

Married to Jesus Christ

Introduction:

Mysteries are what keep our attention for longer periods of time. Paul speaks of a mystery on occasion throughout his letter to the saints at Ephesus. On of those mysteries Paul said he revealed to them concerned the gospel of Jesus Christ and it's power to adopt the Gentiles into one spiritual family with the Jews, to be recognized as God's children.

Then Paul mentions a mystery in the context of the marriage relationship, of husband and wife responsibilities when he quotes the Genesis record saying that "a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." "This mystery is profound" (ESV) Paul says. But he qualifies that thought apparently speaking in reference "to Christ and the church."

The mystery of two people becoming "one flesh" keeps me pondering the relationship I have with my wife in achieving such oneness. But the mystery of the marriage between us and Christ is the real mystery Paul is talking about. Why a mystery? Mysteries keep us interested and intrigued. Mysteries capture our desires. It's the mystery of our marriage with Christ that keeps us interested in achieving and holding to that unity with him. When there is no mystery, nothing more to discover, nothing more to achieve, nothing more to the meaning of Christ's love and our submission to him, nothing inviting about unity and oneness with Christ as his assembly of called people, just like with a relationship when the mystery is gone the relationship wanes.

Question: What do we learn from Paul about how to help the saints actualize the picture of our marriage with Christ in our lives? How does Paul attempt to bring these Christians to actualizing their relationship with Christ through the picture of us as the bride of Christ (the husband).

What does Paul want them to be, and be more of as Christians? The goal of this section is one of submission/subjected of the saints one toward another, and of wives to their husbands, as well as in love of the husbands toward their wives. So if I'm Paul, how do I do that? I point them to the best example of Christ and his relationship with his bride (his cleansed people).

The uniqueness of this picture of the church as a bride/family is that it speaks of relationship, a picture that compels loyalty, commitment, trust, submission, & love.

I. **Willing subjection to Christ's headship**

The significance of the church portrayed as a wife/bride to Jesus is through our active, humble subjection to His headship. (Ephesians 5:22-33) Here are the *reasons* Paul gives for her (the church's) willing subjection to the husband (Jesus Christ):

- A. **His Leadership.** Most people want to see this picture of Jesus as their leader—the one who guides them in their spiritual walk to make good, moral, spiritual decisions. But the next one is a bit more difficult for people.

- B. **His Authority/power.** More people struggle with this part than any other—the idea that someone else is telling me what to do and that I need to do what they say. But that’s self will and a lack of trust. We need to start seeing the authority not as a that of tyranny, but of his expressed power as the proof that we can trust every bit of what he tells us to do and not do, because he’s proven that his will, his authority, and power are for my betterment: for provision and for cleansing.
- C. **His Provision of care.** His exceeding love has prevailed above any and all, just as the husband’s love for his wife endures. It is not a love that is expressed with mediocrity or only at times when it is convenient. Verse 25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her.” Through His sacrificial, life- giving love Christ has been a true husband to us in that He was concerned not about self, but about our spiritual beauty. “That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (vs. 26-27).
- D. **His Cleansing.**
- E. Application:
 - 1. **Q:** How do you instill in people a willingness of subjection to Jesus Christ in *all* things? How do you get them to actualize that picture of subjection to Christ with their life? **A:** They need to be given *good reason(s)* to compel them to place themselves under the loving authority of Jesus Christ? What makes us choose that?
 - 2. How does that make us a pleasing spouse to Jesus? How does that make the relationship work?

II. **Attributes of the Bride**

The book of Revelation captures the assembly of God’s called-out people in the scene of a wedding as a bride prepared for marriage to the groom (Jesus). The attributes of the bride revealed to John in this book stand out as a grand significance to the life of the saints—a picture that would help the saints look at their faith in Jesus in a very specific/positive light so as not to become discouraged and turn away from their relationship with him because of the bleak circumstances of turmoil and persecution coming upon them as a result of the relationship.

- A. Revelation 19:7-8.
 - 1. **Joy/celebration** for the marriage of the Lamb and the bride (Jesus & his faithful saints).
 - 2. The bride’s **adornment** – righteousness.
- B. Revelation 21:2, 9. The bride **prepared** for the groom.
 - 1. Context pictures the New Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 12:22, 23) prepared as a bride in adornment for the groom. (v. 2)
 - 2. The beauty of being prepared and adorned for the groom. (v. 9 ff.)
- C. Revelation 22:17. The bride’s invitation.

III. **Christ, our first love**

- A. Ephesus’ troubling flaw, “*you have left your first love.*” (Rev. 2:1-6)
- B. Can you imagine coming home one day only to hear your spouse say, “I don’t love you anymore”?
- C. Jesus said the greatest command is to love God. (Matt. 22:37, 38; Col. 3:1-4) God wants a relationship, not a performance. (Hos. 6:6)

D. Love regained:

1. Remember from where you have fallen.
2. Repent – a change in the direction in your thinking and living.
3. Repeat the deeds you did at first. (Acts 2:42)
4. Remain strong in those things you have in common in the Lord.
5. Did you notice that Jesus said to do this **quickly**? These corrections are urgent! Callousness sets in quickly and it makes it harder to change. Has the passion waned? Have other things replaced Christ as your first love? If so, its time to do some **remembering, repenting, repeating, & remaining** so that Christ is our first love.

Conclusion: The marriage picture of the church in relationship to Christ is one of loyalty and complete closeness to Christ in the way we present ourselves to him through our faith and righteousness, pure, holy living and in the way His love intimately and continually envelops us. In other words it's seen in the way we adorn and the way he adores.

Such a beautiful picture has portrayed our marriage to Christ. Without our respectful submission to Christ's matchless love and selfless authoritative leadership, we would not be that glorious and acceptable bride for whom He gave His life. We often need to be reminded of our marriage vows to Christ lest we turn from our marriage and leave our first love.