

## **THE BODY, THE BRIDE OF CHRIST**

We are always sorry to differ with those we love; yet, when necessary for the truth's sake, we must do it in the spirit of meekness – the spirit of love – the spirit of Christ. We believe that it is our Lord's wish that we "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints"; therefore we "have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." We find that among the Apostles there were differences. (Acts 15; Gal. 2:11; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18.) Hence, we need not be surprised if such should be the case in this day. But should the faithful servant ignore doctrinal differences to maintain peace? Did Paul do so? No; as faithful servants, we should contend earnestly, at the same time striving to maintain unity of spirit in the bonds of peace, yet never sacrificing truth for either unity or peace, else we should not be able to grow in grace and knowledge – up to a stature of perfection in Christ.

In its last two issues, Zion's Day Star presents, as new light, the idea that the body of Christ – the church – is different from the Bride of Christ – the church. They claim that the "body" means those who overcome the world following the example of Jesus, their Head (which we always held); but deny that the bride is the same class of overcomers. They claim that the body, with the head, constitute the Bridegroom, who, in due time, will be united to the Bride; and they claim that the Bride company, through weakness of the flesh, are not overcomers of the world, but are overcome by the world [the class whom both they and we have always heretofore recognized as the servant company of Rev. 7:9-17].

The question arises, is this true – have we heretofore labored under a misapprehension? We are not to conclude that because it is different from what we had thought, therefore it is erroneous; neither

are we to conclude that because it is new, therefore it is new light. It might be new error. It might be darkness. Neither should we judge of its truth or falsity by the measure of our love for those who advocate or oppose the view. This is a lesson which all need to learn: that while human teachers are necessary, and should be esteemed very highly for their work's sake (1 Thes. 5:13), yet they are to be respected and heeded only so far as they can show us a thus saith the Lord, for their teachings. Let us, then, inquire of the Lord what is truth on this subject, and receive his reply from his Word.

When Jesus would teach the nature of the kingdom of God, he gives a number of parables or illustrations: – The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a merchantman seeking pearls; it is like to a man seeking a treasure in a field; it is like a young nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom; it is like to a grain of mustard seed; it is like to leaven hid in meal, etc., etc. Shall we conclude that each of these pen-pictures represents a different kingdom? If so, how many kingdoms of heaven there are, and how different from each other! But no; we all recognize the fact that these are different views of the same kingdom; that different illustrations are given to show more clearly different features of that one kingdom.

Again, in Rev. 20 and 21 we have seven different pen-pictures of the operation and results of the kingdom established – (1) Satan bound for a thousand years (vss. 1-3); (2) Earthly thrones cast down, and the Overcomers reign with Christ a thousand years (vs. 4); (3) The holy and blessed of the first resurrection live and reign a thousand years with Christ (vss. 6-10); (4) The great white throne – Heaven and Earth flee – The dead judged from open books (vss. 11-15); (5) New Heaven and Earth – Holy City – its blessings to mankind (chap. 21:1-8); (6) The Bride, the Holy City – the kingdom of God come to earth (vss. 10-27); (7) The water of life flows freely – the world's troubles healed – the curse destroyed (chap. 22:1-3).

Should we conclude that these are seven different kingdoms in operation, or, that they picture seven different thousand years? No; these views present to us from various standpoints the work of the one kingdom during the one thousand years. The saints live and reign at the same time that Satan is bound; and the dead, small and great, are brought to a full trial before the great white throne of justice during the same time, etc.

When we read the many different titles of Jesus – the Prophet, Priest, King, the Son of God, Son of man, Man of sorrows, the Lamb of God, etc., should we conclude that these titles belong to different beings? Or, do they not belong to the same, and do they not all represent, from different standpoints the "Son of God"?

So, if we look at the various names given by inspiration to the church of Christ, we find them many; we find, too, that each of these illustrative names serves to show some feature of our work, or of our relationship to Jesus better than any other title.

The church is a company of soldiers fighting a good fight – overcoming the world under the leadership of the "Captain of our salvation." It is also a "royal priesthood"; each overcomer is a priest, and all regard Jesus as the High or Chief Priest of our profession. This shows the life of sacrifice. Another illustration is that of pupils or disciples learning and copying from their Master's example and precept, for "He hath left us an example that we should follow in his steps." (1 Pet. 2:21.)

Another illustration of the church's position and relationship to Jesus, is furnished in the figure – the body of Christ. This illustration does not show the sacrifice, as does the priest illustration; it does not show the battle with the world, as does the soldier illustration; it does not show the following of Christ as our pattern and example; but it does show a feature which does not appear in any [R397 : page 8] of the other illustrations, viz.: the very intimate and close relationship

which exists between Jesus and his church, and among all the members of the church. As every member of the human body moves under the control of the head, so every member of Christ is controlled by the will or spirit of our Lord, the Head of the church. As every pain or suffering of each member of the human body is known and shared by each other member, and especially by the head, so each member of the body of Christ is in sympathy with the other, and the Head, Jesus – "knows our every weakness."

Our head is quickly touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and applies the relief, using one or another member of the body to bind up and comfort and bear the burdens of the injured member.

**[R398 : page 8]**

But, while this last is one of the most beautiful of the many illustrations of our relationship to Jesus, still each of the others are necessary.

The temple is another figure and name given to the church. (1 Cor. 3:16.) At one time each Christian is compared to a temple, in which God, by his spirit, dwells; and again, each Christian is compared to a living stone in the one great temple which God is building during this age, and from which his blessing is to flow to the world during the next age. This last figure shows the growth of the church as the other figures do not show it. Neither the soldier figure, nor the priest figure, nor the disciple figure, nor the body figure, none of these show the growth of the church as a whole; but the temple figure does show it. We, as living stones, are cut, polished, and builded, and so through this age, the temple "groweth," until Jesus, the top-stone, shall crown it. Then it will be perfect and ready for its great Millennial work.

How necessary, then, are all these figures. Consider, for a moment, that if any figure were omitted, much would be lost. If we had only the figure of "the body," how would additions be shown?

Suppose a body which received additional members – one joint, one toe, one finger, one eye, one ear, one member, at a time, it would be an absurd figure, and would not illustrate the addition of members to the church, as the temple figure does, though it (the body figure) well illustrates the oneness and perfection of the entire living church at any stage of its existence. It shows the possibility of the perfect thing growing or maturing in perfection. Thus, we are perfect in Christ from the very first, yet we are to grow in grace, etc. "Let as many as are perfect be thus minded." (Phil. 3:15.)

And now we come to another figure of the church, viz.: that of the Bride, the Lamb's wife. This is the figure which our brethren think should be regarded as representing a different company – not the overcomers – not the body of Christ. Their argument is, If we are the body of Christ, we cannot be the Bride, because, say they, the body of Christ is to be married to the Bride of Christ.

At first sight there is a plausibility here, but let us remember that each of these figures stands separate and alone, and the moment we begin to blend any two of them we get confusion. Now, let us see; suppose we were to say, We are to be members of the body of Christ, hence when we read of Jesus as the Captain, we should conclude that we are not the soldiers fighting the good fight, for we are members of the Captain's body. Or, when we read of Jesus as the Master, who set his disciples an example to follow in his footsteps, should we conclude that we are not disciples or followers, because we are of his body; and say we could not walk in his footsteps because we are members of his feet, making the footprints, and therefore could not follow them? Or, should we say that we are not members of the holy temple, because we are members of his body, and reason that a body could live in a temple, but could not be a temple? This would be as wise as to say that we could not be represented by the bride figure, because we are represented in the body figure. Who would disclaim

being of the "royal priesthood" because another figure shows that we are members of the body? (1 Pet. 2:9.)

Thus we see that if we try to blend these figures, we get confusion. Yet, who will claim that each of these figures represent different classes? No one; they each represent some special feature of our relationship.

We next pass on, to notice that there is a relationship between Jesus and his church better illustrated by the Bride and Bridegroom figure, than by any other. Jesus went away, saying, "I go to prepare a place (home) for you, and I will come again and receive you unto myself." How beautifully this is illustrated by the earthly marriage relationship. The time for marriage is not yet; the intended husband goes to a far country, promising to return and claim his faithful betrothed, and cause her to share his wealth, his name, his honor, etc., and to make her joint-heir to all his inheritance.

The one condition on which all is promised is love and faithfulness – a love which overcomes the painfulness of lonely waiting, and surmounts the difficulties of the way, ever praying "Come, Lord (husband) Jesus, come quickly."

What other illustration would so clearly and faithfully represent the relationship between the church and her Lord during the time of his absence? The body figure fails entirely to represent this. Suppose a head cut off and separated far from a body, yet both alive and longing for union. It would be an absurdity. But when we take the figure of the church, so repeatedly presented a virgin (pure woman), espoused to Christ, we can see how the absent Bridegroom and the waiting Bride look forward to the time of their union. The loving devotion of each is beautifully pictured here. And, as a true bridegroom desires for his bride, one whose love could overcome the obstacles in the way, so Jesus will claim for his bride only such as overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, which together conspire

to allure her from her absent Lord. The inspiration of the promise – "Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it" – will keep his faithful Bride "unspotted from the world."

Note how plainly the Scriptures teach that Jesus, personally, is the Bridegroom, and not Jesus and the overcomers. John speaks of Jesus personally as the bridegroom. (John 3:29.) Jesus also speaks of himself individually as the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34.) In Matt. 25:1,5,6,10, the Bridegroom is four times mentioned, and who will say that any of them could be applied to other than the individual Bridegroom, Jesus? No virgin went forth in any sense to meet a multitudinous bridegroom. The midnight cry was not, Behold, a multitudinous bridegroom cometh, nor did a multitudinous bridegroom in any sense tarry.

The glory, the honor, the power, all came directly to the man, and the woman obtains joint-heirship by marriage (covenant union with him). So Jesus was the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2) and we inherited none of them, until called by the Father, we become his betrothed, and now we are heirs unitedly with him, for "He (the Father) that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him, also freely give us all things?" Therefore, by union or marriage with him who is the heir, "all things are yours."

To this view all the Old Testament types harmonize: Man was formed first, then woman was developed, and became his companion and joint-heir to the dominion of earth. So Jesus was first perfected, and since then the church is being prepared as a bride for her husband, and hopes to enter the joys of her Lord (husband). Adam's sleep and the rending of his side did not directly produce Eve, but merely the rib from which Eve was formed by God's power. So Jesus' death did not produce the church directly, but it produced a justified humanity (a rib), which, by God's power, is transformed into the glorious divine

likeness of the second Adam, and she henceforth becomes his bride and help-meet.

It will not do, to say that Adam was the type of the body (church), as well as of Jesus, for Paul tells us that he was a type of Jesus personally. He says, "The first man was of the earth earthy, the second man was the Lord from heaven." That Paul meant Jesus who had already been perfected on the plane of glory, is evident from his subsequent remark – "As we have born the image of the earthy, (Adam) we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," (Jesus, the anti-type). As Adam alone represented our Lord and Adam and his wife were unitedly called Adam, (Gen. 5:2,) so Jesus alone was the Christ, (anointed) yet when we as his wife are united to him, the one name stands for the united ONE – The Christ of God.

Look too, at the striking type of Isaac and Rebecca. Abraham the type of Jehovah, sends his servant a type of the Spirit, to take a bride for Isaac, who typified Jesus, the Son and heir. Isaac was the rightful heir of Abraham without any bride, but when she was united to him she became a joint-heir. So Jesus was first and individually appointed "heir of all things" by Jehovah (Heb. 1:2); and since then we are invited to be heirs of God, also joint or united heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.

When we read – "We brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise," we must remember how we became as Isaac. Not that we were created heirs and joint-heirs, but that we become such by reason of our espousal (covenant – marriage) with Jesus. Rebecca was an heir of Abraham and joint-heir with Isaac while journeying to his home, and yet it was by hope and faith, and depended on her completing the journey; so we are now heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus by hope, by faith; but our full realization of it depends on our following on in the narrow way. We are "heirs of God, joint-heirs



with Jesus Christ our Lord (husband) if so be that we suffer with him," etc. Rom. 8:17.

Again, if the Bridegroom class, according to the Day Star, was not yet complete, how could Paul, in his day, addressing the church, say, "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"? Since every type of the Bridegroom and Bride shows that the Bridegroom was completed or perfected before the Bride was even called to union and joint-heirship, this is out of harmony with the view presented by our brethren. But it is entirely harmonious with the view we have all heretofore held, for Jesus was perfected in glory before the Spirit at Pentecost began to call the chaste virgin to be the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

No one can gainsay the fact that Jesus and Paul and Peter all recognized the calling of the Bride of Christ as in progress during the past eighteen **[R399 : page 8]** hundred years, and this of itself should be proof that the Bridegroom was Jesus, who alone was perfected on the spiritual plane, before the call of the church to be his bride.

Paul's use of the two figures is clearly shown in Eph. 5. Here he does not blend, but links these illustrations – the body and bride, and shows them to refer to the same class. He is here addressing "the saints which were at Ephesus, and the FAITHFUL (overcoming ones) in Christ Jesus." (Chap. 1:1.) In chap. 1:23, he likens the church to the human body, of which Jesus is the Head; and in chap. 5:22-33, speaking to the same persons, he likens the church to husband and wife, exhorting husbands to love their wives, and wives to reverence their husbands, and thus exemplify the beautiful relationship between Jesus and his church. Verse 28 compares the wife to the body, saying, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself; for no man ever yet hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." "For we (the same company – the church – the prospective bride) are members

of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "For this cause (thus representing the heavenly union) shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh (one body). This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Could words express more plainly that the figures body and bride are used interchangeably, referring to the same class – the overcomers?

When it is claimed that the title bride belongs to the class who are overcome by the world, and who do not keep their garments, etc., we object; we call attention to the fact that the Bride of Christ is everywhere spoken of as a "chaste virgin," and never as impure or in unholy alliance with the world (a harlot). But it is claimed that she comes out of Babylon! True, and who that is out and free did not come out of the Babylon or confusion? All, just as in the type all of typical Israel went into captivity, into literal Babylon, so here. It is well to read carefully the text, Come out of her (Babylon), my people, that ye be NOT PARTAKERS of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. (Rev. 18:4.) This shows that the class who are called out and obey are not partakers of Babylon's sins, but overcomers.

In conclusion, since the Apostles urged the church as soldiers, as a priesthood, as disciples or imitators, as the body members, as living stones of the temple, and as "a chaste virgin, espoused to one husband – Christ,\* we believe that all of these expressions were but variations of the same call, and to the same class, because during this Gospel Age there has been but one – the high calling; and all are "called in ONE HOPE of your calling." Hence these distinctive titles refer, not to different classes, but to the same.

\*1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:9,21; Eph. 4:15,16; 1 Pet. 2:5; 2 Cor. 11:2.