And*

when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation)—when you believed in Christ—you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory.

- What do we see here? Union... Marked with a seal... Down payment...
- *Ephesians 1:17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, will give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him, 18 —since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened—so that you can know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe, as displayed in the exercise of his immense strength.*
 - Notice in v18 → Now it is his joy in his inheritance...
 - To really see where Paul is going we need to jump to Eph 5
- *Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church (he himself being the savior of the body). 24 But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her 26 to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, 27 so that he may present the church to himself as glorious—not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one has ever hated his own body, but he feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great—but I am actually speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each one of you must also love his own wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*
 - You get to verse 32 and you realize something - Christ and the church isn't the metaphor for explaining marriage. Marriage is the metaphor that we live in to explain Christ and the Church!
 - God has given us these cultural institutions to teach us about spiritual realities!
- As we look at Ephesians we realize this is the language of MARRIAGE!
 - Chose you before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in love → Arranged marriage for his Son
 - This culminates with union because a man will leave his father and mother and become one flesh at consummation
 - E.g. The Body of Christ (man is the head, etc)
 - A down payment was given → in ANE, the bride price paid by the Father.
 - What price was paid? The blood of Christ
 - What gift did the Father send? The Holy Spirit.
 - As the husband looks forward to the day when he can cleave with his wife, Ephesians says that God takes joy in us as his inheritance

- Still don't believe me and think I am forcing this? Following the proposal in ANE culture, they would celebrate a meal, breaking bread and drinking wine
- Still don't believe me? Following all these proceedings, the couple was considered legally bound even though they had not consummated the wedding (e.g. think Mary and Joseph).
 - It's called Kiddushin. Do you want to know what it translates as? Sanctification
- Christ clothes us, not in a gown but in a robe of righteousness
- So that he can present us holy, blameless - a pure bride...
- He loves his body b/c it cleaves and becomes one flesh
- We are his body, he loves us. We are his and he is ours
- He does this work, not us.
 - Were it not for Christ, we would be playing the "you know what" but he pursues and purifies his bride

REVELATION

- *Revelation 19:6–10, [6] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

SUMMARY AND APPLICATION

- *2 Corinthians 11:2–4, [2] For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. [3] But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. [4] For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.*
 - You are betrothed to one husband, Christ
 - You are to be presented as a pure virgin to Christ. What does it look like to be impure? To be led astray from devotion to Jesus (Spiritual adultery)
 - Practically, what does that look like? Believing a DIFFERENT GOSPEL
 - So what is the gospel? The King arranges a marriage for his Son with a prostitute, and despite her waywardness, he pursues her even to the cost of shedding his own blood, but he defeats the darkness that wooed her away and carries her home, washes her clean, and marries her in joy.
- Discussion:
 - Confused? Clear it up w/ your group. What is your big takeaway?
 - What does it look like to be a good fiance vs. a bad fiance? Make spiritual observations.
 - Go deeper → Read Ruth, Proverbs 31 through lens of "bride of Christ"