

# WIVES PICTURE THE CHURCH

## Ephesians 5.24: A Theology of the Church's Relationship to Christ

**Theme:** Wives are to submit to their own husbands because they picture the true Church that submits to Christ.

### The Role of the Wife in Marriage

- We are continuing our study of the topic of mutual submission in the marriage.
- **Remember the context:** (Eph 5.18, 21) Paul is speaking about the *mutual* submission of believers, one to another, as fruit of the filling of the Spirit.
  - ✓ When the Spirit (of Christ) fills/controls us, we will act like Christ.
  - ✓ (Php 2.5-8) We will have the mind (attitude, thoughts, focus, perspective) that Christ has.
  - ✓ (Php 2.2-4) That mind is one of mutual submission: We esteem the other better than ourselves for God's glory and the good of that other person.
- **Remember the theme:** (Eph 5.32) Paul is speaking *primarily* about the relationship between Christ and the Church.
  - ✓ So even though we can learn a lot that can help us in our marriages, this is not self-help seminar.
  - ✓ This passage is primarily teaching the theology of the Church and her relationship to Christ (which out to then inform our marriages in practical ways).

### (Eph 5.24) Today we are going to look at the role of the wife as a picture of the Church.

- The wife is to submit to her husband (v22), to be subject unto him (v24), and to reverence him (v33b).
  - ✓ For any lady who has been married any amount of time, that is probably very hard to swallow.
  - ✓ And that is precisely why we need to understand the *theology* that God has woven into the marriage.
- (v24) Observe what the Bible says: The true Church *is* subject to Christ. Why...?
  - ✓ Because the true Church is made up of born-again believers who have turned *from* sin and self *to* the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - ✓ A "believer" who is *not* subject to Christ is showing fruit of a false conversion (what Paul, in 1Corinthians 15.2, called "believing in vain"—believing without repentance).
  - ✓ That's why the true Church *is* in submission to Christ; it's made up of repentant believers.
- Therefore, it is this *theology* of the Church's relationship to Christ that leads a wife to submit to her husband (v21-22; the focus is on God—Jesus Christ—and a desire to please Him).
  - ✓ A woman who understands the *theology* involved in her marriage...
    - ...will look beyond her petty, personal desires,
    - ...she'll look beyond the faults and failures of her husband,
    - ... and she'll strive to submit to her husband because she knows she is a picture of the Church in submission to Jesus Christ. And she wants to please Christ in all things because she follows Him.
  - ✓ A wife's relationship with her husband...
    - ...needs to be informed by proper, biblical theology because...
    - ...it is designed by God to preach (picture) proper, biblical theology to everyone who sees her.

**So, let's take some time see what the Scripture says about the Church and her relationship to Christ...**

## **I. Pictures of the Church: Wives**

### **A. Pictures and Types in Marriage**

1. Because God has designed marriage to illustrate His relationship to His people, in nearly all of the marriages in the Bible, we can see illustrations (pictures, types) of the Church's relationship to Christ because she is the Bride of Christ.
2. Three marriages are important for our purposes this morning because they show us the past, present, and future of the Bride of Christ.
3. Let's look at how marriage in the Bible pictures Christ and the Church so that we strive to make our marriages similar (marriages that "preach through picture" the theology of Christ and the Church)...

### **B. Adam & Eve: The Past—How God Made the Church**

1. The husband, Adam, is a picture of Christ and the wife, Eve, is a picture of the Church.
2. (Gen 2.21-22) By God's will and design, Adam slept and, while he slept, God took what was needed from side, and from that He formed Eve (the bride).
3. The same can be said of Jesus Christ and His Bride, the Church.
  - a) (John 19.30) Jesus "slept" the sleep of death, by God's design, and according to God's will.
  - b) (John 19.31-37) And from Jesus' side, while He slept, came forth that which was needed to form His bride, the Church: Blood and water.
    - (1) His *blood* was necessary to *save* us: Acts 20.28; 1Peter 1.18-19.
    - (2) His *water* is necessary to *sanctify* us: Ephesians 5.26-27.
4. In Adam and Eve we see the Church's past: How God formed the Bride for His Son.
  - In the death of Christ, God has provided all we need to be the perfect Bride: The blood and the water (for salvation and sanctification).

### **C. Isaac & Rebekah: The Present—How God Builds the Church**

1. In Isaac and Rebekah we see the work of the Father through the Holy Spirit who goes out into the world in order to call out a bride for His Son.
2. Remember: (Gen 22.1-2) Isaac was to be offered as a sacrifice by his father, Abraham. Genesis 22 is a beautiful picture of God the Father sacrificing His only begotten Son for our salvation.
3. After the sacrifice: (Gen 24) We see Isaac waiting "at home" while his father, Abraham, sends out an unnamed servant to find and call out a bride for his beloved son.
  - a) (v1) Abraham, old and well stricken in years, is a picture of God the Father (Ancient of Days).
  - b) (v2-4) The father sends out his servant to go into the world, to seek out a suitable wife for his son, and then to bring her to the son (called out of the world and into marriage with the son).
    - Observation: The servant is never named. God does not draw specific attention to him.
  - c) The bride, sought out by the servant sent from the father, is called out by the servant to separate from her first (natural) family in order to follow the servant to the son so that she can form part of his family.
    - (1) (v56-58) The servant works with haste (his mission is urgent), but he leaves the final decision to go up to the future bride—she must willingly choose to go to the son (and it is by faith in the word of the servant because she does not see the son or anything about him).
    - (2) (v62) While the servant is bringing the bride to Isaac, he comes out (Christ in the rapture).
    - (3) (v63-67) The servant then brings the bride to Isaac, and Isaac takes her to his home (just like us with Christ: "...and so shall we ever be with the Lord"; 1Thes 4.13-18).

4. (John 12.32) After Christ's sacrifice and resurrection (pictured in Genesis 22), He promised He would draw all men to Himself. How does He do that...?
  - a) (John 16.7-11) The Spirit, during our present age, has been sent into the world to call out a bride for the Son.
  - b) (John 16.13) Just as the servant was unnamed, so the Spirit of God does not speak of Himself, but rather of the Father who sent Him, and of the Son for Whom He was sent.
    - Side note: We should be very cautious with ministries and ministers who put an unbiblical emphasis on the Holy Spirit.
5. In Isaac and Rebekah we see the Church in the present age: God is calling out a bride for His Son!
  - a) Here we also see the importance of the filling of the Spirit in in our lives until we meet the Son.
  - b) Once Rebekah decided to go (picture of salvation), she followed the servant by faith. She had no idea which way to go or even what Isaac looked like if she stumbled upon him.
  - c) We are the same way in this world. We need to be filled with the Spirit—led by Him, and He guides us in this world by Scripture. He will lead us closer and closer to Christ, but we must follow the Servant our Father sent.

#### **D. Joseph & Asenath: The Future—How God Will Exalt the Church**

1. (Gen 41.39-44) After his time of suffering, when his brothers had rejected him, Joseph ascended to the throne, to the right hand of Pharaoh.
  - a) Joseph here is a picture of Christ after the suffering of the cross and after His ascension to heaven, to sit at the right hand of the God the Father.
  - b) During this time, Joseph is given a Gentile bride to rule with him...
2. (Gen 41.45) Joseph was given a Gentile bride named Asenath.
  - a) She was an Egyptian, born in the family of a pagan priest (a family led to worship false gods), and she was called out to be the bride of the ruler of Egypt.
  - b) Christ has been given a Gentile bride who was born in the family of the devil, and He has called us out to rule with Him as His joint-heirs.
3. Thus we see in Asenath (an obscure, unknown, "nobody" of a Gentile) a picture of the Bride given to Christ and exalted with Him to rule with Him in His kingdom. She pictures our future.

#### **E. Summary: So... what is the point of all this? Wives picture the Church!**

1. Wives in Scripture are meant to typify (picture, illustrate, put on display) the relationship between God and His people.
  - We only looked at three, and they showed us our past, present, and future as the Bride of Christ. There are many more!
2. (Eph 5.24) Wives today (just as the wives in Scripture) have received the high calling to submit to their husbands in order to "play the part" of the Church and show the world what Christ is like in His relationship to His Bride.
  - a) The true Church is subject unto Christ because she is made up only of true converts: Those who have repented of (turned from) their sins and their selves and who are trusting in (and following) the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - b) That is what the role of the wife is in the marriage. And theology ought to inform this role!
    - (1) Women, you do not submit to your husbands for your husbands' sake. It's not primarily about him.
    - (2) (Eph 5.32) You submit to your husbands so Jesus Christ can be glorified—so He can be put on display for others to see!

- c) Think about this way:
  - (1) The true Church is *so grateful* to Christ for His willing sacrifice on the cross (His great love toward us displayed in His shame, humility, suffering for us... all for the joy set before Him in God's plan to call out the Church for His glory), that true believers *willingly* and *gladly* submit to Him, call Him Lord, and following Him wherever He would lead us!
  - (2) Wives, let *that* (theology!) motivate you to submit to your husband, so your marriage can also typify the relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. It's about Christ!
- 3. There is another doctrinal issue related to women and the Bride of Christ (the church) that we need to address because of the days we live in (the last days of the Church, days of apostasy)...

## II. **A Picture of the False Church: The Strange Woman, Proverbs 5**

### A. **The Importance of Understanding the Strange Woman**

- 1. Obviously it is important for us to understand the strange woman on a practical level.
  - a) Men: We need to understand her ways so we can avoid her.
  - b) Women: You need to understand her ways...
    - (1) So you don't become her, and
    - (2) So you don't leave your husband open to her temptation.
- 2. It is just as important (if not more so) to understand the strange woman on a doctrinal level. Why?
  - a) So we don't become her as a church, and
  - b) So we can avoid her (and her influence) as we labor with the Spirit during our dispensation to call out a Bride for the Lord Jesus Christ.

### B. **A Quick Overview of the Strange Woman: Proverbs 5**

- 1. Doctrinally, the strange woman is a picture of false religion.
  - a) Specifically, she is a picture of *apostate* religion (i.e., the religion God established, but which men have changed and perverted).
  - b) So, she is not so much a picture of, for example, Islam. She is, rather, a picture today of evangelical Christendom (of churches that no longer follow truth and the true Gospel).
  - c) The strange woman is set alongside of God's wife as the opposite of all she is (or should be).
    - (1) There are two principal women in Proverbs, and they are contrasted to teach us.
    - (2) God's Wisdom is personified as a woman, and she is a picture of truth and God's Word. She is contrasted with this strange woman, a picture of false religion and its lies.
- 2. (v1-2) The only way to avoid the strange woman is by growing in wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (found in Scripture).
- 3. (v3 cf. Prov 7.5, 21) The first thing God draws our attention to is her *speech*: She uses flattering words, sweet words, and smooth talk... *with the motive to deceive*.
  - a) She will tell a man what *he* wants to her, what is sweet to *his* taste, what makes *him* feel good.
  - b) (Rom 16.17-18) One of the principal characteristics of apostate Christendom (of an apostate local church) is good words and fair speeches that deceive the hearts the men.
  - c) The strange woman is a doctrinal lesson on bad churches—on what the Bride of Christ is *not*!
- 4. (v4-5) The strange woman (an apostate church) will lead men only to death and hell.
  - a) She strives to lure people in by her offer of fleshly entertainment (that is what the strange woman appeals to: she offers fun, distraction, "feel good" fleshly entertainment).
  - b) And those who are lured in will not find the truth, but rather only death, destruction, and hell.

5. (v6) The ways of the strange woman are *moveable*: She will adjust herself to every popular fad so that she is "relevant" to the people she wants to "reach."
  - a) She will change how she looks... what she says... in order to draw men in and tickle their ears with what she knows they want to hear.
  - b) She is the master of survey-based ministry philosophy! Find out what they men, and then change your ways to give it to them (just as long as the *come in for the entertainment!*).
6. (v7-8) God's command to His people: GET OUT!
  - a) For those who are in churches that use *fair speech* in the pulpit, but who will not teach God's Word, God says, "Get out!"
  - b) For those who are in churches whose ways are "*moveable*" (who change with every fad so they can be cool and hip and relevant and... attractive to the world!), God says, "Get out!"
  - c) James 4.4 says that this type of ministry or church is a whore, not the Bride of Christ who seeks only to please the Lord through willing and glad and intentional submission to His Word.
    - (1) Friendship with the world is not "being relevant." It is enmity with God!
    - (2) And the church that follows the world to try to look like the world, feel like the world, sound like the world... is no friend of God, much less His Bride. She is a strange woman!
  - d) (2Cor 6.16-17) And God says to His people in those churches: "Get out!"
    - (1) Any Christian who would stay in a church like that (even if he would stay for good motives and with good intentions: "I want to reform this church from the inside"), is in *gross disobedience* to God.
    - (2) The Lord *never* calls us to reform an apostate church. He calls us *out* of them.
7. (v9-14) You will waste your time, your life, and your reward if you are a true Christian, seduced by the strange woman—seduced by the fleshly, "feel good" temptations of an apostate church.
  - a) (v13) Again: Our only hope of not becoming a church like this... or of avoiding churches like this (and their influence on us)... is God's Word. We need to *hear* it and *obey* it. Read it, do it!
  - b) (v14) And don't make the mistake of thinking, "Oh, it won't happen to me." Each and every one of us is but one step from sin!
    - (1) For the individual (on a practical level): Just read Romans 7 (no one is immune).
    - (2) For us as a church (on a doctrinal level): Just look at how many good churches that used to follow God's Word are now following the world in a fleshly race to draw people in.
8. (v15-20) If the strange woman cannot win you over with her fair words and her "moveable" ways, then she will use sensual desires (she will meet your "felt needs" of the moment; she will entertain you; she will make you feel good).
9. (v21-23) We should all allow God's coming judgment to inform us about the decisions we make, and to motivate a change in our behavior.
  - And this includes husbands... wives... (future husbands and wives)... and us as a church...

### **Conclusion: Ephesians 5.24**

#### **Wives are to submit to their husbands because they picture the true Church in her relationship to Christ.**

- The *best* thing we can do for our marriages is to learn the *theology* behind them.
- And that theology says that the wife portrays to the world what the Church is to Christ.

**Because of this, there are some very *practical* exhortations for *women* in this passage:**

- Instead of focusing on your husbands faults and failures, focus on Christ!
  - ✓ Your submission to your husband (to love him, help him, serve him—to be his helpmeet by helping meet his needs) is *because* you are a Christian and therefore want to portray a right picture of the Church to the world (just like the brides of the Bible picture the Church).
- And don't forget the practical lessons we can see in the strange woman...
  - ✓ Your husband married *you* because he needed *you* (for several things) and because *you* won his heart.
  - ✓ Submit to your husband, meet his needs, strive to keep his heart... because if *you* don't, someone else will. Think about it this way (and this is what I've seen in "marriage counseling")...
    - We've all been told to not go to the grocery store hungry, right? If we do, the temptation is much harder to resist.
    - Wives, if you isolate your husband, push him away, refuse to submit to him and meet his needs... and then just send him off into the world... you are sending a hungry man into the grocery store with a credit card.
  - ✓ Your husband *needs* you, and he married *you* because he wants *you* to meet those needs. Submit to him; esteem him better than yourself. Humble yourself and love him like you said you would.

**There are also some very *important* applications for *our church* in the theology of Ephesians 5.24.**

- As the Bride of Christ, we (as individual Christians and as a local church) are called to submit to Christ.
- (Gal 1.10) We are *not* to play the strange woman and entice men with fair speech and sensual entertainment—we are *not* to be man-pleasers. ***We are to be Christ-pleasers!*** Think about it this way...
- What pleases a man and makes him appreciate his wife (what will make him *very* attracted to her)?
  - ✓ **First:** A husband appreciates a wife who admires him (for who he is and for what he does) and tells him that. A man is very attracted to a woman like that (that's why he married you!).
    - In other words: she *likes* him, is *interested* in him and what he does; and she *likes* being with him.
    - The opposite: Naggin' on him to get done what she wants done and to get her own way.
  - ✓ **Second:** A husband appreciates a wife who speaks well of him in front of others (who would go so far as to defend him and maybe even brag on him). That is very attractive in a wife!
    - The opposite: Raggin' about him and all his faults, failures, and shortcomings.
- So, think about what Christ wants from His Bride...
  - ✓ He certainly doesn't want a whore: The "moveable," relevant, sensual, flattering strange woman who is out in the world trying to lure men in to get one more body to add to her trophy room.
  - ✓ **First:** Christ wants a Bride who will *worship* Him.
    - He wants our admiration—our adoration. He wants us to *like* Him and *like* being with Him.
    - He wants us to desire to know Him, to want to spend time with Him (reading the letters He wrote us), talking to Him (in prayer), and longing for the day we can be with Him (like Paul said: loving His appearing).
    - That is attractive in a wife... and that is becoming of a Christian and a church!
  - ✓ **Second:** Christ wants a Bride who will speak to others of Him and how wonderful He is!
    - The true Church is no man-pleaser (that's the strange woman—the apostate evangelical church!).
    - The true Church desires only to please Christ and she does so by submitting to Him as His "helpmeet," laboring with Him in the work He is doing in the world today...
      - ➔ Christ, through His Spirit, is convicting men of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come...

- Christ, through His Spirit, is drawing all men to Himself..
- And it is an attractive and becoming Bride who submits to Him, serves with Him, and goes out to *speak well of Him to others* by preaching the Gospel of Christ to them.
- ✓ We ought to be fervent in *prayer* and bold in our *preaching*! We ought to be hungry for *worship* and zealous in *witnessing*!
  - Go, be with Christ and learn Him (enjoy spending time with Him)! Go, tell others about Him!
  - That is a picture of a bride who is enamored with her husband!
  - That is a picture of a bride in submission to her husband because she is absolutely in love with him because of who he is and what he does.
- Wives ought to submit to their husbands (in private, in public) because they are to be a picture of the relationship between the Church and her Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Let theology inform your marriage and then adjust your marriage to picture/portray that theology.