

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON CXXIV : THE WISE AND SPIRIT FILLED LIFE OF SUBMISSION / THE HAUSTAFEL (5:15-6:9)

## ***Ephesians 5:25-33 — Paul to the CHURCHES —***

When we discussed the Haustafeln (“Household Codes”) we took specific looks at each the wives and husbands. We then took a couple lessons to look at the marriage metaphor in the OT and then in the NT. This last lesson we looked at the marriage traditions at the time of Christ. In this lesson I would like to do some clean-up, looking at some of the difficult verses in Eph 5:25-33 as it relates to our ecclesias (our congregations). We will not be looking at how these verses relate to the husbands and wives since we have already discussed those topics.

### ***Wives, Husbands & Churches Verse Division — vv. 22-33***

| WIVES                                                                                                                                            | HUSBANDS                                                                                                                 | CHURCHES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <sup>22</sup> <i>Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife,</i>                      |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ,</i> |                                                                                                                          | <i>as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ,</i>                                                                                                                        |
| <i>so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.</i>                                                                                  |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                  | <sup>25</sup> <i>Husbands, love your wives,</i>                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                  | <i>just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,</i>                                                    | <i>just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                          | <sup>26</sup> <i>that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.</i> |
|                                                                                                                                                  | <sup>28</sup> <i>So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.</i> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                               | <sup>29</sup> <i>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.</i>                   | <sup>29</sup> <i>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.</i> |
|                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                               | <sup>30</sup> <i>For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.</i>                                         |
| <sup>31</sup> <i>“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”</i> | <sup>31</sup> <i>“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”</i> |                                                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                               | <sup>32</sup> <i>This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.</i>                                 |
|                                                                                                                                               | <sup>33</sup> <i>Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself,</i>                                          |                                                                                                                             |
| <i>and let the wife see that she respects her husband.</i>                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                             |

(New King James Version, 1982)

As seen in the chart above, throughout this passage the thought swings back and forth between human marriage (22-23a, 24b-25a, 28-29a, [31], 33) and the Christ-ecclesia relationship (23b-24a, 25b-27, 29b 30, [31], 32). ***While there were a few commentators I studied who disagreed, the majority I read taught the passage from the viewpoint that our Lord’s relationships to His ecclesia serves as a basis of instruction for our human marriages, and not the reverse. As we saw in lesson 24g, it is when we get to vv. 31-33 that Paul declares a revelation he had been given that marriage is a metaphor or an analogy of the ecclesia’s relationship with our Lord (since what is true of the ecclesia addressed in Ephesians 5 is true of each and every ecclesia, I believe this essentially relates to each and every believer’s relationship to our Lord).***

**23b – as also Christ is head of the ecclesia; –** ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας [hōs kai ho Christos kephalē tēs ekklēσίας] — **CHRIST IS THE PATTERN FOR OUR MARRIAGES**

— “The reason Paul instructs wives to submit to their husbands is due to the fact that the husband-wife relationship in the Christian household is modeled on the relationship of Christ to the church. ***These role distinctions are therefore not based on something out of the old covenant now abolished in Christ, nor are they based on some kind of concession to the Graeco-Roman or Jewish cultures. The pattern for role relationships in marriage is rooted deeply in the new covenant.***” [Arnold, 381]

**THE ‘HEAD/BODY’ METAPHORS IN EPHESIANS** — Important to our understanding of Christ being the ‘head’ of the ecclesia is that this should be discussed in the context of a larger metaphor, that of the head in connection to a body. Paul has already used the head-body metaphor twice in this letter (1:22; 4:15,16; see also Col 2:19). “In our discussion of each of those contexts, we established that there is a dual notion of leadership and provision. Christ not only gives guidance, direction, and inspiration for his body, but he also provides strength, help, and

sustenance for his people. This usage is consistent with how head-body imagery was used and understood in the ancient world (as illustrated in the medical writers, philosophers, and Jewish texts). It is therefore inappropriate to eliminate any notion of authority from the use of “head” (κεφαλή, kephalē) in this passage.” [Arnold, 382] “As mentioned in 1:23, some suggest that the ‘head’ and ‘body’ in Ephesians and Colossians are two distinct metaphors which, though related to each other, should not be combined as one metaphor.... However, whenever ‘head’ is mentioned in Ephesians (1:22; 4:15; 5:23) and Colossians (1:18; 2:10, 19), the ‘body’ is mentioned in the same context, indicating that the two metaphors are combined.” [Hoehner, 740]

### **THE MODERN ATTEMPT TO ELIMINATE AUTHORITY FROM THE ‘HEAD’**

**METAPHOR** — For nearly two millennia there has been full agreement on the ‘head’ metaphor used by the NT writers to refer to leadership and authority (along with parallel concepts, e.g., leadership, provision, guidance, direction, et. al.). But the rise of the feminist movement brought with it attacks against any suggestion of the woman being submissive to another, one target being the authority of the Scriptures. In an attempt to legitimize these attacks, papers have been written for over fifty years suggesting that ‘head’ did not convey any notion of authority but rather that of ‘source,’ e.g., as a spring is the ‘head’ or source of a stream. While the underlying thrust of that teaching was to deny any God-ordained leadership husbands have in relation to their wives, such a notion must overflow to Christ’s leadership in regards to the ecclesia. “This novel view of ‘head’ as ‘source’ was countered by a variety of studies that questioned whether the term ‘head’ ever conveyed the notion of source in Greek literature prior to the time of the NT. These studies were effective in casting doubt on the alleged use of ‘head’ (κεφαλή, kephalē) to convey the meaning ‘source’ in an absolute sense. For instance, Greek writers never used this word to make statements like, ‘cows are the source of milk’ or ‘Egypt is the source of papyri.’ The absence of such usage explains why the most recent NT Greek lexicons do not even list ‘source’ as part of the semantic range of the term ‘head.’” [Arnold, 381] “In each of the earlier instances of this term in Ephesians it signifies ‘head’ as ‘ruler’ or ‘authority’ rather than ‘source’, or one who is ‘prominent, preeminent’. At 1:22 ‘head’ expresses the idea of Christ’s supremacy and authority over the cosmos, especially the evil powers, which he exercises on behalf of the church (cf. Col. 1:18; 2:10). His rule over his people is described at 4:15, and this headship is expressed in his care and nourishment, as well as in his leadership of them in the fulfilment of the divine purposes.” [O’Brien, 413]

**23c – and He is the Savior of the body.** – καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστὶν σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος [kai autos estin sōtēr tou sōmatos] — **A REFERENCE TO CHRIST, NOT TO HUSBANDS** — As Paul discusses Christ’s role as Head of His ecclesia (v. 23b), it prompts Paul to expand on Christ’s work on behalf of the ecclesia. Because this statement does not begin with a conjunction (such as ‘and’) and does not have a parallel member in the chiasmic structure of the passage, it is to be closely tied to the preceding statement. That along with the following line beginning with the strong adversative conjunction ‘but’ (ἀλλ’, [all’]), most commentators consider the statement to be entirely Christological and should not be considered an additional function of the husband’s role to his wife. While a minority suggests the husband is the provider and protector of his wife (thus her ‘savior’ in the sense of deliverer), the context cannot be taken in this sense as it relates to our Lord. *Jesus is the One who defeated the power of sin and the forces of evil on the cross and in that sense the Savior of the ecclesia (explicit in v. 25; see also 5:2). Further, the term ‘savior’ may be found in the NT twenty-four times and always refers to Jesus or God but never human beings (e.g., Of Jesus: Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Acts 5:31; 13:23; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:10, etc. Of God: Luke 1:47; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10, etc.).*

**EMPHATIC** — The fact of Christ as the Savior of the body is emphatic both by position and presence. The sense is, *‘He Himself and no other is the Savior of the body.’*

**WHY ANOTHER METAPHOR DESCRIBING CHRIST’S ROLE IN RELATION TO THE ECCLESIA?** — As we have been teaching, God uses these metaphors to describe our relationship to Him. As such, this second metaphor expands and clarifies another aspect of this relationship:

*JESUS CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE* speaks of love and intimacy

*JESUS CHRIST AND HIS BODY* speaks of lordship, leadership, guidance

*There may be overlap in these metaphors; e.g., our Lord as both the ‘Husband’ and ‘Head’ could both speak of provision for His wife / His body. But the use of different metaphors are used to provide we as believers a fuller picture of who He is and who we are in relation to Him. This further reminds us that (a) no metaphor is complete in and of itself (meaning no single metaphor can fully describe the Lord, salvation, eternity, etc.); and (b) no metaphor is perfect in every aspect (meaning we cannot press any metaphor in every aspect to the spiritual truth it pictures).* For this reason Paul often uses different metaphors to describe something spiritual; for example, we saw in Eph 2:19-22 that Paul used four different metaphors to describe the congregations’ relationship to our Lord: **the STATE:** *‘Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints’* (2:19a,b); **the FAMILY:** *‘and members of the household of God,’* (2:19c); **a BUILDING:** *‘having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,’* (2:20); and **a TEMPLE:** *‘in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’* (2:21,22) [Arnold, 382; Best, 536; Hoehner, 741ff; Lincoln, 371; O’Brien, 414f]

**24a – Therefore, just as the ecclesia is subject to Christ,** – ἅλλ’ ὡσπερ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ [all’ hōsper hē ekklēsia hupotassetai tō Christō] — In these next two lines Paul reiterates in similar terms what he has said at the outset of this passage. In fact these two lines form the outer members (b<sup>1</sup> and a<sup>1</sup>) of the chiastic structure of the passage (a - b - c - b<sup>1</sup> - a<sup>1</sup>, found in vv. 23a, 23b, 23c, 24a, 24b).

**A WILLING SUBMISSION** — Harold Hoehner observes *the word ‘subject’ is best considered in the middle voice where the subject acts as a free agent, willingly and freely submitting to the Lord as it is to our benefit to do so. “[T]he relationship of Christ and the church will never on the one side be servile nor on the other tyrannical. His rule over the church will accord with Mk 10.44 and her obedience will be offered in joy (Phil 3.1; 4.4).”* [Best, 537f; see also Arnold, 382; Best, 537; Hoehner, 744f]

*‘And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’* (Mark 10:44,45)

*‘Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.... Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!’* (Phil 3:1; 4:4)

**WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE ECCLESIA’S SUBMISSION TO CHRIST?** — The congregation’s relationship to Christ is the focus of attention in several passages within Ephesians, and these spell out important facets of its submission to its Lord:

- God has graciously placed everything under Christ's feet and caused him to be head over all for the benefit of the congregations, thus the congregations receive God's gift of Christ as head over all on its behalf. The congregations gladly submit to his beneficent rule (1:22).
- Christ is the vital cornerstone on whom God's building is constructed. As this new community looks to Christ as the One who holds it all together, it grows and progresses to its ultimate goal of holiness (2:20, 21).
- Christ indwells the hearts of his people, establishing them so that they may be able to comprehend the greatness of his love (3:17, 19).
- The congregations receive Christ's gift of grace (4:7), and the ministers he gives for the purpose of enriching the whole body (4:11, 12).
- The congregations thus grow towards its head, the ultimate goal of which is the whole measure of Christ's fulness (4:13), and it receives from him all that is necessary for this growth (4:15, 16).
- In submitting to its Lord, God's people had 'learned Christ': they welcomed him as a living person and were shaped by his teaching (4:20). This involved submitting to his rule of righteousness and living by standards and values completely different from what they had known.
- The congregations are to imitate Christ's sacrificial love (5:2).
- It seeks to please its Lord (5:10) by living in goodness, holiness, and truth and by understanding his will (5:17).
- His people sing praises to him (5:19), and live in godly fear and awe of him (5:21).

Accordingly, each congregation's submission to Christ means 'looking to its head for his beneficial rule, living by his norms, experiencing his presence and love, receiving from him gifts that will enable growth to maturity, and responding to him in gratitude and awe'. [quoting loosely from O'Brien, 416f; see also Lincoln, 372]

**25b – just as Christ also loved the ecclesia and gave Himself for her, – καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἡγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς [kathōs kai ho Christos ēgapēsen tēn ekklēsiān kai heauton paredōken hyper autēs] — THE EXTENT OF HIS LOVE SHOWN BY GIVING HIS LIFE —** The extent of Christ's love is expressed in His action of giving His life for the congregations (5:25c). Paul uses the same expression earlier in the chapter when he speaks of how 'Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us' (5:2), which is also how he explained the heart of the gospel to the Galatians (Gal 2:20). Used negatively, the structure is similar to 4:19, 'who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.' *Note the love of Christ is not selfish but rather is concerned with the highest good in the one loved. He did not love us because we were lovable but to make us lovable, holy, pure. Westcott states, 'Christ loved the Church not because it was perfectly lovable, but in order to make it such.'*

**CHRIST TOOK HIS OWN INITIATIVE IN HANDING HIMSELF OVER' —** *The verb means 'to hand over, to give over,' indicating He took His own initiative in handing Himself over. This agrees with Jesus' statement that He is the Good Shepherd and will lay down His life*



*for His sheep (John 10:11, 15, 17); also, there is no greater love than when one lays down his life for his friends (John 15:13). The reflexive pronoun ‘himself’ further enhances His supreme love by indicating He was not forced to die at the hand of sinners but He willingly laid down His own life (John 10:18). He did His Father’s will but was not forced to do it.*

**THE TENSE CHANGE IS IMPORTANT** — *Husbands are to ‘love their wives,’ present tense; they are to continue loving their wives (v. 25a). But Christ ‘loved’ the ecclesia, aorist tense, ‘punctiliar,’ speaking of the whole of His earthly life but especially the cross.* Some consider this an ‘ingressive aorist,’ meaning the aorist expresses the beginning of the action or the entrance into the state, thus it is a ‘continuing action’ or a ‘state of being’ (I am not sure how this would differ from the Greek perfect tense). [Best, 541]

**‘CHRIST’S CARE FOR HIS BRIDE FROM A PAST TO FUTURE ETERNITY’** — Peter O’Brien quotes John Stott, noting *Paul uses five verbs to indicate ‘the unfolding stages of Christ’s commitment to his bride, the church, namely, ‘loved,’ ‘gave himself,’ ‘sanctify,’ ‘cleansed,’ and ‘present.’* Stott continues by claiming these ‘trace Christ’s care for his church from a past to a future eternity;’ the words ‘*Christ loved the church,*’ ‘preceding as they do his self sacrifice on her behalf, seem to look back to his eternal pre-existence in which he set his love upon his people.’ O’Brien does comment that while this is certainly theologically correct, strict exegesis suggests that the love Paul mentions here speaks of the cross rather than eternity past. [O’Brien, 419]

**THE ONLY PLACE WHERE THE ECCLESIA IS THE OBJECT OF CHRIST’S ACTIONS** — This is the only place in the NT where the ecclesia is named as the object of Christ’s activity, although in v. 23 Christ is described as the ‘Savior of the body’ (= ecclesia). Regarding v. 23, *Our Lord is said to be the Savior of individuals (e.g., Paul in Gal 2:20, ‘Christ gave Himself for me’) and is the Savior of the cosmos (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14, ‘Savior of the world’), it is only here in the Scriptures where He is said to be the Savior of the ecclesia.* Here in v. 25, “The prepositional phrase (ὕπὲρ αὐτῆς, [huper autes], ‘for her’) indicates the object for which Christ laid down his life, namely, the church.’ *The preposition with a genitive signifies that it was done ‘for the sake of, in [on] behalf of,’ showing interest in the object and has been characterized as the particle of love. Whereas in 5:2 Christ’s death was characterized as on behalf of individual believers, here it is represented as on behalf of the church, the body of believers. His supreme sacrifice is the evidence of his love.*” [Hoehner, 750]