

## **WELCOME TO JESUS' CHURCH** It is His Bride

If you'd never met her, how might you recognize my bride in a crowd? If you had a description, you might look for a pretty petite lady with dark hair and a beautiful smile. But, what if you didn't even have that? Though she's not one for public displays of affection, you might look for the one holding my hand or my arm. The one making eye contact from time to time. Point being, she'd be giving me attention. The woman who searched me out, before leaving the premises\_ just to communicate with me about her plans. If you've heard about her reputation, you might just watch to see who was serving me and others. She's often so focused on doing that, she neglects her own needs.

On the flipside\_ wouldn't you expect that I'd also be showing her some affection and giving her my attention? Once more, there might not be a lot of PDA, but if you watched for awhile, you'd see who I sit with. You'd see whose hand I hold. You'd see my affectionate glances. You'd also see who I go home with. And if anyone attacked her, you'd see me quickly rise to her defense.

Shouldn't there be similar indicators when it comes to Jesus and His bride? At least that's what I get from Paul's words in his 3<sup>rd</sup> word picture of the church in **Ephesians 5**....

**<sup>23</sup> 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.**

**<sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - <sup>30</sup> for we are members of His body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery- but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

Obviously, *Jesus loves His bride*. If you ever doubt that, look to the cross\_ but even beyond that. He cares so much for her that He left the glory of heaven, surrendering riches for poverty just to be close to her. The wording in **Ephesians 5** suggests that every choice He made in life was with her in mind\_ thinking only of her welfare. Yes, and in the fullness of time, He laid down His life for hers. Jesus provides for His bride's deepest needs. By the way, He is faithful to her. It seems many want to have a casual relationship with Jesus\_ even have an occasional one night stand with Him. Don't get me wrong, Jesus is compassionate and kind with everyone\_ but He does not cheat on His spouse. He may help you out in a jam\_ even more than once, but do not expect to experience deep intimacy with Him unless you're willing to commit.

**Jesus is passionate toward His bride.** The imagery in **verses 31-32** of our text is one of physical intimacy. Jesus longs to "be one" with His bride. He delights in listening to His Bride. When she pours out her heart in prayer it actually gives Him pleasure. In response, He courts her through His love letters in what we call the Bible. It gives Him joy to whisper words of love into her ear. And He "woos" her through worship. When she expresses her affection for Him, he draws her close\_ pulling her into His arms of love. Hard to believe? In **Isaiah 62:5** it was foretold: **"As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you."** And in **Zephaniah 3:17** it says, **"The LORD your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing."** Okay, maybe I'm a hopeless romantic\_ but that sure sounds like He was looking forward to being with His bride.

**Jesus is coming for His bride.** You can read about that in the latter chapters of the book of **Revelation 22**. He is coming to take His Bride to His home in heaven. He's even riding in on a white horse. For now, consider that the parable of the virgins in **Matthew 25** is an urging to be ready when He comes.

**The Bride submits to the Groom.** The church honors and obeys Christ. She may not “like” everything He asks her to do, but she is quick to respond because she loves Him. Her one goal is to please Him. Why?

**The Bride is passionate for the Groom.** The church worships and adores Jesus. She may have had other lovers, but she now keeps herself pure for Him. Other suitors vie for her affections, but she refuses them all. Her heart is His and she is not ashamed for anyone to know it. She sings of His beauty and praises Him wherever she goes.

**The Bride anxiously awaits the Groom.** The church anticipates Christ's return and readies herself for Him. She washes herself with the Word that He has given to her. She is made clean both inside and out. She then adorns herself in the dress that He provides. In a sense, it is His “*mother's dress*” \_ for it is the same one that His Father gave to Israel many years ago. It is without stain or wrinkle. It makes her look radiant. She is dressed and ready and waiting for her beloved. We sang about it earlier in the song “*Even So Come*” \_

The words of **Revelation 3:20** are often taken out of context. Jesus says there, **“I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens and lets me in, I will come and 'dine' with them.”** He is not talking to some stranger – or to a prostitute. He is speaking to his Bride, and the door He knocks on for all intents and purposes is to her boudoir. The word translated “*dine*” or “*eat*” here suggests extended fellowship\_ even intimacy as the Bride communes with her Husband.

I'm a “*teetotaler*.” For reasons I won't go into now, I made a decision years ago not to drink alcoholic beverages. I've made a few exceptions\_ “*Nyquil*” when I have the flu\_ and I have had a sip of champagne at a wedding. Wine is often used as a symbol of joy and celebration, but I find it interesting that at the wedding banquet for Jesus and His bride, we will be toasting with something far better.

In **Revelation 22:17** it says: **“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”**