

The Bride of Christ.

by Gareth Evans

The sermon emphasizes the importance of developing intimacy with Christ, being prepared for the wedding feast, and having an evangelical vision for the local church.

Scripture: Exodus 33:19, Luke 10:20, John 4:23, Ephesians 2:20, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 3:3, Revelation 21:9

Topics: "Church Community", "Kingdom Living"

Description

Gareth Evans preaches on the church as the Bride of Christ, emphasizing the characteristics of intimacy, preparation, destiny, and invitation highlighted in Revelation 21. He challenges believers to develop intimacy with God by focusing on purity, accountability, and growing in the Word to become overcomers. Evans stresses the importance of the local church as a training ground for believers, preparing them for their future role of co-reigning with Jesus in His kingdom. He encourages a kingdom mentality, expectant hope, and an evangelical vision within the church, ensuring a welcoming and hospitable environment for all.

Transcript

This week we shall consider the church as introduced in Revelation 21:9.

"Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."

As we study the remainder of that chapter we find certain characteristics of this future glorious city, come down from heaven, that reveal it as the culmination of Christ's built church.

V14: its foundation stones bear the names of the apostles. (see Eph.2:20)

V23: the Lamb dwells there in glory.

V27: its 'occupants' are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life. (see Luke 10:20)

When you consider a bride, what aspects of church come first to mind? Let me suggest some.

(A) Intimacy. A love relationship. Assurance, Purity.

(B) Preparation. The work of the 'goel' - the best man.

(C) Destiny. Marriage, reigning,

(D) Invitation. 'The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"

How do we put these into the context of the local church? How can we demonstrate our 'brideness'?

Surely one of the purposes we meet together is to develop intimacy with our bridegroom. The motto of YWAM is a good one. To know God and to make Him known. We might well make that our own.

(A) How do we develop intimacy?

Consider Moses: "God's friend." He had such a relationship with God that his face shone whenever he returned from the mountain top. Yet this face-to-face encounter created a hunger for more. He cried "O God, please show me your glory!" He longed for an even deeper intimacy with God.

Do you long to see God's glory?

God's reply is revealing. "I know your name so I will tell you mine!" (Ex.33:19). Intimacy with God, knowing Him, is conditional upon my 'name' - my character as God alone knows it. He wants to make Himself known, to reveal His name, but its measure is limited by my name. Is it faithful one or unfaithful? Trusting one or doubter? Man of Integrity or Hypocrite? He knows!

(a) So, also, our intimacy with Christ is dependant on our character. As a bride is expected to be 'pure' for her husband, so we are called to purity. He that hath this hope in him (Christ's soon return) purifies himself as he is pure. 1 John 3:3.

(b) John gives us another condition for intimacy in his first letter. (2:12-14).

"Fathers" have come to know Him 'who is from the beginning'.

"Children" have their sins forgiven and know God as Father.

"Young men" - growing in maturity and in intimacy - are those who are strong, for the Word of God abides in them and they are overcomers of the evil one.

So intimacy - knowing the Lord - is nurtured by a challenge to holiness (accountability) and a growing foundation in the word (teaching and dialogue) and being 'overcomers'.

(c) Intimacy also speaks of 'sweet whisperings' between lovers. This should be the goal of all worship. In the NT the word used almost all the time for worship - and always by John the beloved' - is proskuneo which literally means to blow a kiss toward.

Praise & Worship should have as its 'goal' that its participants come to a place of being "lost in wonder, love and praise" (Wesley) - intimacy.

(B) Another aspect of the bride is that she is being prepared for a glorious position. She is not yet the 'wife' but longs for the marriage supper to take place. Church is not a social club but a training ground. We are in a battle and 'the local church' is where we learn tactics, receive our weapons, receive our food and help in times of wounding. Its members are daily 'on the front lines' so the weekly meeting must be a place of refreshing and healing, equipping and training.

One day she will co-reign with Jesus over a kingdom. She needs to have a kingdom mentality even while in preparation. She does not exist for her own purposes but for the purposes of the king and his kingdom.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit to 'lead us into truth', to prepare us for the wedding feast, to clothe us in garments of righteousness, etc. As the best man (the goel) for the bridegroom, he is anxious that we be as prepared as possible, beautiful for our bridegroom's eyes.

(C) As her wedding day approaches, a bride might well be preoccupied with certain thoughts and deeds.

Will my Lord be pleased with me? I want to please him.

Have I done everything I can in preparation?

Have I forgotten any guests?

Are all the invitations out?

(D) This speaks to me of the evangelical vision of the church. The local church must be a place where we can invite others, comfortable in the knowledge that they will be welcomed, feel 'at home' and where they can be introduced to the bridegroom.

Thus, any local expression of the church that would identify itself as the bride of Christ should have the following characteristics.

Expectant hope

Desire for purity, integrity,

Intimate praise and worship

Becoming strong in the Word

Attitude of overcomers

Kingdom mentality

Evangelical invitation

Welcoming, hospitable

[A question for consideration: Are all believers members of the BRIDE? Consider that not all believers are overcomers, not all will be given a crown (necessary if one would reign as bride?) [Note the conditions given in the letters to the 7 churches in Rev 2&3.]]

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