

October 24, 2010
The Bridge Bible Fellowship
Pastor Paul S. Brown
Selected Scriptures

**“The Local Church Part Eleven:
Metaphors of the Church – Part Three”**

- I. **Memories of the Early Church – 2:41-47**
- II. **Metaphors of the Church** (a “metaphor” is a word or phrase that means one thing and is used for referring to another thing in order to emphasize their similar qualities)
 - A. **The Body of Christ**
 - B. **The Bride of Christ** (cf. OT concept of God and Israel – Is. 54:5f; 62:5; Hos. 2:7. NT = Matt. 9:15; 25:1-10; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17)
 1. **The Love Of The Bridegroom** – Eph. 5:25ff
 - a. **The Extent of Love** (Rom. 5:8-10; Eph. 3:19)
 - b. **The Expression of Love** (Eph. 5:23-29)
 2. **The Response Of The Bride**
 - a. **Love! 1 Jn. 4:19** (demonstrated in faith and obedience)
 - b. **Submission! Eph. 5:24** (voluntary, wholehearted, sincere, enthusiastic)
 - c. **Fidelity! 2 Cor. 11:2-3** (cf. Gen. 3)

Simplicity = “that which is spread out, and thus without folds or wrinkles,” suggests a heart totally and wholeheartedly devoted to Christ with **no duplicity or secret loves**.

Ezekiel 6:1-9 – “hurt” = “to break, crush, dash in pieces” (cf. Hos. 1:6, 8f; 2:2; 11:8-9)

But how are we adulterous as a Church? (cf. Is. 57:3-9; Jer. 3:1-21; Ezekiel 16; 23; Hosea; 1 Cor. 10:14; James 4; 1 Jn. 5:19-21; Rev. 2:20–22; 14:8; 17:1–5; 18:3, 9; 19:2)

3. The Future Union (2 Cor. 11; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 19)

Oriental practice of marriage consisted of three states: 1) Betrothal; 2) Marriage; 3) Marriage Supper

Commitment / Response:

1. **To the Groom - Love the Groom, Jesus Christ! (Submit, respect, obey, wait, be ready)**
 - **Who gets us ready?** (Rev. 19:7; 2 Cor. 11:2; Phil. 1:10; 2:16; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 2:19f; 1 Jn. 2:28)
2. **To the Bride – Love Her!** Join Him in working to make her beautiful! Membership, prayer, instruction, one another, mentoring, forgiveness, forbearance, sacrificial giving... Make Her your priority! Passionately serve Her! Give to Her! Reach out to other true churches! Expose false churches! Help plant more churches!
3. **To the Watching World** – participate with the Groom in reaching others to become a part of His Church / Bride!

Discussion Questions:

1. People often have expectations of their local church and then are very disappointed when those expectations are not met. What are some common expectations people have? What are some that you have? What are some typical behaviors of people when their expectations are not met? What should our expectations be for the local church?
2. William Willimon in “What’s Right with the Church,” page 24-25 wrote, “*Many of those who criticize the church do so on the basis of an ideal. They set up...an abstract picture of the church, and then criticize the real church when it fails to resemble the fantasy... As for those of us on the inside, we can do great damage to the church with our irresponsible, romantic speculations about the church... We are humans, and our communities invariably reflect our humanity at its best and its worst.*” How might a more realistic (and biblical) view of the church as both a masterpiece (salvation) and a mess (sin) help us in dealing with our expectations? How might it help us carry out the biblical “one another” commands more faithfully?
3. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “fidelity”? What thoughts & feelings might a person have when they find out their spouse has been unfaithful? Does God feel? Does He feel as intensely as we do, less intensely, or more intensely? What does Ezek. 6:9 say about the way God felt when Israel committed spiritual adultery? Can you find other passages that speak of God being “hurt” by the infidelity of His people? Does this in any way change the way you perceive God? Does this change the way you perceive your sin against Him?
4. What are some ways that churches commit spiritual adultery? List as many as you can. How can we guard against committing these grievous sins?
5. What is the “Bride” of Christ? Is it you individually? Is it the local visible church corporately? Is it the Universal invisible Church? Is it all three? What biblical support do you have for your answer?
6. If it refers to the Universal Church what are the implications of the metaphor? What are the implications for us as individuals and for us as local churches? What responsibility do we have to the Universal Church? What does this say about the typical approach of “competition” between local churches in a given city? How might we better participate with true churches in our area to carry out the Great Commission?
7. Read Rev. 19. What is the ultimate future for the Bride of Christ? How does she look? How did she get that way? What is all heaven’s attitude toward the Church? What should our attitude be toward the Church?
8. Read 2 Cor. 11:1-3. What is Paul’s concern for the Corinthian church? What might keep the church from being a “pure virgin”? What are some specific ways Satan deceives the church and keeps it from simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ? What must we do to overcome these temptations?
9. Read Rev. 2-3. What problems did Jesus point out in the churches? What praises did He point out? Which two churches only received positive comments? What was the focus of those churches? What lessons can we learn / apply from this?
10. Do you LOVE the Church, the Bride of Christ? How are you demonstrating your love to your local church? How are you demonstrating your love to other local churches in your area? How are you demonstrating your love to churches around the world?
11. What specific things are you going to think, say, and do differently as a result of this study?