

**Outline of the Messages
for the Memorial Day Blending Conference
May 23-26, 2025**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE**

Message One

The Bride—the Goal of the Lord's Recovery

Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:7-9; John 1:29; 3:29; S. S. 1:2-3; 8:14

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

John 1:29—The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 3:29—He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

S. S. 1:2-3—Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. ³Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; Your name is like ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.

S. S. 8:14—Make haste, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young hart Upon the mountains of spices.

I. The Bible is a romance, in the most pure and the most holy sense, of a universal couple—God in Christ as the Bridegroom and God's redeemed people as the bride—John 3:29; Matt. 25:6; Rev. 19:7; 21:2; 22:17:

John 3:29—He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

Matt. 25:6—But at midnight there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Go forth to meet him!

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 22:17—And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

A. Throughout the centuries God has had a romance with man; He created man with the purpose of having a counterpart—Gen. 1:26.

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and

over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

- B. God is a lover, and He created man in the image of Himself as a lover; this means that He created us so that we would love Him—Mark 12:30; Eph. 3:14-19.

Mark 12:30—And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength.”

Eph. 3:14-19—For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, ¹⁵Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, ¹⁶That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, ¹⁷That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are ¹⁹And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

- C. The entire Bible is a divine romance, and Song of Songs is an abridged form of this romance—1:2-3; 8:14:

S. S. 1:2-3—Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. ³Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; Your name is like ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.

S. S. 8:14—Make haste, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young hart Upon the mountains of spices.

1. The Bible is a romantic book, and our relationship with the Lord should become more and more romantic.

2. If there is no romance between us and the Lord Jesus, then we are religious Christians, not romantic Christians—S. S. 1:2-3.

S. S. 1:2-3—Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. ³Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; Your name is like ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.

3. As a whole, *romance* is a word of the divine courtship; in the Bible we see that God is seeking our love—2 Cor. 11:2.

2 Cor. 11:2—For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present *you as a pure virgin* to Christ.

4. Song of Songs is more than a romance; it is a fantastic romance.

- D. Whatever we love, our whole heart, even our entire being, is set on and occupied and possessed by—1 Tim. 6:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:2-4; 4:8, 10a; Titus 1:8:

1 Tim. 6:10-11—For the love of money is a root of all evils, *because of which* some, aspiring after *money*, have been led away from the faith and pierced themselves through with many pains. ¹¹But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.

2 Tim. 3:2-4—For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, not lovers of good, ⁴Traitors, reckless, blinded with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

2 Tim. 4:8—Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

2 Tim. 4:10—For Demas has abandoned me, having loved the present age, and has gone to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia.

Titus 1:8—But hospitable, a lover of good, of a sober mind, righteous, holy, self-controlled;

1. “To love God means to set our entire being—spirit, soul, and body, with the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)—absolutely on Him, that is, to let our entire being be occupied by Him and lost in Him” (footnote 3 on 1 Cor. 2:9).

Mark 12:30—And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength.”

1 Cor. 2:9—But as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and *which* have not come up in man’s heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

2. To love the Lord Jesus is to appreciate Him, to direct our being to Him, to open to Him, to enjoy Him, to give Him the first place, to be one with Him, to live Him, and to become Him—Matt. 26:6-13; 2 Cor. 3:16; Mark 12:30; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 6:17; Phil. 1:20-21; *Hymns*, #477, stanza 2.

Matt. 26:6-13—Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷A woman came to Him, having an alabaster flask of ointment of great value, and she poured *it* on His head as He reclined *at table*. ⁸But when the disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, Why this waste? ⁹For this could have been sold for much and given to the poor. ¹⁰But Jesus, knowing *it*, said to them, Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a noble deed to Me. ¹¹For the poor you have with you always, but you do not always have Me. ¹²For in pouring out this ointment on My body, she has done *it* for My burial. ¹³Truly I say to you, Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her.

2 Cor. 3:16—But whenever *their heart* turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Mark 12:30—And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength.”

Col. 1:18—And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

1 Cor. 6:17—But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

Phil. 1:20-21—According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

II. Revelation 19:7-9 unveils Christ as the Bridegroom:

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

- A. The marriage of the Lamb is the issue of the completion of God's New Testament economy, which is to obtain for Christ a bride, the church, through His judicial redemption and by the organic salvation in His divine life—Gen. 2:22; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9-11.

Gen. 2:22—And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

Rom. 5:10—For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9-11—And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. ¹⁰And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

- B. The bride of Christ in Revelation 19 is composed of all the overcomers—vv. 7-9; cf. Gen. 2:22; Matt. 16:18.

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

cf. Gen. 2:22—And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

cf. Matt. 16:18—And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

- C. All the overcomers will be the New Jerusalem as the bride of Christ for one thousand years in its initial and fresh stage—Rev. 19:7.

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

- D. Eventually, all the believers will join the overcomers to consummate and complete the New Jerusalem in full as the wife of Christ in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:2, 9-11.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9-11—And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. ¹⁰And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

III. The bride is the goal of the Lord's recovery—19:7-9:

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

- A. "The marriage of the Lamb has come"—v. 7b:

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

1. In the beginning of his Gospel, John speaks of the Lamb and the Bridegroom, and in Revelation he says that the marriage of the Lamb has come—John 1:29; 3:29.

John 1:29—The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 3:29—He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

2. After the rapture of the majority of the saints (Rev. 14:16; 1 Thes. 4:15-16) and the judgment at the judgment seat of Christ for the giving of the reward (Rev. 11:18; 2 Cor. 5:10), the events that immediately follow should include the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7b):

Rev. 14:16—And He who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped.

1 Thes. 4:15-16—For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, who are left remaining unto the coming of the Lord, shall by no means precede those who have fallen asleep; ¹⁶Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Rev. 11:18—And the nations became angry, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and *the time* to give the reward to Your slaves the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, to the small and to the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.

2 Cor. 5:10—For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad.

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

- a. If we are rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ, we will participate in the wedding feast.
- b. If we are not rewarded but are disapproved of by the Lord, we will not perish but will suffer a loss like that described in 1 Corinthians 3:15.

1 Cor. 3:15—If anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

B. "His wife has made herself ready"—Rev. 19:7c:

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

1. *His wife* refers to the church (Eph. 5:24-25, 31-32), the bride of Christ (John 3:29).

Eph. 5:24-25—But as the church is subject to Christ, so also *let the wives be subject* to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

Eph. 5:31-32—For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. ³²This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

John 3:29—He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

2. According to Revelation 19:8-9, the wife, the bride of Christ, consists only of the overcoming believers during the millennium, whereas the bride, the wife, in 21:2 is composed of all the saved saints after the millennium for eternity.

Rev. 19:8-9—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. The readiness of the bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers—19:7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Heb. 6:1—Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

Phil. 3:12-15—Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing *I do*: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, ¹⁴I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called *me* upward. ¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

Eph. 4:13—Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

4. We need to adorn and consummate the New Jerusalem as the bride of Christ with God the Father as the gold, God the Son as the pearl, and God the Spirit as the precious stones—Rev. 21:2, 19a; 1 Cor. 3:12; S. S. 1:10-11.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:19—The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

1 Cor. 3:12—But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

S. S. 1:10-11—Your cheeks are lovely with plaits of ornaments, Your neck with strings of jewels. ¹¹We will make you plaits of gold With studs of silver.

5. The overcomers are not separate individuals but a corporate bride.
 6. The overcomers not only are mature in life but also are built together as one bride.
- C. “It was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints”—Rev. 19:8:
1. *Clean* refers to the nature, and *bright* refers to the expression.
 2. The Greek word translated “righteousnesses” may also be rendered “righteous acts.”
 3. The righteousnesses do not refer to the righteousness that we received for our salvation—1 Cor. 1:30.

1 Cor. 1:30—But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

4. The righteousness we received for our salvation is objective and enables us to meet the requirement of the righteous God, whereas in Revelation 19:8 the righteousnesses of the overcoming saints are subjective (Phil. 3:9) and enable them to meet the requirement of the overcoming Christ.

Rev. 19:8—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Phil. 3:9—And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God *and* based on faith,

5. Thus, the fine linen indicates our overcoming life, our overcoming living; it is the Christ whom we live out of our being.
- D. “Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb...These are the true words of God”—Rev. 19:9:

Rev. 19:9—And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

1. The marriage dinner of the Lamb is the wedding feast, the kingdom of one thousand years, which is one day in the eyes of God, as a reward to the overcoming believers—v. 9; Matt. 22:2, 11-14; 2 Pet. 3:8.

Rev. 19:9—And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Matt. 22:2—The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son.

Matt. 22:11-14—But when the king came in to look at those reclining *at table*, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment, ¹²And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the servants, Bind his feet and hands, and cast him out into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴For many are called but few are chosen.

2 Pet. 3:8—But do not let this one thing escape you, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.

2. To be called to the marriage dinner of Christ, which will usher the overcoming believers into the enjoyment of the millennium, is to be blessed—Rev. 19:9.

Rev. 19:9—And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

3. The marriage dinner of the Lamb in Revelation 19:9 is the wedding feast in Matthew 22:2; it will be a reward to the overcoming believers:

Rev. 19:9—And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Matt. 22:2—The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son.

- a. To be called is to receive salvation (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 4:1), whereas to be chosen is to receive a reward.

Rom. 1:7—To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, the called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor. 1:2—To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, *who is* theirs and ours:

Eph. 4:1—I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

- b. Only the overcomers will be called to the marriage dinner as a reward to them; not all the saved ones will participate in it.
- c. The overcoming believers, who will be called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb, will also be the bride of the Lamb—Rev. 19:8-9.

Rev. 19:8-9—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Message Two
The Building of the Bride

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26; 2:7-10, 18-25; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9-11

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Gen. 2:7-10—Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. ⁸And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed. ⁹And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰And a river went forth from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided and became four branches.

Gen. 2:18-25—And Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart. ¹⁹Now Jehovah God had formed from the ground every animal of the field and every bird of heaven. And He brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called any living animal, that was its name. ²⁰And the man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of heaven and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper as his counterpart. ²¹And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. ²²And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³And the man said, This time this is bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called Woman Because out of Man this one was taken. ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And both the man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed before each other.

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 21:9-11—And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. ¹⁰And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

I. The building of God is the central matter in the entire Bible; the bride of Christ is the building of the Triune God—"Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man"—Gen. 2:22:

- A. The entire Bible may be likened to a building manual; the revelation concerning the garden of Eden, as the beginning of the divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures, and the revelation concerning the New Jerusalem, as the ending of the divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures, reflect each other.

B. What is revealed in these two parts of the Scriptures is the central thought of God, the central line of the divine revelation, and a controlling principle of the interpreting and understanding of the Holy Scriptures:

1. Genesis 1 and 2 are the blueprint of God's organic architectural plan to have His divine building (Heb. 11:10); God's desire is to build Christ into our intrinsic constitution so that our entire being will be reconstituted with Christ; in this way God may gain a corporate man to express Him in His image and to represent Him with His authority (Gen. 1:26; 1 Cor. 3:9; Matt. 16:18; 2 Sam. 7:12-14a).

Heb. 11:10—For he eagerly waited for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God.

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

1 Cor. 3:9—For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.

Matt. 16:18—And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

2 Sam. 7:12-14—When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be his Father, and he will be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the sons of men;

2. Revelation 21 and 22 are the photograph of the finished building, the corporate expression of the Triune God; the New Jerusalem is the reflection and fulfillment of the divine revelation concerning the garden of Eden.
3. Christ will come back as the Bridegroom to marry His bride, who will be the totality of the overcomers; this building up by the overcomers in this age is for the initial consummation of the New Jerusalem in the kingdom age (19:7-9) and eventually for the full consummation of the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth (21:2).

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

4. By the continual working of the Holy Spirit through all the centuries, this goal will be attained at the end of this age; then the bride, the overcoming

believers, will be ready, and the kingdom of God will come—Matt. 26:29; 13:43.

Matt. 26:29—But I say to you, I shall by no means drink of this product of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father.

Matt. 13:43—Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

5. The corporate bride, the New Jerusalem, will fulfill the two aspects of the purpose of God (Gen. 1:26); first, the New Jerusalem will be the full expression of God in God's full image for His glory (Rev. 21:11; cf. 4:3); second, this New Jerusalem will subdue the enemy, conquer the earth, and exercise God's authority with His dominion over the entire universe (Gen. 1:26; Rev. 22:5; cf. 20:10, 14-15).

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Rev. 21:11—Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

cf. Rev. 4:3—And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance, and *there was* a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance.

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Rev. 22:5—And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them; and they will reign forever and ever.

cf. Rev. 20:10—And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

cf. Rev. 20:14-15—And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

- C. When we as God's people enter into a love relationship with God, we receive His life, just as Eve received the life of Adam; it is this life that enables us to become one with God and makes Him one with us—Gen. 2:21-22.

Gen. 2:21-22—And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. ²²And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

II. For God and His people to be one, there must be a mutual love between them; the love between God and His people unfolded in the Bible is primarily like the affectionate love between a man and a woman—John 14:21, 23; Jer. 2:2; 31:3:

John 14:21—He who has My commandments and keeps them, he is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.

John 14:23—Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

Jer. 2:2—Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says Jehovah: I remember concerning you the kindness of your youth, The love of your bridal days, When you followed after Me in the wilderness, In a land that was not sown.

Jer. 31:3—Jehovah appeared to me from afar, *saying*, Indeed I have loved you with an eternal love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.

- A. As God's people love God and spend time to fellowship with Him in His word, God infuses them with His divine element, making them one with Him as His spouse, the same as He is in life, nature, and expression—Psa. 119:140, 15-16.

Psa. 119:140—Your word is very pure, And Your servant loves it.

Psa. 119:15-16—I will muse upon Your precepts And regard Your ways. ¹⁶I will take delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

- B. God first loved us in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers—1 John 4:19-21.

1 John 4:19-21—We love because He first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God love his brother also.

- C. The life which we have received from God is a life of love; Christ lived in this world a life of God as love, and He is now our life so that we may live the same life of love in this world and be the same as He is—3:14; 5:1; 2:5-6; 4:17.

1 John 3:14—We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.

1 John 5:1—Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God, and everyone who loves Him who has begotten loves him also who has been begotten of Him.

1 John 2:5-6—But whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. In this we know that we are in Him. ⁶He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.

1 John 4:17—In this has love been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world.

- D. Our natural love must be put on the cross; one difference between God's love and our natural love is that it is very easy for our natural love to be offended.

- E. We must be persons who are flooded with and carried away by the love of Christ; the divine love should be like the rushing tide of great waters toward us, impelling us to live to Him beyond our own control—2 Cor. 5:14.
2 Cor. 5:14—For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- F. The commandment regarding brotherly love is both old and new: old, because the believers have had it from the beginning of their Christian life; new, because in their Christian walk it dawns with new light and shines with new enlightenment and fresh power again and again—1 John 2:7-8; 3:11, 23; cf. John 13:34.
1 John 2:7-8—Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard. ⁸Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
1 John 3:11—For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,
1 John 3:23—And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, even as He gave a commandment to us.
cf. John 13:34—A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
- G. The Body builds itself up in love to become Christ's bride (Eph. 4:16); our God-given, regenerated spirit is a spirit of love; we need a burning spirit of love to conquer the degradation of today's church (2 Tim. 1:7).
Eph. 4:16—Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
2 Tim. 1:7—For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
- H. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1b; cf. 2 Cor. 3:6); loving one another is a sign that we belong to Christ (John 13:34-35); loving to be first in the church is versus loving all the brothers (3 John 9).
1 Cor. 8:1—Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.
cf. 2 Cor. 3:6—Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, *ministers* not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
John 13:34-35—A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
3 John 9—I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not receive us.

- I. Just as the Lord Jesus laid down His soul-life so that we might have the divine life, we need to lose our soul-life and deny the self to love the brothers and minister life to them in the practice of the Body life for the preparation of Christ's bride—1 John 3:16; 4:17 and footnote 5; John 10:11, 17-18; 15:13; Eph. 4:29—5:2; 2 Cor. 12:15; Rom. 12:9-13.

1 John 3:16—In this we know love, that He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers.

1 John 4:17—In this has love been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world.

John 10:11—I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:17-18—For this *reason* the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment I received from My Father.

John 15:13—No one has greater love than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Eph. 4:29—5:2—Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice. ³²And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you. ¹Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; ²And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

2 Cor. 12:15—But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?

Rom. 12:9-13—Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, *but* be burning in spirit, serving the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope; endure in tribulation; persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality.

- J. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:31b—13:8a.

1 Cor. 12:31—13:8—But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And moreover I show to you a most excellent way. ¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have *the gift of prophecy* and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³And if I dole out all my possessions to feed *others*, and if I deliver up my body that I may boast, but do not have love, I profit nothing. ⁴Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag *and* is not puffed up; ⁵It does not behave unbecomingly *and* does not seek its own things; it is not provoked *and* does not take account of evil; ⁶It does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷It covers all things, believes all things,

hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never falls *away*. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless.

III. We need to see what God did in order to produce a counterpart for Himself; Genesis 2 reveals a picture of Christ and His bride in the types of Adam and Eve:

- A. Adam typifies God in Christ as the real, universal Husband, who is seeking a wife for Himself—Rom. 5:14; cf. John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9-11.

Rom. 5:14—But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a type of Him who was to come.

cf. John 3:29—He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

cf. 2 Cor. 11:2—For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present *you as* a pure virgin to Christ.

cf. Eph. 5:31-32—For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. ³²This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

cf. Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

cf. Rev. 21:9-11—And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. ¹⁰And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

- B. "Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart"—Gen. 2:18:
1. Adam's need for a wife typifies and portrays God's need, in His economy, to have a wife as His counterpart, His complement (lit., His parallel); although God, Christ, is absolutely and eternally perfect, He is not complete without the church as His wife.
 2. God desires to have both Adam, typifying Christ, and Eve, typifying the church; His purpose is to "let them have dominion" (1:26); it is to have a victorious Christ plus a victorious church, a Christ who has overcome the work of the devil plus a church which has overthrown the work of the devil; God wants Christ and the church to have dominion (Rom. 5:17; 16:20; Eph. 1:22-23).

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Rom. 5:17—For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom. 16:20—Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Eph. 1:22-23—And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him *to be* Head over all things to the church, ²³Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

- C. From the ground God formed every animal of the field and every bird of heaven and brought them to Adam, “and the man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of heaven and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper as his counterpart”—Gen. 2:19-20.

Gen. 2:19-20—Now Jehovah God had formed from the ground every animal of the field and every bird of heaven. And He brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called any living animal, that was its name. ²⁰And the man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of heaven and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper as his counterpart.

- D. The wife must be the same as the husband in life, nature, and expression; among the cattle, the birds, and the animals Adam did not find a complement for himself, one that could match him—v. 23.

Gen. 2:23—And the man said, This time this is bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called Woman Because out of Man this one was taken.

- E. In order to produce a complement for Himself, God first became a man, as typified by God’s creation of Adam—John 1:14; Rom. 5:14.

John 1:14—And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

Rom. 5:14—But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam’s transgression, who is a type of Him who was to come.

- F. “Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place”—Gen. 2:21:

1. Adam’s deep sleep for the producing of Eve as his wife typifies Christ’s death on the cross for the producing of the church as His counterpart—Eph. 5:25-27.
Eph. 5:25-27—Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her ²⁶That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

2. In the Bible, sleep means death—1 Cor. 15:18; 1 Thes. 4:13-16; John 11:11-14.

1 Cor. 15:18—Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

1 Thes. 4:13-16—But we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are sleeping, that you would not grieve even as also the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so also those who have fallen asleep through Jesus, God will bring with Him. ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, who are left remaining unto the coming of the Lord, shall by no means precede those who have fallen asleep; ¹⁶Because the Lord Himself, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

John 11:11-14—He said these things, and after this He said to them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going that I may wake him out of sleep. ¹²The disciples then said to Him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover. ¹³But Jesus had spoken about his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴So Jesus then told them plainly, Lazarus has died.

3. Christ's death is the life-releasing, life-imparting, life-propagating, life-multiplying, and life-reproducing death, which is signified by the grain of wheat falling into the ground to die and to grow up in order to produce many grains (12:24) for the making of the loaf which is the Body, the church (1 Cor. 10:17).

John 12:24—Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

1 Cor. 10:17—Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

4. Through Christ's death the divine life within Him was released, and through His resurrection His released divine life was imparted into His believers for the constituting of the church—Luke 12:49-50; cf. Rom. 12:11; Rev. 4:5.

Luke 12:49-50—I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!

cf. Rom. 12:11—Do not be slothful in zeal, *but* be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

cf. Rev. 4:5—And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

5. Through such a process God in Christ has been wrought into man with His life and nature so that man can be the same as God in life and nature in order to match Him as His counterpart.

- G. "And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man"—Gen. 2:22:

1. The rib taken from Adam's opened side typifies the unbreakable, indestructible eternal life of Christ (Heb. 7:16; John 19:32-33, 36; Exo. 12:46; Psa. 34:20), which flowed out of His pierced side (John 19:34) to impart life to His believers for the producing and building up of the church as His counterpart:

Heb. 7:16—Who has been appointed not according to the law of a fleshy commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life.

John 19:32-33—The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other man who had been crucified with Him. ³³But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He had already died, they did not break His legs;

John 19:36—For these things happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “No bone of His shall be broken.”

Exo. 12:46—It shall be eaten in one house. You shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break any of its bones.

Psa. 34:20—He keeps all his bones; Not one of them is broken.

John 19:34—But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

- a. Out of Christ’s side came blood and water, but all that came out of Adam’s side was the rib without the blood.
- b. This is because at Adam’s time there was no need of redemption through the blood, because there was no sin; by the time that Christ was “sleeping” on the cross, there was the problem of sin; thus, the blood that came out of Christ’s side was for our judicial redemption.
- c. Following the blood, the water came out, which is the flowing life of God for our organic salvation (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; Num. 20:8); this divine, flowing, uncreated life is typified by the rib taken out of Adam’s side (Rom. 5:10).

Exo. 17:6—I will be standing before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

1 Cor. 10:4—And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed *them*, and the rock was Christ.

Num. 20:8—Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes, so that it yields its water. Thus you shall bring forth water for them out of the rock and give the assembly and their livestock something to drink.

Rom. 5:10—For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

2. Genesis 2:22 does not say that Eve was created but that she was built; the building of Eve with the rib taken from Adam’s side typifies the building of the church with the resurrection life released from Christ through His death on the cross and imparted into His believers in His resurrection—John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3.

Gen. 2:22—And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

John 12:24—Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

1 Pet. 1:3—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

3. The church as the real Eve is the totality of Christ in all His believers; the church is the reproduction of Christ; other than Christ's element, there should be no other element in the church—Gen. 5:2.

Gen. 5:2—Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and called their name Adam, on the day when they were created.

- H. Only that which comes out of Christ with His resurrection life can be His complement as His bride (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:6; 5:28-30); the church is a pure product out of Christ; the church is “Christly,” “resurrectionly,” and heavenly.

1 Cor. 12:12—For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

Eph. 2:6—And raised *us* up together with *Him* and seated *us* together with *Him* in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,

Eph. 5:28-30—In the same way the husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his own wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church, ³⁰Because we are members of His Body.

- I. Adam and Eve, being one, lived a married life together as husband and wife (Gen. 2:24-25); this portrays that in the New Jerusalem the processed and consummated Triune God as the universal Husband will live a married life with the redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified humanity as the wife, forever (Rev. 22:17a).

Gen. 2:24-25—Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And both the man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed before each other.

Rev. 22:17—And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

- J. In the eternity that is without end, by the divine, eternal, and surpassingly glorious life, they will live a life that is the mingling of God and man as one spirit, a life that is superexcellent and that overflows with blessings and joy.

Message Three

The Maturity of the Bride

Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:6-9; John 3:29; James 5:7;
Matt. 5:48; Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11

Rev. 19:6-9—And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

John 3:29—He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

James 5:7—Therefore be long-suffering, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain.

Matt. 5:48—You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Col. 1:28-29—Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; ²⁹For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.

Col. 3:10-11—And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

I. The meaning of the word *mature* in Greek is “at the end point”:

- A. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life; to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Heb. 6:1; Col. 4:12; Rom. 12:2; 2 Pet. 1:3.

Heb. 6:1—Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

Col. 4:12—Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

Rom. 12:2—And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

2 Pet. 1:3—Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,

- B. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life—v. 4.

2 Pet. 1:4—Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

- C. A mature believer knows and cares for the Body of Christ, being Body-conscious and Body-centered—1 Cor. 12:16, 18-19, 21, 24.

1 Cor. 12:16—And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, *it is not that* because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor. 12:18-19—But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed. ¹⁹And if all were one member, where would the body be?

1 Cor. 12:21—And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1 Cor. 12:24—But our comely *members* have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the *member* that lacked,

II. As used in the New Testament, the word *mature* refers to the believers' being full-grown and perfected in the life of Christ, which they received at the time of regeneration—Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23; Matt. 5:48:

Titus 3:5—Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,

1 Pet. 1:3—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1 Pet. 1:23—Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through *the* living and abiding word of God.

Matt. 5:48—You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- A. We should never be content with ourselves but pursue growth and maturity in the life of Christ—Phil. 3:12, 14.

Phil. 3:12—Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Phil. 3:14—I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called *me* upward.

- B. We need to go on, to be brought on, to maturity by forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, pursuing toward the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ for the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom—vv. 12-15.

Phil. 3:12-15—Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

¹³Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing *I do*: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, ¹⁴I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called *me* upward.

¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

- C. The prerequisite for maturity in the spiritual life is to grow continually in the divine life—Eph. 4:15.

Eph. 4:15—But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

- D. The ultimate issue of the believers' growth and maturity in the life of Christ is the full-grown man—the church as the Body of Christ growing into a mature man—v. 13.

Eph. 4:13—Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

III. In his Epistle, James uses the illustration of a farmer awaiting with long-suffering the precious fruit of the earth—5:7:

James 5:7—Therefore be long-suffering, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain.

- A. The Lord Jesus is actually the real Farmer, the unique Farmer—Matt. 13:3.

Matt. 13:3—And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.

- B. While we are awaiting with long-suffering the Lord's coming, He, as the real Farmer, is awaiting with patience our maturity in life, as the firstfruits and harvest of His field—Rev. 14:4, 14-15.

Rev. 14:4—These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men *as* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Rev. 14:14-15—And I saw, and behold, *there was* a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe.

- C. If we pray, "Lord, come back quickly," the Lord may say, "While you are awaiting My coming back, I am awaiting your maturity; only your maturity can hasten My coming back."

- D. It is a great help for us to realize that if we are serious about awaiting the Lord's coming back, we need to grow in life unto maturity.

IV. To be mature is to have Christ fully formed in us; it also means that we have been fully transformed into His image—Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18:

Gal. 4:19—My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,

2 Cor. 3:18—But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

- A. Since the time of our regeneration, the Lord has been working in us so that we may have His image—v. 18; Rom. 8:29.

2 Cor. 3:18—But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom. 8:29—Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

- B. When the Lord has fully worked His image into us and is fully expressed through us, we will be mature in life—Eph. 3:16-17.

Eph. 3:16-17—That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, ¹⁷That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

V. Chapter 3 of Song of Songs shows us the maturity of the seeking one, and chapter 4 continues by explaining that such maturity is reached by the subduing of the will; the secret of the maturity of the seeking one is that her will has been completely subdued and resurrected—v. 4:

S. S. 4:4—Your neck is like the tower of David, / Built for an armory: / A thousand bucklers hang on it, / All the shields of the mighty men.

- A. The neck signifies the human will under God; the Lord considers the submission of our will a most beautiful thing—vv. 1a, 4.

S. S. 4:1—Oh, you are beautiful, my love! / Oh, you are beautiful! Your eyes are *like* doves behind your veil; / Your hair is like a flock of goats / That repose on Mount Gilead.

S. S. 4:4—Your neck is like the tower of David, / Built for an armory: / A thousand bucklers hang on it, / All the shields of the mighty men.

- B. If we have a submissive will, our will is expressed like the tower of David that holds all kinds of weapons:

1. First, our will must be subdued; then it will be strong in resurrection and like the tower of David, the armory for the spiritual warfare—Eph. 6:10.

Eph. 6:10—Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.

2. The weapons for spiritual warfare are kept in our subdued and resurrected will—2 Cor. 10:3-5.

2 Cor. 10:3-5—For though we walk in flesh, we do not war according to flesh; ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, ⁵As we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.

VI. The goal of Paul's ministry was to present every man mature, full-grown, in Christ for the one new man—Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11:

Col. 1:28-29—Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; ²⁹For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.

Col. 3:10-11—And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹Where there cannot be Greek and Jew,

circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

- A. The Greek word rendered “full-grown” in Colossians 1:28 may also be translated “perfect,” “complete,” or “mature.”

Col. 1:28—Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;

- B. Paul’s ministry was to dispense Christ into others so that they would be perfect and complete by maturing in Christ unto full growth.

VII. Genesis 37—47 is a record of the process of Jacob’s maturity:

- A. In Genesis 27 we see a supplanter; in chapter 37, a transformed man; and at the end of chapter 47, a mature person.

- B. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life:

1. God’s eternal purpose can only be accomplished through our transformation and maturity—1:26; Col. 1:28; 2:19.

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Col. 1:28—Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;

Col. 2:19—And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

2. Maturity is a matter of having the divine life imparted into us again and again until we have the fullness of life—John 10:10.

John 10:10—The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have *it* abundantly.

- C. Maturity is a matter of the enlargement of capacity—Psa. 4:1:

Psa. 4:1—When I call out, answer me, O God of my righteousness; Make room for me *when I am* in straits; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

1. Maturity in life is the sum total of receiving the discipline of the Holy Spirit—Heb. 12:5-11.

Heb. 12:5-11—And you have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him; ⁶For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” ⁷*It is* for discipline *that* you endure; God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline, of which all *sons* have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected *them*; shall we not much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined for a few days as it seemed good to them; but He, for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness. ¹¹Now no

discipline at the present time seems to be *a matter* of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it.

2. Others may see a person who has matured in life, but they cannot see the accumulated discipline of the Holy Spirit which that person has received secretly day after day throughout the years—2 Cor. 1:8-10; Gen. 47:7, 10.

2 Cor. 1:8-10—For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell *us* in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond *our* power, so that we despaired even of living. ⁹Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead; ¹⁰Who has delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver *us*; in whom we have hoped that He will also yet deliver *us*,

Gen. 47:7—And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

Gen. 47:10—And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went forth from Pharaoh's presence.

- D. God will sovereignly use persons, things, and events to empty us of everything that has filled us and to take away every preoccupation so that we may have an increased capacity to be filled with God—Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:6.

Luke 1:53—The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

Matt. 5:6—Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

- E. The life of Jacob reveals that everything that happens to us is under God's sovereignty for our transformation and maturity; nothing is accidental:

1. In order to become mature, Jacob first had to suffer the loss of Joseph, the treasure of his heart—Gen. 37:31-35.

Gen. 37:31-35—Then they took Joseph's coat and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the coat in the blood. ³²And they sent the coat of many colors and had it brought to their father and said, We found this; please examine *it*, and see whether it is your son's coat or not. ³³And he recognized it and said, It is my son's coat. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces. ³⁴And Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted and said, Surely I will go down to Sheol to my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

2. A mature believer has learned that God is merciful and all-sufficient to meet his needs in every kind of situation—43:11, 13-14; 17:1; Phil. 1:19-21a; 4:11-12; cf. 1 Tim. 6:6-8.

Gen. 43:11—And their father Israel said to them, If it *must be* so, then do this: Take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man—a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

Gen. 43:13-14—Take your brother also, and rise up; return to the man. ¹⁴And may the All-sufficient God grant you mercy before the man, that he may release to you

your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am to be bereaved of my children, I shall be bereaved.

Gen. 17:1—And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Jehovah appeared to Abram and said to him, I am the All-sufficient God; Walk before Me, and be perfect.

Phil. 1:19-21—For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and *the* bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Phil. 4:11-12—Not that I speak according to lack, for I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content. ¹²I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack.

cf. 1 Tim. 6:6-8—But godliness with contentment is great gain; ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, because neither can we carry anything out. ⁸But having food and covering, with these we will be content.

3. His trust and rest are altogether in the mercy of his all-sufficient God, no longer in himself or in his ability—Rom. 9:16.

Rom. 9:16—So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

4. The strongest sign of Jacob's maturity was his blessing others—Gen. 47:7, 10; 48:14-16; Heb. 7:7.

Gen. 47:7—And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

Gen. 47:10—And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went forth from Pharaoh's presence.

Gen. 48:14-16—But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid *it* upon Ephraim's head—although he was the younger—and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands with insight, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵And he blessed Joseph and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has shepherded me all my life to this day, ¹⁶The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; And may my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they be a teeming multitude in the midst of the earth.

Heb. 7:7—But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

VIII. The mature bride is the goal of God's will and purpose—Rev. 19:7-9:

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

- A. The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers—v. 7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Heb. 6:1—Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

Phil. 3:12-15—Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing *I do*: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, ¹⁴I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called *me* upward. ¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

Eph. 4:13—Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

- B. The marriage of the Lamb is the issue of the completion of God's New Testament economy, which is to obtain for Christ a bride, the church, through His judicial redemption and by His organic salvation in His divine life—Gen. 2:22; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2.

Gen. 2:22—And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

Rom. 5:10—For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

- C. In the Gospel of John, Christ is revealed both as the Lamb who came to take away sin and as the Bridegroom who came that He might have the bride—3:29.

John 3:29—He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

- D. Christ's goal is not to remove sin; it is to have the bride:

1. In the book of Revelation, we see that Christ is the Lamb and the coming Bridegroom; therefore, as the Bridegroom, He must have a wedding—19:7-9.

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was

given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

2. The wedding of the Lamb will be a universal wedding; it will be the marriage of the Redeemer and the redeemed.
 3. Christ is coming as the Bridegroom, and we are going as the bride.
- E. A very crucial matter is the readiness of the bride—v. 7:

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

1. According to Revelation 19:8 and 9, the wife, the bride of Christ, here consists only of the overcoming believers during the millennium.

Rev. 19:8-9—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

2. The readiness of the bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers, who are not separate individuals but the corporate bride.
3. In Revelation 19:6 the voice of the great multitude proclaims, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns”:

Rev. 19:6—And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

- a. The reign of God, the kingdom, is related to the marriage of the Lamb.
- b. The wedding will bring in the reign of the Lord, the kingdom, because all the guests called to the wedding will be both the corporate bride and the co-kings of the Bridegroom; all His co-kings will be His corporate bride.
- c. To the overcomers, the thousand years of the millennial kingdom will be a wedding feast.
- d. Everyone invited to the wedding feast will also participate in the thousand-year reign as kings.
- e. For the overcomers, reigning with Christ in the kingdom will be the wedding feast—v. 9.

Rev. 19:9—And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Message Four
The Beauty of the Bride

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:19, 22; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 1 Thes. 5:23; S. S. 8:13-14

Rom. 6:19—I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom. 6:22—But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

Eph. 5:25-27—Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her ²⁶That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

1 Thes. 5:23—And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

S. S. 8:13-14—O you who dwell in the gardens, *My* companions listen for your voice; Let me hear *it*.
¹⁴Make haste, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young hart Upon the mountains of spices.

I. The process of dispositional sanctification is the process of our organic salvation as our beautification to become the beautiful, holy, and glorious bride for Christ—1 Thes. 4:3a; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:4-5; 5:25-27; 1 Thes. 5:23-24; Rom. 6:19, 22:

1 Thes. 4:3—For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication;

1 Pet. 1:15-16—But according to the Holy One who called you, you yourselves also be holy in all *your* manner of life; ¹⁶Because it is written, “You shall be holy because I am holy.”

Eph. 1:4-5—Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, ⁵Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph. 5:25-27—Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her ²⁶That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

1 Thes. 5:23-24—And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
²⁴Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do *it*.

Rom. 6:19—I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom. 6:22—But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

A. Ephesians 5:25-27 reveals the entirety of God's complete salvation in presenting Christ to us in three stages:

Eph. 5:25-27—Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her ²⁶That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

1. In the past, Christ as the Redeemer gave Himself up for the church for our judicial redemption—"Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"—v. 25.
2. In the present, Christ as the life-giving Spirit is dispositionally sanctifying the church by saturating her with His element so that she may be His counterpart; this is organic salvation as bride beautification and bride preparation—"That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word"—v. 26.
3. In the future, Christ as the Bridegroom will present the church to Himself as His counterpart for His satisfaction—"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"—this is our glorification for bride presentation—v. 27.
4. In the past, Christ gave Himself up for the church; in the present, He is sanctifying the church; and in the future, He will present the church to Himself as His counterpart for His satisfaction; therefore, His loving the church is to sanctify her, and His sanctifying the church is for His presenting the church to Himself glorious.

B. The beauty of the bride comes from the very Christ who is wrought into the church and shining out from the church to be expressed through the church—Isa. 43:7; Eph. 3:21.

Isa. 43:7—Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created, formed, and even made for My glory.

Eph. 3:21—To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

C. Christ is a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people—Isa. 28:5:

Isa. 28:5—In that day Jehovah of hosts Will become a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people,

1. A crown is like a hat or turban, whereas the diadem is the headband as the most beautiful, glorious part of the crown—Exo. 28:36-39; 29:6; Isa. 62:3.

Exo. 28:36-39—And you shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave upon it, *like* the engravings of a signet: HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH. ³⁷And you shall put it on a cord of blue *strands*, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. ³⁸And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel sanctify for all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before Jehovah. ³⁹And you shall weave the tunic of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a girding sash, the work of an embroiderer.

Exo. 29:6—And you shall place the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban.

Isa. 62:3—You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, And a royal turban in the palm of your God.

2. We need to continually behold the beauty of the Lord in the church as the house of His beauty so that we may be transformed from glory to glory, beautified by the Lord, to become His beautiful bride with Him as our diadem of beauty—2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 19:7-9; Isa. 28:5; Psalms 27:4; Isa. 60:1, 7, 9, 13, 19; 62:3; Rev. 21:11.

2 Cor. 3:18—But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Isa. 28:5—In that day Jehovah of hosts Will become a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people,

Psa. 27:4—One thing I have asked from Jehovah; That do I seek: To dwell in the house of Jehovah All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in His temple.

Isa. 60:1—Arise! Shine! For your light has come, And the glory of Jehovah has risen upon you.

Isa. 60:7—All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you; The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; They will go up acceptably upon My altar, And I will beautify the house of My beauty.

Isa. 60:9—Surely the coastlands will look eagerly for Me; And the ships of Tarshish will come first, To bring your children from afar, Their silver and their gold with them, Unto the name of Jehovah your God And unto the Holy One of Israel; for He has beautified you.

Isa. 60:13—The glory of Lebanon will come to you, The fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together, To beautify the place of My sanctuary; And I will make the place for My feet glorious.

Isa. 60:19—You will no longer have the sun for *your* light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But Jehovah will be an eternal light to you, And your God your beauty.

Isa. 62:3—You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, And a royal turban in the palm of your God.

Rev. 21:11—Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

II. The Lord's primary work in the recovery is His genuine work to prepare us to be His glorious bride; apart from the continual, dispositional sanctification spoken of in Ephesians 5:26, there is no way for the bride to be prepared and, hence, no way for Revelation 19:7-9 to be fulfilled:

Eph. 5:26—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word,

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

- A. The church is being beautified through the process of sanctification by Christ as the life-giving Spirit cleansing us by the washing of the water in His word—Eph. 5:26-27:

Eph. 5:26-27—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

1. This indicates that in the word of Christ is the Spirit as the water of life; the words that He speaks to us are spirit and life—John 6:63.

John 6:63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

2. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ is the speaking Spirit; whatever He speaks is the word that washes us; this does not refer to *logos*, the constant word, but to *rhema*, which denotes an instant word, the word that the Lord presently speaks to us—Matt. 4:4; John 6:63; Rev. 2:7; 22:17a; cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:14-15; Acts 28:25-31.

Matt. 4:4—But He answered and said, It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.”

John 6:63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Rev. 2:7—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev. 22:17—And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

cf. Isa. 6:9-10—And He said, Go and say to this people, Hear indeed, but do not perceive; And see indeed, but do not understand. ¹⁰Make the heart of this people numb; Dull their ears, And seal their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, And their heart perceive and return, and they are healed.

cf. Matt. 13:14-15—And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, “In hearing you shall hear and by no means understand, and seeing you shall see and by no means perceive. ¹⁵For the heart of this people has become fat, and with their ears they have heard heavily, and their eyes they have closed, lest they perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and they turn around, and I will heal them.”

cf. Acts 28:25-31—And when they disagreed with one another, they departed, Paul saying one word *to them*, Well has the Holy Spirit spoken through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, ²⁶Saying, “Go to this people and say, In hearing you shall hear and by no means understand, and seeing you will see and by no means perceive; ²⁷For the heart of this people has become fat, and with their ears they have heard heavily, and their eyes they have closed, lest they perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and they turn around, and I will heal them.” ²⁸Let it be known to you therefore that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also hear *it*. ²⁹And when he had spoken these things, the Jews departed, having much dispute among themselves. ³⁰And he remained two whole years in *his* own rented dwelling and welcomed all those who came to him, ³¹Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.

3. Christ’s speaking is the Spirit; His speaking is the very presence of the life-giving Spirit—John 6:63; Eph. 6:17.

John 6:63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Eph. 6:17—And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God,

4. 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.
- B. Through such a washing process we are saturated with Christ and beautified by Christ to be His holy, beautiful, God-expressing bride, a bride without blemish or imperfection—Rev. 19:7; cf. S. S. 6:13; 8:13-14.

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

cf. S. S. 6:13—Return, return, O Shulammite; Return, return, that we may gaze at you. Why should you gaze at the Shulammite, As upon the dance of two camps?

cf. S. S. 8:13-14—O you who dwell in the gardens, *My* companions listen for your voice; Let me hear *it*. ¹⁴Make haste, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young hart Upon the mountains of spices.

- C. Christ as the life-giving Spirit sanctifies the church by cleansing her according to the washing of the water in the word; according to the divine concept, *water* here refers to the flowing life of God typified by flowing water (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17); we are now in such a washing process in order that the church may be holy and without blemish.

Exo. 17:6—I will be standing before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

1 Cor. 10:4—And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed *them*, and the rock was Christ.

John 7:37-39—Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for *the* Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Rev. 7:17—For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to springs of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Rev. 21:6—And He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely.

Rev. 22:1—And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev. 22:17—And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

- D. The Greek word for *washing* in Ephesians 5:26 is literally *laver*; in the Old Testament the priests used the laver to wash away their earthly defilement (Exo. 30:18-21); day by day, morning and evening, we need to come to the Bible and be cleansed by the laver of the water in the word.

Eph. 5:26—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word,

Exo. 30:18-21—You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing. And you shall put it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. ¹⁹And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it; ²⁰When they go into the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water, that they may not die; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering by fire to Jehovah, ²¹They shall wash their hands and their feet, that they may not die. And

it shall be a perpetual statute to them, for him and for his seed throughout their generations.

- E. Paul uses the Greek word *rhema* when he speaks of the word with its washing process (Eph. 5:26); *logos* is God's Word objectively recorded in the Bible; *rhema* is the word of God spoken to us on a specific occasion (Mark 14:72; Luke 1:35-38; 5:5; 24:1-8).

Eph. 5:26—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word,

Mark 14:72—And immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered the word, how Jesus had said to him, Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And thinking upon it, he wept.

Luke 1:35-38—And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, Elizabeth your relative, she also has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who is called barren, ³⁷Because no word will be impossible with God. ³⁸And Mary said, Behold, the slave of the Lord. May it happen to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

Luke 5:5—And Simon answered and said, Master, through the whole night we toiled and caught nothing; but based on Your word I will let down the nets.

Luke 24:1-8—Now on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb; ³But when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴And while they *stood* perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling clothing. ⁵And they became frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, and *the men* said to them, Why are you seeking the living One among the dead? ⁶He is not here but has been raised. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷Saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise up. ⁸And they remembered His words.

- F. The *rhema* reveals something to us personally and directly; it shows us what we need to deal with and what we need to be cleansed from (the laver of bronze was a mirror that could reflect and expose—Exo. 38:8); the important thing for each one of us is this—is God speaking His word to me today?

Exo. 38:8—And he made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze from the mirrors of the serving women who served at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

- G. One thing that we always treasure is that the Lord still speaks to us personally and directly today; true growth in life depends upon our receiving the word directly from God; only His speaking in us has true spiritual value—Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:7; Psa. 95:7-8.

Heb. 3:7-11—Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you hear His voice, ⁸Do not harden your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of trial in the wilderness, ⁹Where your fathers tried *Me* by testing *Me* and saw My works for forty years. ¹⁰Therefore I was displeased with this generation, and I said, They always go astray in their heart, and

they have not known My ways; ¹¹As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest!"

Heb. 3:15—While it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation."

Heb. 4:7—He again designates a certain day, today, saying in David after so long a time, even as was said before, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

Psa. 95:7-8—For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture And the flock of His hand. Today, if you hear His voice, ⁸Do not harden your heart as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,

- H. The central point of our prayers should be our longing for the Lord's speaking, which enables us to fulfill the goal of His eternal economy according to His heart's desire to have a bride as His counterpart—Rev. 2:7; cf. 1 Sam. 3:1, 21; Amos 3:7.

Rev. 2:7—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

cf. 1 Sam. 3:1—And the boy Samuel ministered to Jehovah before Eli. Now the word of Jehovah was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

cf. 1 Sam. 3:21—And Jehovah continued to appear in Shiloh, for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.

cf. Amos 3:7—Surely the Lord Jehovah will not do anything unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

- I. In a very practical sense, the Lord's presence is one with His speaking; whenever He speaks, we realize His presence within us; Christ's speaking is the very presence of the life-giving Spirit.
- J. The speaking of the indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit within us is the cleansing water that deposits a new element into us to replace the old element in our nature and disposition; this metabolic cleansing causes a genuine and inward change in life, which is the reality of dispositional sanctification and transformation.
- K. We must be beautified by Christ as the life-giving, speaking Spirit in our spirit; through the Lord's speaking within us as the life-giving Spirit, we are becoming His glorious church—Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 2:7.

Eph. 5:26-27—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

Rev. 2:7—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

III. Ephesians 5:27 reveals that the church as the bride of Christ will eventually become a glorious church, a God-expressing church, "not having spot or

wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish”:

Eph. 5:27—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.

- A. Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us; what Christ appreciates within us is the expression of Himself—Psa. 50:2; 2 Cor. 3:15-18; cf. Exo. 28:2:

Psa. 50:2—Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

2 Cor. 3:15-18—Indeed unto this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart; ¹⁶But whenever *their heart* turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

cf. Exo. 28:2—And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.

1. “Your eyes will see the King in His beauty” (Isa. 33:17a); “the King will desire your beauty” (Psa. 45:11a).

Isa. 33:17—Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will behold a land that is very far away.

Psa. 45:11—Thus the King will desire your beauty. Because He is your Lord, Worship Him.

2. “You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, / As lovely as Jerusalem, / As terrible as an army with banners”—S. S. 6:4.

- B. For the bride to be prepared means that she is clothed in “fine linen, bright and clean,” which is “the righteousnesses of the saints” (Rev. 19:8); this fine linen is the beauty of the bride.

Rev. 19:8—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

- C. On the day of his wedding, a bridegroom cares much more for the beauty of his bride than for her ability; the Lord Jesus, our God, cares primarily for the beauty of Himself expressed through our humanity; we need to be beautified by Christ day by day so that we can be prepared to be presented to Him as His lovely bride.
- D. Whenever we take time to behold the beauty of the Lord in His word by praying and musing upon His word (Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15), He becomes our beauty, and we are beautified by Him to become the house of His beauty so that He also may be beautified (27:4; 2 Cor. 3:18; Isa. 60:7b, 9b, 13b, 19b, 21b).

Eph. 6:17-18—And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God, ¹⁸By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

Psa. 119:15—I will muse upon Your precepts And regard Your ways.

Psa. 27:4—One thing I have asked from Jehovah; That do I seek: To dwell in the house of Jehovah All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in His temple.

2 Cor. 3:18—But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Isa. 60:7—All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you; The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; They will go up acceptably upon My altar, And I will beautify the house of My beauty.

Isa. 60:9—Surely the coastlands will look eagerly for Me; And the ships of Tarshish will come first, To bring your children from afar, Their silver and their gold with them, Unto the name of Jehovah your God And unto the Holy One of Israel; for He has beautified you.

Isa. 60:13—The glory of Lebanon will come to you, The fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together, To beautify the place of My sanctuary; And I will make the place for My feet glorious.

Isa. 60:19—You will no longer have the sun for *your* light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But Jehovah will be an eternal light to you, And your God your beauty.

Isa. 60:21—Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be beautified.

- E. The washing of the water in the word in Ephesians 5:26 deals mainly with spots and wrinkles; spots refer to something of the natural life, and wrinkles are related to oldness; only the water of life can metabolically wash away such defects by the transformation of life.

Eph. 5:26—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word,

- F. 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—cf. S. S. 4:7.

cf. S. S. 4:7—You are altogether beautiful, my love, And there is no blemish in you.

- G. Also, the church will not have “any such things,” which means that she will not have “this or that kind of defect”; God will bring the church to the place where nothing can be said against her in any respect—Eph. 5:27.

Eph. 5:27—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.

IV. Ephesians 5:26-27 matches Song of Songs 8:13-14; both reveal that it is by the Lord’s speaking to us that we are prepared to be His glorious bride with the desire for His second coming—“O you who dwell in the gardens, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it. / Make haste, my beloved, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices”:

Eph. 5:26-27—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

- A. In Song of Songs the loving seeker of Christ asks Him who dwells in the believers as His gardens to let her hear His voice while her companions listen for His voice—8:13; cf. 4:13-16; 5:1; 6:2:

S. S. 8:13—O you who dwell in the gardens, *My* companions listen for your voice; Let me hear *it*.

cf. S. S. 4:13-16—Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates With choicest fruit; Henna with spikenard, ¹⁴Spikenard and saffron; Calamus and cinnamon, With all the trees of frankincense; Myrrh and aloes, With all the chief spices. ¹⁵A fountain in gardens, A well of living water, And streams from Lebanon. ¹⁶Awake, O north wind; And come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden: Let its spices flow forth; Let my beloved come into his garden And eat his choicest fruit.

cf. S. S. 5:1—I have come into my garden, my sister, *my* bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; Drink, and drink deeply, O beloved ones!

cf. S. S. 6:2—My beloved has gone down to his garden, To the beds of spices, To feed in the gardens And gather lilies.

1. This indicates that in the work that we as the lovers of Christ do for Him as our Beloved, we need to maintain our fellowship with Him, always listening to Him—Luke 10:38-42.

Luke 10:38-42—Now as they went, He entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her home. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to His word. ⁴⁰But Martha was being drawn about with much serving, and she came up to *Him* and said, Lord, does it not matter to You that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to do her part with me. ⁴¹But the Lord answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; ⁴²But there is need of one thing, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

2. Our lives depend on the Lord's words, and our work depends on His commands (Rev. 2:7; 1 Sam. 3:9-10; cf. Isa. 50:4-5; Exo. 21:6); without the Lord's words we will not have any revelation, light, or personal knowledge of Christ as our King (Isa. 6:1, 5), our Lord (2 Cor. 5:14-15), our Head (Col. 2:19), and our Husband (2 Cor. 11:2); the life of the believers hinges totally upon the Lord's speaking (Eph. 5:26-27).

Rev. 2:7—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

1 Sam. 3:9-10—And Eli said to Samuel, Go *and* lie down, and if He calls you, you shall say, Speak, O Jehovah; for Your servant is listening. And Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰Then Jehovah came and stood by and called as at the other times, Samuel! Samuel! And Samuel said, Speak, for Your servant is listening.

cf. Isa. 50:4-5—The Lord Jehovah has given me The tongue of the instructed, That I should know how to sustain the weary with a word. He awakens *me* morning by morning; He awakens my ear To hear as an instructed one. ⁵The Lord Jehovah has opened my ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn back.

cf. Exo. 21:6—Then his master shall bring him to God and shall bring him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

Isa. 6:1—In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Isa. 6:5—Then I said, Woe is me, for I am finished! For I am a man of unclean lips, And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell; Yet my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

2 Cor. 5:14-15—For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

Col. 2:19—And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

2 Cor. 11:2—For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present *you as* a pure virgin to Christ.

Eph. 5:26-27—That He might sanctify her, cleansing *her* by the washing of the water in the word, ²⁷That 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.

- B. As the concluding prayer of this poetic book, the Song of Songs, the lover of Christ prays that her Beloved would make haste to come back in the power of His resurrection (gazelle and young hart) to set up His sweet and beautiful kingdom (mountains of spices), which will fill the whole earth—8:14; Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:35:

S. S. 8:14—Make haste, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young hart Upon the mountains of spices.

Rev. 11:15—And the seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the *kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.

Dan. 2:35—Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed all at once, and they became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

1. Such a prayer portrays the union and communion between Christ as the Bridegroom and His lovers as the bride in their bridal love, in the way that the prayer of John, a lover of Christ, as the concluding word of the Holy

Scriptures, reveals God's eternal economy concerning Christ and the church in His divine love—Rev. 22:20.

Rev. 22:20—He who testifies these things says, Yes, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

2. “Come, Lord Jesus!” is the last prayer in the Bible (v. 20); the entire Bible concludes with the desire for the Lord's coming expressed as a prayer.

Rev. 22:20—He who testifies these things says, Yes, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Message Five

The Righteousness of the Bride

Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 6:33; 22:2; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 1:7, 9; Rev. 15:3

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Matt. 5:20—For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Matt. 6:33—But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matt. 22:2—The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son.

2 Cor. 5:21—Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 John 1:7—But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Rev. 15:3—And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!

I. The righteousness of God is what God is in His action with respect to justice and righteousness—Rev. 15:3; Rom. 1:16b-17a; John 3:16; 1 John 1:9:

Rev. 15:3—And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!

Rom. 1:16-17—For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek. ¹⁷For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, “But the righteous shall have life and live by faith.”

John 3:16—For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- A. Our experience of Christ rests upon the foundation of God’s righteousness.
- B. The foundation is God’s righteousness, the unshakable foundation of God’s throne—Psa. 89:14.

Psa. 89:14—Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before Your face.

II. There are four aspects of the definition of righteousness:

- A. Righteousness is to be right with persons, things, and matters before God according to His righteous and strict requirements—Matt. 5:20.

Matt. 5:20—For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

- B. Righteousness is the outward expression of the Christ who lives in us as the Spirit—2 Cor. 3:8-9:

2 Cor. 3:8-9—How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory? ⁹For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

1. This is righteousness as God's image—Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.

Eph. 4:24—And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

Col. 3:10—And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

2. The ministry of righteousness is a ministry of the Lord's image—2 Cor. 3:9.

2 Cor. 3:9—For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

- C. Righteousness is a matter of God's kingdom—Matt. 6:33; Psa. 89:14:

Matt. 6:33—But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Psa. 89:14—Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before Your face.

1. God's kingdom is righteousness.

2. Righteousness is related to God's government, administration, and rule.

- D. Righteousness is a matter of our being right with God in our being—2 Cor. 5:21:

2 Cor. 5:21—Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1. To be right with God in our being is to have an inner being that is transparent and crystal clear, an inner being that is in the mind and will of God.

2. This is a matter of our being the righteousness of God in Christ—v. 21.

2 Cor. 5:21—Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

III. Righteousness is related to God's outward acts, ways, actions, and activities—Rev. 15:3:

Rev. 15:3—And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!

- A. Everything God does is righteous—Rom. 1:16-17.

Rom. 1:16-17—For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek. ¹⁷For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, “But the righteous shall have life and live by faith.”

- B. Whatever God is in His justice and righteousness constitutes His righteousness.

IV. God is righteous in the blood of Jesus His Son—1 John 1:7, 9:

1 John 1:7—But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- A. God is faithful in His word (v. 10) and righteous in the blood of Jesus His Son.

1 John 1:10—If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

- B. His word is the word of the truth of His gospel (Eph. 1:13), which tells us that He will forgive us our sins because of Christ (Acts 10:43); the blood of Christ has fulfilled His righteous requirements that He might forgive us our sins (Matt. 26:28).

Eph. 1:13—In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise,

Acts 10:43—To this One all the prophets testify that through His name everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins.

Matt. 26:28—For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

- C. To forgive us is to release us from the offense of our sins, whereas to cleanse us is to wash us from the stain of our unrighteousness.

V. Righteousness is related to the kingdom of God—Rom. 14:17:

Rom. 14:17—For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- A. The church life is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is righteousness.

- B. God’s throne is established with righteousness as the foundation—Psa. 89:14.

Psa. 89:14—Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before Your face.

- C. Where God’s righteousness is, there His kingdom is also—Isa. 32:1; Heb. 1:8-9.

Isa. 32:1—Indeed a King will reign according to righteousness, And the rulers will rule according to justice.

Heb. 1:8-9—But of the Son, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. ⁹You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners”;

- D. In the Old Testament, righteousness is often synonymous with the kingdom.
- E. Where there is righteousness, everything is headed up in a proper way; this is the kingdom.
- F. Righteousness first issues in the image of God, and then righteousness establishes the kingdom of God:
 - 1. In Romans 8 we have righteousness and God's image.
 - 2. In Romans 14 we have righteousness and God's kingdom.
 - 3. Both the image and the kingdom are based on righteousness.
- G. To say that righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13) means that everything will be in order, headed up, and regulated:

2 Pet. 3:13—But according to His promise we are expecting new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

 - 1. Everything will be governed, controlled, and under the proper rule, for the throne of God, the kingdom, the divine administration, will be there.
 - 2. The result will be peace and joy.

VI. In Revelation 19:7-8 we see the righteousness of the bride:

Rev. 19:7-8—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

- A. There are two aspects of Christ being righteousness to the believers:
 - 1. The first aspect is to be the believers' righteousness for them to be justified before God objectively at the time of their repenting unto God and believing into Christ—Rom. 3:24-26; Acts 13:39; Gal. 3:24b, 27.

Rom. 3:24-26—Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred, ²⁶With a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time, so that He might be righteous and the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus.

Acts 13:39—And from all the things from which you were not able to be justified by the law of Moses, in this One everyone who believes is justified.

Gal. 3:24—So then the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ that we might be justified out of faith.

Gal. 3:27—For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
 - 2. The second aspect is to be the believers' righteousness lived out of them as the manifestation of God, who is the righteousness in Christ given to the believers for them to be justified by God subjectively—Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:24a; James 2:24; Matt. 5:20; Rev. 19:8.

Rom. 4:25—Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification.

1 Pet. 2:24—Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.

James 2:24—You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.

Matt. 5:20—For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Rev. 19:8—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

3. As our objective righteousness, Christ is the One in whom we are justified by God—Rom. 3:24, 28; 4:25; 5:1, 9, 16, 18.

Rom. 3:24—Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Rom. 3:28—For we account that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Rom. 4:25—Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification.

Rom. 5:1—Therefore having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rom. 5:9—Much more then, having now been justified in His blood, we will be saved through Him from the wrath.

Rom. 5:16—And *it is not that* as through one who sinned, *so also* the free gift is; for the judgment was out of one *offense* unto condemnation, but the gracious gift is out of many offenses unto justification.

Rom. 5:18—So then as *it was* through one offense unto condemnation to all men, so also *it was* through one righteous act unto justification of life to all men.

4. As our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God—Matt. 5:6, 20.

Matt. 5:6—Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Matt. 5:20—For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

- B. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8:

Rev. 19:8—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

1. The righteousness we received for our salvation is objective and enables us to meet the requirement of the righteous God, whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming saints are subjective and enable them to meet the requirement of the overcoming Christ—1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9.

1 Cor. 1:30—But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

Phil. 3:9—And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God *and* based on faith,

2. The wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-12 signifies the Christ whom we live out and who is expressed through us in our daily living as our surpassing righteousness—5:20; Rev. 3:4-5, 18.

Matt. 22:11-12—But when the king came in to look at those reclining *at table*, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,¹²And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Matt. 5:20—For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Rev. 3:4-5—But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.⁵He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev. 3:18—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

- C. The Lord's bride, His wife, "has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints"—19:7b-8:

1. Revelation 19:8 clearly associates clothing with righteousness.

Rev. 19:8—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

2. The word *righteousnesses* in verse 8 is plural and can be translated as "righteous acts."

Rev. 19:8—And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

3. The righteousnesses do not refer to Christ as our righteousness, whom we received for our salvation—1 Cor. 1:30.

1 Cor. 1:30—But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

4. The fine linen indicates our overcoming life, our overcoming living.

5. The fine linen is the Christ whom we live out of our being.

- D. "Blessed are they [the overcoming saints] who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb"—Rev. 19:9:

Rev. 19:9—And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

1. The marriage dinner of the Lamb here is the wedding feast in Matthew 22:2.

Matt. 22:2—The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son.

2. To be called to the marriage dinner of Christ is to be blessed.
3. The overcoming believers, who will be called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb, will also be the bride of the Lamb—Rev. 19:7.

Rev. 19:7—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Message Six

The Bride as the Corporate Warrior

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:10-20

Eph. 6:10-20—Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil, ¹²For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of evil in the heavenlies. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness ¹⁵And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. ¹⁷And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God, ¹⁸By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints, ¹⁹And for me, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰For which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

I. Ephesians 6:10-20 reveals that the bride is a corporate warrior fighting against the enemy of God for God's kingdom:

Eph. 6:10-20—Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil, ¹²For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of evil in the heavenlies. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness ¹⁵And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. ¹⁷And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God, ¹⁸By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints, ¹⁹And for me, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰For which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

A. When the overcoming lover of Christ becomes one with God to be God's dwelling place, in the eyes of God she is as beautiful as Tirzah and as lovely as Jerusalem; however, to the enemy she is as terrible as an army with banners—S. S. 6:4:

S. S. 6:4—You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, As lovely as Jerusalem, As terrible as an army with banners.

1. Banners indicate a readiness to fight and also are a sign that the victory is won; a terrible army signifies that the overcomers of the Lord terrify God's enemy, Satan.
2. This army fights the battle for God's kingdom in the degradation of God's people to become the overcomers who answer the Lord's call (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21); eventually, the overcomers will become a bride collectively to

marry Christ (19:7-9); after their wedding, this bride will become an army to fight alongside Christ, her Husband, to defeat Antichrist with all his followers (vv. 11-21).

Rev. 2:7—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev. 2:11—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death.

Rev. 2:17—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives *it*.

Rev. 2:26—And he who overcomes and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations;

Rev. 3:5—He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev. 3:12—He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev. 3:21—He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 19:11-21—And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹²And His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, *and* He has a name written which no one knows but Himself. ¹³And He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white *and* clean. ¹⁵And out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations; and He will shepherd them with an iron rod; and He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ¹⁷And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come here; gather yourselves to the great dinner of God, ¹⁸That you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free and slave and small and great. ¹⁹And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth

and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army. ²⁰And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone. ²¹And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeds out of the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

- B. The church as the bride is actually the corporate man in God's intention, who will fulfill the twofold purpose of expressing God and dealing with God's enemy—Gen. 1:26.

Gen. 1:26—And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

- C. Not only must God's eternal purpose be fulfilled and the desire of Christ's heart be satisfied, but God's enemy must be defeated; for this, the church must be a warrior.
- D. Our walk is for the fulfillment of God's purpose, our living is for the satisfaction of Christ, and our warfare is for the defeat of God's enemy—Eph. 4:1; 5:2, 8; 6:10-11.
- Eph. 4:1**—I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

Eph. 5:2—And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Eph. 5:8—For you were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light

Eph. 6:10-11—Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,

II. The testimony of Jesus during the millennium is the bride of Christ—the overcomers who are the co-kings of Christ—Rev. 19:7-9; 20:4, 6:

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 20:4—And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and *of those* who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Rev. 20:6—Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

- A. The Lord's recovery is for the preparation of the bride of Christ (19:7-9; 21:2); ultimately, we will be conformed to be the wonderful Shulammite, who, as the duplication of Solomon, is the greatest and ultimate figure of the New Jerusalem as the counterpart, the bride, of Christ (S. S. 6:13; Rev. 21:2, 9-10; 22:17a).

Rev. 19:7-9—Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. ⁹And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

S. S. 6:13—Return, return, O Shulammite; Return, return, that we may gaze at you. Why should you gaze at the Shulammite, As upon the dance of two camps?

Rev. 21:2—And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev. 21:9-10—And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. ¹⁰And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

Rev. 22:17—And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

- B. The Shulammite is likened to the dance of two camps, or two armies (Heb. *mahanaim*), in the sight of God; after Jacob saw the angels of God, the two armies of God, he named the place where he was Mahanaim and divided his wives, children, and possessions into “two armies”—S. S. 6:13; Gen. 32:1-10:

S. S. 6:13—Return, return, O Shulammite; Return, return, that we may gaze at you. Why should you gaze at the Shulammite, As upon the dance of two camps?

Gen. 32:1-10—And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ²And Jacob said when he saw them, This is God's camp. So he called the name of that place Mahanaim. ³And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother, into the land of Seir, the field of Edom. ⁴And he commanded them, saying, Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now; ⁵And I have oxen and donkeys *and* flocks, and male servants and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord *this*, that I may find favor in your sight. ⁶And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you; and four hundred men are with him. ⁷Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him and the flocks and the herds and the camels into two camps; ⁸And he said, If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp which is left will escape. ⁹Then Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Jehovah, who said to me, Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will do you good, ¹⁰I am not worthy of all the lovingkindnesses and all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff *only* I crossed over this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.

1. The spiritual significance of the two armies is the strong testimony that we more than conquer, we “super-overcome,” through Him who loved us according to the principle of the Body of Christ—Rom. 8:37; 12:5; Deut. 32:30; Eccl. 4:9-12.

Rom. 8:37—But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us.

Rom. 12:5—So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Deut. 32:30—How shall one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Were it not that their Rock sold them, And Jehovah delivered them up?

Eccl. 4:9-12—Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor; ¹⁰For if they fall, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls and does not have another to lift him up! ¹¹Again, if two lie together, they keep warm. But how can one be warm *alone*? ¹²And while a man may prevail against the one, the two will withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

2. God does not want those who are strong in themselves; He wants only the feeble ones, the weaker ones, the women and children; those who are counted worthy to be overcomers will be the weaker ones who depend on the Lord—1 Cor. 1:26-28; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; 13:3-5; S. S. 8:6.

1 Cor. 1:26-28—For consider your calling, brothers, that there are not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many wellborn. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world that He might shame those *who are* wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world that He might shame the things that are strong, ²⁸And the lowborn things of the world and the despised things God has chosen, things which are not, that He might bring to nought the things which are,

2 Cor. 12:9-10—And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am powerful.

2 Cor. 13:3-5—Since you seek a proof of the Christ who is speaking in me, who is not weak unto you but is powerful in you. ⁴For indeed He was crucified out of weakness, but He lives by the power of God. For indeed we are weak in Him, but we will live together with Him by the power of God *directed* toward you. ⁵Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?

S. S. 8:6—Set me as a seal on your heart, As a seal on your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol; Its flashes are the flashes of fire, A flame of Jehovah.

3. God needs a people who are one with Him, a people who are submissive to Him, signified by the plaited hair (1:11), and obedient to Him with a flexible will, signified by the neck with strings of jewels (v. 10).

S. S. 1:11—We will make you plaits of gold With studs of silver.

S. S. 1:10—Your cheeks are lovely with plaits of ornaments, Your neck with strings of jewels.

4. When we consider how to arrive at the highest peak of the divine revelation, we should not trust in ourselves but depend on the Lord as love, power, and mercy to make us vessels of mercy, honor, and glory—Rom. 9:16, 21-23.

Rom. 9:16—So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Rom. 9:21-23—Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? ²²And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, ²³In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,

III. Spiritual warfare is necessary because Satan's will is in conflict with God's will—Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; Matt. 6:10:

Eph. 1:5—Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph. 1:9—Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 1:11—In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

Matt. 6:10—Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

- A. In addition to God's intention, God's will, there is a second intention, a second will, for the satanic will is set against the divine will—Isa. 14:12-14.

Isa. 14:12-14—How you have fallen from heaven, O Daystar, son of the dawn! How you have been hewn down to earth, You who made nations fall prostrate! ¹³But you, you said in your heart: I will ascend to heaven; Above the stars of God I will exalt my throne. And I will sit upon the mount of assembly In the uttermost parts of the north. ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

- B. All warfare has its source in the conflict between Satan's will and God's will.
- C. Spiritual warfare is the warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan; in order for the kingdom of the heavens to be established, there is the need of spiritual fighting—Matt. 12:26, 28; Rev. 12:11.

Matt. 12:26—And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

Matt. 12:28—But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Rev. 12:11—And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

- D. We walk according to truth and by grace, we live in love and light, and we fight to subdue the satanic will—Eph. 4:1; 5:2, 8; 6:12.

Eph. 4:1—I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

Eph. 5:2—And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Eph. 5:8—For you were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light

Eph. 6:12—For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of evil in the heavenlies.

IV. To deal with God's enemy, we need to be empowered with the greatness of the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the heavenlies, far above all the evil spirits in the air—v. 10; 1:19-22:

Eph. 6:10—Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.

Eph. 1:19-22—And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength, ²⁰Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, ²¹Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come; ²²And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him *to be* Head over all things to the church,

- A. The fact that we need to be empowered in the Lord indicates that in ourselves we cannot fight the spiritual warfare against Satan and his evil kingdom; we can fight only in the Lord and in the might of His strength.
- B. The charge to be empowered implies the need to exercise our will; if we would be empowered for spiritual warfare, our will must be strong and exercised—S. S. 4:4; 7:4.

S. S. 4:4—Your neck is like the tower of David, Built for an armory: A thousand bucklers hang on it, All the shields of the mighty men.

S. S. 7:4—Your neck is like a tower of ivory; Your eyes, *like* the pools in Heshbon By the gate of Bath-rabbim; Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, Which faces Damascus.

V. The warfare between the church and Satan is a battle between us who love the Lord and who are in His church and the evil powers in the heavenlies—Eph. 6:12:

Eph. 6:12—For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of evil in the heavenlies.

- A. The rulers, the authorities, and the world-rulers of this darkness are the rebellious angels, who followed Satan in his rebellion against God and who now rule in the heavenlies over the nations of the world—Col. 1:13; Dan. 10:20.
Col. 1:13—Who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

Dan. 10:20—Then he said, Do you know why I have come to you? And now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia; so I go forth, and the prince of Javan is now about to come.

- B. We need to realize that our warfare is not against human beings but against the evil spirits, the spiritual powers in the heavenlies.

VI. Spiritual warfare is not an individual matter; it is a matter of Christ's bride being a corporate warrior—Eph. 6:13:

Eph. 6:13—Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

- A. The church is a corporate warrior, and the believers together make up this corporate warrior; after we have been formed corporately into an army, we will be able to fight against God's enemy.
- B. God's strategy is to use the church as His army to fight against the enemy; Satan's strategy is to isolate us from the church as God's army.
- C. The whole armor of God is for the Body, not for individuals; only the corporate warrior can wear the whole armor of God.

VII. To fight the spiritual warfare, we need to put on the whole armor of God—v. 11:

Eph. 6:11—Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,

- A. God in Christ as the reality in our living is the girdle that strengthens our whole being for the spiritual warfare—v. 14a.

Eph. 6:14—Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

- B. The breastplate of righteousness that covers our conscience and guards us from Satan's accusations is Christ as our righteousness—v. 14b; 1 Cor. 1:30.

Eph. 6:14—Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

1 Cor. 1:30—But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

- C. Christ is the peace for us to be one with God and with the saints; this peace is the firm foundation that enables us to stand against the enemy—Eph. 2:15; 6:15.

Eph. 2:15—Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace,

Eph. 6:15—And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace;

- D. Faith is a shield against the flaming darts of the enemy; Christ is the Author and Perfecter of such faith—v. 16; Heb. 12:2.

Eph. 6:16—Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Heb. 12:2—Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

- E. The helmet of salvation that covers our mind is the saving Christ whom we experience in our daily life—Eph. 6:17a; John 16:33.

Eph. 6:17—And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God,

John 16:33—These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

- F. The sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, is our offensive weapon with which we cut the enemy to pieces—Eph. 6:17b.

Eph. 6:17—And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God,

- G. Prayer is the unique, crucial, and vital means by which we apply the whole armor of God, making every item of the armor available to us in a practical way—v. 18.

Eph. 6:18—By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

VIII. By putting on the whole armor of God, we are able to stand against the stratagems, the evil plans, of the devil—vv. 11, 13-14:

Eph. 6:11—Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,

Eph. 6:13-14—Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

- A. To sit with Christ is to participate in all His accomplishments, to walk in His Body is to fulfill God's eternal purpose, and to stand in His power is to fight against God's enemy—2:6; 4:1; 5:2, 8; 6:11, 13-14.

Eph. 2:6—And raised *us* up together with *Him* and seated *us* together with *Him* in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,

Eph. 4:1—I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

Eph. 5:2—And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Eph. 5:8—For you were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light

Eph. 6:11—Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,

Eph. 6:13-14—Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

B. In fighting against the enemy, the most important thing is to stand; having done all, we need to stand to the end.

IX. We all need to see that in the Lord's recovery today we are on a battlefield; we must cooperate with the Lord to fight against Satan's aerial forces so that we can gain more of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ and the preparation of the bride of Christ, setting up and spreading the kingdom of God so that Christ can come back to inherit the earth.