

**HWMR: THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST AND OUR GROWTH IN LIFE UNTO MATURITY
(Week 6)**

Scripture Reading: Heb. 12:2; Col. 2:15; Rev. 19:7-9; Neh. 8:10c

The Joy Set before Christ and the Joy Set before Us

Hebrews 12:2	Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.
Colossians 2:15	Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
Revelation 19:7	Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
Revelation 19:8	And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
Revelation 19:9	And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
Nehemiah 8:10c	for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

Day 1

- Hebrews 12:2* - Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.
- Ephesians 5:25* - Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

I. For the **joy set before Him, Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, “endured the cross, despising the shame”—Heb. 12:2:**

- A. The Lord **loved** the church and **gave Himself up** for her—Eph. 5:25.
- B. On the cross the Lord **offered Himself** as the sacrifice for sins, bearing the sins of many, being made sin for the believers, casting out the ruler of this world and judging this world, and as a grain of wheat, falling into death for the release of the divine life—Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 12:24, 31.

Paul exhorts the husbands to **love** their wives. The opposite of subjection is ruling. However, the apostle does not exhort the husbands to rule over the wives, but to **love them**. In married life, the wife’s obligation is subjection and the husband’s, love. The wife’s subjection plus the husband’s love constitutes proper married life and typifies the normal church life, in which the church is subject to Christ and **Christ loves the church**.

Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” A husband’s love for his wife must be like **Christ’s love for the church**. This means that a husband ought to **give himself up for his wife**. The requirement for the husband is much heavier than that for the wife. Submitting to someone is not as difficult as giving yourself up for someone. To give yourself up is to be a martyr, to sacrifice your life. Husbands are to love their wives at such a cost to themselves. They must be willing to pay a great price, even to die for their wives. (*Life-Study of Ephesians, chapter 52*)

Day 2

Colossians 2:13-15 - And you, though dead in your offenses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our offenses; Wiping out the handwriting in ordinances, which was against us, which was contrary to us; and He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

- C. Colossians 2:15 portrays the **warfare** that took place at the time of Christ's crucifixion:
1. In His crucifixion **Christ** was working to accomplish **redemption**, and **God** the Father was working to **judge sin**.
 2. At the same time the rulers and authorities were busy in the attempt to **frustrate** the work of God and Christ—v. 15.
 3. The **rulers** and **authorities are evil angels**, fallen angels that are subordinates of Satan working for him—Eph. 2:2.
 4. While God was judging sin, the evil rulers and authorities were **present and were very active**, swarming around the crucified Christ, pressing in very closely—Col. 2:15:
 - a. If they had not pressed in closely, God could not have stripped them off.
 - b. The words *stripping off* indicate that the rulers and authorities were **very close**, as close as our garments are to our body.
 5. In stripping off the rulers and authorities, God made a display of them openly, **putting them to shame** and **triumphing over them in the cross**—v. 15.

Day 3

Revelation 19:7 - Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Ephesians 2:21-22 - In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

II. The joy set before us is the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, coming for His **bride**, who has **made herself ready**—Rev. 19:7-9:

- A. The **maturity** of the bride—vv. 7-9; Eph. 4:13-15:
1. The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the **maturity in life of the overcomers**—Rev. 19:7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.
 2. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life, whereas to be **matured** is to be **filled with the divine life that changes us**—Heb. 6:1.
- B. The **building** of the bride—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16:
1. God's building is the **desire** of God's heart and the **goal** of God's salvation—1:5; Exo. 25:8; cf. 1:11; 40:2-3, 34-35.
 2. The goal of the Lord's recovery is to **recover Christ as life** and everything to us so that we may be built up—Eph. 3:8; 4:16.
 3. God's building is the **corporate expression** of the Triune God—1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 17:22; Eph. 3:19b, 21.

According to Matthew 25, when the Lord comes back, those who are ready will sit with Him at the wedding feast. To be ready here means that the **bride has made herself ready**, that **God has completed His building work in man**, and that we have **grown** and **matured** in the Lord's life. These three matters—God's building in us, our growth in the Lord's life, and our getting ready before the Lord—are all linked together. God's building work in us is our growth in the Lord's life and is also our getting ready before the Lord. These three matters are actually one matter.

The church today is a miniature of the glorious New Jerusalem in the future, and it will continually grow until the day that it is **fully grown**. We grow through God's continuous building work in us. The more God builds Himself into us, the more we grow. Without God's building work we cannot grow. Our growing is actually God's building (*The Conclusion of the New Testament: Experiencing, Enjoying, and Expressing Christ, Volume 3, chapter 424*)

Day 4

- Revelation 19:8* - And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Matthew 22:11-12* - But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment, And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

- C. The **righteousness** of the bride—Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 22:11-13:
1. As our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One **dwelling in us** to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God—5:6, 20.
 2. The living that is right with both God and man must be **God as our expression** in our daily living—2 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.
 3. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8.
 4. The **wedding garment** in Matthew 22:11-13 signifies the **Christ whom we live out** and who is expressed through us in our daily living as our surpassing righteousness—5:20; Rev. 3:4-5, 18.

Day 5

- Ephesians 5:25-27* - Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word, That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

- D. The **beauty** of the bride—Eph. 5:25-27:
1. As the bride, the church needs beauty; the beauty in Ephesians 5 is for the **presentation** of the bride.
 2. The beauty of the bride **comes from the Christ** who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church—3:17a:
 - a. Our only beauty is the **shining out of Christ** from within us.
 - b. What Christ appreciates in us is the **expression of Himself**.

Day 6

Ephesians 6:17-18 - And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

Nehemiah 8:10 - Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

- E. Ephesians 6 and Revelation 19 reveal that the church as the bride must also be a **warrior** to defeat God's enemy:
1. Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body; we are a **corporate army** fighting the battle for God's interest on earth—17:14; 19:14; cf. 2 Tim. 2:4.
 2. In Ephesians 5 the word is for nourishment that leads to the **beautifying** of the bride, but in Ephesians 6 the word is for killing that enables the church as the corporate warrior to engage in spiritual warfare—vv. 17-18.
 3. Christ will come as a **fighting General with His bride** as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21.
 4. The wedding garment—Christ lived out of us as our daily righteousness— qualifies us not only to **attend the wedding** but also to **join the army** to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon—Matt. 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8, 14.

III. “The **joy of Jehovah** is your strength”—Neh. 8:10c:

- A. According to Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of our Lord is our strength:
1. It is not a matter of our having strength; His joy **upholds us**—1 Thes. 5:16.
 2. The Lord's joy has nothing to do with circumstances; He rejoiced in God's will; there was **joy in knowing and doing God's will**.
 3. We should not try to copy the Lord but **receive** the joy of the Lord:
 - a. We can have something of the Lord **imparted** to us.
 - b. We can have the joy of the Lord; **His joy will be our strength**.
- B. At the end of his life Watchman Nee said, in the midst of his sufferings, “I **maintain my joy**”—*Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 182.
- C. *I maintain my joy* indicates that he was practicing the word of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:4: “**Rejoice in the Lord always.**”
- D. Through the mercy and grace of God, may we all be able to **maintain our joy by the joy of the Lord as our strength**

When Christ comes back, He will marry the overcomers who represent all the saints in the church. For this reason, the readiness of the bride depends on the **overcomers' maturity in life**. Revelation 19:8 says, “*It was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.*” Righteousnesses in this verse can also be translated as “righteous acts,” referring to the **subjective righteousness of the overcoming saints**, who form the wife in verse 7, that enables them to meet the requirement of the overcoming Christ. Hence, fine linen speaks of the overcoming living that is lived out by the believers' overcoming life, which actually is **Christ lived out of them**. Fine linen in verse 8 is equivalent to the wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-12. According to the revelation of the Scriptures, the believers need two garments—one for **salvation** and one for **preparation to be the bride**. For their salvation, the believers need a robe to cover them. This robe is the robe put on the prodigal son in Luke 15:22, which signifies Christ as our righteousness for us to be justified before God. However, the believers also need a second garment, which is the **wedding garment** in Matthew 22:11-12 and the garment of fine linen in Revelation 19:8, so that they may be qualified to attend the marriage dinner of the Lamb to be His bride. The second garment is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believers. It is the **Christ whom they live and express** in their daily living. (*Truth Lessons, Level Four, Vol. 1, chapter 17*)