

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

SESSION TEN: NEW TESTAMENT OVERVIEW OF THE BRIDAL PARADIGM

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I. REVELATION OF THE BRIDE IN THE SCRIPTURES

- A. The Word of God tells the story of God's eternal plans for the redeemed. The Scripture begins describing a bride in an earthly garden paradise (Gen. 1-3) and ends with a prepared bride in a heavenly paradise (Rev. 19-22). God declares the end from the very beginning (Isa. 46:10).
⁷ For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready... ⁹ Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Rev. 19:7-9)
- B. ***Bridal paradigm of the kingdom:*** a paradigm speaks of one's perspective or world view. To have a bridal paradigm of the kingdom is to have perspective of the kingdom through the lens of a Bride. It includes subjects of wholehearted love, beauty, a wedding, and partnership with Jesus.

II. JESUS REVEALED HIS HEART AS THE BRIDEGROOM GOD

- A. Jesus' miracle ministry began at a wedding (Jn. 2:1-11). It could have begun anywhere. This was a prophetic statement. He uses His power to enhance the wedding celebration of salvation. He saves the "best wine" until the final hour (Rev. 22:17) when His power is released in the greatest measure in context to preparing His Bride for the wedding of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).
⁹ The water that was made wine...¹⁰ And he said to him [bridegroom], "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good [saved the best, NIV] wine until now!" (Jn. 2:9-10)
- B. Soon after Cana, Jesus is revealed by John the Baptist as the Bridegroom God (Jn. 3:29).
²⁹ He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom... (Jn. 3:29)
1. ***He is the Bridegroom:*** Jesus does not just fulfill a bridegroom's function. He is a bridegroom in the essence of His personality. He feels, thinks, and acts as a Bridegroom.
 2. ***He who has the Bride:*** God planned to give Jesus a prepared Bride as His inheritance. In the plan of God, Jesus possessed the Bride even then. This plan cannot be stopped.
- C. In Matthew 9, we find the first time Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom. He said He was to be "taken away" which spoke of His death. This is His first description of His death.
¹⁵ Jesus said, "Can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken...then they will fast. (Mt. 9:15)
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea prophesied of the Bridegroom God. In Matthew 9, Jesus identified Himself as the fulfillment of their prophecies. He is saying, "I am the God with burning desire for My people." He was making a statement about His emotional makeup and how He carries His heart for all eternity.
- D. In Jesus' final public message, He set forth the kingdom as a wedding (Mt. 22:1-14). The Father is the great king who has arranged a marriage for His Son. Jesus then pronounced judgment on the evil leaders of Israel (Mt. 23). Then He gave private instructions to the twelve (Mt. 24-25).

² *The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son (Mt. 22:2)*

- E. The great commandment is also Jesus' great prophecy (Mt. 22:37). Jesus prophesied to the people before Him, "You shall love the Lord with all your heart." Jesus referenced Moses' end-time prophecy (Deut. 30:6). This commandment and prophecy both pertain to His people walking in wholehearted love for God. This is the primary emphasis of the bridal paradigm.

³⁷ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart...³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37-38)*

⁶ *The LORD...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... (Deut. 30:6)*

- F. Jesus went to the cross to purchase a Bride who would be equally yoked to Him in love. He was motivated to endure the cross by the joy set before Him. Part of that joy was the people He called to Himself. He felt joy in seeing some of those people saying yes to Him on His final sermon in Jerusalem. God defined His joy as being like a bridegroom who rejoices over a bride (Isa. 62:5).

² *Jesus...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross... (Heb. 12:2)*

⁵ *As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:5)*

- G. In private, Jesus urged the disciples to not neglect to know Him as a Bridegroom (Mt. 25:1-13).

¹ *Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the Bridegroom. ⁶ At midnight a cry... 'Behold, the Bridegroom is coming...' ⁸ The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' (Mt. 25:1-8)*

- H. Jesus' final teaching to the disciples was filled with revelation of Jesus' love, care, joy and plans for them (Jn. 13-17). These are themes that are related to the bridal paradigm.

⁹ *As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love...¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (Jn. 15:9-11)*

- I. Jesus' final recorded intercession for the Church throughout history is in John 17:20-26. He prayed that His people be with Him, experience His glory, and love Him like the Father loves Him. Jesus prayed for the release of the great prophecy (Deut. 30:6; Mt. 22:37). He expressed His burning heart of desire to be with His people (v. 24). This prayer is so personal and was filled with great emotion. It gives us insight into what motivated Jesus to go to the cross for us. Jesus was soon to be in agony in Gethsemane, yet He was focused on His desire for His people.

²⁴ *Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory...²⁶ I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them. (Jn. 17:24-26)*

- J. Jesus' final recorded conversation was with the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43. Even on the cross, His desire was fixed on His Father being glorified and the church being with Him. Jesus said the to the thief what He prayed for His disciples that, "You will be with Me" (Jn 17:24).

⁴³ *Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Lk. 23:43)*

Jesus did not describe salvation as an escape from trouble, but a call to be with Him. He wants more than for people to escape hell. He wants them to reign with Him in glory and to love Him.

- K. Jesus' last message to the Church recorded in Scripture starts with a call to wholehearted love (Rev. 2:4) and ends with it (Rev. 3:20-21). To "be with Him" to dine and rule is the same heart cry that we see in John 17:24. He starts it with the subject of their love and ends with the wedding feast theme of dining and ruling with Him. On Patmos, He spoke like a Bridegroom.

⁴ *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (Rev. 2:4)*

²⁰ *I stand at the door and knock...I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

²¹ *To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... (Rev. 3:20-21)*

- L. The ultimate expression of dining or feasting with Jesus is at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9). It also speaks symbolically of dining with Him by feasting on His word.

III. FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM PARADIGM OF NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY

- A. The norm for New Testament ministry is to function as *friends of the Bridegroom*. This speaks of having a specific message and spirit in ministering to people. Specifically, it is to make known Jesus' extravagant love and majestic beauty and to call people to love Him with all their heart. This involves more than just equipping them to serve God with a relevant task and to make an impact. Set your heart to function in your ministry in the spirit of a friend of the Bridegroom.

- B. A friend of the Bridegroom functions "like the best man" at a wedding. They focus on getting people connected to Jesus and not drawing the Bride's attention to themselves (2 Cor 4:5).

⁵ *We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord... (2 Cor 4:5)*

- C. Jesus' paradigm of ministry was that His disciples be friends of the Bridegroom (Mt. 9:15). He prophetically named them to indicate the way they would function in ministry.

¹⁵ *Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? (Mt. 9:15)*

- D. John the Baptist's view of ministry was to be a friend of the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29).

²⁹ *The friend of the bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. (Jn. 3:29)*

- E. Paul functioned as a friend of the Bridegroom. His view of ministry was to betroth people as pure virgins to Jesus. We are betrothed or "legally married" to Jesus at our new birth.

² *I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)*

- F. Jesus sent out His servants with a mandate to invite the people to a wedding. We call both believers and unbelievers to the wedding. We are to call unbelievers to the God who has great desire for them. We call them to the reality of being loved and to love God with all of their heart.

³ *Sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding...⁴ saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner...all things are ready. Come to the wedding"...'*

⁸ *He said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.
⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'* (Mt. 22:3-9)

- G. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1-13) emphasizes the need for ministries to cultivate intimacy with Jesus as our Bridegroom God. Each virgin had a lamp which spoke of a ministry. The foolish pursued ministry without acquiring oil and the wise ministries acquired it.

¹ *Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.* ² *Five of them were wise, and five were foolish...* (Mt. 25:1-2)

- H. Prophetic ministry is to give expression to the testimony of Jesus. The highest definition of prophetic ministry is given in context to the marriage supper of the Lamb, which is the ultimate prophetic event of all the ages (Rev. 19:1-10). In this context, the spirit or purpose of prophecy is to make known Jesus' testimony as related to preparing the Bride. His testimony involves what He thinks, feels, and does in the past (cross), present, and future (at His wedding supper).

⁹ *He [an angel] said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"...*¹⁰ *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* (Rev. 19:9-10)

IV. PAUL'S REVELATION OF THE BRIDE IN EPHESIANS

- A. The revelation of the Bride joined to Jesus is a great mystery hidden in God (Eph. 5:31-32). Paul gave an apostolic interpretation of Adam and Eve being joined together in Genesis 2:24.

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

²⁴ *A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife...* (Gen. 2:24)

- B. God washes us by the Word as we fill our hearts and mind with it. The end-time Church will be washed and filled with glory as Jesus nourishes and cherishes her (Eph. 5:29). In other words, the revelation of Jesus' cherishing heart or how He feels about us washes our heart and mind.

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church...* ²⁶ *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *that He might present her to Himself a glorious church...* ²⁸ *Husbands...love their wives as their bodies...* ²⁹ *No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church...* (Eph. 5:25-29)

- C. Paul interceded for the Church to see the glory of being Jesus' inheritance (Eph. 1:17-18).

¹⁸ *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...* (Eph. 1:18)

V. THE HEART IMPACT OF THE BRIDAL REVELATION

- A. John described the emotional impact that hearing the Bridegroom's voice had on him. Joy speaks of his gratitude and being preoccupied with Jesus instead of the difficulty of this lifestyle. He had no complaints or regrets about the lonely fasted lifestyle.

²⁹ The friend of the Bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. (Jn. 3:29)

- B. The Apostle John was overwhelmed at the revelation of the Bride (Rev. 19-22). Twice, he mistakenly fell down to worship an angel, only to be rebuked. First, after seeing the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:10) then again after seeing New Jerusalem as the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9; 22:8). John was mature in the Spirit, being an apostle many years, having good theology, and deep experiences in the Spirit.

⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready...¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. (Rev. 19:7-10)

⁹ Come, I [an angel] 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... (Rev. 21:9-10)

⁸ I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. (Rev. 22:8)

VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S END-TIME EMPHASIS ON THE BRIDAL REALITY

- A. The bridal paradigm will be prominent in the generation the Lord returns (Rev. 22:17). The final intercessory emphasis in Scripture is that Jesus come as the Bridegroom God.

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17)

- B. The Church's identity at the end of the age is as a cherished bride. The last cry of Jesus before the cross was "that she be with Me." The last cry of the church is "that we would be with Him."

- C. Hosea pointed to the prominence of the bridal paradigm in the generation the Lord returns when God's people will call Him "My Husband." (Hos. 2:16).

¹⁶ It shall be, in that day," Says the LORD, "you will call Me 'My Husband.'" (Hos. 2:16)

- D. Isaiah also pointed to the prominence of the bridal paradigm in the generation the Lord returns. He prophesied that in the end times God's people will be called Hephzibah (the Lord delights in you) knowing He rejoices over them as a Bridegroom (Isa. 62:4-5). This gives us insight into the Spirit's activity at the end of the age.

⁴ You shall be called Hephzibah...for the LORD delights in you...⁵ As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:4-5)

- E. The final picture of the Church at the end of the age is to be His glorious Bride (Eph. 5:27-32)..

²⁷ He might present her to Himself a glorious church...³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:27-32)

- F. We see a prophetic picture of God's people coming up from the wilderness leaning on Jesus and anointed with the fire of His love in the Song of Solomon.

⁵ Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved? ⁶ Set Me as a seal upon your heart...for love is as strong as death...its flames are flames of fire... (Song 8:5-6)

- G. Jesus began and ended His earthly ministry in context to a wedding celebration and focus. Both Jesus' final public message and the Spirit's final emphasis to the Church is about the Bride. Both Jesus' final intercession and the Bride's final intercession is to be with each other. God truly saved the best wine for the last (Jn. 2:10).
- H. ***The Bridegroom generation:*** The bridal paradigm has been strategically reserved by God for the unique complexities of the generation in which the Lord returns.
1. The bridal paradigm of the kingdom leads to transformation of our hearts and to restoring the first commandment to first place in the most emotionally broken time in history.
 2. The Spirit uses this revelation to equip the church in the greatest hour of martyrdom, the greatest hour of temptation, and the greatest hour of pressures to reach the greatest number in the harvest and to live in the greatest abandonment of love.
 3. It will be used to empower the Church to overcome the coldest, most lawless, fearful, demonic, and sexually perverted generation in history.
 4. The most intense sexual perversion and demonic bondage can be healed by the power of the Spirit in context to seeing Jesus' burning desire for us.
- I. As the angel showed the Bride to John (Rev. 21:9), so we ask the Spirit to reveal the Word to us and even to send angels, dreams, and visions to show us the bride, the Lamb's wife.
- ⁹ Come, I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife. (Rev. 21:9)***
- J. Paul interceded for the Church to see the glory of being Jesus' inheritance (Eph. 1:17-18). What a stunning insight into our purpose, dignity, and eternal destiny. We are part of the Father's reward to Jesus. Jesus wants you. He sees great wealth in you. You are very valuable to Jesus.
- ¹⁷ That the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Eph. 1:17-18)***