

## The Church and Bride and The Body of Christ . . .

### Philippians 1:13:

*Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

Christendom has been plagued by confusion of one sort or another since Paul's day. The so-called "church" (which is "ecclesia" in Greek. It means "out-called"), has mistaken itself for "the bride" for almost 2 millenia.

I read a story recently by a Christian writer, who equated the "Church" and the "Bride" of Christ. No mention was found of the Body of Christ. There appears to be great confusion, spanning almost 2,000 years, between these terms. And, since they all appear in the scriptures, they are significant and important to God...or they would never have been inspired or written.

The questions might well be asked, "Who cares?" "What difference does it make, whether the Bride and Body are the same or not?" "How does that affect our lives today?" "Is this just an argument over semantics?"

Let's remember Paul's exhortation to Timothy, written not long before his death:

2 Timothy 2:15:

*"Endeavor [be diligent] to present yourself to God **qualified**, an unashamed worker, **correctly cutting the word of [the] truth.**"*

What we know from past studies in the scriptures that God is **very particular** about His word:

Psalms 138:2:

*For you have exalted above all things your name and your word. (NIV)*

*For you have magnified Your Name, Your promise [saying], over all else. (Concordant Literal N.T.)*

Let's deal first with the term, "CHURCH." (ecclesia, in Greek). It's first appearance in the scriptures is Matthew 16:18.

*"Now I, also, am saying to you that you are Peter, and on this rock will I be building My ecclesia, and the gates of the unseen shall not be prevailing against it." ("the unseen" = Hades in NIV, "hell" in KJV)*

"*My ecclesia*" is NOT the ONLY ecclesia to appear in the NT. The term was a common noun, as opposed to a proper noun (in other words, there is no ONE Church to which the scriptures refer, nor is there "THE CHURCH").

Ecclesia shows up 115 times in the original texts, 112 of which appear in the ASV as "Church," and 3 as "assembly."

There are 5 ecclesias in NT scriptures:

1. The incident of Annanias and Sapphira, in Acts 5:11 – “And great fear came on **the whole ecclesia** and on all those who hear these things.
2. Stephen speaks in the Sanhedrin, in Acts 7:37-38 – “This is the Moses who says to the sons of Israel: A Prophet will God be raising up to you from among your brethren, as me. 38 This is he **who came to be in the ecclesia in the wilderness** with the messenger, who speaks to him in mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who receives the living oracles to give to you...”
3. The near riot started by the silversmiths in Ephesus, in Acts 19:32, 39-41 – “Others, indeed, then, cried some other thing, for **the ecclesia** was in confusion, and the majority were not aware on what account they had come together...Now if you are seeking for anything concerning other things, in **the legal ecclesia** will it be explained. For we are also in danger of being indicted concerning today's commotion, there inhering not one cause concerning which we shall be able to render any account concerning this riot.” And, saying these things, he dismisses **the ecclesia**.

NOTE the last two examples above: The Israelites were an “out-called” people from Egypt – That’s the definition of “ecclesia.”

One group, in verses 32 and 41, was “out-called,” separated from the rest of the people in the city, by profession and intention. This “out-called” group was illegal, as opposed to the second “out-called” group, in verse 39 that was legally assembled – e.g. the city council of Ephesus.

1) **Ephesians 1:22 (start at v. 17):**

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him,  
 18 the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints,  
 19 and what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of His strength,  
 20 which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand **among the celestials**,  
 21 up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending:  
 22 and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to **the ecclesia which is His body, the complement** of the One completing the all in all.

Here, the “out-called” are His **body**, “**the complement**” (that which completes). Here is the grand distinction Paul makes, and is found nowhere outside his writings: **This ecclesia is the body of Christ**; “**the complement of the One completing the all in all**” We’ll come back to this...

# THE BRIDE

The bride is made up, best I can discern, of children of Israel, who, beginning with John the Baptist, were baptized into repentance and into the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. They include those Jews and proselytes believed in Jesus during His life, remained faithful after His death, and who were brought in by the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles in Jerusalem from Pentecost until near the close of the book of Acts, with the re-statement of Isaiah's prophecy. The Bride's expectation is the earthly Kingdom of the Heavens that Jesus and the eleven apostles heralded during and after Christ's first appearance on earth.

The "Bride," appears only in John's Gospel and in The Unveiling (Revelation):

**John 3: 29** – The Apostle John recorded the first mention of The Bride by John the Baptist speaking:

*He Who has **the bride** is the **Bridegroom**.*

**Look at V. 26-30:**

26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He Who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, to Whom you have testified, lo! this One is baptizing and all are coming to Him."

27 John answered and said, "A man can not get anything if it should not be given him out of heaven.

28 You yourselves are testifying to me that I said, 'Not I am the Christ,' but that 'Dispatched am I in front of Him.'

29 He Who has **the bride** is the **Bridegroom**. Yet the **friend of the Bridegroom**, who stands and is hearing Him, is rejoicing with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice. This, my joy, then, has been fulfilled.

30 He must be growing, yet mine it is to be inferior.

**Rev. 18** (referring to the destruction of Babylon):

23 and the light of a lamp may be appearing in you nevermore; and the voice of **the bridegroom and bride** should be heard in you nevermore;

*This reference has nothing to do with any of God's people. It refers literally to the absence of marriage when Babylon is destroyed. It is an image of destruction of life.*

**Rev. 19** (after Christ's millennial reign, after Satan is loosed from prison, after the new heaven and earth and after the new Jerusalem descends from heaven, at the beginning of the "Great Eon"):

7 We may be rejoicing and exulting and will be giving glory to Him, for the wedding of the Lambkin came, and **its bride** makes herself ready."

9 And he is saying to me, "Write: 'Happy are those invited to the wedding dinner of the Lambkin.'"

**Rev. 21**

1 And I perceived a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth pass away, and the sea is no more.

2 And I perceived the holy city, new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, made ready as **a bride** adorned for her husband.

## Rev. 22

16 "I, Jesus, send My messenger to testify these things to you **in the ecclesias**. I am the root and the race of David, the resplendent morning star.

17 And **the spirit and the bride** are saying, 'Come!' and let him who is hearing say, 'Come!' And let him who is thirsting come. Let him who will, take the water of life gratuitously.

The Bride is particularly earthly, Kingdom-focused, mentioned only by John—an apostle to the circumcision, see...

## Galatians 2:

9 and, knowing the grace which is being given to me, James and Cephas and John, who are supposed to be pillars, give to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we, indeed, are to be **for the nations, yet they for the Circumcision**

Paul, the apostle to the Nations, never mentions the Bride, but is focused on ***“the prize of God's calling above in Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 3:14).

- The Bride gets herself ready: Rev. 19:7 – **“its bride** makes herself ready.”
- Christ readies the “ecclesia, which is His body:

## Ephesians 5:

27 that **He should be presenting to Himself a glorious ecclesia**, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that it may be holy and flawless.

The Lord took Israel to Himself like a husband takes a wife. She was faithless and an adulteress, many times; yet the Lord loves her and calls her back to Himself:

## Read Jer. 3:6...

<sup>6</sup> During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, “Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. <sup>7</sup> I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. <sup>8</sup> I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. <sup>9</sup> Because Israel’s immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. <sup>10</sup> In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense,” declares the LORD.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah. <sup>12</sup> Go, proclaim this message toward the north:

“‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the LORD,  
‘I will frown on you no longer,  
for I am faithful,’ declares the LORD,  
‘I will not be angry forever.

<sup>13</sup> Only acknowledge your guilt—  
you have rebelled against the LORD your God,  
you have scattered your favors to foreign gods  
under every spreading tree,

and have not obeyed me,”  
declares the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> “Return, faithless people,” declares the LORD, “for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion. <sup>15</sup> Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding. <sup>16</sup> In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the LORD, “people will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. <sup>17</sup> At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. <sup>18</sup> In those days the people of Judah will join the people of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your ancestors as an inheritance.

<sup>19</sup> “I myself said,  
“How gladly would I treat you like my children  
and give you a pleasant land,  
the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.’  
I thought you would call me ‘Father’  
and not turn away from following me.

<sup>20</sup> But like a woman unfaithful to her husband,  
so you, Israel, have been unfaithful to me,”  
declares the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> A cry is heard on the barren heights,  
the weeping and pleading of the people of Israel,  
because they have perverted their ways  
and have forgotten the LORD their God.

<sup>22</sup> “Return, faithless people;  
I will cure you of backsliding.”  
“Yes, we will come to you,  
for you are the LORD our God.

<sup>23</sup> Surely the idolatrous commotion on the hills  
and mountains is a deception;  
surely in the LORD our God  
is the salvation of Israel.

<sup>24</sup> From our youth shameful gods have consumed  
the fruits of our ancestors’ labor—  
their flocks and herds,  
their sons and daughters.

<sup>25</sup> Let us lie down in our shame,  
and let our disgrace cover us.  
We have sinned against the LORD our God,  
both we and our ancestors;  
from our youth till this day  
we have not obeyed the LORD our God.”

Nevertheless, The Lord invites her back to Him:

**Hos 2:**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."

<sup>2</sup> So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.

<sup>3</sup> Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you."

<sup>4</sup> For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods.

<sup>5</sup> Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

Jesus calls those of his generation, "adulteress," who constantly asked him for a sign of Who He was:

**Matthew 12:**

39 Yet He, answering, said to them, "A generation, **wicked and an adulteress**, for a sign is seeking, and a sign will not be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.

**Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 16:4**

**Mark 8:**

38 For whosoever may be ashamed of Me and My words in this generation, **an adulteress and sinner**, the Son of Mankind also will be ashamed of him whenever He may be coming in the glory of His Father, with the holy messengers."

The image Israel as an adulterous wife is not the same as The Bride. The Bride, to which Jesus and the apostles to "the circumcision" refers, is a faithful remnant out of the nation of Israel.

The distinctions of "the Church," "the Bride," and "the Body of Christ," have been so clouded, that Christians have been expecting the same kingdom that was promised to Israel alone. We ought rather to be expecting the putting on of incorruption and immortality, and take our places among the celestials, as the "apostle to the Nations" -- the one chosen sovereignly by the risen Lord -- alone declared.

Christians have almost entirely ignored Paul's evangel, which heralds a completely different destiny for "*those who are Christ's at His coming*," which was "*hidden in God from the eons*." until it was revealed to Paul by Christ, who then preached it everywhere.

## THE BODY

The BODY of Christ, to which Paul alone refers, is completely different from the church and the Bride. The Body of Christ is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles, who participate in "the administration of God's grace," as heralded and taught by the Apostle Paul and those others

whom he trained in what Paul calls, “my evangel.” Paul’s evangel is particularly for “the Nations,” or Gentiles, to whom Paul was uniquely sent by Christ.

**2 Corinthians 11:2 is a passing illustration in which the Apostle represents himself as the bridegroom’s friend,**

2 for I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God. For I betroth you to one Man, to present a chaste virgin to Christ.

**Paul was simply referring to the service he had done them in making them acquainted with Christ. Now, having become acquainted with and related to Christ, they should look to His direction of their affairs *as* exclusively as a betrothed maid looks to her espoused. The danger in Corinth was schism, the partisan spirit, a looking to other leaders than Christ.**

- The Bride and the Lamb are never connected to The Nations.
- The Body, however, is a different story...

**Ephesians 1:**

22 and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to **the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing** the all in all.

**Ephesians 4:**

4 **one body and one spirit**, according as you were called also with one expectation of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all.

11 And the same One gives these, indeed, as apostles, yet these as prophets, yet these as evangelists, yet these as pastors and teachers,

12 toward the adjusting of the saints for the work of dispensing, for the upbuilding of the **body of Christ**

15 Now, being true, in love we should be making all grow into Him, Who is **the Head -- Christ --**

16 out of Whom **the entire body**, being articulated together and united through every assimilation of the supply, in accord with the operation in measure of each one's part, is making for the growth of the body, for the upbuilding of itself in love.

**Ephesians 5:**

30 for we are members of His body.

**1 Corinthians 6:15** Are you not aware that **your bodies are members of Christ?**

**1 Corinthians 10:**

16 The cup of blessing which we are blessing, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we are breaking, is it not **the communion of the body of Christ?**

17 For **we, who are many, are one bread, one body**, for we all are partaking of the one bread.

### 1 Corinthians 12:

12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the one body, being many, are **one body, thus also is the Christ**.

13 For in **one spirit** also we all are baptized into **one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and **all** are made to imbibe **one spirit**.

### Romans 12:

4 For even as, in one body, we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function,

5 thus **we, who are many, are one body in Christ**, yet individually members of one another.

### Colossians 1:

18 And **He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia**, Who is **Sovereign, Firstborn** from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first,

24 I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and am filling up in my flesh, in His stead, the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ, **for His body, which is the ecclesia**

25 **of which I became a dispenser**, in accord with the administration of God, which is **granted to me for you, to complete the word of God --**

26 **the secret which has been concealed from the eons and from the generations, yet now was made manifest to His saints,**

27 **to whom God wills to make known what are the glorious riches of this secret among the nations, which is: Christ among you, the expectation of glory --**

28 Whom we are announcing, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that **we should be presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus**

### Colossians 3:

15 And let the peace of Christ be arbitrating in your hearts, **for which you were called also in one body**; and become thankful.

*What is the unique position of "the Body"?*

The Body of Christ has a celestial destiny, above and beyond an earthly one:

### Ephesians 2:4-7

4 yet God, being rich in mercy, because of His vast love with which He loves us

5 (we also being dead to the offenses and the lusts), **vivifies us together in Christ** (in grace are you saved!)

6 and **rouses us together** and **seats us together among the celestials**, **in Christ Jesus**,

7 that, in the oncoming eons, He should be **displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness** to us **in Christ Jesus**.

### Phillipians 3:

20 **For our realm is inherent in the heavens**, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord, Jesus Christ,



21 **Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory,**  
in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself.

**Ephesians 3:**

3 for **by revelation the secret** is **made known to me** (according as I write before, in brief,  
4 by which you who are reading are able to apprehend my understanding in the secret of  
the Christ,

5 which, **in other generations, is not made known** to the sons of humanity as it was now  
revealed to His holy apostles and prophets): in spirit

6 **the nations are to be joint enjoyers of an allotment, and a joint body, and joint  
partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus,** through the evangel

7 of which I became the dispenser, in accord with the gratuity of the grace of God, which is  
granted to me in accord with His powerful operation.

8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was granted this grace: to bring the evangel of the  
untraceable riches of Christ to the nations,

9 and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which **has been  
concealed from the eons in God,** Who creates all,

10 that now may be **made known to the sovereignties** and the **authorities** among the  
**celestials, through the ecclesia,** the multifarious wisdom of God,

11 in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord;