

The Faithful Love of the Husband of Israel

By Gerry Watts

With Appendix:

The Bride and the Body – Are They the Same Group or Separate? (Page 11)

In the beginning, God created the first two humans, Adam and his wife Eve, to love each other as a husband and wife. Although man was created first, and was later given authority over the woman due to sin, the two of them were ideally to complement one another. This sacred bond and union of two bodies and souls merging into one is not only the foundation for true marriage, but it is the fundamental illustration of God's love for mankind.

Many centuries later, due to the increased wickedness of humanity after the Flood, God chose the nation of Israel out of all the other nations to be His special treasure, to become His Bride, His Wife. He was going to use this nation to prove His love to the whole of mankind, to ultimately bring blessing, not only to Israel, but to the whole world.

At Mount Sinai (also known as Horeb), after He had rescued them from being slaves in Egypt, Yahweh drew up His marriage covenant with His Bride, Israel. This took the form of the Law given through Moses. The people agreed to obey the statutes of this covenant, so at that time they officially became Yahweh's wife.

But sadly, as the centuries passed by, Israel became an unfaithful wife. She began to flirt with the religious practices of the other nations, beginning to forsake her Husband in her heart. She in turn was seduced by the other nations, and she became an adulteress, prostituting herself with all manner of foreign lovers. She forsook her Husband and trampled on the marriage covenant by constantly disobeying His Law. In spite of this, God was patient with her and gave her numerous opportunities to repent and return to Him, her True Husband and Lover.

This saga was played out in relation to the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Yet ultimately both kingdoms failed to return to their Husband, and consequently, in accordance with His own Law, Yahweh divorced her! Yes, that's right, God divorced Israel!

"If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? **But**

you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers - would you now return to Me?" declares Yahweh. "Look up to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been ravished? By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness."

"...Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to Me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. **I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries.** Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; **she also went out and committed adultery.**"

"Return, faithless people," declares Yahweh, "**for I am your Husband.**"

"But **like a woman unfaithful to her husband**, so you have been unfaithful to Me, O house of Israel," declares Yahweh.

(Jeremiah 3:1-2, 6-8, 14, 20 NIV)

This is what Yahweh says: "Where is your mother's **certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?** Or to which of My creditors did I sell you? Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away."

(Isaiah 50:1 NIV)

This shows that divorce itself is not a sin, because God used it as a figure in His relationship to Israel - and He does not sin! It may not be ideal, but in this world of sin and lawlessness, and corrupt hardheartedness, it has its place. God, of course, hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) for it causes pain and distress, and can break up families. This is not the way it was meant to be from the beginning. But it is often necessary in this world, until all are changed by the Spirit of God.

Hosea and Gomer

Thankfully, the story doesn't end there. God has not given up on His unfaithful wife. A beautiful allegory of this love story is written in the book of Hosea. Hosea was a prophet of God sent to speak to Israel. He was told to take a wife, named Gomer, but it was revealed to him that she had an unfaithful heart. Hosea married Gomer and she had three children, a son named Jezreel (meaning 'God is sowing'), a daughter named Lo-Ruhamah (meaning 'not compassionate'), and another son called Lo-Ammi (meaning 'not My people').

These three children became signs to Israel that God was going to reject her as His wife and dismiss her. Gomer became unfaithful to Hosea, so he divorced her. She then bedded down with many lovers, though she never married anyone else. She became an adulteress and a prostitute.

Yet in later years, Hosea was commanded by Yahweh to show his love for Gomer by seeking her out and buying her back. So he bought her, and she returned to

him. She lived with him and was faithful to him, and gradually her heart was won over by his love and mercy, to truly become his wife, never to desert him again.

This whole story is an allegory of God's love and mercy for his unfaithful wife, Israel. Through the meanings of the three children's names, He was saying that He would scatter them like seed, and would no longer show them compassion, and they would no longer be called His people. He would reject her and send her away with a bill of divorce because of all her adulteries, but eventually he would search for her and bring her home. He would pay the Ransom price to purchase her back and shower His love upon her, so that her heart would turn from being unfaithful to her 'Possessor' or 'Master,' and she would truly learn to love Him as her True Husband and Lover.

"Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts."

"They will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not increase, because they have deserted Yahweh to give themselves to prostitution, to old wine and new, which take away the understanding of My people. They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God."

Yahweh said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. **Love her as Yahweh loves the Israelites**, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin-cakes."

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of Hope. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as the day she came up out of Egypt. **In that day," declares Yahweh, "you will call Me 'my Husband';** you will no longer call Me 'my Master.'

"I will betroth you to Me for the eon; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. **I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge Yahweh."**

"I will plant her for Myself in the land; I will show My love to the one I called 'Not My loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not My people,' 'You are My people'; and they will say 'You are my God.'"

(Hosea 2:2; 4:10; 3:1; 2:14-16, 19-20, 23)

Marriage and Divorce

To help us understand more about this epic love story, let us take a look at what God's Law teaches on the subject of marriage, divorce, adultery and prostitution.

God's Law had been written in the heart of Adam at the beginning, and as the administrator of God amongst humanity, he passed on this law and conscience to the rest. Eventually, the original kingdom of ancient Babylon (or Sumer) formed a written Code of laws to govern their society. Many of these laws and principles were God-given, and had a universal influence in the ancient East. Yet many of these

laws were also man-made and were therefore not in accord with God's righteousness and justice. So God formulated His Law in the covenant given to Israel through Moses. The Ten Commandments are a summary of the Law, but there were many other statutes and precepts contained in the writings of the Torah, the books of Moses, to show the people how to live righteously before a Holy God.

We must bear in mind though that the Law was given to an immature Israel to act as a school master (a pedagogue or child escort) in bringing them to maturity in Christ (Galatians 3:23-24). The law was primarily given to expose sin and transgression (Romans 7:7), and the law is laid down for the benefit of the lawbreaker, to teach them righteousness, while at the same time protecting the righteous (1 Timothy 1:8-11). There is no need of law when all are loving and righteous, because love is the complement of the law (Romans 13:8-10). This is why there is no law against the righteous fruit of the Spirit, for this fruit fulfills the law (Galatians 5:22-23). Yet in the meantime, during the ages, due to the hardness of men's hearts, law is necessary.

The Law is very clear on the following points, although some of these have changed due to cultural differences (for instance, a woman generally needed financial support from a man, yet this is very different in the West today):

Firstly, marriage is a conditional legal agreement or covenant entered into between a man and a woman. Ideally, this covenant is in force until one or other of the parties dies, for the law is only binding while one is living (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39). The man especially, as her authority, had to support the woman and take care of her. Both of them had to fulfill their marital duties. If there was a serious breach in this agreement, the guilty party could be dismissed.

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled.

(Deuteronomy 24:1-4 NIV)

The common laws at that time allowed a man or woman to dismiss or send away their partner without any legal document of divorce. But God's Law gave security to the woman especially by stating that in such circumstances a written certificate of divorce had to be issued to prove that the marriage contract had been terminated. The first husband was not allowed to change his mind later and take her back, if she had married another man. This in itself proves that divorce is the termination of a marriage, although many in the Church teach otherwise, not allowing second marriages.

The rule of indecency, quoted above, did not mean adultery, for that was punishable by death. It generally meant that if a woman was flirtatious or seductive or openly rebellious then this was good reason for divorce. Centuries later, the Jewish Rabbis had a number of interpretations for this 'indecency' even going so far as to say that if a wife was not a good cook, you could divorce her!

Now in relation to this subject, Jesus had some enlightening things to say to the devious Pharisees who were trying to trap Him with their questions.

Some Pharisees came to test Him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" Jesus replied, "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and He said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has yoked together, let man not separate."

They asked, "Why then did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to dismiss your wives **because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you** that anyone who dismisses his wife, except for prostitution, and marries another woman commits adultery, and he who marries her who has been dismissed commits adultery."

(Matthew 19:3-9 FT)

"Whosoever should be dismissing his wife and should be marrying another is committing adultery against her. And if she, dismissing her husband, should ever be marrying another, she is committing adultery."

(Mark 10:10-12 CV)

"Now it was declared, Whoever should be dismissing his wife, let him be giving her a divorce. **Yet I am saying to you** that everyone dismissing his wife (outside of a case of prostitution) is making her commit adultery, and whosoever should be marrying her who has been dismissed is committing adultery."

(Matthew 5:31-32 CV)

"You, then, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

(Matthew 5:48)

The Jewish Rabbis had reinterpreted the Law to form their own traditions and teachings of men. They used the Scriptures as a disguise for lawlessness. They were making light of the marriage covenant and using any excuse to allow someone to divorce. But Jesus teaches the true nature of God's high standards of righteousness saying that this kind of divorce is a mockery to God and it is really a disguise for adultery. They were using divorce to have many partners whenever they wished.

Jesus is here reinforcing the true nature of marriage from the beginning, yet He still upholds the Law in relation to divorce on the issue of sexual misconduct or prostitution, which of course, within marriage this is already committing adultery. He is therefore stating that divorce should only be allowed when there is actual adultery, when the covenant has already been defiled. Anything less is an excuse.

But note well here that Adam and his wife Eve are the perfect picture of true marriage. There is no mention of a particular ceremony or even an official, legal

marriage certificate. True marriage is in the heart, where the love and commitment for one another truly lies. What God has joined together, let man not separate.

And, as noted earlier, divorce is recognised by God as an annulment of the marriage covenant. There are many who teach that a divorcee is still really married. They often misuse Jesus' words to heap guilt on many who are already hurting from the pain of separation. Divorce may not be ideal for the believer but, particularly in this present era of grace, Paul teaches that where there *has* been divorce, and all means of reconciliation has failed, particularly if one or other is an unbeliever and wishes to end the marriage, the believer is not bound to that marriage in such circumstances, and is free to marry another in the Lord. We are called to live in peace, and ironically, in some circumstances, divorce can bring peace where there is an unequal yoke. But we are not to seek a divorce as an excuse or a way out, instead we are to learn to love and do everything we can to bring reconciliation (1 Corinthians 7:12-17).

Adultery and Prostitution

Now in the Law adultery and prostitution, and all manner of sexual misconduct and perversions, was punishable by being stoned to death. This was to show how sacred marriage and the sexual union really is in God's eyes. If a man or woman was proven to be an adulterer or an adulteress, he or she, along with the one they lay with, would receive the ultimate penalty, death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). The sexual act of homosexuality had the same penalty (Leviticus 20:13). A prostitute or paramour was also to receive the same penalty, to be cut off from the people via death. This included all manner of pre-marital or extra-marital sex and adultery (Leviticus 20; Deuteronomy 22:13-21).

Yet we have another enlightening account of something that occurred in Jesus' ministry in relation to adultery.

"At dawn Jesus appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around Him, and He sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?" "No-one sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

(John 8:2-11 NIV)

Now there was a good reason why Jesus was writing in the dirt. He was fulfilling a prophecy in Jeremiah.

"Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water."

(Jeremiah 17:13 NIV)

He was probably writing their sins in the dirt while He waited for one of them to throw the first stone. Of course, they were all full of sin and they slowly turned away from the One who could truly cleanse them from all sin. This incident shows the love and mercy of God as revealed in Christ. Now the law was given through Moses and could only condemn, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ Who alone can give Life (John 1:17), and this account is a great example of grace. Jesus didn't condone the sin. He told her to go away and leave her sinful life behind, yet He forgave her and didn't condemn her according to the Law. Jesus initially came to save Israel (and the world), not condemn them. The incident with the Samaritan woman at the well is another similar example, as she also was an adulteress, and Samaritans were also enemies of the Jews (John 4:1-42). Yet Jesus showed love and compassion to her, which in turn saved many in that village.

Now whatever God does, it is always in line with His own Law. The Law is full of types and shadows, as well as prophetic patterns, that reveal the true heart of God when understood correctly. They particularly point to Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of the Divine Law. So let us use the above information concerning the laws on marriage, divorce and adultery, and see how they apply to the story of God's love for His wife, Israel, revealed through Christ.

The Identity of the Bride

Like Hosea, God has already legally purchased back His unfaithful wife through Christ's Sacrifice on the cross. Israel is the treasure hidden in the field of the world, and Christ sold everything He had to gain that treasure by buying the whole field (Matthew 13:44). At the same time, He also laid claim to a special portion of mankind from among the nations as well, the precious pearl from the sea (Matthew 13:45-46). Together, they form the Ecclesia of God, the spiritual Body of Christ, Firstfruits of a New Humanity.

The name Hosea means *being the Saviour* and the name Jesus comes from the same Hebrew word, Jehoshea or Joshua, meaning Yahweh is the Saviour. Gomer means to *lapse* or *fail*, and also to *finish* or *complete*. So here we have the story of Yahweh the Saviour, the Husband of Israel, Who rescues His failing wife from death to bring her to a fresh place of complete wholeness. All of this is based on God's Love and Grace.

Paul tells us in Romans 7:2-6, using the figure of marriage, that through the death of Christ, all those who believe in Him are put to death also, and are therefore freed from the Law. This in turn means that through Christ's resurrection, those who belong to Him are also raised to a new life so that they can belong to Another Husband, Christ. This is describing the new humanity, the new Bride and Wife of the Lamb!

Christ paid the death penalty for all the adulteries and prostitutions of Israel and the world. He became the Curse of the Law to rescue those under its condemnation. This means that in Christ, God has a new Virgin Bride.

"For I betroth you to one Man, to present a chaste virgin to Christ."

(2 Corinthians 11:2)

John the Baptist knew something of this truth at the beginning of Christ's ministry.

"He Who has the bride is the Bridegroom. Yet the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and is hearing Him, is rejoicing with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice. This, my joy, then, has been fulfilled. He must be growing, yet it is mine to be inferior."

(John 3:29-30)

John was primarily using this analogy to show that he was not the Messiah, but he was fulfilling the unique role of being His forerunner and herald. He was not saying that he does not belong to the Bride. As a believer in Christ, of course he does. But he knew that Jesus was the Bridegroom and that there was a new Bride being formed. He had the special role of being the friend who announces the Bridegroom's arrival. Jesus also confirmed to His disciples that He was the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15).

A few of Jesus parables were set around the various activities of Jewish wedding festivities. This was indicating that the coming kingdom of God is to be likened to a Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14), with many from among the nations being invited. This Wedding is a figure of the coming kingdom in which the promises of God to Israel and the nations shall be fulfilled on the new earth. And we have this confirmed in Revelation, where we are also given the identity of this new Bride.

' "...for **the wedding of the Lambkin** came, and Its bride makes herself ready." And to her it was granted that she may be clothed in clean, resplendent cambric, for the cambric is the just awards of the saints. And he is saying to me, "Write: Happy are those invited to the wedding dinner of the Lambkin." "

(Revelation 19:7-9)

"And one of the seven messengers who have the seven bowls brimming with the last seven calamities came, and he speaks with me, saying, "Hither! I shall be showing you **the bride, the wife of the Lambkin.**" And he carries me away, in spirit, on a mountain, huge and high, and shows me **the holy city, Jerusalem,** as it is descending out of heaven from God, having the glory from God."

(Revelation 21:9-11)

"And I perceived the holy city, new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

(Revelation 21:2)

"...having **twelve portals**, and at the portals **twelve messengers**, and their names inscribed, which are the names of **the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel**...And the wall of the city has **twelve foundations**, and on them the twelve names of **the twelve apostles of the Lambkin**...And he measures the city with the reed to **twelve thousand stadia**...And he measures its wall of **a hundred and forty-four cubits**...And the twelve portals are **twelve pearls**

(Revelation 21:12-14, 16-17, 21)

This Bride, the faithful Wife of the Lamb, the Chaste Virgin, the Body of Christ, the Ecclesia of God, **is the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Israel of God**, (The study of Gematria and Biblical Numerology also confirms that the number 12 (symbol of Perfect Divine Government), 24 and 144 are identification numbers for the chosen ones of God who shall co-rule with Christ in the ages to come. These numbers are intimately related to the group of 144,000 as well as the measurements above of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22).

This is confirmed in the book of Hebrews.

"But you have come to **Mount Zion**, and the city of the Living God, **celestial Jerusalem**, and to **ten thousand messengers**, to **a universal convocation**, and to **the ecclesia of the firstborn**, registered in the heavens, and to God, the Judge of all, and to **the spirits of the just perfected**, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a fresh covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which is speaking better than the blood of Abel."

(Hebrews 12:22-24)

Paul also confirms that the Ecclesia of God, the Body of Christ, is the Bride and Wife of Christ.

"He who is **loving his wife is loving himself**...Christ also the ecclesia, **for we are members of His body**...This secret is great: yet I am saying this as to Christ and as to the ecclesia."

(Ephesians 5:28-32)

This is describing the deep intimacy of the spiritual relationship between Christ and His Ecclesia. This is most definitely a celestial calling with spiritual blessings, to figuratively be the Wife of Christ, ruling with Him as One Body in a New Humanity.

Every promise and covenant has been fulfilled to the earthly nation of Israel in, and through, Jesus the Messiah, and the chosen remnant of the Israel of God. Yet even Gentile believers of the nations are also included in this chosen remnant, as the Wife of the Lamb.

In the coming new age of the New Creation, there will only be two divisions of humanity for the remainder of the ages -

1. Those of the New Jerusalem, also known as the Body of Christ, the Bride and Wife of the Lamb, the New Humanity, the Celestial Israel of God, the Kings of the Earth, the Kingdom of God, those experiencing Eonian Life;

And

2. Those outside in the Lake of Fire, also referred to as the Outer Darkness, the Nations, those experiencing the Eonian Death, the Second Death, the Justice of God.

But it's all swings and roundabouts, spuds and potatoes really, because after the kingdom has run its course in this present age, ALL believers will belong to the Bride/Body of Christ as the New Humanity dwelling in the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God, ruling all others. (For further information, see [The Destiny of the Israel of God](#)).

The bottom line is this: The heavenly, spiritual Israel of God belongs to the New Jerusalem, **which is the Bride and Wife of the Lamb, the Joint-Body of Christ**. In fact, she is the new Jerusalem.

"Wherefore, remember that once you, the nations in flesh - who are termed "Uncircumcision" by those termed "Circumcision," in flesh, made by hands - that you were, in that era, apart from Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and the guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation, and without God in the world.

Yet now, in Christ Jesus, you, who once are far off, are become near by the blood of Christ. For He is our Peace, **Who makes both one**, and razes the central wall of the barrier (the enmity in His flesh), nullifying the law of precepts in decrees, **that He should be creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity, making peace**; and should be reconciling both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity in it. And, coming, He brings the evangel of peace to you, those afar, and peace to those near, for through Him we both have had the access, **in one Spirit**, to the Father.

Consequently, then, no longer are you guests and sojourners, but are fellow-citizens of the saints and belong to God's family, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the capstone of the corner being Christ Jesus Himself, in Whom the entire building, being connected together, is growing into **a holy temple in the Lord**: in Whom you, also, are being built together for **God's dwelling place**, in spirit."

(Ephesians 2:11-22)

"And a temple I did not perceive in it (*the city*), for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lambkin."

(Revelation 21:22)

Appendix: The Bride and the Body – Are they the same group or separate?

At one time, I used to believe that the Bride Church or Ecclesia was separate from the Body Church; the Bride representing Israel or the Circumcision, and the Body representing those of the nations under Paul's ministry. This was largely due to the influence of the writings of A. E. Knoch and others. I still greatly respect his work and that of the Concordant Publishing Concern, nevertheless, there were a few things that just didn't sit right in my spirit. Throughout the New Testament, there is mention of only **One Body**, and **One Flock**, and **One Ecclesia** made up of Jew and Gentile (generally speaking, that is, not including local ecclesias), although this revelation is progressive.

Paul clearly revealed that there is now only One Body of believers, One Building or Temple of God, and we must aim to keep the unity of the Spirit with the bond of peace within this One Body (Ephesians 2:11-22, quoted above). This is the same Ecclesia of God and of Christ that is revealed throughout the New Testament. Nowhere does it clearly reveal that the Body and the Bride are separate groups.

It is true to say that Paul's ministry was unique in many regards, and it was through him alone that a number of secrets were revealed to the Church. His use of the term 'my evangel' in some of his letters, and the mention in Galatians 2:8-10 of his special apostleship and ministry to the nations (the uncircumcision) reveals the distinction between himself and Peter. It is technically correct, according to Galatians 2, to say that they were at the head of two distinct ministries with two messages or gospels, but this in no way suggests that they were separated as to the Ecclesia of God in general or that they were unable to share in the same spiritual blessings of God in Christ, which comes through the Gospel of the kingdom - that is, to inherit the First Resurrection; to inherit immortality and incorruption or age-abiding life.

Many correctly point out that Paul is the only one who uses the term Body of Christ, and that he never uses the term Bride of Christ. This is true, but this does not necessarily mean that the concept and theme of Christ having a Bride is not taught by Paul. It is also true to say that the other apostles never mention the words *conciliation* and *reconciliation* in their letters, but that doesn't mean that they don't teach the principle of it.

The gospel is a message of Grace, Love and Peace - and the foundation of this same gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed by all of the Apostles; this foundation being the death and resurrection of Christ, and the coming of His kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:1-11, particularly verse 11). Peter and John never mention the word 'justification,' but does that mean that they don't believe in justification by faith? Of course not. Even James is not contradicting Paul on this subject in chapter 2 of his letter, though on the surface it appears so. They are all teaching the same truths from different vantage points.

So the real issue, and fundamental question, is this: Does Paul in any sense teach that the Body of Christ Ecclesia is one and the same as the Bride Ecclesia? I would say emphatically, "Yes, he does." Let us see.

Firstly, Paul reveals to the Corinthians (and by extension, to all believers) that we are betrothed to Christ.

"For I **betroth** you to one Man, to present **a chaste virgin to Christ.**"

(2 Corinthians 11:2)

Without stretching his words here, a chaste or pure virgin who is betrothed to a Husband **is a Bride of Christ**. Betrothal or engagement is the first stage of marriage, and it requires a divorce to annul it (Compare Matthew 1:18-19). Paul is also using this analogy in Romans 7:1-4.

Secondly, Paul's description of marriage in Ephesians 5 is very clear - and the way he applies it figuratively or spiritually is also very evident.

"He who is **loving his wife is loving himself**...Christ also the ecclesia, **for we are members of His body**...This secret is great: yet I am saying this as to Christ and as to the ecclesia."

(Ephesians 5:28-32)

In the same way as a husband and wife are One Flesh, One Body, so are we members of His Body. This means that the Bride is the Wife of Christ, at One with her Husband.

Now there are some who like to split hairs and say that a bride is not literally a wife until the wedding day. Nevertheless, as we've seen above, in Scripture, **a betrothed Bride is also the wife**. But let's settle this once and for all, for all those who seek truth.

John reveals that the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, **is the Bride AND Wife of the Lamb**.

"And one of the seven messengers who have the seven bowls brimming with the last seven calamities came, and he speaks with me, saying, "Hither! I shall be showing you **the bride, the wife of the Lambkin**." And he carries me away, in spirit, on a mountain, huge and high, and shows me **the holy city, Jerusalem**, as it is descending out of heaven from God, having the glory from God."

(Revelation 21:9-11)

"And I perceived the holy city, new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

(Revelation 21:2)

The New Jerusalem is the Bride and Wife of Christ. But is this only for those of Israel, the Circumcision, or does it include the whole Body of Christ? Is the destiny one and the same?

Paul makes it clear once and for all when he compares the Old Jerusalem to the New in Galatians.

"But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother."

(Galatians 4:26 NIV)

"But you have come to **Mount Zion**, and the city of the Living God, **celestial Jerusalem**, and to **ten thousand messengers**, to **a universal convocation**, and to **the ecclesia of the firstborn**, registered in the heavens, and to God, the Judge of all, and to **the spirits of the just perfected**, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a fresh covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which is speaking better than the blood of Abel."

(Hebrews 12:22-24)

Paul includes himself amongst all those who belong to the free inhabitants of the Jerusalem which is above, the heavenly New Jerusalem - **and she is our Mother** (with God as our Father), **as well as being the Bride and Wife of Christ.**

This should end the debate once and for all. For anyone to even suggest that any of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus, or any Overcomer in Christ, shall not partake of this allotment or inheritance is certainly missing the point. There is only One Body of Christ Ecclesia, and that Body is the Bride and Wife of the Lamb, for they belong to the heavenly Mount Zion and the New Jerusalem - the Temple of the Living God. These Sons of God will rule the heavens and the earth with their Lord as Royal Priests after the order of Melchizedek - as the heavenly, spiritual Israel of God.

Scripture quotations are marked as follows:

CV (or no abbreviation) - Concordant Version

NIV - New International Version

FT - Free Translation based on CV and NIV