



The Epistle of St. Paul to Ephesians

A BRIDE **IN THE DIVINE PALACE**



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THE CHURCH AS AN ICON OF HEAVEN

The epistle of St. Paul the apostle to the Ephesians is similar to an invitation given to each believer to be taken up to the third heaven, so we can elevate our hearts and say with St. Paul: "I know a man in Christ... whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a one was caught up to the third heaven... He was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinth 12:2-4).

What did he see but the Church, the pledge of the Heavenly Jerusalem, people's dwelling with God (Rev 21:3).

He saw the glorified Church, the body of Christ in her full light, the bride in the divine palace and the eternal home like a queen.

In the holy of the holies that is not made by humans but by God the Holy One, as a new creation that does not get old. He enjoys great heavenly benefits that the humans get amazed by.

He enjoys the mystery of the eternal wisdom, as a daughter who knows her father's mysteries that she is honored with. She embraces members from all nations and peoples in great harmony and unbelievable beauty.

AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE ROYAL PALACE (Eph Ch. 1)

By reading the chapter, it's as if St. Paul's soul went to Paradise, to the entrance of the heavenly castle. He expresses how the soul does not enter a waiting room to arrange a time to meet the King of kings, but she is the bride, the owner of the palace, the queen that is **"in Christ."** St. Paul repeats this expression and what resembles it in many chapters, especially in chapter one where he mentions it more than 20 times.



MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS FOR THE CHURCH IN CHRIST:

- We live **in heaven**; we enjoy all its spiritual blessings (1:3), and live with Christ (2:6).
- We are **chosen by Him** before the creation of the world to be saints with no blame (1:4).
- We are **beloved by the Father**, as we are accepted in the His Beloved Son (1:6)
- We are **all united in Christ** who gathers all in Him (1:12).
- In Christ **the door of hope is opened** and despair will not sneak up on us (1:12).
- In Christ we **hear the gospel of salvation** and enjoy the divine truth (1:13).
- In Christ we **believed and were sealed by the Holy Spirit**, like the high priest in the Old Testament, as he was adorned on his forehead by the words "**holiness to the Lord**" (1:13; Exodus 28:36).
- In Christ **we know Him** as the greatest gift; to reveal Himself to His bride (1:17).
- In Christ, **we rose from the death of sin** (2:5) to enjoy eternal life.
- In Christ, we **enjoy the divine sweetness** (2:7), so we do not fear divine anger, but see Him as Lover of all mankind.
- We became **a new creation** (2:1-10), where the old man has nothing in us.
- We became members of the household of God (2:13; Eph 2:19), no longer strangers in heaven.
- We became the **holy temple for Christ** (2:21), always living in holiness.
- We became **partners in the eternal inheritance** (3:6) nothing satisfies us but our Christ.



- **The Lord is glorified in us** (3:21) where we become His icon.
- In Christ **we got forgiveness** (4:32) where we forgive all those who despise us.
- In Christ **we become light to the world** (5:8) as we abide in Him who is “**The Light of the world.**”

IN THE OFFICIAL MEETING HALL (Eph Ch. 2)

In Chapter 1 the Church goes to paradise, the divine palace, through Christ "the Door" (John 10:9). She finds herself at the entrance of the castle as the bride and owner, with her Heavenly Groom welcoming her.

Now, she enters the official meeting hall, not to be caught up into dry logical dialogues, but to disclose the mystery of the great cross:

1. Christ the groom was raised on the cross as in the air, because the enemy of goodness considers himself the king of air (Jews think that the devil's kingdom is in water where he drowns, in the wilderness where poverty is and in the air where there is no stability). **Christ was raised on the cross to take away the power of the devil and his angels.** (Co 2:15).
2. The cross consists of a **vertical board** that links heaven with earth; the Heavenly One with human beings. The believer sees Christ who was raised from the dead, welcoming the Church in her house saying: “Welcome home”, for we have been transformed from sons of sins, and sons of anger by nature (2:2-3) and from the state of death by sin to the raised life (2:6) and enjoy salvation (2:8) and the new creation (2:10).
3. The **horizontal board** of the cross unites the believers who are from all nations; Jews and Gentiles (what had



seemed to be impossible). St. Paul says to the nations: "You were dead (2:10) by not believing and we were dead by lusts and breaking the laws (2:3). The Jews and Gentiles were in need to be raised from the dead (2:6) to a new creation (2:10).

4. We are **no longer strangers and foreigners** but fellow citizens with the saints of the household of God. (2:11-19)
5. **Uniting the Jews and the Gentiles**, all becoming one in the holy temple of the Lord, that is built on the Chief Cornerstone (2:20).

THE ROYAL DIVINE THRONE (Eph Ch. 3)

Now the soul leaves from the official meeting hall to the divine throne. Here we get in the heart of the message where the queen meets with the King of kings, and He reveals to her His hidden secret that touches the life of the Church.

Those who shared in the Lord's crucifixion stand in front of the throne. That is why the apostle called himself "prisoner of Jesus Christ."

WHAT IS THE MYSTERY WHICH HAS BEEN HIDDEN FOR AGES?

1. The opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles, who became partners in the inheritance (membership in the body of Christ). The apostle did not mention that he was the prisoner of Christ in the beginning of the message, but in the beginning of this chapter. He is a prisoner because of his open preaching to the nations. Being a prisoner does not lock him up from going to the divine throne together with the nations.

2. Annunciation of the uncountable richness of Christ. As a heavenly bride, the Groom reveals to her the eternal mystery, that of the great love of God to humanity, and in



return, she exposes it to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (3:9-10). She became a practical teacher to the heavenly hosts that discovered what they could not imagine, as they saw mankind who was to perish becoming in a great position among them. For example the thief witnessed of the Crucified One in front of those who crucified him, and hoped to have a place in the divine bosom.

3. At the throne, the bride discovers that she herself became a throne to the Groom, "That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith" (3:17). That is the marvelous mystery.

4. The bride enjoys the eternal inheritance which is much more than what she would ask for or think of (3:19-20).

THE JEWELS ROOM (Eph Ch. 4)

Every day the believer prays the first five verses of this chapter in the Morning Prayer; the Church is reminding him daily of his Precious Jewels.

The bride delights in her eternal inheritance and enjoys God's heavenly Jewels, what would she discover?

1. **Pearl of humbleness** (4:2). With that pearl we become the icon of Christ who says: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29).

2. **Pearl of oneness** in everything: one body, one spirit, one hope, one God, one faith, one baptism, God, and one father for all (4:3-6). Truly the Church is called "the one and only church."

3. **Ascending with Him** (4:8). The Church ascends by being united with Christ, who was incarnated for our sake, became a Crucified Servant, and descended first to the lowest parts of the earth. He means that by His descending to hell and through His death, the souls of those who died in hope were lifted up (ascended) into paradise with Him.



4. **Enjoy the different talents** (4:11). Christ gave men dignity of partnership in working with God in His divine vineyard.

5. **Continuous growth** so that he would not live in the weakness of childhood but in the strength of spiritual maturity. He would become: "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (4:13).

6. **Honest love** (4:15)

7. Putting off the old man's deeds and attain **the renewal with the spirit of your mind** (4:17-24)

8. **No enemy can take away the jewels** (4:27)

THE WORKING HALL (Eph 5:1-21)

Enjoying the spiritual jewels encourages us to work as a Bride who is ready for her Heavenly groom:

1. The work plan that is appropriate with our new position is to be an icon of Christ, the Lover of mankind.

2. Work that is appropriate for us to become light in the Lord (5:8), no room for darkness to work in us (5:3-4). Caring about time (5:16) as our life is valuable, it is a preparation for an Eternal Wedding

3. Work according to God's will (5:17)

4. Work with the spirit of joy and praise (5:19) with continuous thanksgiving (5:20). With it we become like the heavenly hosts.

❖ We who were given eternal life; do good deeds, not as a reward, but to preserve the purity that is given to us.

St. Mark the Ascetic

❖ We become equal to the angels. He gives us the kingdom so we become united in Christ. We know that without righteousness, we become lower than the sensible animals. This is why we have to train ourselves to be humans, no actually, to be angels, to enjoy the blessings that were promised to us through the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.



- ❖ With God's grace, we can pursue with the heavenly spirits and can surpass them.

St. John Chrysostom

THE FAMILY SUITE (Eph 5:6-21-6:1-9)

A heavenly Bride and a royal family must have a constitution; its articles are the following:

1. With love, each one surrenders to the other in the fear of the Lord (5:21)
2. All relations are in Christ, the Lover of His Church and the Church submits to her Christ through love.
3. Each member honors the other: "We are the members of Christ's body, of His flesh and bones" (5:30)
4. Children obey their fathers in God (6:1), and fathers not to aggravate their children (6:4)
5. Honestly serving the rulers (or masters) for the sake of the Lord.
6. Humbleness of masters with their subordinates, for all of us are equal in the Lord, without partiality (6:9).

- ❖ Marriage is a small kingdom, it is the small house of the Lord
- ❖ The hearts of the beloved have wings... Love can turn into hatred, if burdensome reasons crawled into it, where is no mutual respect.

St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ "You, Women submit to your husbands as it is fitting in the Lord, and men, love your wives" (Col 3:18-19)

Love is due from men, and submission is due from women. If everyone does what is commanded of them, the relationship becomes stable. This is obtainable through the man's love to his wife and the woman's obedience to her husband that he may become humble with her. Women; do not become arrogant because your



husband loves you, for God made him love you so that you obey him easily and in humbleness.

Do not fear to surrender to him, because surrendering in love is not difficult.

St. John Chrysostom

THE SUPPLY ROOM OF SPIRITUAL ARMORS (Eph 6:10-20)

The only enemy is the devil (6:11-12). He is a strong enemy when compared with the normal human: "spiritual wickedness in high places" (6:12). But the believer holds great armor in Jesus Christ.

SPIRITUAL ARMORS

- Girded your waist with Truth.
- Breastplate of righteousness.
- Shod your feet with preparation of Gospel of peace.
- Shield of Faith.
- Helmet of Salvation.
- Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

A SPIRITUAL WARFARE PLAN

- Prayer in spirit.
- Vigil.
- Supplication for saints, even for St. Paul the apostle himself (Eph 6:19). In order to be victorious, we have to take care of our inner man and our brethren.
- ❖ The devil points arrows at me, but I hold a sword! I'm being a soldier of Christ have a strong armor. He carries the bow, and throws his arrows from a distance; but he would not dare come near me.
- ❖ You may have lost paradise before, but God gave you heaven to assure you of his tenderness. He conquered the devil, showing you that if tens of thousands of plans are

set against you they will not prevail, as God leads you always to a greater dignity.



St. John Chrysostom

WHAT DO THE FATHERS SAY ABOUT THE CHURCH, THE HEAVENLY BRIDE?

- ❖ Where was the Church elevated? It is as if He elevated her with an instrument and has built it in the highest and placed her on the throne there. Where the Head (Christ) is, the body (Church) will be too. No isolation or separation between the Head and the body...Generally he made all the humanity follow Him and adhere to Him and accompany Him. "He says that, if you hear of the church you would not think of the leadership only, but also in abiding in her as well. So you would not view Christ as a Leader only, but also as the Head of the body (church).
- ❖ What is the purpose of this building? The purpose is for God would dwell in that temple. Each one of you is a temple, and all of us together are a temple. God abides in us being the body of Christ and His spiritual temple. We did not return to God on our own, but God brought us back to Himself and made us close to Him. Christ says: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father except through Me." (Jo 14:6).

St. John Chrysostom

- ❖ We have left our old father's house, as by nature, we were sons of anger like the rest, but now we direct our eyes towards the heavens.

St. Paphnotius

- ❖ Christ paid for our salvation by taking human flesh and dying on our behalf; He allowed us to be with Him in the Heavens.



- ❖ Christ is the Foundation of all, and the Head of the Church (Eph 5:23) In Him we are deserving of our original nature (Created in the image and the likeness of God, Gen 1:26-27) according to the flesh and to be able to sit in the heavenly throne. The body was honored, as it is made a share in Christ that is God, also every human nature was honored, as it partakes in the body of Christ.

We are present in Him by taking our bodily nature.

- ❖ There is Armor for our salvation as long as there is Christ.
- ❖ I know my brethren that these wounds that we accept for the sake of Christ are not destructive to life, but sustaining to life.

St. Ambrose

- ❖ The work of God is to keep us together, so we become perfect and heavenly ones in the spirit of unity. He wants salvation for all, he wants to make all of us children of God and call all saints in one whole being. There is the Only Begotten Son of God, in Him we receive the renewal through the Holy Spirit; He wants to bring us all in one whole heavenly being.

St. Hippolytus of Rome

- ❖ Our struggle is not against humans who are angry with us, as they are only instruments that others use. Our Shield is in Christ.

St. Augustine

- ❖ We know that all the spirits are not the same in their action and aggressiveness, or in the same boldness and cunningness, as for the humans who are beginners and that are being attacked by the weak spirits; if these spirits were defeated, then whoever is stronger attacks the soldiers of Christ.

No man not even the saints could withstand the attacks of those strong enemies(the devil and his angels),

if it is not for the Chief fighter “ Jesus Christ” who gives us strength and fights for us to stop the increasing of the attacks and help us endure according to our limits. (1 Corinth. 10:13) It would be impossible for man to fight alone.

Fr. Serenios



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