

What is the Church?

Part 2: the Bride, the Body, Overcomers (3/8/26)

Please turn to *Colossians 1:15-23*

LAST WEEK:

- The world isn't just corrupt, it's powerful...too powerful for us.
- It's run by fallen angelic beings who hate God and desire worship and glory for themselves.
- They work through human elites who have "sold their souls" to live rich lives and rule over the rest of us.
- Our parents and grandparents tried to prepare us when they said "life is hard!"
- But Jesus isn't from this world! He's OTHERWORDLY!
- He came from "heaven" where He rules over a "kingdom" with His Father.
- He proved His dominance over this natural world by performing SUPERNatural, otherworldly acts: healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, calmed a storm.
- He also promised to bring His Kingdom here and told us to pray "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
- Jesus overcame Satan! He overcame the world!
- He created—built—the Church upon Himself. He is the Rock!
- We are made in His image which means the Church is OTHERWORDLY.
- It's not made of the stuff of this world therefore it cannot die, become lesser, or corrupted.
- We're still in a body made from this earth so yes: we'll still get old, hungry, too hot, too cold, feel pain, get sick, and eventually pass away.
- We can still be beaten, imprisoned, and even martyred by the evil forces of this world.
- But our spirits have been born again, resurrected from death and ushered into eternal life!
- We are sealed for the resurrection by the Holy Spirit and we will endure!

TODAY we go further to answer the question "What is the Church?"

[Col 1:15-17 ESV] 15 He [JESUS] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--**all things were created through him and for him.** 17 And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together.**

I love Colossians because Paul spends lots of time telling us **about the divine aspect of Jesus!** Jesus IS God and look at verse 16: He created ALL things, what we can and can't see. Not just "matter" but beings, including angels and humans.

Focus on the last two words of verse 16: **He created everything for Himself...and that includes the Church.**

- The Church wasn't created for the world.
- The Church wasn't created for individual Christians like you and I.
- The Church was created by Jesus, FOR Jesus.

If you and I are part of the Church, **He grafted us into it for Himself.**

- My destiny was created for Jesus.
- My time, effort, and life was created for Jesus.
- Any gifts, talents, and skills I have were created for Him.
- I was forgiven, saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit...for Jesus.

Verse 17: *the church is held together by Him.*

Verses 15 & 16 prepare us for the revelation of verse 17:

- Jesus is God therefore eternal, immortal, and indestructible.
- No one can add anything to Him nor can they take anything away.
- No one can corrupt Him. No one can stop, delay, or divert Him in any way.

Thus if the church is held together by HIM, **then there's nothing the devil**, the elite humans of this world, or nature **can do to destroy us**, tear us apart, whittle us down, or body slam us.

- The church endured persecution by Jewish religious authorities in the 1st century.
- The church endured the Roman Empire using all its might and power to destroy us up until the 4th century.
- The Parthian/Persian Empire tried to body slam the church from the 3rd – 7th centuries.
- The Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and Communist China all tried, and all failed.

They brought all their money, military power, unjust laws, and economic pressure to bear...and the Church is still here because Jesus holds us together.

[Col 1:18-20 ESV] 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Now we're given a label: we are His BODY. The translation of that word is fascinating: it's a *mystical & supernatural group of people, closely united with each other*. We're not separate from the Head, we are one with Him—we're an extension of Him which operates in this world.

Verse 19: the fullness of God dwells in Jesus b/c He is God and *He's made "peace"* between Heaven and Earth. Jesus is in Heaven, the Church is on earth, and "peace" means more than a relaxation from tension. It means connection and harmony. Please listen carefully:

There is peace between Jesus and His Church.

- Does this mean the church is always obedient, holy, and doing everything we're supposed to? NO.
- Does this mean the church never sins, never rebels, never follows after earthly desires? NO.

We remain His body despite all this. I hear older people often say "there's lots of things I want to do, but my body won't cooperate!" Yet they still try to take care of it, don't they? Go to the doctor, etc? They don't approach a surgeon and say "could you please disconnect my head from my body, 'cause my body isn't cooperating."

We remain in covenant with Him. Connected to Him. How? What's the nature of this relationship?

[Col 1:21-22 ESV] 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order **to present you** holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

The first part of verse 22 is talking about *the actual physical body of Jesus* Who died on the Cross.

The last part gives us another label: **the Bride and Wife-to-be of Christ.** Even though that word is used elsewhere by Paul, the last part of verse 22 is marital: He PRESENTS us.

I remember the first time I introduced Becky to my parents: I was presenting her to them. The same thing applied when I first met her parents: I was being presented to them.

Let's get more traditional, **as in the time and society of Christ.**

Marriages were arranged by parents. If they had a son, they would select a potential bride and present said bride to him. They didn't just parade her off the street dressed in whatever. The first thing that happened was the father of the groom negotiated a literal Dowry with the bride's father. Once the price was agreed, the bride would begin to prepare herself for presentation to the groom. She would bathe, lather herself with oils and perfume, dress in fine clothing that was clean.

Back to verse 22: **Jesus is the One PRESENTING us which means we've been CHOSEN to be someone's BRIDE.**

Who is He presenting us to? What is the preparation?

[Eph 5:25-28 ESV] 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, **having cleansed [washed KJV] her by the washing of water with the word,** 27 so that **he might present the church to himself** in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their **wives as their own bodies.** He who loves his wife loves himself.

Jesus is presenting us to Himself. He chose us to be His Bride and His Body. Paul links both body and bride in Ephesians 5, both labels are equally truthful and appropriate.

Verse 26: just as an ancient Jewish bride would bathe and dress in clean clothes, Jesus does this for us.

Sanctify: which means "to set apart." We just did a Bible Study on the Book of Esther and here's what happens: the King of Persia has a bunch of beautiful virgins brought before him and spends time with each. He's only going to pick one to be his queen. The book of Esther said she found great favor in his site and he loved her more than the others. The moment he chooses her to be queen, she is set apart from all the other "candidates."

The Church has been set apart for Jesus' pleasure.

Washing. Next He bathes us. The Book of Esther states it was a 12 month preparation period for Esther including baths, oils to soften her skin, and perfumes to make her smell good before she even got to approach the king!

The Church has been going through this for 2000 years! When the Revelation 19 Wedding Feast finally takes place, ***Jesus will have us ready!*** The water, oils, and perfumes He's using is His Word! The result will be, as we see in verse 27, SPLENDOR. KJV says it a little better in my view: ***"in all her glory."***

Translates to ***"illustrious, honored, esteemed, free from sins."*** Praise God!

Jesus then gives us our new clothes in the same verse: ***"without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."***

Remember that **"nakedness" in the Bible represents how we're judged.** If we're naked, we're judged by God according to the flesh...which won't be a good result for anyone. If we're judged according to shining, glorious, and radiant wedding robes Jesus has given us, however, the result is "welcome! Enter into the joy of the Lord!"

Last part of verse 27 is He'll make us "holy and without blemish" **which compares us to OT sacrifices.** In order for an animal to be worthy of sacrifice in the Temple, it had to be w/o ANY blemishes which was a tall order. Blemishes represented sin. Jesus cleanses us of all sin and makes us w/o blemish!

Verse 28: **we are Jesus' body and He loves us as He loves His own body.** More good news: Jesus doesn't believe in divorce. No condemnation to anyone who had one! **What I'm revealing is He won't divorce us!!!** To do so would be to cut the head from the body and He won't do that.

Last I want to address that **the Church was created to overcome, not be overcome.**

- Is Jesus all powerful God?
- The King over all kings and Lord over all lords: both the good and the bad ones?
- Is He otherworldly and supernatural, having overcome ALL elements of this world? All the beings who run it?
- Is He greater than sin, evil, and demons?
- Is the Church made in His image or that of the world?
- Did He create us from the stuff of heaven, or the stuff of earth?
- Did He create us for His pleasure or the world's?
- Did He create us to overcome the world like He did, or to be overcome by it?
- Did He make us the head or the tail?

You answered those questions correctly, thank you. **Now we just have to believe it.**
Let's start with God's Word:

[1Jo 5:1-5 ESV] 1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 **For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.** And this is the **victory that has overcome the world--our faith.** 5 ***Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?***

- Verse 1: The church is born of God, not this world or the devil.
- Verses 2-3: We don't see His commands as heavy burdens. Only our flesh does.
- Verse 4: We were born...again...to be overcomers of this world!!!
- Verse 4: WHAT does this "victory" look like? Good health? Prosperity? Going on vacation? Getting a promotion at work? Eating fine foods? Making sure all the bills are paid? Lower gas prices? A reasonable NYSEG bill??
- Those are ALL things of this world.

We overcome with faith in Christ. Please remember there are Christians who are starving, homeless, sick, injured, lonely, in pain, jobless, being dragged into court, falsely accused, persecuted, in jail, and more.

- This world hates us because it hated Jesus first.
- It hates us because we're part of Him and He chose us.
- It hates us because He took us out of this world and seated us in heavenly places with Him.
- It hates us because He FREED us from its dominion!

It might be able to destroy our bodies, take our homes and property, drain our money, and put us in prison. But it can't take away anything Jesus gave us like faith, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life!

Our overcoming of the world is believing in Jesus, holding fast to everything He's given us, and keeping our eyes on the prize of the resurrection.

Our overcoming is continuing to do the business of the Kingdom until He returns, regardless of earthly consequences.

SUMMARY: **We are the Body of Christ. We are the Bride of Christ. We were created to overcome the world!**