**The Church is one Body, made up of *all* believers in Christ. It is to the Church that the epistles are written. The church at Corinth, as well as all other churches, was composed of *two* classes of believers, the *carnal* and the *spiritual* (**[**1 Corinthians 3**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3&t=NKJV)**). And this *dual* condition will *always* exist in the Church. Those Christians who remain carnal until the end will be saved “yet so as through fire,” but they should *not* entertain any thought of being *part* of the Bride of Christ.**

**Who then is the Bride? Those who are *providing themselves a wedding garment of good works* [by allowing the Holy Spirit to *work through them and produce those good works\**].**

**Who Is The Bride of Christ?  
By John Lanham**

When asked this question, almost everyone answers “The Church,” or “The Body of Christ,” meaning of course, all saved people. However, they never give Scripture to back this statement, nor is it possible for them to do so; for nowhere in the Bible is the Church called the Bride of Christ. The Church is called His Body in [Ephesians 1:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.22-23&t=NKJV); but the Body and the Bride are not synonymous as has been and is supposed.

If we observe the “rule of first mention,” a term referring to a biblical principle of interpretation with which many students of the Bible are familiar, and keeping in mind that the things written in the Old Testament contain numerous types (examples) for our learning ([Romans 15:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+15.4&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 10:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.11&t=NKJV)), we can readily perceive that the Bride is taken from (out of) the Body. Two examples from the Old Testament (and there are others) illustrate this truth:

[1] The first bride, Eve, was not the body of Adam (a type of Christ [[Romans 5:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.14&t=NKJV)]) but was only a small part of it, which was taken out of his body ([Genesis 2:21-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.21-23&t=NKJV)); and

[2] In [Genesis 24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24&t=NKJV) we have the story of Abraham who sent his servant to take a bride for his son, Isaac.

Although many believe this account to be a type of God the Father sending the Holy Spirit into the world to call out the Church, a truth in itself, this is an erroneous type-antitype interpretation. Whereas according to the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.19-20&t=NKJV); [Mark 16:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15&t=NKJV)) the Holy Spirit ministers the Gospel to the entire world, the account of Abraham, his servant, and Isaac in [Genesis 24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24&t=NKJV) does not reflect this truth. Abraham (a type of God) instructs his servant (a type of the Holy Spirit) *not* to go to the Canaanites (a type of the entire world) but to go *only* to his own people (a type of the family of God [the Church, the Body of Christ]) and *take a bride* for his son (a type of Christ). When the message of eternal salvation for the lost (those dead in trespasses and sin) goes forth, it goes to all; but when God calls for service, surrender, fellowship, purity of life, love, devotion and many other terms that apply to the word “bride,” He calls *not* to the world but to His own people, His *family*.

Our Lord used the term “family” because of its meaning in our *temporal* life. We are born the first time into a *physical* family. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (trusting Him who died in our place), we are “born again” into the family of *God*. The word “body” is used in the same sense as the word “family.” While there is a distinct relationship between *all* members of the family and the intended groom, there is a familiarity and an intimacy that is *not* shared by the rest of the family. With this in mind, we can see how the Lord calls those who are His to come up closer. It is not to this *world*, but to His *own* that He says,

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* ([Romans 12:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+12.1-2&t=NKJV)).

Many Christians will *not* heed this urgent plea. Many who possess eternal salvation *never* experience intimacy with the Lord Jesus; and like Esau will *forfeit* future spiritual rewards for present carnal gratifications ([Hebrews 12:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.16-17&t=NKJV)).

Paul informed the Corinthian Christians that they were “betrothed” to *one husband* (*i.e.*, promised in marriage or “engaged,” as was Mary to Joseph before they came together in [Matthew 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+1.18&t=NKJV)) with the further (future) possibility of being presented “as a chaste virgin to Christ” ([2 Corinthians 11:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+11.2&t=NKJV)). In this he reveals that all Christians are *foundationally* qualified (eternally saved) but *not guaranteed* to become the Bride of Christ. This is made clear as Paul continues by expressing his fear that they may be “deceived” and become “corrupted” ([2 Corinthians 11:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+11.3&t=NKJV)) toward this end. And, unfortunately, this is the *state of many Christians today*. In addition to this possibility, numerous other New Testament passages indicate the probability that *most* Christians will *fail* to achieve the spiritual *maturity* qualification necessary to be called-out to be the Bride of Christ.

This failure to qualify for inclusion into the Bride does *not* mean the loss of salvation. In [Revelation 16:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+16.15&t=NKJV) we read, “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” This referral to garments does *not* refer to Christ’s righteousness with which He clothes individuals for salvation ([Isaiah 61:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+61.10&t=NKJV)), but to garments of *good works* that may be maintained with a profitable result, or which may *be lost* to their shame and *loss* of rewards at His appearing ([1 Corinthians 3:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12-15&t=NKJV), [1 John 2:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.28&t=NKJV), [Titus 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.8&t=NKJV), [2 John 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2John+1.8&t=NKJV)). [Revelation 19:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-8&t=NKJV) reveals that the bride makes herself *ready* for the marriage and the marriage supper by providing herself a *garment* of “righteous acts” (good works). In the days when this was written, a bride literally made her wedding garment, putting many hours of hard work into it. All Christians do not work for Christ; therefore *all will not* be the Bride. The *absence* of this garment will cause an *unfaithful* Christian to be taken away and *cast* into “outer darkness,” in the darkness outside the wedding feast where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” ([Matthew 22:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.13&t=NKJV)). Outer darkness is *not* representative of the traditional concept of “hell,” for unprofitable servants will be assigned there. It is the darkness outside the feast where the unfaithful will be, while those who have been faithful will be enjoying a communion and fellowship not shared by all. This same lesson is found in [Matthew 25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV) where the Lord is dealing with His *own* servants and the unprofitable servant is cast into the darkness outside. This unprofitable servant would not be there if he did not belong to the Lord. This has to do with that time after the rapture of the Church when Christians will give an account of the deeds done in the body whether good or bad ([2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV)). No doubt unconcerned, *unfaithful* Christians will weep over their *failures* for it is only *after* the Millennial reign of Christ that God will *wipe away* all tears from their eyes ([Revelation 21:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.4&t=NKJV)).

[Revelation 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.18&t=NKJV) instructs Christians to buy white raiment that they may be clothed and that the shame of their nakedness *not* be revealed. As is already seen, the white raiment represents *righteous acts* (good works) of God’s people. The word *buy* is used to indicate to the child of God that it will *cost* him to be among those who make up the Bride of Christ. Yes, a separated and surrendered life is *costly* but the reward will be for those who *dare* to pay the price. [Isaiah 55:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+55.1&t=NKJV) speaks of buying without money, a cost that does not refer to money; but the Christian who has purposed in his heart to live *completely* for the Lord Jesus Christ knows that it costs *plenty*. It may cost one friends; for many do not walk the separated way. It will cost in hours of studying Scripture, prayer, witnessing, and denying various pleasures of the flesh.

The word “body” is used to show unity. Today Christians are scattered throughout the world; yet there is only *one* Body. One day (very soon) the Christ will *come* and *take* all His children out of this world to be with Him *forever* ([1 Thessalonians 4:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.15-18&t=NKJV)). Then they will give an *account* of their lives and be *rewarded* accordingly ([2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 10:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.30&t=NKJV)). Christians work and serve the Lord in *varying degrees* and will be *rewarded* in this *manner*. Some do *not* serve Him at all and these will suffer *loss*. Those who have *not* provided themselves a wedding garment will be spiritually *naked* and *ashamed* but not *lost*. However, [Titus 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.8&t=NKJV) tells us that to maintain good works is profitable. The profit or loss, as the case may be, will be manifested at the Judgment Seat of Christ where *every* Christian will *give* an account of the deeds done in the body, whether *good* or *bad* ([1 Corinthians 3:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15-18&t=NKJV)).

Salvation is a *gift* of God ([Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV)). It is eternal and *cannot* be lost. Reward, crowns, and inheritance in the kingdom are based upon *faithfulness* to Christ. The *reward* is to be among those who *make up* the Bride of Christ. This is a figurative term and simply refers to those who have been clean, pure, yielded to Him and who have lived in communion and fellowship with Him; in other words, those who *have been* to their Lord all that is *implied* in the word “bride.”

It was this to which Paul referred in [Philippians 3:11-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.11-14&t=NKJV). He certainly had no fear of missing the resurrection but he desired to be *among those* called out from among those resurrected (the “out-resurrection”) to receive “the *prize* of the *upward call* of God in Christ Jesus,” which is a referral *not* to eternal salvation, a gift.

Again, the Church is one Body, made up of *all* believers in Christ. It is to the Church that the epistles are written. The church at Corinth, as well as all other churches, was composed of *two* classes of believers, the *carnal* and the *spiritual* ([1 Corinthians 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3&t=NKJV)). And this *dual* condition will *always* exist in the Church. Those Christians who remain carnal until the end will be saved “yet so as through fire,” but they should *not* entertain any thought of being *part* of the Bride of Christ.

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This article primarily reflects the work of John Lanham, Pastor Emeritus, Calvary Bible Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee. It has been edited by [Bible One by Charles Strong](http://www.bibleone.net/).

[Bible One - Who is the Bride of Christ?](http://www.bibleone.net/whoisthebrideofChrist.htm)