

JESUS AND HIS CHURCH (PART 1 – MYSTERY)
February 21, 2016 morning service
Ephesians 5:22-33

Amen. We believe. That's good stuff, wasn't it? Take your Bible and go to the book of Ephesians chapter 5. Alan, you can run me just a little hotter than normal today because my voice is a little weak this morning. We begin today in Ephesians 5:22-33. I'll be in this text this morning, next Sunday morning, and the following Sunday morning. We'll preach right out of this text. Spurgeon said about verse 30 itself that you could preach for a year out of just verse 30. Well you'd have to be Spurgeon to do that and I know my limitations but there's such a rich truth out of this 5th chapter of Ephesians 22-33. So you find in your Bible your place and I'll begin reading in verse 22.

*Wives [all the wives say Amen], be subject to your own husbands [All the wives say Amen. My voice isn't that weak, alright? Wives, be subject to your own husbands], as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands [all the husbands say Amen], love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body [now the King James adds here, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh]. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.*¹

Verse 32. This mystery, *musterion*, this mystery is great. He is using the illustration of the man and the woman come together, two becoming one as a backdrop for the church of Christ and His people. Two becoming one. This is a great mystery. Now the word mystery is a mystery to us because in our context when we think of mystery we think of an enigma or a riddle, hocus pocus, Pensacon, made up stuff. But in the Bible a *musterion*, a mystery is not a riddle, a made up something. In the Bible a mystery is a truth that God knows and chooses not to reveal it until a certain period of time. It is always truth but God pulls back the curtain at a point in time.

There's seven great mysteries in scripture. I shared a series of sermons years ago on these seven great mysteries. Let me just enumerate them again for you quickly. There's the mystery of the incarnation. God became flesh. There's the mystery of

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divine indwelling. That is God giving in the believer. There's the mystery of Israel's blindness of how God's people could not see and do not see today who they are in Christ. Number four is the bride of Christ, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Number five is the mystery of the rapture. You won't understand this fully until God takes that truth, His truth today, and brings it to a point in time.

Number six is the mystery of the antichrist. Everybody that's ever elected President, somebody calls them the antichrist. You heard that about Obama. You're already hearing people talk about Trump in that way. There are people this week that called the Pope the antichrist. It's a *musterion*. The antichrist is a truth, a real person, but the revelation of it has not been made known yet. It's a mystery. Then number seven is what we deal with today and that is the church. The church is a mystery. The first 39 books of the Bible you never heard of the church. There's no church in the Old Testament. You've never even heard of it in the gospels until Jesus reveals that word. You never even heard of it. But in Acts the mystery of the church, the curtain's drawn back, and we see the *ekklesia*. We see the church and its mystery is opened up.

So this morning I want to begin a three part series of sermons. This morning about the church, the mystery. Next Sunday, the agents of holiness in the church. Then thirdly, the membership of the church when we come to March 6 and that last message about Jesus and His church. So today I want us to pull back the curtain if you will on the mystery, the *musterion*. Now we've heard about the church so much that we don't think it's a mystery but, oh, there's some things mysterious about the church. So let's outline it today and see three pertinent truths about this mystery of the church. When I finish I'm going to come right down here and I'm going to stand right here. Some of you that are in this place that are not a part of God's body, the church, will be saved today and you'll call on Christ. You'll come forward and you'll say, "Pastor, I'm ready to make my declaration that Jesus is my Lord," and you'll be a part of the church." Others and here and you've been saved but you've never been baptized. That is the first step of obedience. You're ready to do that.

Some of you are saved, baptized, and you've moved here or you're, as people tell me every week, "I'm looking for a church." What that means is they're looking for a local body to affiliate with like Olive and some of you want to move your membership to our church. Then we're going to invite you to do that as we come to understand a little bit about the church. So let's dive right in and look at these three pertinent truths regarding the church this morning.

Number one. I want you to see the structure, the structure of the church. It's found in verses 22 through 25. He uses the backdrop of husband and wife and says that the husband is to be the head, the wife is to be submissive. There's been a whole lot of meanness gone on with mankind taking that Bible verse, that concept, and men that have said, "Women must do so and so." Dear friend, you've not understood what headship is all about. You've not understood what godly submission is all about. Paul takes that backdrop and he says, "Christ is the head of the church and the church is to be in submission unto Christ."

Now let's just lay it right out on the table. The head of the church is not the papacy. The pope is not the head of the church. Let's get it right out on the table. The pastor is not the head of the church. The elders do not comprise a body that is the head of the church. No deacon is the head of the church, not even the head deacon. Christ is the brain trust of the church. He is the head. As the head He tells the body what to do and we are to walk in submission unto Him.

Now keep your finger in Ephesians 5. Back up just a page or two to Ephesians 3. The first nine verses talk all about the church and submission and being a mystery. He calls the church a mystery three times, verses 3, 4, and 9. Then he drops down to verse 14 and out of all of that he says, "For this reason I bow my" what? Before the pope? No. Before the pastor? No. "I bow my knees before the Father, Christ, the head of the church." The church is to walk in humble submission, in humble supplication, and in humble surrender on its knees before the Father who is the head of the church.

I had a gentleman come to my office one day. It has been many years ago. He was not happy with the way Olive was going. He was making his case. Then he said this to me. "Pastor, what we have going on right now, you are going to ruin my church." I'm not a counselor nor the son of a counselor. I am not a prophet but I have prophetic leanings and I stopped that gentleman who loves Olive Baptist Church. I mean he loves it deeply. I said, "Let me say this. I may ruin this church. I have the potential to be so in error that I could ruin this church but, dear sir, I will not ruin your church because you do not own it." He said, "Pastor, well you know what I mean." I said, "No, I don't know what you mean. I just know what you're saying."

Now I understand that because I say about Olive sometimes, "You know, I love my church," but I don't own it. You don't own it. The Lord Jesus is the head of it and we are to bow our knees in humble surrender and submission and supplication to the head of the church. Dear friend, if you're not saved today, you ought to run to this altar and get on your knees and thank Him that He sent Christ and Christ died for you and come and say, "I'm ready to surrender to the One that is the head of the church."

We see the hierarchy, if you will, of this church. We see the structure. The headship of Christ, fellowship of His saints. Now there's a structure within the fellowship but nobody in the fellowship is the head. The pastor is given great accountability and great responsibility and great leadership. The pastor to whom much is given much will be required. I will give an account for the years that I pastored this church. Dr. Passmore that sits to my left will give an account for the 17 years he pastored this church. Brother Rousseau will give an account for the 17 years he pastored this church. Deacons will give an account but I will never give an account for being the head. That's way above our pay grade. Don't miss the structure. It's His church. He bought it. He secured it. As a matter of fact, He'll still be here when we're all gone. The head of the church.

Now secondly, the mystery, the mystery is the origin. How'd this thing get started? The origin of the church. It's found in chapter 5 and verse number 30 that we are members of His body. Bone of His bone. He's quoting right out of Genesis 2, verse 23 where God made Adam and then out of his side He took a rib and fashioned the woman, the woman. Our good friend, Fred Luter, will never introduce his wife, Elizabeth – that wonderful preacher from New Orleans that has been our Southern Baptist Convention president, he's preached here for us – when he introduces Elizabeth he always says, "This is my short rib right here." That woman was taken from the side of Adam.

Paul says that we are members of His body. Where'd we come from? I'm telling you, the origin of the church is from the body of Christ. Like a woman from Adam's side, the church is from the side of the Lord Jesus. We are bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. The origin of the church is through the life of Christ. You say, "Preacher, that's weird." That's a mystery. That Jesus, the scar in His side and the scars in His hands, He birthed the church in His agony on the cross.

Now watch this truth out of verse 30. We do not imitate Christ. You're not that good. I'm not that good. The call is not to imitate Christ but to participate in Christ. It is Christ in us and us in Him. You don't just say, "You know, Jesus, what would He do if He was here?" Friend, you can try. You can't do it. That's why you've got to come to so surrender your life to the head that it is Christ that pulls through you. This is when you get to the place where you say, "Man, I can't do that." I know you can't but Jesus can when He's in you and through you. You don't imitate. You participate in the Christ life and you become bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. You are a part of the body of Christ. That's where we originated is from the very side of Christ. From His heart through His cross He birthed the church.

We see the structure of it. We see the origin of it. Now there's one little word there in verse 30 I want you to see and that is the membership of it. This is the great mystery to the Old Testament people. Because we are members of His body. Wow. Take your Bible and go back to that third chapter of Ephesians. Look at verse number 6. He's talking about that mystery. Here's what Paul said. To be specific, to be clear, to be plain, don't misunderstand. The Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow – there's our word – members of the body. Oh my Lord. He's talking to Jews. He said, "The Gentiles are in." All the Gentiles in this room ought to say Amen. You see, the mystery was it was just Israel and it was just Jewish. But now Paul says that the Gentiles, they're fellow heirs, fellow members, fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. What He's saying is that the church and its membership and anyone who comes to Christ can get in. This is not just mysterious. This is revolutionary in that anybody, anyone who will come to Christ is in the membership.

You say, "Preacher, that's pretty cool. Jews and Gentiles." Well now let's drill down there for a minute. Rich and poor. James writes about this. He says, "If a guy comes in your church and he sits down and he doesn't look like he belongs, you better make him fit." Speaking of fits, I'm about to have one. Several weeks ago in the 11:00

service – and I will share this at 11:00 today – we have a group here that’s been working with the State College of Florida basketball team and inviting them to Olive. Most of the time they sit way up yonder and then they feed them lunch. I asked them if they could move down a little closer and when they got here, they did and about six or seven of the boys, they’re big. I mean big. I’m talking 6’5” tall and pretty broad. When this basketball team came in and they sat down, the report came to the shepherd that some folks in the congregation asked them to move because they were too big to see over. One of those boys had never been before and looked over at one of them and said, “We’re not welcome here. Let’s leave.” They didn’t. They stayed. They’ll be back today. Hey, I want to let you in on a little secret. If somebody’s in your way, get yourself up and sit somewhere else.

Twenty years ago when we opened this building I preached a sermon out of Ephesians. “No one owns their seat.” That’s what I preached on. It’s taken me 20 years to get back to it. You don’t own your chair. I don’t own my chair. You see, if it’s really the mystery that the Jew and the Gentile is welcome, then bigg’ns and little’ns are welcome too. I’m telling you it’s the truth.

James says, “When that poor man comes in, you better make room for him.” You see, sometimes we say, “Oh, there’s an old boy. He looks like he’s got some money. We better make him welcome.” I mean, just because you dress up like you’ve got some money doesn’t mean you’ve got any. My momma always said, “A big shot’s just a little shot away from home.” Amen. Just because you think that old boy’s loaded, he doesn’t get a better seat than anybody else. That’s the mysterious miracle of the church. The rich and the poor. The clean and the unclean. I mean by that, that the one that’s drug-infested and that one that’s never had any. Friend, if you’ve never been drunk – I never have – if you’ve never taken a pull off of a marijuana cigarette – I have not – I shared with you a few weeks ago that I did have a penchant for cigars years ago. I made that illustration and a lady brought me a box of Cuban cigars. It’s the truth. They’re in my gun cabinet at home. My wife rarely goes in there but she did look in the other day and she said, “What is that?” I said, “I’ve had this habit for a long time.”

Hey, I’ll just tell you, I’ve been pretty clean all my life. I got saved when I was 10. After you get saved, you’re not supposed to get drunk anymore after that and I’d never been drunk when I was 10. I didn’t get high before I was 10. Now watch this. If you never have done all that stuff, you’ll get to thinking you’ve got some righteousness. Hey, you don’t have any. Your righteousness is just like filthy rags. God takes that old boy that’s clean and saves him just like He takes that old boy that’s been a drunkard or an addict and cleans him up, straightens him up, and He put them together.

You know, out here where the building is we’ve tried to buy 147 times out here in front of our church – there’s a potato thing in there now. There used to be a Starbucks in there. I was in that Starbucks one time and the guy asked me, he said, “Pastor, how do ya’ll do what you do at Olive?” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “How do you pay for all that?” I said, “Like this. You take that campus where we are now over 52 acres, you take that 52 acre campus where we are.” At that time out on this side there

was a little trailer that had no running water in it. There was a couple living in there. It's not there anymore. They had a hose hooked up to their neighbor's house and he let them run water over into their house. It was a momma and daddy and three children. I took them groceries on more than one occasion. I said, "If you go over on this side of the campus, you'll find some people that are in poverty. If you come over on this side of the campus you find people paying \$5 for a cup of coffee." I said, "What we do is we win this Starbucks crowd and take their money to go win that crowd over there."

When we come over there at the church, then we're all the same. It's the mysterious miracle of the membership of the church. Big ones, little ones, rich ones, poor ones, clean ones, high, and of course the color issue always comes. Red and black and white and brown. Thank God we got over that. It's not easy. If you've never read it, I challenge you to read the book I quoted in my little word today, *Up From Slavery*, the life story of Booker T. Washington. Phenomenal little book, 130 pages. I learned something from Booker T. in that book. He was born on a plantation. He said, "You know, in America, it wasn't just white people that had slaves." He said, "There were a lot of American Indians in the territories of America that had black slaves." I'd never heard that. The American Indian gets free stuff, casinos, because of what the white man did but they never bring up red slavery. Booker T. didn't bring it up to say something mean. He just said, "If we're going to talk about it, we've got to get the whole playing field level and we've got to all get over ourselves and come up from slavery." That was his word.

I thought, my Lord, if we'd just do at the church what Booker T. tried to do at Tuskegee, we'd probably see revival. Let a white woman and a black woman and a brown man and a red man all come together. It's the mysterious miracle of the church because Jesus died for every kind you can find. All of us. Because when we get to the other side, Revelation said that every tribe and every tongue, every people, they're going to be there. Independents and Republicans and Democrats. They're going to all be there. Some of ya'll don't believe that but I'm telling you, it's the truth.

While we're on that subject I do want to say this. The mysterious miracle of membership is not a blender. It's a puzzle. In a blender, you put all that stuff in there together and you turn it on and then you can't even tell, it's just all alike. My wife's got me drinking some stuff for breakfast. You can put brown walnuts and blueberries and green kale and white milk and you turn that on and when it comes out it's not always pleasant to view but you can't find it in there. You just drink it down. The church is not a blender. You don't lose your distinction. It's like a puzzle. You keep your distinction and your shape but you just fit with other people to make a larger picture than you can make by yourself. That's why God brings all of His people together and He fashions us together and that large picture called grace begins to show itself to the world about us. The world can't understand that. It is a mystery.

I've got people, I've got some folks, not in our church that's had the guts to say it. Thank you, just keep your guts to yourself. "Preacher, are you really going to have a prayer meeting with some Assembly of God people?" I said, "Well, if you get cancer is it

alright if I call that crowd to pray for you? If you're hurting, is it alright if I ask somebody that's not a Baptist to pray for you?" Somebody jokingly said, "They're going to have it at Olive because the charismatics will come here but we won't go over yonder." Well that ain't true. We have some distinctiveness but we're all building a picture. It's called grace. It's the marvelous, miraculous mystery of the church. It's what Paul's trying to say there in Ephesians 5:32. "This mystery is magnanimous. It is great but I'm speaking with reference to Christ and His church."

Now I've been here awhile and many of you have been here longer than I have. I looked up there and saw Clyde and Joyce awhile ago. I sat down here and I was praying. I said, "Thank God for them." I almost called on their son-in-law to pray the offertory prayer today but he'd rebuke me if I did that. I think about the Parazines and I see Randy and Sandy sitting there and I see that family. They've been here a long time, generation after generation after generation. There's folks like me. We've just been here in the 20's. Some of ya'll have been here 20 minutes.

Let me tell you something. I want to tell you one of the keys to this church. It's folks like that family right there. It's folks like that family right there that said, "We're going to let our church grow up and grow out if it needs to. We're not going to keep it just being us four and no more." A generation even before Brother Jerry said, "For the mysterious miracle of the church, the local church, we'll let go." I could just as well look down at David and talk about the Millers, with Baron and all of that crowd. They were bookends. Others. I think about Ms. Bobbie Johnson. We'll have her funeral here Thursday. I think about these flowers today. I didn't have better friends in this church than the people these flowers are in honor of today. Ben Linn. I've got three rocking chairs at my house he made. We've got benches up all out here he made. That crowd said, "We're going to let Olive grow up if it needs to grow up." Not every church needs to grow out but this one did and God put us here. You see, it's not ours. In Jesus' name, it's not ours. We're accountable but it's His church because He's the head and we're the body.

I think my voice is getting better. You see, the church, it's a miracle. It's mysterious. Well this thing ought not work. How does God keep us all together? It's grace, grace, marvelous grace. Great is the mystery. Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. I'm praying that between now and next Sunday and the then next Sunday on the 6th that we have 100 new members at Olive Baptist Church. I'm working toward an increase of 100 in three weeks. You say, "Preacher, that's crazy." No, that's the number the Lord put in my heart because we baptize, move their letter, come and get here, be a part. I don't know how the Lord's going to be about that but He is because He's always building His church and Jesus said, "The gates of hell will not prevail against it." Friend, if you're propping up one of the gates of hell, you're in a losing proposition because you can't win. Jesus wins because of His church.

Well, if I wasn't a member, I'd join this morning. I don't know who you are but somebody sits in this very room right now and what you've got to do is you see all of those people, they only have one thing in common. That is they are in Christ. When

Noah built the ark there was a door and God shut the door. He shut some in and He shut some out. Today you are either in or out of God's family so which side of the door are you on? If you'd like to get on the right side when we sing this song, I want you to come down here and say, "Pastor, today, today, I'm coming today to say yes to Jesus. I want it to be my day today." Some of you, you know that step. It's easy. You just come and put your membership here. Place your life here with us. When you come, you'll encourage others to do that. Which side of that door are you on today?

My phone's over there and we have a little app on our phone that the staff uses. I can punch it in there, Traylor, spell my name, comma, T, and my name will come up. It will say active member. If anybody's ever been a member of this church – I can type Ben Linn's name in there. It will say inactive member. When I saw that, I thought, that's a bad line for some guy that's in heaven. He's more active than I am but I understand we've got to have some language or whatever, you know. But what I want to know is when God punches that in His – you know, He used to use the Lamb's Book of Life but now He's got an iPad. So when the Lord Jesus punches your name in the iPad of Life, which side of the door are you on? When He knows you're on the wrong side, He says, "Come. Come. Come and follow Me. I'll forgive your sin. I'll wash it as if it's never happened. I'll take you from the pit and raise you to the solid rock of eternal salvation."

Some of you are here today and you need to make that move today because today's the day of salvation and now is the time to be a part of God's church. You can have your name on a roll and never be in God's church. There's one of our girls that coaches in Upward down here. I saw her the other day. Boy, she was just getting after it. Her team, she was coaching hard. I remember the day just a few years ago, she did something when she was a little girl but she didn't remember it. She walked forward. She was as active as anybody in this church. She walked down here and took me by the hand and said, "Pastor, if I don't get saved today I'm going to hell." I said, "What?" She said, "I just don't know that I know I know. I'm not sure. Something happened back there. Momma told me but I want to know that I'm on the right side of eternity." We knelt right here and she asked God to step out of heaven and step into her heart and God saved her and transformed her life that day. He made her a better wife, made her a better mother, made a better Upward coach out of her because Jesus, she was bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh.

I'm going to pray. Jon's going to start singing. When he starts singing, I want you to be the first one to get up and come. Nobody to the back door, everybody coming to the front today saying yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Father, help my friend say yes today. Help the lost get saved today. Grow the church today. Move in our hearts and add to the miraculous, mysterious body of the church. Do it at Olive. Do it at East Brent. Do it at Hillcrest. Do it at First Baptist. Do it at Bethel. Do it at Emmanuel. Do it at Calvary. Do it in Pisgah. Do it in Texas. Lord, do it in Indonesia. O God, call all people today from the four winds to come to you. Have Your way. Have Your way, Lord, in Jesus' name.

Now the Lord's speaking. You're coming unto Christ, unto Christ, unto Christ.