



The Church - The Bride of Christ

Key idea:

The Church is the Bride of Christ, Whom He loves and for Whom He gives Himself that she might be glorious, full of the beauty of holiness.

Key text:

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now 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 up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church — ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³² This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Ephesians 5:22–33

Catechism Question 70:

What is the Church?

The Church is the Body, Bride, and Temple of Christ, the community of all true believers for all time.

Key points:

1. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul is giving instructions to husbands and wives about how they should act within their marriage. They are to base their actions on the relationship between Christ and the Church.

2. The relationship between Christ and the Church is not built on the example of human marriage; rather, human marriage is built upon the deeper, older union between Christ and His people, a relationship that will survive into the eternal ages.
3. The reality of God's people as His Bride is found in both the Old and the New Testament and is consummated in the New Heavens and the New Earth described in Revelation.
4. There are many implications of the reality of the Church as the Bride of Christ including:
 - a. Christ loves the Church and cares for her needs
 - b. Christ is working to make the Church glorious, full of the beauty of holiness
 - c. The Church must submit to Jesus
 - d. The Church must be faithful to Jesus
 - e. I must love and honor the Church as Jesus' Bride

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. Have I usually thought of human marriage as being the foundational reality to which the relationship of Christ and the Church is compared, or have I thought of the relationship between Christ and the Church as being the foundation on which human marriage is built?
3. When I read Ephesians 5:22-33, who does Paul place at the center - the husband and wife, or Christ and the Church? What should this tell me about marriage? How could this even be reflected in a wedding ceremony itself?
4. If human marriage is built upon the relationship between Christ and the Church, is it a human institution, or one given by God? What does this mean about our "right" to define marriage as we want?
5. In what ways does Jesus feed and care for the Church?
6. What things make me doubt Jesus' care for the Church? If He really cares for the Church, why does He Sovereignly allow such things to happen?
7. Why is Jesus so committed to the Church becoming holy?
8. What things might Jesus use to purify His Church and make her holy?

9. How does a Church submit to and be faithful to Jesus? What does this look like in practice?
10. Do I personally love and honor the Church as Jesus' Bride? What does love for the Church look like in practice?
11. Who will I call or see to encourage this week? What specific members of BRCC will I commit before God to call or spend time with in person?