

Message Twelve

**The Bridegroom,
the Maturity of the Bride,
and Being a Warrior to Defeat God's Enemy**

Scripture Reading: John 3:29a; Matt. 9:15; Heb. 6:1; Rev. 19:7

I. Christ is the Bridegroom—Matt. 9:14-15; 22:2-3; 25:1, 5-6, 10:

- A. In the whole universe the most pleasant person is Jesus as the Bridegroom.
- B. John the Baptist said, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom"—John 3:29a.
- C. Jesus presented Himself as the Bridegroom—Matt. 9:14-15; Mark 2:19:
 - 1. At the end of the Bible, we have the term *the wife of the Lamb*—Rev. 21:9.
 - 2. The Lamb of God (John 1:29) is the Redeemer, but the Lamb who took away our sins on the cross is also our Bridegroom for the marriage (Rev. 19:7).
- D. In the presence of the Bridegroom, fear is nonexistent; when we touch the Lord's presence, touch Him as the Bridegroom, we touch His loveliness, sweetness, and freshness; He is so lovely!
- E. The first stanza of *Hymns*, #170 says, "Lord, Thou art the lovely Bridegroom, / God appointed, dear to us; / Thy dear self is so attractive, / To our heart so beauteous!"
- F. There are four ways (or aspects) for us to have the enjoyment of Christ as our Bridegroom:
 - 1. First, we are the companions in the bridechamber enjoying the Bridegroom—Matt. 9:15.
 - 2. Second, we are the guests enjoying Him as our feast—Luke 14:15-17; Rev. 3:20; 19:9.
 - 3. Third, we are the virgins enjoying the coming of the Bridegroom—Matt. 25:1-13.
 - 4. Fourth, we will be the bride to enjoy the Bridegroom to the uttermost—Rev. 19:7.
- G. The direction of the Lord's move today is to prepare the bride as the counterpart of the Bridegroom for the eternal marriage of the redeeming God with His redeemed—vv. 7-8; 21:1-2, 9-10.
- H. We need to realize that as the Bridegroom the Lord Jesus is the coming One:
 - 1. He is coming to meet us as His bride.
 - 2. The revelation of the Lord's coming is included in His being the Bridegroom.

II. We need to see and understand the maturity of the bride—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:13, 15; Heb. 6:1; Rev. 19:7b; 21:2, 9:

- A. Revelation 19:7b says, "His wife has made herself ready."
- B. In the maturity of the divine life, the lover of Christ becomes the Shulammite (the feminine form of *Solomon*), indicating that she has become the reproduction and duplication of Christ to match Him for their marriage—S. S. 6:13; Rev. 21:2, 9-10.
- C. The meaning of the word *mature* in Greek is "at the end point":
 - 1. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life; to be mature is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Heb. 6:1; Col. 4:12; Rom. 12:2; 2 Pet. 1:3.
 - 2. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life—vv. 4-8.
 - 3. 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.

- D. 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:
 - 1. We should never be content with ourselves but pursue growth and maturity in the life of Christ—Phil. 3:12, 14.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. The prerequisite for maturity in the spiritual life is to grow continually in the divine life—Eph. 4:15.
 - 4. 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.
- E. In his Epistle, James uses the illustration of a farmer eagerly awaiting with long-suffering the precious fruit of the earth—5:7:
 - 1. The Lord Jesus is actually the real Farmer, the unique Farmer—Matt. 13:3.
 - 2. 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 the field—Rev. 14:4, 14-15.
 - 3. 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."
 - 4. 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.
- F. 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:
 - 1. 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. 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.

III. The church as the bride of Christ must be a warrior to defeat God's enemy—5:25-27; 6:10-18; Rev. 19:7-9, 11-16:

- A. Colossians 2:15 portrays the warfare that took place at the time of Christ's crucifixion; at that time the cross of Christ was the center of the universe.
- B. The purpose of spiritual warfare is to bring in the kingdom of God—Rev. 12:10.
- C. Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body; we are a corporate army fighting the battle for God's interests on earth—17:14; 19:14; cf. 2 Tim. 2:4.
- D. Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21:
 - 1. When Christ comes with His army, He will come as the Son of Man—Matt. 26:64; Rev. 14:14.
 - 2. As the Son of Man, He will need a counterpart to match and complete Him; this counterpart will be His bride—21:2, 9.
 - 3. Christ will marry the overcomers, who have already overcome the evil one.
 - 4. The wedding garment—Christ lived out of us as our daily righteousness—qualifies us not only to attend the wedding but also to join the army to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon—Matt. 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8, 14.

- E. In Song of Songs we see that the overcoming lover of Christ becomes as beautiful as Tirzah and as lovely as Jerusalem; however, to the enemy she is as terrible as an army with banners—6:4, 10:
1. The lovers of Christ should be lovable and terrible at the same time; however, many believers have lost their loveliness before the Lord and their terribleness before the enemy—vv. 4, 10:
 - a. The lover of Christ is beautiful and comely before the Lord, as solid as the heavenly city and as serene as the sanctuary; at the same time, she displays the glory of her victory before the enemy and the world—vv. 4, 10.
 - b. The overcoming lover of Christ not only has a future that is full of hope and a life that is absolutely heavenly, but she is also a victor who constantly triumphs in her victory—3:7-8.
 2. A terrible army signifies that the Lord's overcomers terrify God's enemy, Satan—6:4, 10:
 - a. The enemy is frightened by the church that is built up as the city of God—Neh. 6:15-16; Psa. 102:12-16.
 - b. Satan is not afraid of individualistic Christians, even if they number in the thousands, but is terrified of the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate warrior fighting against him and his kingdom—Eph. 6:10-20.
- F. David typifies the warring Christ in the midst of sufferings (1 Sam. 25:28), and Abigail typifies the warring church, fighting for God's kingdom in the midst of sufferings (vv. 2-42):
1. From 1 Samuel 25 onward, Abigail was always at the side of David the warrior and followed him in his wars—vv. 40-42.
 2. Abigail's marriage to David typifies the church enlisted as an army for warfare—Eph. 6:10-20.
 3. The type of Abigail portrays the church's participation with the Lord Jesus in spiritual warfare:
 - a. Not only must God's eternal purpose be fulfilled and the desire of His heart be satisfied, but God's enemy must be defeated; for this, the church must be a warrior.
 - b. Spiritual warfare is necessary because Satan's will is set against God's will—Matt. 6:10; 7:21; Isa. 14:12-14:
 - (1) Spiritual warfare has its source in the conflict between the divine will and the satanic will.
 - (2) As the church, our fighting is to subdue the satanic will and to defeat God's enemy—Rev. 12:11.
 - (3) Our spiritual 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 and to maintain His victory.
- G. Through spiritual warfare God's eternal purpose is completely accomplished; "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever"—11:15b.