

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

SESSION ONE: GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

GARY WIENS

I. JESUS' INHERITANCE: AN ETERNAL COMPANION

- A. God's ultimate purpose for His creation is to provide a family for Himself and a Bride for His Son as His eternal companion to reign with Him forever. The guiding principle of God's activity throughout history has been to raise up a prepared bride for His worthy Son. The Father set His heart to train the Bride to willingly prepare herself to rule the earth with Jesus (Rev. 3:21; 5:10).
Revelation 19:7 For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
Revelation 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne...
Revelation 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.
- B. The inheritance that the Father promised Jesus is a people whom He fully possesses.
Psalms 2:8 I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.
Deuteronomy 32:9 For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.
- C. ***Jesus' inheritance:*** the mandatory obedience of all creation and the voluntary love of His Bride
1. ***Mandatory obedience:*** God will cause all creation to bow in obedience to Jesus.
Philippians 2:10-11 At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
 2. ***Voluntary lovers of God:*** Jesus' inheritance is to receive a people who fully love Him.
Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you... 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes...
Deuteronomy 30:6 The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul...
- D. Jesus loves us to the same degree that the Father loves Him (Jn. 15:9). We will love Jesus to the same degree that the Father loves Him (Jn. 17:23).
John 15:9 As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.
John 17:26 . . . That the love with which You [the Father] loved Me may be in them...

- E. We will love God to the measure of the stature that He loves us.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come...to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...

- F. To accomplish this, God reconciled us to Himself in Christ, putting an end to the animosity between God and mankind, opening up the way for intimate friendship. "Reconcile" means to mutually change in order to bring something together. God took our sin in Christ and gave us His righteousness. To deny this or refuse it is to refuse the ultimate and necessary reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Ephesians 2:14-16 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

- G. The saints will be equally yoked to Jesus in love. Jesus will not be unequally yoked to His wife. Our "currency" in eternity will be the love that we cultivated for Him in this age.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

- H. Paul prayed that we would know the riches of the glory we receive in being God's inheritance.

Ephesians 1:18 May know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...

- I. From before the foundations of the world, God's ultimate purpose was to have a people who were blameless in their love for God.

Ephesians 1:4 He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...

Romans 8:29 Whom He predestined to be conformed [in love] to the image of His Son...

- J. Jesus will share some of His glory with His Bride because He so desires that she be with Him.

John 17:22-24 The glory which You gave Me I have given them... 24 Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory...

John 14:3 I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am, there you may be.

II. REDEMPTIVE HISTORY CENTERS AROUND PREPARING A BRIDE

- A. Human history began in Eden with Adam and Eve joined as a bridegroom and bride (Gen. 2).

Genesis 2:18-24 God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable [suitable NAS, NIV] to him"... 21 The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs... 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man... 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- B. Paul interpreted Genesis 2:18-24 as speaking of Jesus and the Church. In the relationship of Adam and Eve, we see a prophetic picture of Jesus joined to His Church as a Bride.

Ephesians 5:31-32 A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

1 Corinthians 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

- C. Natural history ends in an Eden-like city with Jesus and His people joined as a bridegroom and bride (Rev. 21-22). The New Jerusalem is called the Bride because it was prepared for the Bride and is where she experiences a face to face relationship with God (Rev. 22:3-5). The description of this city is given in relational terms or by our nearness to God (Rev. 21:1-8) and then in functional terms as the ultimate garden of Eden and Holy of Holies (Rev. 21:9-22:5).

Revelation 21:9-10 I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit...and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven...

- D. Natural history ends with the Church in a bridal identity. Rev. 22:17 is one of the most informative and significant prophecies in the Bible describing the end-time Church.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"

Hosea 2:16 It shall be, in that day...that you will call Me [Jesus] "My Husband"...

1. This prophecy describes the Church in deep unity with the Holy Spirit, in saying and doing what the Holy Spirit is saying and doing. What is the Spirit saying? He is revealing the Church's bridal identity as Jesus' Bride. The Spirit for the first time in history will universally emphasize the Church's spiritual identity as Jesus' Bride. Notice that John does not proclaim that the Spirit and the family say, "Come," nor the Spirit and the army, nor the kingdom, nor the body, nor the temple, and not the Spirit and the priesthood.

2. The generation in which Jesus returns will be the most sinful and emotionally broken generation in history (Dan. 8:23; Mt. 24:10-14; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). Scripture describes it as having great anger, fear, cold love (selfishness), lawlessness (rebellion), betrayal (broken relationships), hatred, sexual perversion, and occult bondage.

Daniel 8:23 In the latter time...when the transgressors have reached their fullness...

3. The Holy Spirit's emphasis of Jesus as a Bridegroom God has been strategically reserved for the last generation to empower the Church to overcome the most lawless, fearful, demonic, and sexually perverted generation in history.

- E. Natural history ends with a Bride who has been made ready for her marriage to Jesus (Rev. 19). The history of the redeemed before the wedding feast is the preparation for their life after it.
Revelation 19:7-9 The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready... 9 He said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'
- F. Jesus began His public ministry at a wedding (Jn. 2:1-12) and He ended it declaring that the kingdom of God was like a wedding (Mt. 22:1-14).
- G. Jesus began His ministry to the apostles by revealing Himself as the Bridegroom God (Mt. 9:15) and ended it by calling them to cultivate intimacy with Him as the Bridegroom God (Mt. 25:8). Jesus' ministry was first introduced by John the Baptist functioning as a friend of the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29) and ended by the Apostle John revealing the Bride (Rev. 19-22).

III. ALL THINGS WORK FOR GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN

- A. Salvation is an invitation to experience the deep things of God's heart that He planned for us.
1 Corinthians 2:9-10 Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.
- B. All things work for God's ultimate purpose in preparing a Bride as Jesus' inheritance. The guiding principle of God's activity in creation and in leading history has been to use His power and wisdom to select, train and prepare a bride to reign with Jesus.
1 Corinthians 3:21-23 For all things are yours: 22 whether...the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours. 23 And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.
1. ***Life:*** the life of humans, angels, animals, and plants are all for the benefit of the Bride
 2. ***Death:*** the reality of death serves to develop the Bride in love
 3. ***Things present:*** both blessing and challenges work together to train the Bride
 4. ***Things to come:*** the New Jerusalem and the end of the age dynamics are for the Bride
 5. ***You are Christ's:*** God gives all to the Bride because she belongs to Jesus
- C. It is inevitable that the Bride will be conformed to love like Jesus loves. All things work together for the benefit of those who love God. God overrules all for the highest good of the Bride.
Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose...
- D. God has orchestrated natural history so that God's people may seek, grope for, and find Jesus.

Acts 17:26-27 He has made from one blood every nation of men...and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him...

1. ***Boundaries***: God has determined the national boundaries of where each nation dwells
 2. ***Times***: God has determined the times in which each nation will rise and fall in power
 3. ***Grope***: God determined national boundaries and times to cause people to grope for Jesus
 4. ***Find***: God's ultimate purpose is that people would find Jesus and to fully walk with Him
- E. History is most often interpreted through the lens of significant events such as scientific breakthroughs, military crises, political developments, economic trends, etc. However, we can only rightly interpret history through the lens of God's purpose to prepare a Bride (Rev. 19:7) and the Bride's growth in love. Without understanding this, people have no way to accurately interpret the pains, struggles, and even the celebrations of this life. Many cannot see where history is headed or what purpose it accomplishes. They can see no definitive goals for the human race. History is so mysterious to them, often leaving them in despair and without hope by seeming accidental and even pointless.