

CONCERNING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Eph. 5:22-33

by Walton Weaver

INTRODUCTION:

1. Text: “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). Read Eph. 5:22-33.
2. Though much is said in these verses about marriage, the central point, as our text makes clear, has to do with the relation of the church to Christ and Christ’s relation to the church.
 - a. This relationship is like marriage, and the picture Paul draws here is a beautiful one indeed.
 - b. Each individual member is married to Christ. See Rom. 7:4; 2 cor. 11:2-3.
3. There is much said here about the church’s relation to Christ, but much is also said about what Christ is to the church, and that is our concern in this lesson.
4. What is Christ to the Church, according to these verses?

I. CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, v. 23.

- A. Christ became head after his ascension into heaven, Eph. 1:20-23.
- B. As head he gives direction to the members of his body, the church, because he has absolute authority over it, Eph. 1:22. “Put all things under his feet . . . gave him to be head over all things to the church.”
- C. Each member, then, must hold fast to the head and not be moved away from him, Col. 2:19.
- D. As head Christ also nourishment to each member, so that each may grow up in him, Eph. 4:12-16.

II. CHRIST IS THE SAVIOR OF THE BODY, v. 23.

- A. He came into the world to be our Savior (Matt. 1:21).
 1. “For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11).
 2. When presented to the Lord in Jerusalem, Simeon an aged prophet who had been promised that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ (Lk. 2:26), said of him, “For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (vv. 30-32).
 3. He said of himself, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk.19:10).
- B. What is the “body” of which he is Savior?
 1. It is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).
 2. If he is the Savior of the body, the church, what of those not in the body? Where does it say Christ is the Savior of those not in the body?
 3. How is he the Savior of the body, the church? The answer to this question is found in our next point —

III. CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIS LIFE FOR IT, v. 25.

- A. *To what extent* did Christ love the church? The answer lies in the supreme sacrifice he made for it, i. e., he laid down his own life for it.
1. In anticipation of his own sacrifice for the church, Jesus taught his disciples that *he would willingly make this sacrifice* for them (Jn. 10:17-18).
 2. But he also taught them that for them to practice the “new commandment” which he was giving them, *they too would be required to be willing to do the same for each other* (Jn. 13:34-35).
 3. Paul later would say, “*For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5:6-8).
- B. What is *the significance of Christ’s death for the church*?
1. In addition to serving as *a great demonstration of his love for it*, Scripture shows that it also serves as *the purchase price for the church* (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 2. *Salvation from sins* is often brought before us in Scripture under the term “redemption” (“to buy back”) connected with the shedding of Christ’s blood (Eph. 1:7).
 3. There is *power in Christ’s death on the cross to draw people to him* (Jn. 12:32) and thereby bring them into the body of Christ, the church.
- C. What *value* does this place upon the church?
1. The thing purchased is of equal value with the purchase price.
 2. Since Jesus gave *himself*, the church is of equal value with Christ.
 3. Because Jesus purchased the church *with his own blood* the church is equal in value with his blood (Acts 20:28).
 4. Saved outside the church, or without being a member of it? Then saved without the blood of Christ!!

IV. CHRIST DIED THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE THE CHURCH, v. 26.

- A. “THAT”— introduces the purpose of his death, why he gave himself.
- B. “IT”— the thing that he loved supremely, and the thing he died for, i. e., “the church” of vs. 25.
- C. To “sanctify” the church is to separate or consecrate it, to set it apart unto God for sacred use. It is to make it holy for service.
- D. To “cleanse” is to purify or make clean. Christ sanctifies by cleansing, and he cleanses:
1. “With the washing of water” — both here and in Titus 3:5 “washing” evidently refers to baptism (cf. Acts 22:16 and 1 Pet. 3:21). Discuss “bodies washed with pure water” in Heb. 10:22.
 2. “By the word” — the medium of teaching is involved. It is, literally speaking, “in a word,” or as the word is taught, that one is brought to “the washing of water,” or to the waters of baptism (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16; cf.

1 Pet. 1:22). See John 15:3; 17:17.

V. HE SANCTIFIED AND CLEANSED IT THAT HE MIGHT PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, v. 27.

- A. “PRESENT”— Here Paul tells us what Christ wants to do in the future.
- B. “IT”— the church.
- C. “GLORIOUS”— At his coming Christ expects the church as his bride to be “pure, free from sin,” and he will make it so by their glorious resurrection from the dead (2 Cor. 4:14).
 - 1. To be without “spot” is to be free from moral blemish. To have no “wrinkle, or any such thing” conveys the same idea. When Christ presents the church to himself it will be “holy and without blemish.”
 - 2. One who lives in hope of Christ’s coming will keep himself pure even as he is pure (1 Jn. 3:3). Remember, God “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).
 - 3. This is why God chose us (Eph. 1:4) and is the reason for our having been reconciled to God (Col. 1:21-22), but we must not be moved away from the hope of the gospel if we expect Christ to present us to himself as “holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” (Col. 1:22-23). We are moved away from this hope when we lose connection with the head (Col. 2:19).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. This is a beautiful picture of Christ’s relation to the church: his supreme love for it, his relation to it as head, how he sanctifies and cleanses it, and how he finally will present it to himself.
- 2. The other side: What is our love for the church? That is reflected in how much we are willing to sacrifice for it: our behavior as citizens in it (Phil. 1:27-28; 3:21), our support of its work in our efforts to help it grow and experience increase as the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).