

THE REMNANT BRIDE

by Joseph Herrin

Herrin's theological work exploring the concept of the church as a remnant bride of Christ, examining various spiritual themes related to the believer's relationship with Christ through the imagery of the bride and bridegroom throughout Scripture.

21 Chapters

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(a). Title

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Part 1.1 - Introduction

Introduction The Lord Jesus Christ is soon to return for His Bride; a Bride that has been prepared; a Bride that is suitable for Him. The conception in the minds of much of the church is that this Bride will consist of all believers. It is believed by many that the Bride will encompass the entire Body of Christ. Is this an accurate conception? I am convinced that it is not.

One does not have to look any further than the opening chapters of Genesis to begin to discern the truth of who the Bride is and where she will come from. In the first chapter of the Bible we are told that God created man, fashioning him after His own image. God declared that it was not good that this first man (Adam) should remain alone, so a suitable helper was sought for him. This helper was to become the very first bride, and she would be a model, or type, of a later bride who would come forth. This later bride would be the Bride of Christ. The second chapter of Genesis gives a very clear description of the creation of Adam's bride Eve. God saw fit to tell us exactly how she was formed and where the material was found from which she would be fashioned. We are told that Adam was formed of the dust of the ground, but this was not so with Adam's bride. Adam's bride was fashioned from a remnant portion of his own body. We find this described in the following scripture.

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place.

22 And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

23 And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man." Genesis 2:21-23

God fashioned a bride for Adam out of a portion, a remnant, taken from his own body. Eve was not formed from Adam's whole body. She was indeed bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, but it was from a remnant portion of his body that she was formed. In this description we have been given an illustration of how a Bride will also be fashioned for the last Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:45).

How do we know that this first bride was a type of the Bride of Christ? The scriptures reveal a very clear correlation between Adam's bride and Christ's Bride. Immediately after we are given details of the creation of Eve we are told "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This verse is quoted in the New Testament as the apostle Paul speaks of the mystery of Christ and His Bride.

31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.

32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:31-32 The scriptures also present a strong parallel between Adam and Jesus. The first Adam is

presented as a type of Christ, who is called "the last Adam." It is fitting then that the bride of the first Adam should be a type of the Bride of the last Adam, Jesus Christ.

45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam [Jesus] became a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

God created a bride for the first Adam from a rib taken from Adam's body. In similar fashion He is even now creating a Bride for the last Adam, Jesus Christ. This Bride is not Christ's entire body, even as Eve was not fashioned from Adam's entire body. The Bride of Christ will be fashioned from a remnant of Christ's body. This remnant will be a choice part, for being included in the Bride of Jesus is a position of great honor. As will be shown in this book, honor and reward are at the heart of the matter of determining who from among Christ's body will be a part of the Bride and who will not. God does not bestow honor lightly. One must be worthy to receive the honor of the Father. Salvation is a free gift, but reward and honor are according to our deeds.

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." Revelation 22:12 To be a part of the Bride of Christ is to receive the highest honor. The Bride is given intimate access to the Bridegroom; the two will become one. This honor, however, is not given freely. It is reserved for those whose hearts beat with a passion for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is reserved for those who have allowed the work of the cross to bring a cleansing and separation in their lives, removing that which is fleshly.

We are taught in God's word that access to the presence of God and to His most holy things is based upon the worthiness of the individual. The Old Testament Levitical priesthood was a type of the kingdom of priests that the body of Christ is today. In Ezekiel God made a distinction among these priests, as to who could come into His presence and who could not. Access to His presence is a great honor, reserved for those who have kept themselves pure and free of idols.

Today the body of Christ consists entirely of priests (Revelation 1:6). Some will be granted access to God's most holy things, and some will not. Some will have access to God's presence, and some will not. Some will be accorded the intimacy and honor of being a part of the Bride, and some will not. The following words spoken to the Levitical priests will be applied to those within today's kingdom of priests who have not cleansed themselves from the impurities of the flesh and the world.

13 "And they shall not come near to Me to serve as a priest to Me, nor come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed.

14 "Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the house, of all its service, and of all that shall be done in it. Ezekiel 44:13-14

How tragic to be a priest in the kingdom of God, yet not be allowed access to God's presence or His holy things. This will be the portion of much of the church. However, there is a remnant who will allow God to purify and refine them; a remnant that is passionate for Jesus and shuns the world and its idols. Of them it will be said:

15 "But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me...

16 "They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge. Ezekiel 44:15-16

Yes, being a part of the Bride is an honor accorded to a choice remnant. These will have access to the presence of God for all eternity. Many who are at ease in Zion will find much to grieve about when they stand before the King. "There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:13).

Some might be concerned that a message of performance is being taught in this book. After so much has been written and preached about grace in recent years, many will undoubtedly be sensitive to anything that has the appearance of works in it. Works, however, are a valid concept in scripture. Many in teaching grace have climbed out of the ditch of legalism, and bondage to performance, only to fall headlong into the ditch on the opposite side of the road that is marked by license and careless living.

Salvation (spirit salvation; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" John 3:6) is by faith in Jesus Christ. This faith is given to us by God. There is nothing a believer can do to add to this salvation. Christ's work on the cross was perfect. There is nothing lacking to His finished work in destroying the power of sin and the bondage to which it had us enslaved. Paul told the Galatian believers that if they tried to add to this salvation by keeping the Law, or by adhering to someone's list of rules and regulations; if performance entered into the salvation of their spirit, then Christ had in actuality become of no effect to them. Jesus' death was needless (Galatians 2:21).

There is a whole realm of work outside of spirit salvation, however. This is the area of fruit bearing. Jesus said that we are to bear much fruit and thereby glorify His Father (John 15:8). Whether we bear little fruit, or much fruit, we are still children of God, but it is to our benefit to bear much fruit. When Jesus returns with His reward in His hand, it will be rendered "to every man according to what he has done."

Some in teaching the grace of God have erred in negating the importance of works and obedience in the life of the saint. Jesus has not lessened the importance He attaches to these things. In the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, Jesus begins each one by stating "I know your works." He does not say "I know your faith", or "I know your heart." In truth, our heart and our faith are revealed in our works, and apart from our works there is no other way for them to be revealed. This is why Jesus states that a tree is known by its fruit (Matthew 12:33). It is not trees that Jesus is interested in, but people. My hope for you as you read this book is that you might be

provided with some encouragement to more passionately pursue Jesus Christ. Much of the current teaching of the church actually does much to discourage a sold out life to Christ. By neglecting the teaching of personal reward, or by teaching falsehoods such as that which asserts all believers will share the same honor and glory for eternity, the body has been lulled into complacency. After confessing Christ as Savior and Lord there seems to be little else that many Christians are encouraged to seek. Being born of the Spirit is but the beginning. This salvation corresponds to the Outer Court of the Tabernacle. The true glory is where the presence of God is found. This is in the Most Holy Place. Only those who have been purified and refined can enter into the Most Holy Place. Only those who have allowed the working of the cross to put to death the deeds of the flesh can abide in the presence of God. This is the calling of the Bride of Christ.

If you have a passion for the Lord Jesus Christ, if you long to know what the Father is looking for in fashioning a Bride for His Son, then this book is for you. May you be challenged by these words and may your heart be stirred with a more passionate pursuit of the One who is pursuing you.

Part 2.1 - Bride and Butterfly

The Bride and the Butterfly

Look again at the cover of this book. Note how distinctly different the caterpillar and the butterfly are in appearance. They would seem to not be related in any way, yet they are one and the same creature. An awesome transformation takes place in the life of this amazing insect. The transformation is so radical and complete that this insect has two different names. At one period of its existence it is called a caterpillar. At another, it is called a butterfly. In the same way, God has changed the names of men and women whom He has transfigured. Abram became Abraham. Sarai became Sarah. Jacob became Israel. Cephas became Peter. Saul became Paul. Their names were changed after they were transfigured by an encounter with God. In these last days before the return of Christ, there is another amazing transfiguration which must take place. A Bride will be fashioned and formed; a Bride that is radiant; a Bride without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. This Bride will be awesome to behold. She will be a fit Bride for the Son of God. The metamorphosis that must take place in order for the Bride to be revealed is no less radical than that of the caterpillar into a butterfly. The world will see the change and stand in awe. The Holy Spirit, even now, is at work to call forth a Bride out of the church, to wash her, to transform her, to make her ready.

Some who read of this transformation will be incredulous. They will look at the caterpillar that the church now resembles and balk at the prospect of a butterfly coming forth from her. Some will believe it is merely wishful thinking. Others will believe the timing is off; they will believe that the church will be transformed, but only after the saints get to heaven.

There will be those, however, who read and believe. There will be those who, being washed by the water of the word, find faith arising in their hearts. They will allow the transforming work of God's Spirit to perform miracles in their lives. It is these who will receive a new name. They will be called "the Bride of Christ."

It is appropriate that these receive a new name. They are in actuality a whole new type of creature. They will be as different from the mass of nominal church goers and half-hearted confessors of Christ as the butterfly is different from the caterpillar. They will not be content to remain in the Outer Court of the Tabernacle, satisfied with salvation and a promise of heaven. These will have a passion for knowing intimately the One who gave all for them.

It is this passion that will hold these faithful ones to the path of transformation. The path is difficult and comes at great cost, but the end is glorious and promises an assured habitation with the Son of God.

There is an in-between stage that occurs as a caterpillar begins the process of becoming a butterfly. This stage is most vital. The caterpillar will never become a butterfly without this period of its existence. The caterpillar spins a cocoon around itself. This cocoon becomes a hidden chamber where the miracle of metamorphosis occurs, out of sight.

There doesn't appear to be much activity in the cocoon. Caterpillars appear active. Butterflies appear active. But the cocoon seems to be lifeless. It appears as a sarcophagus of death. Those who desire the appearance of constant activity will not eagerly enter into the cocoon. Those who seek comfort above conformity to Christ, or who live for the opinions of men, will not willingly enter into this place. It is uncomfortable, confining, and does not make sense to the world, nor does much of the church understand its function. For these reasons, and others, many will shun this place of death and they will forfeit the greater glory and resurrection life that can be attained by no other way. For the remnant portion of the Body of Christ who will follow wherever their Savior leads there is a cocoon stage, a death process, that they must submit to. This stage is vital and cannot be skipped over. It correlates to the wilderness portion of the trip from Egypt to the promised land of Israel. God will lead all of His children through this part of the journey, but few appreciate its significance. Some will not survive this part of the journey. Some will want to turn back. It is here that transformation takes place. It is here that flesh is stripped away and a spiritual being arises. As with the butterfly, the Bride of Christ will be prepared in a hidden chamber. Her transformation will be veiled from the eyes of the world, and from much of the church, as well. These will see her emerge and will wonder at the miracle that has taken place. But even in knowing, many will not submit to the process required for the glory of God to be revealed in them. Our Savior's invitation is to come and die; die to the flesh, die to self, die to the soulish powers of life. This death is not an end. It is a glorious beginning. After death comes resurrection life. After shedding the fleshly form of the caterpillar, the glorious butterfly emerges. What then will be the form of those children of God who allow the same process to work in them? Their end will be glory.

Part 3.1 - Bride in Esther

The Bride as Seen in Esther The Bible is full of images of brides. These images were given to provide understanding of the ultimate bride, which is the Bride of Christ. In the book of Esther we read of a bride that was prepared for a king. Even so, the Bride of Christ is being prepared for her King. The events of the book of Esther take place within the empire of the Medes and the Persians during the time of Israel and Judah's exile. King Ahasuerus was a Mede. He was also known by the Greek form of his name, Xerxes. He reigned from 486 to 465 B.C.. In the third year of his reign he gave a banquet and "displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days..." (Esther 1:4). On the seventh day of his great banquet he commanded his eunuchs "to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful" (Esther 1:11). The timing is important to note here. It was on the seventh day of the great banquet that the queen was commanded to come forth. We are told in scripture, "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). The world since Adam has experienced 6,000 years; 4,000 before Christ, and 2,000 since His birth. This equates to 6 days. We are just entering into the 7th millennium, or the 7th day.

King Ahasuerus, in this illustration, is a type of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. On the 7th day Jesus will summon His Queen to come before Him, but because she does not revere Him as Lord, she will refuse to answer His summons, presented by His eunuchs (which equate to God's ministers or to the seven spirits of God).

12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him.

13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times...

15 "According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?" Esther 1:12-13; Esther 1:15

Even so, let the wise men and women of our day, who discern the times, realize that this same event is being played out. Notice what was determined to be done to Queen Vashti due to her failure to revere King Ahasuerus as her lord and to respond in obedience to his summons.

"If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti should come no more into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she." Esther 1:19

Due to disobedience, Vashti was no longer permitted to enter the presence of the king. Much of the body of Christ today also is failing in obedience to their King and they will be excluded from the honor of entering His presence. "Another who is more worthy" will be accorded this honor. For all those saints who have been falsely taught that salvation by faith affords them all of the honor of

heaven and access to God's presence, as well as access to all of God's most holy things, this is a wake-up call. It is those who are worthy who will be granted such honor.

It does not say that Vashti was killed, or cast out. She was simply stripped of her honor. How terrible to be betrothed to the king, yet denied access to his presence. Shame due to her folly followed her for the rest of her life. What tremendous grief she must have felt when her royal position was given to another. Many in the body of Christ are making the same error today. Shame and grief will be their portion as well.

Much of the body of Christ has been presented with a distorted view of God's desire for them. They have been taught that expressing faith in Jesus Christ to attain salvation is the pinnacle of what is set before them. Unknown to much of the church, salvation is only the beginning, it is not the end. Salvation is a loosing from the bondage to sin that we should forevermore become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:1-23). We were formerly conformed to the ways of a fallen and sinful world, now we are to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). This conforming comes as a process. Salvation is but the first step in this process.

Many saints today, having confessed faith in Christ, are then assured by others that they can now continue on to pursue personal happiness much as they did before salvation. They are even taught that God will be there to help them achieve the selfish longings of their hearts. The Lordship of Christ is overlooked, or given very minimal attention. Such saints ultimately fall into the pattern of Queen Vashti. They love the honor of being wed to the King, but they see the King as existing to meet their needs. Obedience is foreign to them. They obey only when God's desire for them coincides with their own desire. When Jesus calls those who have been betrothed to Him to respond in obedience in this hour, many will refuse. Jesus will then respond as King Ahasuerus; He will restrict access to His presence to the disobedient ones. He will then search for another who is more worthy to be His Bride. This obedient Bride will be given honor and afforded access to His presence.

We are told that after the anger of King Ahasuerus subsided that he remembered his queen. He could not repeal the royal edict, so his advisers counseled him to have a new queen sought out. Beautiful virgins from all over his kingdom were gathered to his capitol and they were placed under the care of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the king's harem. Hegai was charged with the responsibility of preparing these chosen ones to meet the king. Esther was among those picked for consideration to become the bride of Ahasuerus.

Once selected, these beautiful young virgins were not immediately ready to go into the king's chamber. A preparation process was required first. For these young women the process lasted an entire year. for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women-- Esther 2:12

It was only after the virgin went through a year of preparation that she was ready to be presented to the king. The first six months of this process was marked by the pronounced usage of oil of myrrh. Myrrh should be recognized by most believers as a spice that was used in preparing bodies for burial. After Christ's crucifixion we are told that His body was prepared for burial and myrrh is especially mentioned.

I think it is significant in the description of this event found in the book of John that it repeatedly states that Christ's body was taken away and prepared. The Bride is a remnant portion of the body of Christ, and, as is seen in the book of Esther, a preparation with oil of myrrh is an important part of her being made ready.

38 And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body.

39 And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. John 19:38-40 Myrrh, for the virgin bride candidates of the king, represented death as well. The one chosen to be the bride of the king was to live for the king's pleasure. She was to respond to his summons with quick obedience. No longer was her life her own, she belonged to another. Essentially, she was to die to her own life. In the same way the scriptures tell those betrothed to Christ that they are no longer their own, "For you have been bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Death is the first step of preparation that those who would become the Bride of Christ must go through. Salvation is not an end. It is a beginning. Our salvation was purchased with the blood of Jesus. The purchase price was exceedingly high, but it was paid. We are now no longer our own. We must die to our own desires, goals, and ambitions. Christ's life must become our life, His will our will, His desires our desires. This death process doesn't come all at once, nor in a single moment of time. The flesh's desire to seek after self is firmly entrenched in our being. It takes considerable time just to identify all of the ways in which we have sought our own welfare. Some forms of selfishness are very subtle. The scriptures teach us that even our righteousness, that which we deem to be good, is as filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6).

It is in this death process that obedience is learned and an end of personal initiative is brought forth. This time of preparation is designed to produce a suitable and compatible Bride for Christ. She must become like Him, conformed to His image.

Death to personal initiative was a characteristic of Jesus. It was exemplified in His words at Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done" (Luke 22:42). This was a characteristic which Vashti lacked, and it cost her that which was most precious to her. It is appropriate that this failure was the first thing addressed among those who would contend for the opportunity to replace Vashti. It will likewise be the foremost issue addressed among those who are called to be the Bride of Christ. In the story of King Ahasuerus' search for a suitable bride, we see some profound truths that are equally applicable to the Bride of Christ. The king's first bride was rejected due to a failure of obedience. A more worthy bride was then chosen to replace the one who had disqualified herself. Those called to betrothal to Christ need to take this lesson to heart. As we will see in subsequent chapters, many are called, but few are chosen. Esther distinguished herself by her obedience. She listened to the voice of the king's eunuch who was given charge over her, to prepare her, and she found favor in the eyes of the king.

Part 4.1 - Eunuch Ministers

The Bride's Eunuch Ministers This book is primarily focused upon the Bride of Christ, but it is prudent to take a brief look at those who are called as ministers to prepare the Bride. The way in which these ministers perform their service will greatly impact the preparation of the Bride. The book of Esther contains a type of these last days ministers. They are represented by Hegai, who was an eunuch in the service of King Ahasuerus.

Hegai's responsibilities were very similar to the description given to those ministers whom Jesus gave to the body of Christ to bring her to maturity and fulness of stature.

11 And [Jesus] gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

We see here that God's ministers are equippers and are called to a work of building up, or preparing the body of Christ. This was Hegai's duty as well. Hegai was charged with preparing the young virgins to meet the king in a most intimate manner. He was to equip them with the manners, behavior, and mindset of those called to intimacy with the king. The Apostle Paul recognized this calling on his life. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. 2 Corinthians 11:2

Paul was an apostle, and he states that Christ gave apostles, as well as the other ministers mentioned, to perform a function in preparing the body of Christ to fulfill its calling and to come to maturity and the fulness of the stature of Christ. This calling on the body is too easily glanced over, so it won't hurt to restate it. The body of Christ is called to attain to the fulness of the stature that belongs to Jesus Christ. When one considers that Jesus is the Head of the body, it makes sense to assert that the body is to attain to His fulness. The Head and the body are to be a perfect match for one another. It would be inappropriate to have a mature head attached to an immature body.

What must be the qualifications and character of these ministers whom Jesus has given to bring forth this maturity? Imagine, these ministers are called to equip and build up the body so that it is an equitable match for the Head. What a tremendous responsibility. Indeed, apart from the grace of God, it is an impossible task to be charged with.

However, as awesome as the calling is upon the minister, the body has an even greater calling. For she is to "grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). It has somehow become overlooked in this passage, and in the exercise of the responsibilities of ministers toward the body, that the minister is really not the important one in this relationship. The minister is merely a servant of God who is given duties in regard to the body. It is the body that is the true focus. This becomes apparent when we look back at Hegai's role in regard to the virgins

he was entrusted to oversee and prepare. King Ahasuerus desired a bride, even as Jesus desires a Bride. He wanted a queen that was suited to himself. This is true of Jesus as well. He desired a beautiful, purified virgin who would respond in obedience to him. The parallel between Christ and His Bride is easily seen here. The eunuch was a minister of the king charged with the responsibility of preparing this bride for him. The eunuch was not the focus of the king's desire, the bride was. The eunuch's ministry and calling existed only as long as there were virgins to be made ready to meet the king. The eunuch served the king, but he did so by serving the young virgins being prepared for the king. In a very real sense, the eunuch's calling was inferior to the virgins' calling. It was a much greater honor to be the bride of the king than to be an eunuch minister who filled the temporary position of preparing the virgin to be a bride. Paul gave voice to this understanding in the following verse:

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. 1 Corinthians 4:10

Again, the clarity of the calling of ministers is brought forth as we consider that the king was pining away in his heart for a bride. After Vashti was removed, it is said that the king forgot his anger and he began to long once more for a bride. The king's desire for a bride had nothing to do with a desire to see more ministers prancing around the palace. On the contrary, the ministers existed because the king desired to have a bride that was suitable for him. The king did not wish to see the eunuch paraded around in finery, he wanted to see the bride adorned. The eunuch was not the focus. The bride was the focus. This is certainly clear enough when it is related to kings and brides of days gone by, but somehow it has become muddled and confused in the present day kingdom of God. To look at things today, an observer would have to conclude that the ministers are the very most important thing and those they "serve" are of lesser import. However, this is a perversion of God's design.

Like the eunuch, the ministers' role is to prepare the Bride of Christ for intimacy with the King. The minister is given his charge because he knows what is pleasing to the king and what is not. He is to communicate this understanding to the virgin Bride. He is not to flaunt his role, or elevate his calling in an unseemly manner. He is not to appear superior to the other members of the body. He is called to be a servant. The minister is especially to guard against any abnormal affection or attraction between himself and the Bride of Christ. He is to be as an eunuch in regard to the Bride. He is not to seek fulfillment through attracting the Bride's affection to himself. He is to direct all of the Bride's passion toward Jesus Christ. To fail in this in the least way is to place oneself on dangerous ground for the Bride belongs to God and His name is Jealous (Exodus 34:14). Jesus said,

"For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:12 The minister belongs to the latter group. As he fulfills his calling to the Bride of Christ, he is to comport himself as an eunuch. He is not to lay hands on the Bride in an unholy manner, nor is he to be attracted to her, or to receive her affection to himself.

Today this happens all too often. Unfortunately, our current Christian religious system is constructed in such a way that the minister and the Bride are thrust into a detrimental symbiotic

relationship with each other. It is not uncommon to hear of ministers having affairs with members of the bodies they are called to minister unto. Yet, these outward and visible trespasses are merely the tip of the iceberg. For every minister that commits adultery with a member of the body, there are a thousand more who have emotional and soul ties between themselves and those they minister to that are immoral and which are considered as adulterous in God's sight. In the last 2000 years the body of Christ and her ministers have deviated from the callings placed upon them. Peter proclaimed to the body of Christ, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Somehow, we have changed this to mean that the ministers are a royal priesthood, and the body is a sub-class we call laity. The ministers "proclaim the excellencies" of God, and the body listens to them do it week by week. This was not God's purpose at all. God did not establish a laity in the body of Christ, nor did He establish a cadre of ministers who are superior to the rest of the body. The ministers are servants. They are to bring the body to the fulness of the stature of Christ. History clearly shows how we arrived where we are at now. Satan was the architect of the deception and the fleshliness of man was the motivating force that caused the church to adopt current forms. The error of the clergy/laity division was established largely due to two forces that both arise out of the flesh. There are some men who are driven by a desire to hold positions of honor and preeminence, and there are others who have found the requirements of discipleship too demanding and who have sought a way to lessen the demands upon themselves. The first group finds their flesh gratified through the false classification of clergy, and the latter finds theirs fulfilled in the equally false and less rigorous classification of laity. The two have formed a symbiotic relationship that fulfills the fleshly desires of both groups. This arrangement works so well that it has remained in place for centuries and has withstood such threats to it as The Reformation and an assortment of revivals. This arrangement, however, is not according to God's design. It keeps the Bride in a state of perpetual immaturity to the dissatisfaction of Christ.

Two things must occur to correct this error. Those who are true ministers of Christ must adopt the mindset of John the Baptist saying, "I must decrease that the body of Christ might increase." Those who are among the body must rise to the calling upon their lives and embrace the rigors of true discipleship. Yes, being a disciple calls for a much purer devotion than calling oneself a layperson, but the rewards are such that Paul said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). The minister is not to obscure the calling of the Bride, he is to clarify it. God's true ministers are given their positions because they themselves have walked in intimacy with the Father and they have been given an understanding of what the Father seeks as He prepares a Bride for His Son. Though the minister is a servant, he is also accorded honor. God always gives honor with responsibility. A servant who is faithfully discharging his duties is to be accorded great honor and those who receive of his ministry are to honor him in the sphere of his duties.

It was clearly recorded for our benefit that Esther listened to the voice of Hegai, the king's minister, and she responded to his words. We are told that when the virgins were presented to the king following their year of preparation, they could take anything in with them that they desired. It was to their benefit, however, to listen to the advice of the eunuch in this matter. Not all did so. Not all were found pleasing to the king. Only one delighted him so much that he made her his queen.

15 Now when the turn of Esther... came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

17 And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen. Esther 2:15; Esther 2:17

Esther listened to the voice of Hegai. The king had appointed Hegai to his task for good reason. He knew what was pleasing to the king. His advice was to be taken seriously. To ignore his voice was to risk the king's displeasure. The Bride of Christ must likewise be attentive to the voice of God's eunuch ministers. They will be given understanding of what is pleasing to the King. They will be entrusted with the wisdom to discern the qualities that the Bridegroom seeks in His Bride. The author of the book of Hebrews writes:

Obey your leaders, and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17 Not all of those who are called to meet the Bridegroom will be as attentive to this instruction as Esther was to Hegai, nor will all ministers be as faithful to discharge their duties as Hegai was. This calls for discernment among those who hear the call to intimacy with Christ. It is certain that a refining will come to both the Bride and the ministers assigned to her. Jesus is zealous for His Bride. Woe to those ministers who have been stealing the Bride's affection and who have touched her in an unholy manner. Among both ministers and the Bride it will be true that "many are called, but few are chosen."

Part 5.1 - Many are Called..

Many are Called, But Few are Chosen

How awful it would be to receive a summons to the wedding feast of a great king's son, only to be singled out upon arrival for not being appropriately dressed. To have the attention of all upon you in such a situation would be embarrassing beyond measure. However, to then be seized as a trespasser, bound hand and foot, and cast out of this elect gathering would be devastating. It would truly be a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a situation that we would all like to avoid. However, if I am correct, it will be the fate of a large portion of the church. The following passage gives us an indication of the fate that awaits many.

1 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying,

2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son.

3 "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.

4 "Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."

5 "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business,

6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them.

7 "But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire.

8 "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

9 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.'

10 "And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes,

12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And he was speechless.

13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

14 "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:1-14 The "king" in this passage clearly refers to God the Father. He is giving a wedding feast for "his son", Jesus Christ. He sends his

servants out to announce the feast and to invite the guests to come. The servants are God's prophets, and the guests, referred to here, represent Israel.

Israel, however, does not respond, so the king sends more servants out with a more explicit and emphatic message. Again, his servants are met with indifference. Many of those invited are caught up in their own pursuits and are aloof to the king and his invitation. Some are even more wicked and take the king's messengers and abuse them and kill some. The king is infuriated at this. In response He sends out his armies, destroys the murderers and sets their city on fire. The city is clearly referring to Jerusalem and her inhabitants.

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! Matthew 23:37-38 The guests that have been twice invited are now deemed to be unworthy, so the king sends his servants out to the main highways to find guests to fill his wedding hall. This indicates that the gentiles throughout the whole world are now being invited. The king's servants bring in those both evil and good. Some have asserted that this refers to the lost and the saved. Many preachers and teachers of the word of God have difficulty describing any of God's children as being wicked. God, however, reveals no such difficulty in calling a spade a spade. A look at the following parable will make it clear that there are both evil and good, worthy and unworthy in the household of God.

42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?"

43 "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

44 "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

45 "But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;

46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

47 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes,

48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. Luke 12:42-48

We see from this parable that there are servants in God's house that are wicked or evil, as well as those who are faithful. These are both members of God's house, the church. Likewise, those brought into the wedding feast are all from God's house. Some, however, are not as worthy as others.

Returning to the wedding feast, we see that the wedding hall has been filled. It has been filled with members from the household of God. The king then comes in to look over the guests and finds

one without a wedding garment. This saint does not have on a robe of worthiness.

4 “But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.

5 He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments.” Revelation 3:4-5 As indicated in the preceding scripture, the garment indicates worthiness. To not have one reveals that the person has been accounted to be not worthy. The king’s question to the unprepared guest could actually be expressed in this way, “How did you come to be here at the wedding feast of my son, seeing that you are unworthy to be here?” The guest is speechless. There is no defense for his lack of preparation. He is hastily removed from the wedding feast.

Surprisingly, at the end of Christ’s parable, we are told that what happened to this man is not a rare occurrence. To the contrary, we are told, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” It is the remnant that are chosen, that are accounted worthy to be at the wedding feast. A further note that must be mentioned from this parable is that the unworthy guest was apparently unaware of his plight. His judgment came upon him quickly. He was deceived in thinking that he was appropriately arrayed, when he was not. It is a similar deception, a lack of awareness, and a state of slumber that is preventing the majority of Christians today from realizing that they are in the same peril.

Part 6.1 - Remnant Bride

The Remnant Bride A deception has been foisted upon the church. The deception says that all Christians are equal before the Father. They will all share the same resurrection, the same reward, the same destiny. This is entirely untrue. Many have confused spirit salvation, which is given freely and in the same measure to all who believe, with reward. Being born of the Spirit is a free gift. It is a gift given equally to all who trust in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. It matters not how long you have trusted in Him, nor how faithfully you have walked before Him. This salvation is a free gift to those who believe. This is the subject of the following parable of Christ.

1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

2 "And when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;

4 and to those he said, 'You too go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went.

5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing.

6 "And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?'

7 "They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into the vineyard.'

8 "And when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.'

9 "And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.

10 "And when those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; and they also received each one a denarius.

11 "And when they received it, they grumbled at the landowner,

12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.'

13 "But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?'

14 'Take what is yours and go your way, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'

16 "Thus the last shall be first, and the first last." Matthew 20:1-16 The pay that all receive equally is the salvation of which we speak. Whether one lives his whole life in obedience to Christ, or whether one comes to trust Him while on his death bed, the pay is the same. Salvation belongs to the Lord and He can dispense it as He wishes. There is no basis for complaint concerning this.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 In the area of reward, however, there is a great variation between what different believer's will receive.

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. Revelation 22:12 Not all saints walk with the same degree of faithfulness and worthiness before the Father. Their reward will therefore be different. The apostle Paul tells us that each man's work will be tested with fire. The quality, or worthiness, of each man's work will be revealed.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

14 If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

It seems that Christians today have given little thought to the issue of reward. There are many who live carelessly, pursuing the things of the carnal nature. Many believe that salvation is enough, that having obtained it, there is nothing else that God requires of them. They therefore walk in oblivion, ignorant of God's voice and His desire for them.

Consider again the parable of the stewards from Luke 12:42-48. The Lord indicates that there are some who will be found faithful and waiting. These are called blessed. Additionally, there are those who will say in their heart that the master delays and they will begin to carouse and act wickedly, mistreating others. These will be cut to pieces and assigned a portion with the unbelievers.

There is another group, however. This group is those who were ignorant of their master's will. They did things worthy of a flogging, but they received fewer stripes because they were unaware of their master's will.

Without a doubt, it is desirable to be among those who are faithful. It is better to receive praise and reward than a reprimand and stripes. Many will suffer loss, whether their disobedience springs from wicked carnality or ignorance of God's will. As we will see, this loss extends even to whether the saints of God will be counted worthy to be among those who are called the Bride of Christ.

Part 7.1 - The Rapture of The Bride

The Rapture of the Bride The most popular teaching of our day states that, when Christ comes back for His Bride, all saints will be caught up in the air together with Him. There is much debate about whether this will occur before, during, or after the tribulation, but it seems pretty well agreed upon that the whole church will be included. Is this an accurate assumption? Examining the following passage of scripture may convince you otherwise.

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

13 And one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?"

14 And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them.

16 "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;

17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:9-17 A central part of this passage is identifying who the people are who are being described. John is pointedly asked in verse 13 by one of the elders around the throne, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?" The Father is taking pains to identify who they are because it is important to our understanding.

John doesn't know the answer to their identity, so the elder tells him. "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Note, that as in the parable of the wedding supper, we have mention of garments here again. These people are ones who had soiled robes and needed them washed. They were once unworthy, but have washed their robes. The washing has taken place during the great tribulation. The washing has come at great cost. The statement, "they have made their garments white in the blood of the Lamb", refers to the necessity of their also having had to go the way of the cross, even to the point of death. This is further borne out in the following passage.

10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also. Revelation 6:10-11 The condition of the wearers' garment reflects their worthiness before God. If they have lived in an unworthy manner; a wood, hay and straw manner, before God, their robes become soiled. Note that it is a great multitude that John sees before the throne. It was also a great multitude that was found to be unprepared to attend the wedding feast of the king's son. Few were originally chosen from among all of those called to attend. This is reflected in the words, "For many [a multitude] are called, but few are chosen."

All of those referred to in the above passage of scripture were given white robes. Where were those who already had white robes? They had been stolen away by the Bridegroom prior to the tribulation. They had been summoned to the wedding feast. These were ready, having wedding garments.

Many Christians are counting on God to rapture them out of this world before the time of tribulation. What many have overlooked is that Christ is coming back as a thief in the night to steal His Bride away to be with Him, and His Bride is those whose garments are white.

37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

38 "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:37-39

It is striking that the coming of the Son of Man is compared to the days of Noah. Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), and he preached his message before a day of great judgment and destruction came upon the world. Even so, Christ will come and deliver the righteous before the day of judgment, the day of God's wrath.

Verse 39 tells us "and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Is this not true of our day? How many Christians falsely believe that all saints will be kept from the day of evil, not understanding that it is the righteous that will be preserved from the day of testing? The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Isaiah 57:1 (NIV) The word "perish" in this verse is "abad". According to Strong's Hebrew/Greek Dictionary, it comes from a primitive root meaning; "properly, to wander away, i.e.

lose oneself." The word is not necessarily referring to perishing in some type of calamity. Another occurrence of this word is in the following verse.

Memory of him perishes [abad] from the earth, and he has no name abroad. Job 18:17 This verse is referring to the memory of the wicked man. How do memories perish? Not through some catastrophic event. They merely disappear as if they have 'wandered away.' We sometimes refer to things forgotten as having "slipped our mind." They have momentarily disappeared. So this verse in Isaiah 57:1 could be accurately rendered in this way: The righteous disappear, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Who disappear, and who are taken away to be spared from evil? It is the righteous and the devout. These are the ones who have white robes. These are the ones who have made themselves ready and who will not be caught unprepared when the Son of Man returns. With the wicked it is not so. The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. Proverbs 16:4 The passage concerning the coming of the Son of Man continues:

40 "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.

41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

44 "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. Matthew 24:40-44 hew-44 hew-44 Who will be taken? This passage is not saying that all Christians will be removed and only the lost remain, as some have taught. We have already read that a vast multitude of Christians will have their garments washed in the day of tribulation. The ones being removed are the Bride. She is being stolen from out of the church which is the house referred to in verse 43.

It is clear that Christ is the thief. What would Christ be interested in stealing? Certainly, it is that which is most valuable to Him. He is coming to steal away those who are waiting with expectation for His appearing. He is coming for those whose garments are spotless. He is coming for those who are passionate for Him.

What will be the impact on the church when she finds that one is taken and another is left? Those left behind will be devastated. They will have to abandon their doctrines stating that all would be taken. They will have to realize that it was because their robes were soiled; it was due to the lack of a wedding garment; it was their unworthiness that precipitated their calamity. As the five foolish virgins who failed to keep oil in their lamps, these will rush out to acquire what they lack, but it will be too late. The door will have been shut. The number of guests for the wedding feast will be complete. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.

2 "And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.

3 "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,

4 but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.

5 "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.

6 "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

7 "Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 "And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

9 "But the prudent answered, saying, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'

10 "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

11 "And later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.'

12 "But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'

13 "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. Matthew 25:1-13 Who are the virgins that wait for the Bridegroom? Certainly they do not represent the lost world. All of the virgins had lamps to give forth light. This is true of saints, only. However, not all of them had oil with which to light their lamps. It will be too late to remedy this when the Bridegroom appears. Over and over throughout scripture, Christians are urged to be on the alert, be awake, be ready.

Again, this does not imply loss of salvation. What is spoken of is loss of reward. Not every believer's reward will be the same. To be included in the Bride is tremendous reward, as is being invited to attend the wedding feast. Not all will attain to this honor. Many are called, but few are chosen.

According to scripture, there will be three divisions of Christians. The Bride is those who have kept their garments clean. They have allowed the Holy Spirit to perform His work of preparation and cleansing in their lives. They have remained alert and vigilant, waiting with anticipation for the return of the Bridegroom. They are mature and have intimate knowledge of their Lord. (Intimate knowledge of Christ is a characteristic of the Bride and is lacking in those who are unprepared. The Lord spoke to the foolish virgins, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you.") The ten virgins do not represent the Bride. They are attendants of the Bride. As attendants of the Bride, "they all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased..." (1 Corinthians 10:3). The Bride, however, remained alert and vigilant while the ten virgins all fell asleep. They failed to keep watch and be alert and they were sleeping when the Bridegroom came for the Bride.

However, among the attendants of the Bride, a distinction is made. Five were wise and were let into the wedding feast and five were foolish and were excluded. The difference was that some had extra vessels of oil for their lamps and some did not. Although oil often symbolizes the Spirit of

God, I believe this oil represents the good works of the saints for this was an oil used to give light. This connection can be seen in the following passage.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 "Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

Although all ten of the virgins had fallen asleep, some had done many good works to the glory of the Father and some had not. The foolish had vessels that were made to give forth light, but they had not ever been used for this purpose, this being typified by the lack of any oil. They were like the wicked servant that went and hid his talent in the ground until the return of his master. Not only had these foolish virgins fallen asleep, but they had no good works for men or God to see. Their vessels were essentially wasted. They had never used them for the purpose they were created for; the vessels being their bodies which are the temple of God. They were sleeping when the Bridegroom appeared. This last group will suffer complete loss of reward for Jesus will testify that He does not even know them. They will realize how great a grace they have resisted and how tremendous a reward they have forfeited. Even these will have their tears wiped away, yet there will be no remedy for their loss. They will receive reward according to their works. The wise virgins will have reward, though not of the same measure as the Bride. It is one thing to be let in to attend the wedding feast, and quite another thing to be the Bride who is being wedded. So we see in the Bride and the two groups of attendants, three separate and distinct groups of saints.

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. Romans 11:22 The majority within the church have been taught that the rapture will occur and that all Christians will be caught up to be with the Lord at the same time. As we have seen, this is not the case. God makes a distinction between those who are worthy and those who are not.

There are some believers who do not believe in the rapture at all. They assert that to teach the catching away of God's children is to teach escapism and to encourage believers to live loose and careless lives. This is certainly true if one teaches that all will be caught up to be with Christ when He comes as a thief in the night, whether they are righteous or wicked. It is not true if one discerns that it is only those who have made themselves ready who will be caught up and protected by the Lord.

I have heard some argue that God has never spared His children from evil before and that He would have to apologize to all of the martyrs that have gone before if He spares some of His children from the coming day of evil. What is overlooked in such arguments is that the martyrs were not killed as a result of God's wrath. It was the wickedness of man and the rage of Satan that has killed the martyrs, not the judgment of God. The coming day of evil, however, is a judgment of God and there is tremendous scriptural support for God delivering a righteous remnant from His judgments. This was true of Noah and his family when God judged the world by a flood. Noah was found to be righteous in God's sight and God spared he and his family from His judgment on the world.

Another instance is when God judged Sodom and Gomorrah. We are told that Lot was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7) and God removed him from the path of His judgment prior to destroying these cities. A further example is the children of Israel prior to their deliverance from Egypt. God judged Egypt, but repeatedly He spared the children of Israel. They did not suffer the judgment of the ten plagues. I could mention Joshua and Caleb, Rahab the harlot, Elijah at the Brook Cherith, and many others whom God spared and protected from judgments that He brought upon mankind.

There is no need to apologize to the martyrs for God's decision to spare the righteous from HIS judgments. The martyrs were not slain under HIS judgment. However, an accurate reading of the tribulation period, also called "the day of the Lord's wrath," reveals that it is a day of God's judgment upon the world. God has always spared the righteous from HIS judgment. A further argument which some have used to teach against any type of catching away of God's saints to a place of safety is derived from the scripture we have just looked at. I mention it because I have heard this argument repeated so much recently. Let's look one more time at the scripture comparing the coming of the Son of Man to the days of Noah.

37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

38 "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

40 "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.

41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. Matthew 24:37-42

Many are claiming today that this passage negates a catching away of those who are righteous. The statement, "The coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah" is taken to great extremes and a false interpretation is applied to the latter verses that speak of "one will be taken, and one will be left." What is falsely derived from this is that in Noah's day it was the wicked who were taken and the righteous who remained. It is concluded that it will also be so at the coming of the Son of Man.

Those who interpret this passage in this way state that what is being taught by our Lord is that the wicked will be removed from the Earth in upcoming days and the righteous will remain. However, a closer look at this passage reveals that Jesus was not teaching this at all. Jesus statement was that His coming again would be "just like the days of Noah." Jesus then immediately defines what He means. In the days of Noah people were "eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." The great similarity to the day of Noah is that people will once again be caught unaware on the day of their visitation. Mankind will be pursuing pleasure and making plans as if the days of joy and mirth will continue forever unabated. It was in this type of party atmosphere that the flood of Noah's day came suddenly upon the world. Even so, the coming of the Son of Man will come when it is not expected. Jesus makes

His meaning clear by three times stating that He will come when He is not expected (verses 39, 42, 44). This is the proper understanding of His words that His coming would be "just as the days of Noah." A clear understanding of God's deliverance of Noah and his family, actually does not contradict a removing of the righteous from God's judgment and wrath. Noah and his family were hidden away in a place of safety, protected from God's judgment on the world. The rest of mankind were not removed from God's wrath, they endured it. The righteous were taken away to a place of safety. This is made even more clear by Luke's account of this teaching of our Lord.

26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man:

27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. Luke 17:26-30

Luke relates Jesus' words comparing His coming to the days of Noah. Luke then adds that it is also like the days of Lot. Whereas someone can misconstrue the account of Noah to say that the wicked were the ones removed and the righteous remained, they cannot do so with the account of Lot. The scriptures clearly tell us that Lot was removed from the path of God's judgment. The angels of God actually took Lot and his family by the hand and dragged them out of Sodom (Genesis 19:16).

Repeatedly the testimony of scripture is that God does preserve the righteous from His judgments and His wrath. "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His" (2 Chronicles 16:9). Those who have not given their heart wholly over to the pursuit of God and to a desire to walk obediently before Him have somewhat to be concerned about. God would not have such careless ones to feel comfortable or complacent about their future. The righteous, however, are to be as bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1).

Part 8.1 - The Deep Sleep of Adam

The Deep Sleep of Adam In the formation of Eve we see many parallels to the formation of the Bride of Christ. One of the very striking parallels between these two brides is that they are both taken from a body that has been cast into a deep sleep. To examine this, let us begin with the description of Eve as she is removed from the body of Adam.

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place.

22 And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

23 And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man."Genesis 2:21-23 In this passage we see described the formation of the bride of the first Adam. The primary things I want you to note in this description are: first, a deep sleep came upon Adam; second, a separation occurred in the body of Adam that resulted in a bride being formed. A remnant was removed from his sleeping body to form his bride. In this very hour in which we live such a separation is taking place. One of the predominant scriptures being proclaimed by prophets and teachers of God in this hour is from the book of Revelation where God's saints are commanded to come out of the great harlot which typifies the apostate church of our day.

"Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues..."Revelation 18:4 This is further borne out by prophecies that have proclaimed that the year 2000 will begin a period of tremendous separation. This is revealed in the number 2000, itself. The number 2 represents division or separation, for any time that a whole unit is divided, separated, or broken, it must become no less than two separate and distinct pieces. Separation in scripture is often typified by the mention of two things as in: the light was separated from the darkness; the land was separated from the waters; the waters below the firmament were separated from the waters above the firmament; Adam's body was separated and became man and woman; the scriptures are divided into the Old and New Testaments, etc.. In these things we can see that the number two speaks of separation. That the year 2000 is a multiple of 2 (2 X 1,000), it symbolizes that the separation that ensues at this time will be greatly multiplied. It will not be a common separation, but one of great magnitude. Even so, the Bride of Christ being separated from the body of Christ speaks of an extraordinary separation.

Now, concerning that which we see in type in the deep sleep that came upon Adam, we see spoken of by Paul in reference to the body of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ. Paul indicated that a similar deep sleep would come upon the body of Christ prior to the Bride of Christ being removed from it.

Paul spoke to the Thessalonian believers and said that those who were afflicting them would be judged at the appearing of the Lord. Their judgment would include their being excluded and

removed from being partakers of the glory of the Lord which would be revealed IN those believers who were found faithful.

9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed.² Thessalonians 1:9-10

We see clearly in this passage that Paul is speaking of the day of the Lord's return. Contrary to what many believers expect, Christ is to be revealed IN His holy saints at His next appearing, not in the clouds of the sky as many teach. The scriptures do say that Christ will return in the clouds, but He is first to be revealed in His saints as Paul describes here. As we will see, these ones who will have the glory of the Lord to rise upon them (Isaiah 60:1-2) will be the remnant that constitute the Bride of Christ.

Returning to the scripture passage in II Thessalonians, we see that Paul is speaking of the day of the Lord's return in His saints. Paul then goes on to describe what will occur just before this day.

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.² Thessalonians 2:3-4 The key to understanding this passage is discerning what temple Paul is referring to in verse 4. We know that Jesus completely fulfilled the Law and by His sacrifice He abolished the need to anymore keep the ceremonial law. This ceremonial law was primarily focused on the temple which was located in Jerusalem. The passing away of this temple built of wood and stone in its function of being the location where God would meet with man was immediately demonstrated at Christ's death by the veil of the temple barring the entrance to the Most Holy Place being rent in two as Jesus breathed His last breath. The covering of the veil of the Temple was mandated by God to prevent those who were unsanctified from gazing on the presence of God. To look on His presence was to invoke His immediate judgment, and death was the penalty. By the veil being torn and the Most Holy Place exposed, God was signifying that His presence no longer would be found in a building made of wood and stone. His temple was now the temple of man's body, a building built of living stones. This was further demonstrated by God when forty years later, in AD 70, the Temple in Jerusalem was COMPLETELY destroyed by the Romans so that not one stone remained upon another.

Since the death of Christ the temple that God has revealed His presence in has been exclusively a temple formed of the bodies of men and women. When Paul then speaks of the man of lawlessness taking his seat in the temple, he is not talking about a temple built of wood and stone, but one built of living stones. It would not offend God at all for a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem to be defiled because God's presence will no more be revealed in such buildings. What angers God is for the man of lawlessness to take his seat in the living temple, the temple of man's body where God's Spirit dwells, for this is the temple where the glory of God is to be revealed. The apostasy that Paul speaks of which must occur before Jesus is revealed in His saints, refers to a rejection of the truth by those who are of the household of God. The word apostasy is defined by Strongs Hebrew/Greek Dictionary as: "defection from truth." This is why Paul describes the last days to

Timothy as being “perilous times”, for men will not listen to truth, but will heap to themselves teachers who will tickle their ears and tell them what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). As the church experiences this defection from truth because they have not loved truth, the man of lawlessness will take a seat in the temple which is the bodies of God’s saints. This lawlessness is a rejection of the authority of God, a failure of obedience to the Lordship of Christ (remember Vashti?). Jesus demonstrated that this was the nature of lawlessness in the following passage.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' Matthew 7:21-23

These ones are lawless because they did not "do the will of [the] Father." They were prophesying according to their own will. They were casting out demons according to their own will. They were performing miracles according to their own will. No matter how much they said "Lord, Lord" it did not change the fact that they were not subject to the Lordship of Christ. Rather than being led of the Spirit of God in all of their activities, they were led by their own will. This is a great note of caution, for many are prophesying in this day, and casting out demons, and even performing miracles. But they are not all doing so by the leading of the Spirit of God. These are lawless ones and Paul prophesies of the "man of lawlessness" being revealed, taking his seat in the temple of God, which temple we are. A large majority of believers were wholly led into a confession of Christ that downplayed the Lordship of Christ and the message of the cross and which emphasized prosperity, self-fulfillment, and fire insurance to keep oneself out of hell. Such believers have never embraced a love of the truth, and a love of the person of Jesus Christ, as well as a desire to be made holy and to be conformed to His image. These believers wanted to have a ticket to get into heaven when they die and the freedom to pursue the pleasures of the world while they walk on this earth.

Because these believers motives have been impure, not loving the truth, God has sent them a strong delusion.

10 because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,

12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

Many Christians misidentify who is being referred to here because of the statement in verse 10, “so as to be saved.” They assume that this is speaking of mans’ initial salvation (spirit salvation), and so they assume that it is not speaking of believers, but of the lost. However, the scriptures reveal that there is a further salvation for the saints of God to partake of, but many will disqualify themselves for it. so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. Hebrews 9:28

The salvation spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 is the same salvation spoken of in Hebrews 9:28. This is a second salvation. Some refer to it as soul salvation. The salvation we receive through Christ's death and resurrection by faith is spirit salvation, for the scriptures state that "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). There remains a further salvation of the soul, and a final transforming of our bodies, bringing us to a fulness of salvation.

Putting all this into perspective, we know that Christ is soon to come back for His Bride, a remnant Bride. In order for the Bride to be separated from the body, a deep sleep must come over the body, even as it did with Adam's body. What Paul has described here as a deluding influence from God in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 corresponds to the deep sleep that came over Adam. Remember, it was God who caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, and we are told that it is again God who sends a deluding influence upon those of His household who have not received a love of the truth. To confirm the correlation between this delusion and sleep let us examine the following scriptures.

10 For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of DEEP SLEEP, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, the seers.

11 And the entire vision shall be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, "Please read this," he will say, "I cannot, for it is sealed."

12 Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, "Please read this." And he will say, "I cannot read."

13 Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from me, and their reverence for me consists of tradition learned by rote,

14 Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed." Isaiah 29:10-14

Note that here God speaks of pouring over the people a spirit of DEEP SLEEP. It was a deep sleep that God brought upon Adam before He removed the remnant from his body to form a bride. This deep sleep is further defined in this passage as: shutting the eyes of the prophets; covering the heads of the seers; sealing up the vision; cutting off their wisdom and discernment. Isn't this a perfect parallel to Paul's words of God sending delusion to those who did not love the truth? So we see that before the return of the Lord to appear in glory in His saints that a deep sleep will once more come from the Lord upon the body. This does not indicate that the body will just be lying around doing nothing, for many will be prophesying, casting out demons, and performing miracles, but they will be doing so of their own volition for the man of lawlessness will take his seat in the temple made of living stones. At this time a breach will be made in the body of Christ as is being manifested by God's words to "come out of her My people." God will then fashion a Bride for His Son from this remnant portion removed from the body.

Now a further thing of interest is revealed as we examine the scriptures. As we look at the principle of covering we see a wonderful truth, but first a brief word on the principle of covering. God reveals examples of covering throughout scripture. The earth of Genesis chapter one was covered by the waters below the firmament and the waters above the firmament. The Ark of the Covenant where

the glory of God appeared had two coverings, the cherubim and the cloud of incense. The Tabernacle of Moses likewise had two coverings. Women are instructed to have two coverings on their heads, their hair and a covering of cloth.

These coverings and many others in scriptures symbolize some important principles relating to power, glory, and authority. However, as this book is not a teaching on the principle of covering, I will not go into this now. What I want to state is that the soul of man in his original creation before the fall also had two coverings. He had his physical body and a covering of glory. How do we know that he had a covering of glory? Simply because we are told that man was created not only in the image of God, but in the image and glory of God (1 Corinthians 11:7).

However, when Adam sinned the glory departed and he was left uncovered and realized that he was naked. Being naked means to be uncovered. Many have supposed that Adam and Eve were always naked and that when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they were simply made aware of their nakedness. This is not true. Adam and Eve were originally clothed. Their clothing was the glory of God and when they sinned their clothing of glory was removed for the glory of God and the presence of sin cannot abide together. The fact that sin and glory cannot abide together is why only those who had sanctified and cleansed themselves from sin could serve in the Temple and Tabernacle. The glory of God resided there. This is why the High Priest had to go through such meticulous procedures of purification and cleansing before entering the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. Sin cannot abide in the presence of God. Paul said that sin dwelt in his flesh, and God said that no flesh could stand before Him. The two are incompatible.

After Adam and Eve sinned they were naked. Their covering of glory had been removed. God therefore gave them a substitutionary covering made from the skin of an animal, and men and women have had need of wearing a covering over their flesh to this day.

One principle of covering shows that because life (soul life) is in the blood, blood must be covered. God demonstrated this even in the matter of killing an animal to eat it.

"So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth."Leviticus 17:13 When one poured out the blood of an animal on the ground it was to be covered with earth. It was also from earth that man's flesh was formed and man's flesh was a covering for the life of his soul which was in his blood. He also had the second covering of glory, and after he sinned he had the substitute covering of clothing.

Now when comparing this principle to the scriptures we have already looked at in II Thessalonians we see the covering that will be given to the Bride of Christ. All sin will be removed from the Bride and the glory of God will once more adorn her and serve as a covering. Again, let us look at this scripture where Paul contrasts the wicked and the righteous of God's household.

9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed.² Thessalonians 1:9-10 Paul speaks of longing for this day of our clothing with glory in this way.

1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven;

3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked.

4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.² Corinthians 5:1-4 This is a marvelous thing. Just as Eve was separated from the sleeping body of Adam, so is the Bride of the Last Adam being separated from His sleeping body. She will then be clothed with glory. A deep sleep was brought upon both bodies by God. Just as God took that remnant portion of Adam's body and formed it into woman, so God will take the remnant removed from the body of Christ and form a Bride. Yet the Bride of Christ will not have a covering of sinful flesh overlaid with the skin of an animal, but she will have a glorified body that is clothed with the glory of Christ.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as Helseiah 3:1-26 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.¹ John 3:2-3

We live in awesome days. The church is asleep and a remnant is being removed. We should live with an anticipation for what is soon to occur. A last thought; even as the Jews at the time of Christ's first coming did not recognize the day of their visitation, so the church of our day will not recognize the day of her visitation. They will be asleep. The Jews of Christ's day were looking for Christ to appear in a form that was different from His actual appearing. They were looking for a conquering King to come and reestablish the throne of David and give them back their nation. Today the church has similarly embraced faulty ideas of the coming of Christ. They do not anticipate that His appearing will be IN His saints. They are looking for Him to come on the clouds of the sky.

Even as the eyes of the Jews were veiled to the presence of the Son of God in their midst, so will much of the church's eyes be veiled. Not all will recognize the coming of Christ as they have been taught. so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. Hebrews 9:28 Did you note that Christ will appear "to those who eagerly await Him?" Not all will see His appearing. It will be those who are awake and alert and who are looking for His return who will see Him. As the church slumbers the separation is taking place. Christ will appear at an hour when the church thinks not and as a thief He will break into His house and steal that which is most precious to Him, His Bride. The others will awaken with a start and realize that they were not ready when the Bridegroom came for the Bride. They will seek to enter in, but the door will have already been shut. They will have to go through the cleansing of the great tribulation and by their patience and perseverance purchase robes wherewith to be clothed.

Part 9.1 - Evidences of Separation

Evidences of Separation Not all Christians will freely receive the message of a remnant Bride. Those who are content with the things of the world and who are enjoying the pursuit of their own interests will find the message to be somewhat threatening to their idyllic existence. The western church is full of “easy believism.” The message of the cross is largely absent from our midst.

It is those who fail to walk in integrity before the Father who would cry foul at the notion of God treating individual saints differently. The righteous have nothing to fear. Those who are passionately pursuing their Savior have only longing and expectation for His appearing.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.¹ John 4:18 The Bible is full of images of separation. God has always made a distinction between those who please Him and those who do not. Our error today is in assuming that everyone who is saved and who claims the name of Christian is pleasing to the Father. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. Galatians 6:7 In the design of the Tabernacle of Moses, which was constructed in the wilderness, God showed that there would be a distinction made among those who could approach Him. This structure was divided into three distinct parts: the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. Each area represented a different level of intimacy with, and approach to, the Father.

I do not have the space to go into an exhaustive teaching of the design and significance of the tabernacle here. I will simply point out a few truths that are pertinent to an understanding of the Bride. I want you to see that there is tremendous support for the idea that Jesus has chosen a special remnant out from among His body to be the Bride. As has been mentioned, the Bride is made up of those who have made themselves ready. They are pure and radiant. They are holy and blameless before God. Those who have soiled their garments are forbidden from being a part of the Bride. In the design of the tabernacle, holiness has everything to do with access to the different parts. The outer court is the least restrictive portion. Virtually all of the congregation of Israel had access to the Outer Court. In the church the Outer Court represents the level of spirit salvation. All who are saved have access to this area. The next level, the Holy Place, was more restrictive. Only priests from the tribe of Levi were allowed into the Holy Place. This represented a significant decrease in access from the Outer Court. The priests who served in the tabernacle also had requirements placed upon them. They had to be without defect or disease to perform service in the tabernacle. We see a double refinement here. Only one tribe of Israel could enter and only those who were without blemish or defect.

It was not God’s original intent that only one tribe should have access here. God’s original desire was that the whole nation should be priests before Him (Exodus 19:5-6). It was only after Israel refused to turn from the idolatry of Egypt that Levi was chosen. This transfer of the priesthood from the entire nation to the tribe of Levi occurred after the nation sinned when Aaron made the golden calf for them to worship. Levi alone stood faithful to God and refused to enter into idolatry (Exodus

32:25-27).

God's original purpose was that the firstborn male of every household should be holy and dedicated unto Him as a priest. After Israel sinned in their idolatry, God substituted the entire tribe of Levi for the firstborn of all Israel. God had every firstborn male of Israel numbered by tribe. They were then ransomed and released from their dedication as a priest before God by having a Levite male take their place. There were more firstborn males from Israel than there were Levite males, so the remaining number had to be redeemed with money (Numbers chapter 3). The double refinement of the Holy Place was therefore a refinement that weeded out idolaters and only allowed access to those who were dedicated to God. Furthermore, these dedicated ones had to be without disease or defect (Leviticus 21:17-23). This is reflective of the Bride of Christ who is to be "without spot or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27). The Most Holy Place represented a final refinement. Only the High Priest could enter here, and only after much preparation. His entry was further restricted to one day out of the year. The Most Holy Place was where the ark of the covenant was kept and it represented the presence of God.

We see in this picture that as one approached the presence of God, greater requirements had to be met. At each level the number of those who had access decreased tremendously. It was not treated as a trivial thing to come into God's presence. The same is true in the church age.

Throughout scripture, the church, individually and corporately is referred to as a temple or tabernacle. God has designed this living temple along the same lines as the physical. The requirements for approach to the presence of God are the same.

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:5 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:20-22 The place of intimacy is the Most Holy Place. It is here that the Bride will consummate the marriage. The Bride that is allowed here is a Bride that has been made ready, a purified and holy Bride as described in Ephesians 5:1-33.

26 that [Christ] might sanctify [the Bride], having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

27 that He might present to Himself the [separated out ones] in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

We see in the pattern of the tabernacle that access to the presence of God is not given in the same measure to all individuals. Holiness and preparation were required to go deeper into God's presence. The number of people who met the requirements for access dropped precipitously at each level. In this temple of living stones that God is fashioning, we see three separate areas. This corresponds to three groups of Christians. Your access to the Father and to His most holy things is determined by what group you belong to. Your discernment of what is righteous and what is profane, and your diligence to walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord are keys to further entrance into the holiest portions of the temple of God. Those who attain to the Most Holy Place

are the Bride of Christ. For them there is no veil of separation.

Look again at the following verse:

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.¹ Peter 2:5 In this verse we are told that as Christians, we are members of a holy priesthood. However, even among the priests of Israel we know that not all priests were accorded equal honor. Some walked worthily and some did not. God made a distinction among them, even as He has among those who are called the church. The things of the Old Covenant are very relevant as types and shadows for us who are of the New Covenant.

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.¹ Corinthians 10:11 In the book of Ezekiel we are told of God making a distinction among the priests of the tribe of Levi. The passage is prophetic, speaking of service in a future temple, a temple of living stones. Access to the most holy things and to God Himself was determined by how worthily one walked before God.

10 "But the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear the punishment for their iniquity.

11 "Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house; they shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them.

12 "Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn against them," declares the Lord GOD, "that they shall bear the punishment for their iniquity.

13 "And they shall not come near to Me to serve as a priest to Me, nor come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed.

14 "Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the house, of all its service, and of all that shall be done in it.

15 "But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord GOD.

16 "They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge. Ezekiel 44:10-16

What a tremendous loss was incurred by the disobedient priests who went with the people in the pursuit of their idols. They were relegated to the service of the building. They were forbidden to serve directly in God's presence. They could not come near unto Him, nor unto any of His holy things, the things considered most holy. Their service was a service of the Outer Court as is indicated in verse 11:

Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house; they shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. Your current love and passion for God will determine whether you see the above passage and it's judgment on the idolatrous priests as tragic or not. Some may think that their punishment doesn't sound too bad. After all, they were still priests and they were still allowed to serve at the temple. There is great tragedy in it, however. The temple itself is nothing without the presence of God. The temple is merely a vessel that contains a great treasure and the great treasure is the presence and person of God. The idolatrous priests are being told that their service and access in the temple will be restricted to the building itself, the true treasure will be withheld from them.

It is much like being given a present of inestimable worth and then being told that you can only keep the box that the gift came in. This directly correlates to the judgment brought upon Queen Vashti in the book of Esther. She was a queen, but she was denied access to the presence of the king. What joy is there in being the bride of the king if you are denied access to him? The idolatrous priests are not only forbidden from serving in God's presence, they are denied access to the things which are the most holy things of God. Because of the abominations they have committed, they must bear their shame.

It would be reasonable at this point to ask what, if any, indication there is in scripture of God making a similar distinction among those who are His children in this present age. There is a parallel passage in the New Testament to the above scripture from Ezekiel, which reveals the same truths, bringing them forward into the era of the New Covenant.

42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?"

43 "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

44 "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

45 "But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;

46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

47 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes,

48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. Luke 12:42-48

Verse 44 reveals that not all Christians will have access to all of God's possessions. This is a privilege reserved for those who are faithful. What is it that will be withheld? It is God's most holy things and God's very presence. When Jesus spoke of the faithful servant, "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions", He was speaking of a great honor being bestowed upon him, an honor that not all would share.

Many Christians today have taken no thought to such things. Having obtained the free gift of salvation, they have become content and live much as the world does, pursuing the same idols of materialism, security, and comfort that the unbelieving masses pursue. It is but a remnant of the church that is actually pursuing God. It is but a few who are anxiously and passionately awaiting the return of the Son of God, keeping their robes unstained from the world.

God's standards have not changed for His church. Those who think they can pursue the same idols that the world chases after and still be given access to the most holy things of God are mistaken. Service in the presence of God will also be withheld from them. They will not be accounted as worthy to be a part of the Bride of Christ.

We are priests before God just as certainly as the Levites who were referred to in Ezekiel. The same standard of holiness required of them is required of us. you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood...1 Peter 2:5 Not all things are equal for all Christians. Salvation is God's free gift, but there is much beyond salvation. Many Christians stand in peril of suffering great loss, loss of that which they did not even know existed and was being offered to them. The church must wake up or experience devastation. Access to the very presence of God is at stake.

Part X - The Outer Court

The Outer Court

We have stated that the Outer Court of the tabernacle is representative of spirit salvation and it is the furthest location from the Most Holy Place that is still part of the tabernacle. Many Christians have through ignorance or disobedience become content to remain in the Outer Court. The Outer Court is the part of the building that has access to the world outside. It rubs shoulders with the world.

Unfortunately, many in the Outer Court are looking the wrong way. Rather than looking farther into the tabernacle, into the Holy Place, and beyond to the Most Holy Place, they are facing the other direction. They are focused on the world. Because of their worldly focus, they are oblivious to the treasures that lie so close at hand.

Those who are called to salvation are all given an invitation to advance from the Outer Court, through the Holy Place, all the way to the Most Holy Place. Few make the complete trip, however. What hinders those who remain outside? As Paul told the Corinthian believers, "You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections" (2 Corinthians 6:12).

Many, having received salvation, have clung tenaciously to their old affections. They have not allowed themselves to be transformed. The idols of the world are their idols. Some even believe that their relationship to God is of great benefit in pursuing the idols that they hold dear. In their deception they implore God to fulfill their lusts. James makes this clear:

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:3-4

James is speaking to the church here. Why does he call such worldly saints adulteresses? Is it not because they are betrothed to Christ, but are unfaithful in their affections? Paul said, "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2). All Christians are betrothed to Christ. Their love and their passion is to be reserved for Christ alone. Many, however, are pursuing other loves.

All who receive salvation stand at the Outer Court of the tabernacle with an invitation to come further in. At the moment of confession and repentance they are facing the Most Holy Place with their back to the world. The call to come in is a call to intimacy. It will require an emptying, a laying down of all things of the world as the Holy Spirit of God brings conviction. To progress further into the temple requires refining. It requires embracing the cross. It requires one to keep his back steadily fixed toward the world and his eyes fixed on Christ. But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62 The very

furnishings of the tabernacle foretell of the necessity of embracing the cross. The furnishings are arranged in the shape of a cross. At the base of the cross is the brazen altar with the bronze laver just above it. These are in the Outer Court. Entering the Holy Place, on either side, forming the horizontal member are the golden candlestick and the table of showbread. Continuing on up the vertical member, entering the Most Holy Place, we find the altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant along with the mercy seat. To progress further inward, one must embrace the cross. To turn and face the world is to turn one's back on the cross. A decision must be made. Which way will the saint go? There is no possibility of compromise. One must discern the difference between the holy and the profane. Idols must be abandoned. Fears must be confronted. Lusts must be denied.

Unfortunately, many don't recognize the idols to which they cling. Anything that is exalted in your life can be an idol. Success can be an idol. Material possessions of all types can be an idol. Leisure can be an idol. Comfort can be an idol. Security can be an idol. Health can be an idol. The respect and praise of men can be an idol. When we stand at the Outer Court, the world and its idols are not silent. They shout at us. Family and friends tell us we would be fools to not pursue them. Our flesh also cries out with the memory of its lusts. As the flesh views the cross terror assails it. How foolish it seems to go this way. The world cannot embrace the cross and most of the church will not. Why should we?

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24 Who are those who belong to Christ, referred to in the above verse? The Bride belongs to Jesus. Those who belong to Jesus must crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. To fail to do so indicates that our heart belongs to another, that we have idols in our life.

Satan has deceived many believers into thinking that their lot in eternity will be the same as all other Christians. They believe there is nothing required of them other than believing in Christ for their salvation and confessing Him. They pursue the life of their dreams and lusts and anticipate a blissful eternity. What unexpected grief will be theirs when they realize that the choicest things of God are denied them, things that will make the most prized possessions on Earth seem as dung in comparison. Those who pursue the things this world has to offer are truly blind.

Paul spoke of pressing on toward the goal (Php 3:14). Those who would progress to the Most Holy Place must "press on" toward it. Resistance will be present. The heavenly goal must be kept at the center of attention. All diligence must be supplied to attain to the goal. Those who are at ease in Zion will not attain to the Most Holy Place. The pattern and testimony of scripture is that the vast multitude remains at the Outer Court. It is a much smaller number that will enter the Holy Place and a mere remnant in comparison who will make it to the Most Holy Place. Knowing this should make the concerned Christian take heed. There is no room for resting on one's laurels. Paul describes the intensity that should be a part of the Believer's life, comparing it to an athlete running a race, a soldier going to war, and a hard-working farmer anticipating the fruit of his labors.

3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

5 And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 2 Timothy 2:3-7

Paul is speaking to Timothy of the necessity of embracing the hardship of a soldier, the rigorous discipline of an athlete, and the patient work ethic of a farmer, always keeping the goal in mind. The soldier desires to please the one who enlisted him. This is the key to his advancement. The athlete strives for a prize, and Timothy is reminded that there are rules that must be adhered to. The farmer anticipates being the first to receive a share of the crops that he has labored to bring forth. Each one focuses on his individual reward and applies whatever discipline, rigor, and patience is necessary, participating according to the guidelines set forth.

Paul is not speaking to Timothy of pursuing the salvation that is given freely to us by God. Paul is speaking of something beyond this salvation. He is speaking of reward. He is also referring to a further salvation, one that Christians know little about, the salvation of the soul. So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. Hebrews 9:28

What is this "salvation without reference to sin" that Christ will appear a second time for? Most Christians know of only one salvation, that which I have referred to as spirit salvation and which is commonly referred to as being 'born again.' God, however, desires that we should be saved spirit, soul, and body. Whereas spirit salvation is a free gift, soul salvation must be worked out. It is this salvation that the following verse refers to. So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling... Php 2:12

If there were only one salvation and we are told that it is a "free gift, not of works, lest any man should boast", then why would Paul then say to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling?" This puzzle can only be unraveled when one discerns that there is more than one salvation being referred to in scriptures. This is also typified in the tabernacle. We have previously mentioned that the Outer Court corresponds to spirit salvation. We can now affirm that the Holy Place corresponds to soul salvation.

Much could be spoken of this, but I will not venture into this area at this time. It is enough to state that there is much that remains after one receives his or her new birth and is born of the Spirit of God. It is this that is beyond our initial spirit salvation that Paul has spoken of to Timothy. Paul speaks a similar message to the Corinthian believers.

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.¹ Corinthians 9:24-27 The imperishable wreath Paul refers to represents the eternal prize he is striving for. He exercises discipline over his body so that he might not be disqualified. Again, this disqualification is not speaking of spirit salvation, but of reward. As Paul spoke to the Corinthians at an earlier place in the same letter, "If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire"¹ Corinthians 3:15.

Satan has purposely blinded the eyes of the church to the issue of personal reward. If a saint believes that his lot in eternity will be the same, no matter how he lives his life before God, he will have an increased temptation to walk carelessly and with little regard to the ramifications of his behavior. He will have less motivation to walk in a circumspect and disciplined manner in pursuit of the high calling of God upon his life. The effects of removing personal reward can be seen in many of the countries of the world under communism. When personal property is taken away and the profit motive removed, productivity drops precipitously. When all receive the same reward, no matter how diligently they labor, performance drops and mediocrity becomes the order of the day. In the same way, the church has become mediocre. It is hard to tell the saint from the unsaved. Both groups are subject to the same maladies. The same idols are pursued. Values are nearly identical. There is little to differentiate the believer from the unbeliever.

Some may question, "Isn't it selfish for a saint to focus upon reward?" The answer is, "Not if the reward is something that the Father has told us to pursue." In the book of Hebrews we are told of the great heroes of the faith. They were pursuing a goal. They were looking for a city not built with hands (Hebrews 11:10; Hebrews 11:16). They were looking to eternal reward. Jesus also encouraged His disciples to lay up treasures for themselves in heaven (Matthew 6:20). The average saint today is aware of nothing beyond salvation. Most have never heard a sermon on eternal reward. Most are under the false delusion that the same reward awaits all believers. However, Jesus said, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" Revelation 22:12. Failing to understand this has led to so many saints unwillingness to embrace the cross. It has persuaded multitudes to be content with the Outer Court.

Part X1 - Embrace the Cross

Embrace the Cross The Bride's dwelling is in the Most Holy Place. This is the place of habitation and abiding. This is the place where the veil of the flesh is torn apart and communion with God is the order of the day. Even as the literal veil in the temple was torn asunder when our Lord was crucified, our flesh must be crucified to open up the way for communion with the Father and the Son.

Some may ask at this point, "Why must we embrace the cross? Wasn't Jesus' sacrifice sufficient?" It is certainly true that Jesus has restored our access to the presence of the Father. The torn veil is proof of this. The veil was torn from the top to the bottom indicating that from God's end of the relationship between God and man all impediments to access into His presence have been removed. The way has been made open to us. This is tremendously significant. However, Christ's sacrifice in no way symbolizes that God has made peace with sin, nor that sin has now become acceptable unto Him. Christ's sacrifice was not intended to make a way for man to remain sinful and yet have full and complete access to the presence of a holy God. No, Christ's sacrifice was made so that we also could have the veil of our flesh torn asunder. Whereas we had been slaves to sin, a way was made for us to now become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:19). Jesus' death was not for the sake of making sin acceptable to God, it was for the purpose of making mankind holy.

19 Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22

Jesus' death was for the purpose of purifying us, to wash us, to make us clean. Before His death we were sold as slaves to sin. We could do nothing but sin. Our most righteous acts were counted as filthiness before God. Through His death, a new and living way has been opened up before us. We can now walk in holiness before God and even have our consciences cleansed from evil, but we must choose to appropriate what God has done for us. This calls for action and response on our part as is shown in the following scriptures.

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.

26 "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. Matthew 16:24-27 As was mentioned in the last chapter, all those who are saved are offered an invitation to advance further into the temple or tabernacle, towards the presence of God. In verse 24 of the preceding scripture, we are told that those who would come after Christ must deny themselves and take up the cross. Further entrance into the tabernacle requires embracing the cross. Since the Bride's residence is in the Most Holy Place, the Bride consists of those who have embraced the cross.

Again, in verse 27 we are told that reward will be meted out to every man "according to his deeds." This passage links together the three elements of; pursuing Christ, taking up the cross, and reward. These three are inextricably bound up with one another.

What does it mean to take up the cross? Much understanding can be gained from the above passage. Taking up the cross involves denying oneself. It requires refusing to save one's life. The literal meaning of life in this passage is soul life, which includes self-will, personal desires, and ambitions. We can also ascertain from the passage that taking up the cross is the antithesis of trying to gain what the world has to offer.

Going back to the image that we have already used, the new believer in Christ stands at the Outer Court of the tabernacle. At his back is the world with all its allure and its idols. At his front is the tabernacle wherein is the presence of God. These two stand in opposition to one another. They are both beckoning to him. He must choose which way he will go. Reward or loss hangs on his decision.

Satan would like the believer to think that having arrived at the Outer Court, having received salvation, that there is nothing else to be concerned about. The truth, however, is that there is much more. Intimate communion and daily fellowship with the Creator of the Universe is awaiting those who would traverse farther in. Access to all of the most holy things of God and access to God's very presence are being offered to the saint.

It would seem that the world wouldn't stand a chance in gaining the heart of the believer. What God offers makes the world appear pale in comparison. Paul described the things of the world as mere rubbish.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. Php 3:7-8 The world, however, seems to shout at us while God speaks with a still, small voice. It would appear that among much of the church that the voice of the world is so loud that the voice of God is hardly heard at all. Few seem to understand that they are being beckoned to proceed further into the presence of God.

Those who would proceed into the temple must turn their back on the clamor of the world with its neon glare and seductive attractiveness. An alternate set of senses must be employed, senses that can see beyond the temporal into eternal things. Discipline, rigor, and patience must replace a desire for instant gratification, ease, and comfort. Above all, one must have seen a glimpse of what awaits him. It was said even of Jesus, that He endured the cross for the joy which was set before

Him (Hebrews 12:2). We too, must see the joy which is set before us in order that we may embrace the cross and proceed toward the Most Holy Place.

Part X2 - The Joy Set Before Us

The Joy Set Before Us

What is it that could convince a person to turn his back on all that the world has to offer? What is it that could keep one steadfast in pursuit of a heavenly goal in the face of the most severe opposition and oppression? What is it that could cause a man to accept with satisfaction that he may never receive reward in this life, while he faithfully looks for reward in the next life?

We find an answer in the life of martyred missionary, Jim Elliot. He was a young, gifted man with talent and potential. The world was ripe and ready for his taking, but Jim Elliot turned his back on the world in his pursuit of Christ. He committed to spend his life to advance the kingdom of God among remote tribal peoples. An incredulous world did not understand. His answer to the world's criticism was, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Jim Elliot had an eternal perspective and he had glimpsed that which awaited him.

King David was also a man with an eternal perspective. Although he had a whole kingdom, with all it had to offer, he was focused on a greater possession.

5 The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; Thou dost support my lot.

6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. Psalms 16:5-6

David, in a beautiful and dramatic poetic form, drew a comparison of his inheritance in God to the inheritance of those who entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. When Israel took possession of their promised inheritance, the land was surveyed and divided into portions. The lot was then cast to determine which tribe would receive each portion.

David is stating that when the time came for the lot to be thrown to determine his inheritance that God was with him, supporting him. The survey lines that marked his inheritance fell along pleasant places. He received a beautiful heritage, his inheritance being the Lord.

David chose the inheritance of a priest. The priestly tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance of land along with the other tribes. Instead, God gave them something much better. He said that He would be their inheritance (Deuteronomy 18:2). All Christians are priests before God and are called a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6). Our inheritance is therefore a priestly inheritance. We can say with David, "The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup." This should excite the faithful saint of God. We have not been given an inheritance that is perishable, rather we have been given an everlasting heritage. The best of the best has been granted to us. Not only are we offered the best of creation, God's most holy things, but the Creator Himself is our portion. The Israelites were promised a special land flowing with milk and honey. They sent spies in to look over the land and they brought back some of the produce of the land.

23 Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two men, with some of the pomegranates and the figs.

24 That place was called the valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the sons of Israel cut down from there. Numbers 13:23-24 This land of promise was so fruitful that it took two men to carry a single cluster of grapes. It so amazed the men that they named the valley in honor of their find. However, because of the obstacles to be overcome to take possession of the land, only two of the twelve spies were desirous of going in. This percentage is indicative of the number who arrive at the Outer Court of the tabernacle and remain there, compared to the number who are willing to press forward to possess all that is offered them.

Like Israel, many Christians are freed from the heavy burden they were under. Even as the Israelites were freed from the oppression and slavery of the Egyptians, Christians are freed from their slavery to sin. This deliverance only takes them to the wilderness, however. The land of promise still lies ahead. There are obstacles and enemies in the way. It requires courage and faith in God to proceed.

Israel decided that she didn't want to face her fears. Instead she longed to go back to Egypt, signifying going back to the world (Exodus 14:3). Even though there was bondage in Egypt, it seemed better than risking life and limb to obtain the prize God held out to them.

Many Christians have responded in like manner. Having been freed from sin, they would rather go back to what is familiar, bondage and all, than to embrace the cross and throw oneself unreservedly over into the hands of God. There appears to be relatively few with the heart of Joshua and Caleb.

6 And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;

7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.

8 "If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us-- a land which flows with milk and honey.

9 "Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." Numbers 14:6-9

Multitudes will forfeit the good things God has for them due to their fear and carnality. Among the whole generation of Israel, only Joshua and Caleb received the promised inheritance. When they could have had rivers and valleys, figs, grapes, pomegranates, milk and honey, this unfaithful generation received only wilderness and manna. We looked earlier at those among the Levitical Priesthood who incurred great loss. When they could have had God's most holy things and served in the presence of God Himself, they were relegated to the service of the building. For these unfaithful priests, their loss was similar to the generation that forfeited so much in the wilderness. Wittingly, or unwittingly, many Christians today are making decisions that will lead to a similar tragic loss.

We have a joy that has been set before us. This joy is to become possessors of God Himself. He is our inheritance. Jesus said that His flesh was true meat and His blood was true drink (John 6:22). We are invited to taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalms 34:8).

Many saints, having received salvation, have hardly given a thought to getting to know the One who purchased it for them with His own blood. Salvation was meant to restore fellowship between fallen mankind and God. Many having received this gift, however, seem clueless as to why it was given to them in the first place.

God did not redeem fallen mankind so that they could continue on in their idolatry and bondage while receiving a free pass to heaven. He called them to walk in righteousness, to be transformed and conformed to the image of the One who saved them. He called them to fellowship and intimacy with Himself. As we have read, the Bride consists of those who have received white robes and have kept them clean. The Bridegroom will come back for His Bride as a thief in the night and steal her away. Many of those who fail to make themselves ready will be caught off guard. They will be left behind. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. They will have a second opportunity to wash their robes, but it will come at great price.

Embracing the cross requires faith in God. Faith is the opposite of fear. Those who are walking in fear are not walking in faith. Those who are walking in faith have faced their fears and overcome them. It required faith for the children of Israel to take possession of their inheritance. When Israel came out of bondage in Egypt she had to cross the Red Sea. God was gracious and He manifested His provision for them before asking them to cross the waters. Moses stretched forth his rod and only after the sea parted did all Israel cross on dry ground. However, when Joshua took the people through the Jordan River to enter their inheritance, God required that they make the first move, demonstrating faith.

"And it shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above shall stand in one heap." Joshua 3:13 As we go in to take possession of our inheritance God will require faith from us. We cannot say, "Show me your provision first, then I will follow you." God requires that we constantly step out into that which we do not see. Only then will He manifest His provision. Only then will He take us into our promised inheritance. To overcome the fears involved in a walk of faith, we must have a tremendous source of courage to draw from. The source of this wellspring of courage is love. "Perfect love casts out all fear"¹ John 4:18. The apostle Paul said that the love of Christ constrained him, holding him to the course (2 Corinthians 5:14). We will need to draw upon this same wellspring if we are to take up the cross and proceed into the temple to the place of the Bride.

Part X3 - The Joy Set Before Us

Love, the Wellspring of Courage

Many saints have made an earnest attempt to follow Christ, only to fall short and grow weary in the pursuit. The reason for their failure is often that they are relying upon their own human strength to follow Jesus. Personal resolve and self-discipline are the wells they are drawing from. These are insufficient, however, to take them where they desire to go. In the lives of Peter and John, we are given a picture of two men drawing strength from two different sources. The outcome for each man is quite different.

Peter, in his early walk with Christ, is a clear example of a man who is following Christ, relying upon his own discipline and resolve to get him through. It took courage to be a disciple of Christ. The 12 disciples were well aware of the enmity of the Chief Priest and the Pharisees. They understood that many would like to see Jesus dead. As Jesus' closest associates, this put their lives in peril. Courage was required for these men to continue on with Jesus.

Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus explained to the disciples what was about to befall Him. He told them that they would all fall away because of Him. Peter, confident in his resolve and ability to stay the course, told Jesus that even if all others fell away, he would remain steadfast (Matthew 26:33). This was a very cocky statement for Peter to make. Peter was sitting at the table with eleven other men who had followed Christ for as long as he had and he was in effect saying, "My faithfulness exceeds all of theirs, for even if they fail you, I never will."

There is no doubt that Peter was a man of a very strong will. He was also a courageous man. He was willing to fight for Christ and put his life on the line for Him. When the mob came to arrest Jesus, it was Peter who drew the sword and lopped off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Peter's courage sprang from his own strength, however. His courage was based upon his reason.

Peter believed that Jesus was the Son of God. However, he failed to grasp what Christ's true mission was. He believed Jesus would restore the kingdom of David. He did not understand that Jesus came to destroy the dominion of Satan over mankind, nor did he perceive that this overthrow would require Jesus to lay down His life.

Peter was courageous as long as he understood what was happening. I don't think that he ever truly understood, before the crucifixion, what would transpire. When Peter saw Jesus arrested, he was shaken. He still had some courage, however, and followed the mob to the court of the Chief Priest. He had seen so many miracles that I am sure he expected to see yet another one. When Jesus submitted to being beaten, spat upon, and mocked, Peter's reason and courage faltered. This was not something Peter had foreseen. To him, it looked like Jesus was being overcome by evil men. How could God be overcome by man? He began to doubt Jesus and consequently he felt vulnerable and helpless. When those with him in the courtyard began to ask him if he was a follower of Jesus, Peter was in confusion and had no courage left. He denied Christ three times.

74 Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a cock crowed.

75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. Matthew 26:74-75

Two things occur when we follow Christ out of the strength of our will. When we are successful and perform some accomplishment in our pursuit of Christ, we will become puffed up and full of pride, after all, we were the one who did this thing. However, if we fail to accomplish that which we are resolved to do, we become devastated. The failure, likewise, is ours. This is what Peter experienced. He was devastated. When the cock crowed, he remembered Jesus' word to him. He realized that Jesus knew what was going to happen all along. He had prophesied it. Peter still didn't fully understand why Jesus was undergoing suffering, but he realized that it didn't catch Jesus by surprise. He had spoken to the disciples previously about what must transpire.

Peter realized that he had failed to do what he had so fervently resolved. His bold words were just an empty boast. His confidence was shaken. His best effort was not enough to keep him faithful to Christ.

There was another disciple, however, who remained near to Jesus. This was John. John made no boast about how he would remain by Christ even if all others fled. John wasn't known for his strong will. Rather, he was known for another trait, his love.

John, in his gospel, refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was part of the three disciples who were most intimate with Jesus. He was often described as being close by Jesus' side and even leaned on Jesus' breast (John 13:23). If one of the other disciples had a question to ask of Jesus, they would sometimes ask John to present it to Him (John 13:24-25).

John loved Jesus passionately and he was aware of Jesus' love for him. By declaring himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved", John was in effect saying, "I know Jesus loves me." It was his understanding of Jesus' love for him that caused such a deep love to arise within his own heart. John acknowledges this in his first epistle to the church.

We love, because He first loved us.¹ John 4:19 This profound truth will be important for us to keep in mind as we go along. As we see how great a source of motivation love is, we will naturally ask how we can be increased in love. The answer is that we must better understand how deeply Christ loves us. Love begets love. Passion begets passion. As we come to comprehend Christ's great love for us, we will find a reciprocal love arising within our own hearts.

John made no rash vows, but, due to his deep love for Jesus, he remained as close as possible.

15 And Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,

16 but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought in Peter. John 18:15-16

John is speaking of himself here as the other disciple known to the High Priest. He and Peter were the only two disciples mentioned as being near Jesus at his questioning before the High Priest. Unlike Peter, it wasn't discipline and determination that brought John here, it was love. He wanted

to remain close to his beloved friend. It was impossible for him to be elsewhere. At Jesus' crucifixion a number of the women who followed Him were present, but only one of the twelve disciples. This was John. His heart of love would not allow him to be separated from his loving master, even through a most unbearable time. At his crucifixion, Jesus committed two of the people who loved Him the most to one another.

26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household. John 19:26-27

I am certain that Mary never lacked anything while she was in John's household. John's care for her flowed from the wellspring of his love for Jesus. In loving and caring for Mary, John was expressing his love for Jesus. Love can be extravagant, it surpasses all other sources of motivation. Paul spoke to the Corinthian church of the excellence of love.

4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails...1 Corinthians 13:4-8 When will-power and resoluteness failed Peter, love did not fail John. John was able to remain by Jesus' side, bearing and enduring all things, due to love. Verse 4 tells us that love does not brag, nor act arrogantly. It was not necessary for John to boast that he would never forsake Jesus. John was constrained and controlled by love. His actions would merely reflect his love for Christ. When Jesus was resurrected and the empty tomb was reported by the women, we are told that Peter and John raced to the tomb to inspect it.

2 And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

3 Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb.

4 And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first;

5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

6 Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there,

7 and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed.

9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. John 20:2-9

Here again, we see the excellence of love. We are told that when John looked into the tomb and beheld it empty, that he saw and believed. Peter merely marveled. Going back to Corinthians we are told that "love believes all things." It was love that allowed John to believe while others doubted. In the 21st chapter of John we are told of another encounter between the disciples and Jesus after His resurrection. Peter decided to go fishing and the other disciples joined him. While they were a little ways from shore, Jesus called to them, the disciples not knowing who He was. In this encounter, John recognized Jesus and told the other disciples. Only after John told him, did Peter recognize that it was Jesus. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. John 21:7

Again, John's perceptiveness can be attributed to his love. He was always hoping for an encounter with Jesus and was quick to believe. 1st Corinthians tells us that "love believes all things, love hopes all things."

Love is certainly an attribute of those who make up the Bride of Christ. It is arguably the greatest attribute. It will be impossible to embrace the cross and walk where Christ would have us to walk without love. We will fail to believe, fail to hope, fail to endure, fail to bear all things, without love. In the preceding examples it would seem that God is striving to reveal to us a profound truth. Over and over we see Peter and John facing the same tests, but with vastly different results. What Peter was unable to accomplish with human strength, will-power, and resolve, John accomplished with love.

I heard a pastor, who had performed many marriage ceremonies, state that he had never seen an unattractive bride. He said they were all made radiant by the love that was evident upon their faces. Even so, the most attractive feature of the Bride of Christ is her evident love for the Bridegroom. It is this love that allows her to advance where others will not go. It is this love that leads her from the Outer Court, through the Holy Place, into the Most Holy Place.

Those who are of the Bride have seen the joy that is set before them. This joy is Christ. He is the passion and love of the Bride. He is her possession, her inheritance. Her love will keep her in readiness and in expectation of His appearing. Like John, she will not be able to be anywhere else, but at His side.

Love is therefore essential, for Jesus will lead His Bride through wilderness places as He prepares her. Even as a butterfly begins as a caterpillar, but is transformed in the cocoon, the Bride will be transformed as she allows her love for Christ to lead her through wilderness paths.

Part X4 - The Wilderness

The Wilderness

It was not God's intention for the children of Israel to spend a whole generation in the wilderness. The wilderness was not to be their destination. However, the wilderness was an integral and important part of their journey. Going through the wilderness was not optional. Even so, the Bride must go through the wilderness. She is not to abide there forever, but she is to profit by her wilderness experience.

Having just come out of bondage, Israel needed to acquire a new mindset. No longer slaves to their Egyptian masters, the Israelites had to shed a slave mentality. It was necessary for someone to take charge of their lives. They had two obvious choices. They could rule their own lives, or they could submit to God, receiving Him as their head and their Lord. The saint of God has the same two choices. Having been delivered from bondage, the saint can choose to rule his own life, attempting to please God in his own strength, being led by his own reason, or he can submit to the Lordship of Christ. As we saw with Peter, reliance upon self is inadequate to lead us to the destination God has for us. It also was inadequate to lead the Israelites into the promised land. The ten unfaithful spies and the mass of the people were walking in their own strength. Having spied out the land, they determined whether they were adequate in their own strength to go in and possess it. The answer was a resounding "No!"

32 "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.

33 "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."Numbers 13:32-33

It may seem incredible to us that Israel thought that they were going to have to conquer and possess the land of their inheritance by their own strength. After all, they had seen clearly that it was God who had brought them out of Egypt. It was God who visited the ten plagues upon Egypt. It was God who opened up the Red Sea allowing Israel to cross over and who then closed the sea, destroying the armies of Pharaoh.

How could these same Israelites, who could attribute none of their deliverance from so great a bondage to their own strength, believe that they would have to rely upon their own strength to possess the land of promise? Indeed, how can Christians today, who have been freed from the bondage of sin by no merit, deed, or strength of their own, believe that they will enter into their inheritance by their own strength? Yet many do.

Only Joshua and Caleb perceived that the God who had brought them freedom from Egypt would also go before them to destroy the enemies who were in their land. Consequently, only these two from among their generation entered in. The wilderness is a place where we learn where our strength lies. It is a place where we abandon our slave mentality and we take God as our Head. It

is a place where we demonstrate that we place no confidence in ourselves, but have complete confidence in God. In the wilderness we learn to lean upon God. Having received the salvation that God provided for us through His Son, we now learn to trust Him with our lives in all other matters. The Song of Solomon holds many truths that relate to Christ and His Bride. It reveals the purpose for the wilderness.

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5 The wilderness is a place where the Bride learns to lean on her beloved. If she does not learn this lesson, she will not come up out of the wilderness, but will remain there. God, having purchased our salvation, does not intend for us to live our lives by our own strength and wisdom. He wants us to continue leaning upon Him, trusting Him and receiving all we require from His hand.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Romans 8:32

One of God's names is Jehovah Jireh, meaning God Our Provider. Many Christians today want to do something for God, but what He wants is for His children to trust Him. This is not in any way a contradiction to what has been said in this book thus far. God wants our lives to be full of obedience and activity, but the activity He desires is that which He leads us to. As we mentioned in a previous chapter, we are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and Jesus stated that He never did anything of His own initiative.

Jesus' life was far from inactive, but His activities were those the Father led Him to. God is always the initiator of the deeds He would have us to be involved in. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Pursuing the reward God has set before us is not about doing something for God. It is merely being willing to go where He is beckoning us to go. It is about expressing trust and confidence in God to the extent that we will go wherever He leads.

Adam and Eve's fall was the result of a failure to trust God. They believed that God was withholding something that was beneficial to them. In grasping for themselves the thing that God had withheld, they were saying, "God, I don't believe you have my best interests at heart. I must take control of my interests because I no longer trust you."

Ever since the fall of man God has been looking for those who will say, "God, I do trust you. I do feel that I can confidently place my life in your hands." Unfortunately, even among those who trust God for their eternal salvation, there are few who will trust Him with their lives here on Earth. However, when He does find such a one, God will move heaven and Earth on their behalf. For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. 2 Chronicles 16:9

God has an inheritance for His children, but it will require faith on our part to acquire it. The Bride is those who trust God and who willingly place their lives and their welfare in His hands. They do not feel they must protect their own interests. They are confident of God's care for them. With Job, they can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). The children of Israel in the wilderness could not make this good confession. Instead, they confessed just the opposite. They

asked God if He had led them into the wilderness just to kill them. They asked Him if it was because there weren't enough graves in Egypt that He had led them to the wilderness to bury them there (Exodus 14:11). Such taunting and lack of trust angered God and because of it He swore that they would not enter into the land of promise. This matter of trust is of utmost importance and it is in the wilderness that it is proven. God is looking for faith in the hearts of His children. Jesus asked the question, "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8)? Likewise, we are told, And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:6(NIV)

Once salvation is received by an act of faith, this faith being a free gift (Ephesians 2:8), God then expects the saint to begin demonstrating trust in Him. The believer needs no other proof of God's good will toward Him than the cross of Christ. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16 The natural response of one who has received salvation should be to assert confidently that he knows God loves Him. He loves him so much that He did not even withhold His own Son, but freely gave Him up on our behalf. All saints should be able to assert with John, "I am the disciple whom Jesus loves." Having this confidence, the saint will find himself following Christ wherever He leads. For this reason, Satan works tirelessly to undermine the saint's confidence in Christ's love toward him. The saint must remain vigilant against the deceptions of Satan.

Having determined that we will trust Christ, following after Him wherever He leads, we must then learn to discern how He leads us. In the wilderness, God led the Israelites by the pillar of fire and the cloud. When these moved, the whole nation of Israel would immediately strike camp and move with them. The child of God is likewise to be led by God. Instead of fire and a cloud, we have God's own Holy Spirit to guide and lead us. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are [mature] sons of God. Romans 8:14 The articles in the Holy Place of the temple are symbolic of the Spirit of God. The altar of incense and the golden candlestick indicate that if we are to progress further into the temple, we must be led by God's Spirit. The reason for this is that the Bride must have no will or initiative of her own. She lives to do the will of God. In order to do so she must discern the voice and leading of God. Jesus is our example in this. As the Christ, the sent one of God, Jesus willingly became subject to God the Father. He only did the will of the Father, never seeking His own will or acting upon His own initiative. His complete obedience in this was perfectly demonstrated upon Gethsemane when He told the Father, "Not My will, but Thy will be done" (Luke 22:42).

Jesus repeatedly demonstrated to His disciples the obedience that the Father required. He did not even speak a word on His own initiative, but spoke that which the Father gave Him.

I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 5:30 28 Jesus therefore said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." John 8:28-29

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me." John 8:42-49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.

50 "And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me." John 12:49-50 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. John 14:10

Embracing the cross means dying to the things of the self-life. The scriptures tell us that God's intention for us is to be conformed to the image of Christ. If this is so, then God would lead us all to the place where we too could confess, "I do nothing of my own initiative. I always do the will of the Father. I do not even speak a word on my own, but I speak that which the Father gives me." Does this seem like an unattainable dream? This is the Father's expressed will for us. The Bride of Christ has no will of her own, even as Christ had no will of His own. He lived for another's pleasure. The Father's satisfaction was Jesus' satisfaction. The two were one. This same unity is Jesus' desire for us.

20 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

22 "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;

23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me. John 17:20-23

Jesus was perfected in unity with the Father. As we enter this same unity with Christ, we will have no ambition or initiative of our own. We will live to do the will of our Lord. We must therefore discern clearly what His will is for us. We must learn to be directed by the Holy Spirit. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:25

God gave the children of Israel the pillar of fire and the cloud to train them how to be led by Him. He was teaching them how He wanted them to relate to Himself. When He moved, He wanted them to move. When He abided, He wanted them to abide. All they had to do was watch and observe what God was doing and follow after Him. This was Jesus' example, also. He was always beholding the Father and doing what He saw the Father doing. He did this as an example of how we are to walk. As God takes the Bride through wilderness experiences, He is desiring to find her expressing confidence in Him. Instead of murmuring, words of complaint, and expressions of fear, He is looking to hear her speak confidently of her trust in the One who brought her out of bondage. In the wilderness God is teaching the Bride to move only at His leading and to go wherever He directs. He is teaching the Bride to hear His voice and to respond accordingly.

These are not small lessons. It would seem that few actually perceive the purpose of the wilderness testing in their lives. One of the greatest features of the wilderness is that there is a

scarcity of things that appeal to the flesh. There is little water, little greenery, few trees, very little shade, or things that bring comfort. In the wilderness, Israel had manna for food. Manna contained everything necessary to sustain their lives, but it held little appeal to the fleshly appetites. As God takes us through the wilderness, we will experience the same meagerness of that which appeals to the flesh. God is testing us to see if we will be content with His provision and His will for us. This is part of embracing the cross. We must crucify the flesh with its desires and lusts. The reward we seek is not the fulfillment of the flesh and its lusts, rather, it is a heavenly reward. We seek the presence of Christ. We seek to lay hold of that for which we were laid hold of by Christ Jesus (Php 3:12).

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. This is the heart of the Bride, a desire to know Christ. The wilderness is intended to strip all else away until we are left with one ambition, one goal, to know Christ and to gain Him as our inheritance. When we are leaning completely on Him, we will be ready to come up out of the wilderness. We will be ready to enter into our possession.

Part X5 - David, A Type of the Bride

David, A Type of the Bride

Anyone familiar with the story of David will recognize in him attributes of the Bride of Christ. As we have mentioned, love is the greatest attribute of the Bride. It is no coincidence, therefore, that David's name means "loving." From the first mention of David in scripture, we see elements of the Bride of Christ. When God allowed Saul to be anointed as King of Israel, He was giving the people of Israel what they wanted. They wanted a figurehead that they could rally around. They wanted someone who was striking in appearance and had outward characteristics that were impressive to mankind. Saul, however, failed to lead the people according to God's will. The attributes that appealed to man proved to be insufficient to impress God. When God rejected Saul, He sent Samuel to find and anoint a man who would fulfill God's desire. He sent Samuel to anoint a young shepherd boy who was impressive on the inside. David had a heart after God. David was passionate and his passion was focused upon the Lord.

Samuel was sent by God to anoint David to be king. In this role, Samuel was representing the Holy Spirit who, along with God's eunuch ministers, is preparing a Bride for Christ. In 1 Samuel 16:1-23 we read of Samuel arriving at Bethlehem and inviting the elders of the city, along with Jesse and his sons, to a sacrifice. A dinner is prepared and seven of Jesse's sons pass before Samuel as he looks for the one who is the chosen one of God.

1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'"

3 "And you shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you."

4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?"

5 And he said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 Then it came about when they entered, that he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before Him."

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."

9 Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."

10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."¹ Samuel 16:1-10

It was a tremendous honor for Jesse and his sons to be invited to a dinner and sacrifice with the elders of the city. As a father, I am sure that Jesse wanted his sons to make a good impression upon Samuel and the city elders. Indeed, Jesse had some sons that were impressive to look at, and these were presented first to Samuel.

Jesse, however, did not invite his youngest son to the event. David was still a youth and, though he was a beautiful youth, he did not have the attributes that impressed his father. His father did not feel that his presence would contribute anything to the meeting, so he was left out. In the same way, the Bride that God is preparing lacks that which is impressive to man. Even among the Body of Christ, the Bride is little esteemed. She is rarely at the forefront of what the world sees as the church. While men of ambition and stature steal the limelight, the Bride toils faithfully in the background, overlooked, even by those of her own household.

Samuel must have been surprised that God had chosen one whose father was not even impressed with him enough to include him with his other sons. God had chosen someone who was so slighted as to not even be invited to an important meeting. When Samuel inquired if there were another son, Jesse revealed that there was another. And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."¹ Samuel 16:11

Although Jesse had neglected to invite David, he now becomes the most important member. All others must wait until David is located and brought before them. This wait was probably fairly lengthy. The sheep would not necessarily have been kept close at hand. Someone had to run and locate David and then return with him to the meeting.

Samuel informed Jesse and all the city elders that they would not sit down until David had arrived. This indicates that a dinner was being given, symbolic of the wedding feast of Christ and His Bride. The wedding feast cannot be held, the guests cannot be seated, until the Bride arrives. The one who was overlooked has become the focus of the event to the consternation of those who had misjudged things.

I am sure that Jesse must have been somewhat embarrassed. Desiring to make a good impression upon Samuel and the city elders, he was now causing them to wait due to his decision to not invite his youngest son. Even so, when Christ returns for His Bride, those in charge of God's house, the church, will be surprised that the treasure Christ seeks has been lightly esteemed in their sight. When David arrived, his appearance is described. So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance.¹ Samuel 16:12

David's image is one of loveliness. His skin has a beautiful, ruddy appearance and his eyes are striking. Even so, when the Bride is revealed, she will appear beautiful to all those who behold her.

I have heard a number of people mistakenly interpret the word “ruddy” to mean “runty”. This does not do justice to the Bride of Christ, nor to David. The word ruddy means reddish in appearance. It is speaking of someone who has a beautiful complexion. In the Song of Solomon the term is used to describe beauty. My beloved is dazzling and ruddy, Outstanding among ten thousand. Song of Solomon 5:10

David typifies the Bride in many ways. His beauty, his heart after God, his great courage, his love of justice, his desire to walk uprightly, are all qualities of the Bride. Another way in which he typifies the Bride is his separation. David stood apart from his brothers. This was not because David was aloof, rather, it was due to his being lightly esteemed. When Jesse was told to bring his sons, he invited all but David. David remained with the sheep. After Samuel left, David returned to the sheep, while his brothers went to serve with the king in battle. Jesse once more sent those whom he felt were the best qualified and the most impressive.

It did not enter Jesse’s mind that his youngest son would be of any use in a battle. When David was finally sent to the battle, he was sent as a delivery boy to his brothers. No one, least of all his father and his brothers, expected that he would prove to be Israel’s champion. In the same way, the Bride will often find herself separated from her brothers. Although overlooked and lightly esteemed, those who comprise the Bride will achieve the greatest victories, and in the process they will deliver those who have scorned them. The Bride need not be concerned about her lack of stature in the eyes of others. As she remains humble, God will select the time of her exaltation. David did not go seeking to impress anyone. The Spirit of God was upon him and he was genuinely incensed at the affront that Goliath presented to God and the armies of Israel. He was seeking God’s honor, not his own. As the Bride demonstrates courage and valor, she will find herself coming under the attack of those who are walking in fear. She will be accused of pride due to her boldness, even as David was accused by his brother Eliab (1 Samuel 17:28). As we mentioned in an earlier chapter, those who will go further into the temple must confront and overcome fears in their lives. They must express confidence in God even when He leads them to places where their natural resources are inadequate to see them through. There are many who will be unwilling to go forward into these areas of faith. These will remain at the Outer Court and some will become offended at those who would go farther in than themselves.

Those proceeding on in their pursuit of Christ will encounter opposition from their own household, the household of God. In fact, the most severe opposition will come from within the church. Rather than returning insult for insult, the Bride must remain steadfast in her pursuit of Christ, not allowing herself to become entangled with the pettiness of others. This was David’s example.

26 Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?"

27 And the people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him."

28 Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab’s anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have

come down in order to see the battle."

29 But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?"

30 Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before. . .

32 And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:26-30; 1 Samuel 17:32

Like John, it was David's love for God that enabled him to endure, bear, and believe things when others faltered. His exploits were inseparable from the trust he had in the Lord whom he was so passionate about. David did not seek to impress God or man with his exploits. David had a heart after God and these things flowed out of his love for God and his confidence in Him. This is the heart of the Bride. As we already saw in David's beautiful Psalm, David had a heart after God and, although he became king of a great nation and had everything available to him, his passion remained the Lord. The Bride of Christ, whether she is abounding or receiving the meagerness of the wilderness, will not have her heart captivated by things of the world. Her eyes will be turned toward Jesus Christ, the Lover of her soul.

Part X6 - The Sons of Jonadab

The Sons of Jonadab The book of Jeremiah reveals a story about a family of unusual character who so impressed God that He made a promise to them that was only given to a few in the scriptures. The things that impressed God about this family are typical of what God is seeking in the Bride of Christ. The story is revealed in the 35th chapter of Jeremiah 1:1-19 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying,

2 "Go to the house of the Rechabites, and speak to them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink."

3 Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, and his brothers, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites,

4 and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper.

5 Then I set before the men of the house of the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Drink wine!" Jeremiah 35:1-5 This was a most unusual thing which God asked Jeremiah to do. At this time the nation of Judah was on the verge of judgment. The land was being besieged by the Babylonians. Because of the idolatry and wickedness of the nation of Judah, she was soon to be given over to her enemies who would take her into captivity.

Jeremiah stood out from among the other prophets and counselors of Judah. He was proclaiming that judgment was at hand due to the nation's wickedness. Others were prophesying that Jerusalem would never fall, that God would deliver them.

Jeremiah pointed out, over and over again, the source of God's displeasure with the people. Their idolatry, sensuality, wickedness, and bloodshed had brought the judgment of God upon them. The people were unwilling to depart from their wickedness and they shunned the words of Jeremiah.

It must have seemed curious to Jeremiah that in the midst of this, God would have him invite a family of Israel to come and drink wine before him. In the midst of the idolatry and sensuality of the day, Jeremiah could not have anticipated their response.

6 But they said, "We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever.

7 'And you shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed, and you shall not plant a vineyard or own one; but in tents you shall dwell all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.'

8 "And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, not to drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, 9 nor to

build ourselves houses to dwell in; and we do not have vineyard or field or seed.

10 "We have only dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and have done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

11 "But it came about, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, that we said, 'Come and let us go to Jerusalem before the army of the Chaldeans and before the army of the Arameans.' So we have dwelt in Jerusalem." Jeremiah 35:6-11 The sons of Jonadab and their families stood out from among the generation they lived in. The idolatry, sensuality, and wickedness of Judah indicated that the nation was focused upon the things the world had to offer. The nation was materially focused, seeking pleasure and prosperity. This nation, who was called to be a representation of God to the nations around them, had instead become infected with the wickedness of her neighbors.

Judah and Jerusalem are symbolic of the Church today. They were the people whom God had selected from among the peoples of the world to bear His name. Indeed, the people of Judah and Jerusalem were proud of their calling and uniqueness. The temple was a focal point for the nation. However, along with their identification with Jehovah God, the Jews also embraced the idols of the nations around them.

Even so, the Church today proclaims Christ while clinging to the things of the world. God is seeking a people who have rejected the world and who will pursue Him with singleness of mind and devotion. The sons of Jonadab exhibited such a resolve. The things that the sons of Jonadab listed that they were to abstain from, represented a progression. Wine is mentioned first. Wine represents pleasure. Those who drink wine do so for the enjoyment of the taste and of how it makes them feel. In abstaining from wine, this family was declaring that the pursuit of pleasure would not be the focus of their lives. The next thing the sons of Jonadab would not do was plant a vineyard. Those who drink wine must have a source for their wine. The logical thing for those who wish to enjoy the fruit of the vine is to plant a vineyard, ensuring a constant supply of that which their heart craves.

Many Christians, while confessing Christ, are pursuing the world and the pleasures it offers. Having become addicted to its pleasures, they seek to ensure that their pleasure will be uninterrupted. This takes commitment and work. Even as a vineyard must be tended and watched over to ensure a steady supply of the grapes needed to produce wine, the worldly pleasures that the children of God seek after require devotion and attention.

Many Christians see God as just another means by which they can pursue their carnal dreams. There is nothing wrong with having a nice house or nice automobiles. There is nothing wrong with providing good things for one's family, but when the pursuit of these things becomes the focus of life, we have crossed the line into idolatry.

Many families today are investing inordinate amounts of time in pursuit of the things the world offers. Men and women are spending more and more hours working, hours that take them away from their families and from God. The saint who is passionately pursuing Christ will not accept any worldly commitment or entanglement to interfere with his pursuit of the One he is devoted to. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.² Timothy 2:4

Jonadab instructed his sons, even as Paul instructed his spiritual son Timothy, not to become entangled with the things of the world. He instructed them to not pursue pleasure, nor to make provision for it. The reason was so that they might live long in the land of promise. Jonadab realized that those who esteemed enjoyment and pleasure had a tendency to forget God. He wanted his sons to always remember the Lord that they might be partakers of the favor and reward of God. The final step in the progression of the pursuit of pleasure is to build a house next to the source of one's enjoyment. Jonadab instructed his sons not to drink wine, not to plant vineyards, and not to build houses. They were instructed to dwell in tents. Not attached to houses or lands, they were focused on the Lord, and they were free to go wherever He led. The pursuit of pleasure leads to bondage. The need to devote time and resources to one's source of pleasure is a form of slavery. We serve that which we love. The demands of this bondage will reach the point that we become so entangled that we can no longer separate ourselves from it. It becomes expedient to build a house that we might abide close to that which claims so much of our time and devotion. In an age of great idolatry and sensuality, the sons of Jonadab, along with their families, stood out in great contrast to those they dwelt among. Even so, the Bride of Christ will find herself standing out from among those who surround her. The things the world and the worldly Church pursue, she will turn her back on.

Having witnessed the response of the sons of Jonadab, Jeremiah lifts them up before the people of Judah and Jerusalem. He tells Judah that the Rechabites have found favor with God because of their commitment. God, through Jeremiah, then chides Judah because she has not listened to the voice of God and she has spurned the prophets He has sent to her. The sons of Jonadab's obedience to their father stands in judgment against the disobedience of the sons of Israel.

While Judah and Jerusalem are about to find out that their idolatry and slavery to pleasure will lead to bondage in Babylon, the sons of Jonadab are given a priceless reward from God.

18 Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands, and done according to all that he commanded you;

19 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me always.'" Jeremiah 35:18-19 To this day, there is someone from the household of Jonadab who stands faithfully before God. How moved God must have been to make such a promise. In Ezekiel 44:1-31, we read how God punished the priests who entered into the idolatry of the people by banning them from His presence. In contrast, God is telling this family who has refused the idolatry and way of life of those around them, that they will always have a man to stand before Him. What an awesome promise. This same promise remains for all those of God's children who will similarly choose the pursuit of Him over the pursuit of the world. By having our backs permanently turned toward the world, we are able to proceed into the temple, into the presence of God. As the Bride embraces the cross, dying to the world and its allure, she advances toward the promised place of habitation with God. This is the joy of the Bride, to hear the Father say, "You will stand before Me, always." We are called to be a peculiar people. We are the people of God's own possession and He becomes our possession, our inheritance. In this, the prayer of Jesus is fulfilled, that we would be one (John 17:1-26). Christ is in God and we are in Christ. We are one with each other. A call is going out to the saints of God today. Wake up Church! Wake up

to that which is being offered to you! Wake up to that which you are in peril of forfeiting! Friendship with the world is enmity with Christ (James 4:4). Flee the bondage of attachment to the world. Flee into the arms of your coming Bridegroom.

Part X7 - The Radiant Bride

The Radiant Bride A friend of mine related a modern proverb he had recently heard. It is a lamentable proverb, but one has to recognize the accuracy of it.

"What began as a movement in Jerusalem, became a philosophy in Greece, an institution in Rome, a culture in Europe, and a big wealthy enterprise in America."

Christianity in America has indeed become a big wealthy enterprise. There are money changers in the temple once again. Believers have fallen from the simplicity of devotion to Christ. The church still espouses her betrothal to Christ, but she does so while clinging to her idols. In our nation, the greatest of our idols is money or mammon. No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24 The scriptures tell us plainly that we cannot serve both God and mammon, but that hasn't kept us from trying. We have even coined a term for the type of preaching that tries to wed the two together. We call it "the prosperity gospel."

President Clinton made an astute remark while running for election. Commenting on what the people of the nation were really interested in, he said, "It's the economy, stupid." Above issues of personal integrity or morality, the citizens of our nation are concerned about the economy and their own financial well-being. This is true of the church, as well. In the church, there are whole groups of pastors, from many different denominations, that preach financial blessing, material gain, and a man-centric gospel week after week. The overall impact of this type of preaching is to convince people that God saved them so that He could bless them with the things of this world. A focus on the pursuit of Christ and heavenly reward is entirely missing.

Across this nation the gospel of Jesus Christ has been mixed with the message of prosperity. Passion for Jesus has been mixed with a passion for things. This causes the world to wonder what the church is really pursuing. By adding other pursuits to our pursuit of Christ, we have lost much of our savor. The world sees the church pursuing the same things she lusts after. The obvious conclusion is that Jesus Christ alone must not satisfy. Our Heavenly Father is determined to bring purity forth where there has been mixture. One way to refine and test the hearts of those whom God has called to bear His name is to remove the things to which they cling. Judgment is coming upon the whole world, but before God can judge the world, He must judge His children. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17

We are told that in the last days God will shake all things that can be shaken (Hebrews 12:26). All of the idols which men cling to will be tested. The stock market, 401K plans, bank accounts, the economy of our nation, the healthcare system, government, and all else that we trust for comfort, security, and safety, will be shaken. Only that which cannot be shaken will stand. The world, along with those Christians who are clinging to houses built upon the sand, will be devastated. We are told that the day will come when men's hearts will fail them for fear (Luke 21:26). Fear will grip the

hearts of those who have trusted in the false gods of this world. Only those who have learned to lean upon their beloved Lord will be unmoved by the devastation around them.

Jesus compared the last days before His return to a time of labor when a woman is about to give birth (Matthew 24:8). The world will be shaken by the coming contractions and the contractions will become more and more frequent even as they increase in their intensity. These contractions will follow on the heels of one another until the world is reeling from them.

Only when the idols of the world are cast down will many perceive that Christ is the only thing which cannot be shaken. He is our strong tower. He is our refuge and strength. He alone is worth pursuing.

During this period when it will appear that chaos reigns, those who have made themselves ready will shine forth brightly before all the Earth. When men's hearts are failing them, these will be unmoved. The Bride will stand in confidence in the day of shaking for she will have hidden herself in the arms of her Beloved.

1 "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

2 "For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you.

3 "And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Isaiah 60:1-3 The days the church is entering into are days of separation. God is calling the church forth out of the world and He is calling a Bride forth for His Son. These will be difficult days even for those who have walked close to the heart of God. Many will doubt and be confused by the intensity of the days ahead. Those who lack confidence in the heart of God will respond as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Many will fall away (Matthew 24:10). But those who have confidence in their God will stand. They will do exploits. They will see the mighty hand of God move on their behalf. A couple of years ago I was ordained as a pastor and elder among the group of believers I fellowshiped with. A pastor from another fellowship attended the service. I had never seen him among our fellowship before, nor have I since. Since he was present, he was invited to participate in the laying on of the hands of the presbytery as I was being ordained. I will never forget his words. This pastor told me, "God has a reward for you, but it will not be of this Earth. Your reward is in heaven." He then said, "In heaven, you will be a worshiper in God's presence." These words were all the more poignant to me because, just prior to this time, I had been considering what my lot and portion would be in heaven. A greater promise could not have been given to me. The words of David resounded in my heart, 5 The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; Thou dost support my lot.

6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. Psalms 16:5-6

I have a promise before me of attaining the highest reward, to stand in God's presence and to worship Him. This is the joy set before me. This is my reason for enduring hardship. This will keep me standing when all around me is shaken. I am pursuing the prize.

Jesus Christ is my portion. His blood is true drink and His flesh is true meat. I have had but a small taste and I want more. The feast the world sets before me has no flavor in comparison. I choose to

pass by the delicacies and rich meats of the world, that I might obtain the true riches which are offered to me by the hand of God.

It is for such a promise that those who comprise the Bride of Christ will choose to live apart from the world. As the sons of Jonadab did and as David did, the Bride will choose the priestly inheritance. Rather than settling for the world, they will choose God as their portion. In the days ahead, God will display to the sons of men many of His chosen ones, of whom the world is not worthy. These will shine forth in great radiance, for they have chosen as their glory, the glory of God. These understand the purpose of the wilderness and of testing. They will not shrink back from difficulty. They will embrace the cross willingly. They will do this for the joy set before them. The shaking that is coming upon the Earth holds no threat for the Bride. It will serve only to further refine her as all attachments to the things of the world are stripped away. It will prove the wisdom of the Bride in choosing to lean on her Beloved. The Bride will appear radiant as her purity is manifested and her love for Christ is displayed. The Bridal Saints will be unveiled before the world and their unveiling will be as startling as that of a butterfly which emerges from the cocoon. No longer a lowly caterpillar, these will be lovely to behold. Having been eternally transformed by their encounter with Christ, they will receive a new name. They will be called the Bride of Christ.

Part X8 - The Bridegroom

The Bridegroom

I stand as one who knows that tremendous things are being offered to me, things that defy understanding. I cannot come near to comprehending the glory of these things. John walked in greater closeness to Jesus than any of the other disciples. He remained focused on the surpassing greatness of Jesus, as is revealed in his gospel. He never forgot that love was the foundation upon which his relationship to Christ Jesus was built, as is evidenced in his epistles. Yet this man, who was so close to Jesus while He walked this Earth, fell prostrated as a dead man when he beheld Jesus in His heavenly glory.

12 And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

13 and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle.

14 And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire;

15 and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

16 And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Revelation 1:12-18

What an awesome revelation of Jesus Christ John had. It was not coincidental that it was John, the beloved disciple, to whom this revelation was granted. John epitomizes those who make up the Bride of Christ. Those saints whose hearts are bound to Jesus will see Him as no others will. Yet, even great love did not prepare John for an unveiled look at his beloved Lord.

How it must have stirred John to think that this awesome Son of God was the same Jesus who allowed him to lay his head on His breast. What tremendous favor was his. How exhilarating to think that this same radiant and glorious God still desired intimacy with John and with all those He had chosen from out of the world. John, the disciple who looked at Christ through eyes of love and adoration, was given further glimpses of the Savior he loved. He describes Him for us.

6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all

the earth.

7 And He came, and He took [the book] out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

8 And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

10 "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Revelation 5:6-14 And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.

13 And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:11-16

John saw Jesus in His glory, the same glory that was His from before the foundation of the Earth. How much more Jesus must have been increased in John's sight when he considered that He had freely laid aside this glory in order to redeem fallen man (Php 2:7). This Glorious One clothed Himself in humility to ransom those who were His enemies (Romans 5:10).

We have been ransomed, but we have not been left at the place of salvation. A promise yet remains to us. A promise of betrothal. A promise of unity. A promise of eternally standing with the One who purchased us with His own blood. Our Bridegroom asks for our devotion, our love. Competing affections must be overcome. Our Bridegroom gave all to purchase for Himself a Bride. He asks that the Bride give all for Him. Jesus did not merely tell those who would follow Him that they must love Him, He went so far as to specify the degree to which they must love Him.

37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. Matthew 22:37-38 [emphasis added]

Those who are the Bride agree that this is not only reasonable, it is desirable. There are no other gods before Christ in their lives. As David, they have invited God to inspect their lives and to correct all that needs amending.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts;

24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way. Psalms 139:23-24

It was revealed to John that much sorrow and tribulation would precede Christ's final triumphant return. However, his heart was gripped with the glory of union with Christ. His words are the words of one who has seen the Bridegroom. And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Revelation 22:17
Let there be no delay.

Part X9 - Come, Lord Jesus!

Come, Lord Jesus! This book is not intended to answer all questions regarding the Bride of Christ. Instead, it is offered in hopes that it will stir up many saints to begin seeking the answers for themselves. There is much complacency in the body of Christ, much of it due to Satan's deception in clouding our view of eternity and our understanding of the reward that awaits us. The church today has lost much of its savor. Its distinctiveness has been diluted until her taste is similar to that of the world around her. When Christ comes to steal away, as a thief in the night, that which is appealing to Him, He will leave behind that which is unappealing. Many saints will be devastated as they realize that it was their idolatry, their love of the world and the things in it, that disqualified them from being chosen. This book is offered in hope that some may awaken out of their slumber and break off their attachments to the world as they glimpse an inheritance and reward that far outshines all that the world offers. It is my hope that a passion for Jesus Christ will be rekindled and that a pursuit of the One who pursues us will be renewed.

Jesus mentioned one thing that would cause Him to remove a church's lampstand, forgetting one's first love (Revelation 2:1-29). His word to the church of Ephesus was to remember where they had fallen from, repent, and do the deeds they did at the first. In Christ's words to the church of Ephesus we see that love, works, reward, these three are inseparable. Our Lord does not desire service without love, nor does He desire words of love and devotion that are not proven in the way we live our lives before Him. Jesus desires a harmony in our lives. Love first, followed by obedience and devotion. It was saints that were passionate for Christ who turned the world upside down in the first century and it will be similar saints who will do so again in these last days before Christ's return.

Arise Bride, your Bridegroom awaits you. Be vigilant. Look to the One who is the lover of your soul. He is the fairest of the fair. He is the lily of the valley. He is the bright and morning star. He is the pearl of great price. He is the treasure that has been lost and must now be found.

Come, Lord Jesus!

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