

Christian Students Association Bible Study

March 2, 2021

The Living Needed in Ethical Relationships (Between Wife and Husband): A Type of the Church and Christ

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord;

23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,

27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

Note for “love” in verse 25: The opposite of being subject is to rule; however, the apostle did not exhort husbands to rule over their wives but to love them. In married life, the wife’s obligation is to be subject and the husband’s is to love. The wife’s subjection plus the husband’s love constitutes a proper married life and typifies the normal church life, in which the church is subject to Christ and Christ loves the church. Love is the very element, the inner substance, of God (1 John 4:8, 16). The goal of this book is to bring us into God’s inner substance that we may enjoy God as love and enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love, and thereby love others as Christ did.

Note for “sanctify” in verse 26: Christ’s purpose in giving Himself up for the church is to sanctify her, not only separating her to Himself from everything common but also saturating her with His element that she may be His counterpart. He accomplishes this by cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word.

Note for washing in verse 26: Lit., laver. In Greek the definite article is used before this word, causing it to refer to the laver, the laver that was known to all the Jews. In the Old Testament the priests used the laver to wash away their earthly defilement (Exo. 30:18-21). Now the laver, the washing of the water, washes us from defilement.

Note for “water” in verse 26: According to the divine concept, water here refers to the flowing life of God, which is typified by flowing water (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 7:38-39; Rev. 21:6; 22:1, 17). The washing of the water here is different from the washing of the redeeming blood of Christ. The redeeming blood washes away our sins (1 John 1:7; Rev. 7:14), whereas the water of life washes away the blemishes of the natural life of our old man, such as the “spot or wrinkle or any such things” mentioned in v. 27. In separating and sanctifying the church, the Lord first washes away our sins with His blood (Heb. 13:12) and then washes away our natural blemishes with His life. We are now in such a washing process, that the church may be holy and without blemish (v. 27).

Note for “word” in verse 26: The Greek word denotes an instant word. The indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit is always speaking an instant, present, living word to metabolically cleanse away the old and replace it with the new, causing an inward transformation. The cleansing by the washing of the water of life is in the word of Christ. This indicates that in the word of Christ there is the water of life. This is typified by the laver situated between the altar and the tabernacle (Exo. 38:8; 40:7).

Note for “present” in verse 27: In the past, Christ as the Redeemer gave Himself up for the church (v. 25) for redemption and the impartation of life (John 19:34); in the present, He as the life-giving Spirit is sanctifying the church through separation, saturation, transformation, growth, and building up; and in the future, He as the Bridegroom will present the church to Himself as His counterpart for His satisfaction. Therefore, Christ’s loving the church is to separate and sanctify her, and His separating and sanctifying the church are to present her to Himself.

Note for “church” in verse 27: In this section of exhortation the apostle presented another aspect of the church, that of the bride. This aspect reveals that the church comes out of Christ, as Eve came out of Adam (Gen. 2:21-22), that it has the same life and nature as Christ, and that it becomes one with Him as His counterpart, as Eve became one flesh with Adam (Gen. 2:24). The church as the new man is a matter of grace and reality, whereas the church as the bride of Christ is a matter of love and light. The apostle’s exhortation in ch. 4 is focused on the new man, which has grace and reality as its basic elements, whereas his exhortation in this chapter is focused on the bride of Christ, which has love and light as its basic substances. In grace and reality we should walk as the new man, and in love and light we should live as the bride of Christ.

Note for “holy” in verse 27: To be holy is to be saturated with Christ and transformed by Christ, and to be without blemish is to be spotless and without wrinkle, having nothing of the natural life of our old man.