

**HWMR: THE PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE (Week 3)**

*Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:6-9; John 3:29; James 5:7; Matt. 5:48; Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11*

**The Maturity of the Bride**

- Rev 19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
- Rev 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**.
- Rev 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.
- Rev 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**.
- John 3:29 He who has the **bride** is the **bridegroom**; but the friend of the bridegroom, who **stands** and **hears** him, **rejoices** with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is **made full**.
- James 5:7 Therefore be **long-suffering**, brothers, until the **coming of the Lord**. Behold, the farmer **eagerly awaits** the precious fruit of the earth, **exercising long-suffering** over it until it receives the early and late rain.
- Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be **perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect**.
- Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man **full-grown** in Christ;
- Col 1:29 For which also I **labor**, struggling according to His operation which **operates in me** in power.
- Col 3:10 And have put on the **new man**, which is being **renewed unto full knowledge** according to the **image of Him** who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but **Christ is all and in all**.

**Day 1**

- Hebrews 6:1* - Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to **maturity**...
- Romans 12:2* - And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be **transformed** by the **renewing of the mind** that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

**I. The meaning of the word **mature** in Greek is “at the end point”:**

- A. To be **transformed** is to be metabolically changed in our natural life; to be **matured** is to be **filled with the divine life** that changes us—Heb. 6:1; Col. 4:12; Rom. 12:2; 2 Pet. 1:3.
- B. The last stage of transformation is **maturity**, the **fullness of life**—v. 4.
- C. A mature believer knows and cares for the Body of Christ, being **Body-conscious** and **Body-centered**—1 Cor. 12:16, 18-19, 21, 24.

What does it mean to be mature? Throughout the years, we have learned that if we are **in ourselves** or are **individualistic**, we are **immature**. If we are trying to be holy, spiritual, or victorious, that also is immaturity. **Real maturity is not only in our spirit, but also in the church life**. The church life is the sign of our having become mature. As a result of my watching and observing for almost fifty years, I can testify that there is **no real maturity in life outside the church**. Real maturity can only be found in the church life.

The Hebrew believers to whom this book was written were staggering in their Christian life. They were wondering in their mind whether to go on or to go back. At that very point, this book was written to encourage them to **go on**.

The best way to go on is to **forget everything**. Once we forget everything, we shall go on. We may spend much time to consider our environment, our past, our future, and all the things related to it, yet we would not spend one hour in going on. Many times dear saints have come to me asking about the past, present, future, and many other things. I became famous for never answering their questions. I only gave them one word of advice: “Go on. Don’t talk and don’t remember your past. You should even forget the present and not care for the future. If you really want to go on, then just go on.” Those who are going on the best are those **who do not remember anything**. Consider the runners in a race. While they are running, they have no time to think of anything else. They only know one thing—running the race.

Here we see a basic principle: if anyone of us has **fallen** from the right track, or has **stopped** running in the race and then is stirred up to go on, he should not hesitate or ask questions. He should **just go on**. When many of the young people are stirred up to go on with the Lord, some of them are concerned with what they should do before they can go on, wondering whether the Lord will forgive them or be happy with them. If you are like this, it will be difficult for you to go on with the Lord. If you mean business with the Lord, simply go on with Him. Forget about whether He will forgive you or be happy with you. Do not take time to consider such things until you have reached the goal and gained the prize. Do not wonder whether you are right or wrong—just go on. (*Life Study of Hebrews, Message 30*)

## Day 2

*Philippians 3:12-15* - ...I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus...One thing I do: **Forgetting the things which are behind** and **stretching forward** to the things which are before, I **pursue** toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward. Let us therefore, as many as are **full-grown**, have this mind...

**II. As used in the New Testament, the word *mature* refers to the believers’ being **full-grown** and **perfected** in the **life of Christ**, which they received at the time of regeneration—Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23; Matt. 5:48:**

A. We should never be content with ourselves but **pursue growth and maturity** in the life of Christ—Phil. 3:12, 14.

- B. We need to **go on**, to be **brought on, to maturity** by **forgetting** the things which are behind and **stretching forward** to the things which are before, **pursuing** toward the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ for the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom—vv. 12-15.
- C. The **prerequisite for maturity** in the spiritual life is to **grow continually** in the **divine life**—Eph. 4:15.
- D. The **ultimate issue** of the believers' growth and maturity in the life of Christ is the **full-grown man**—the church as the Body of Christ growing into a mature man—v. 13.

**Hebrews 5:12-14.** These verses show us our need to **grow and mature in the spiritual life**. If we do not grow and mature, we will remain in the childish stage, unable to comprehend God's word of righteousness, which is like solid food. Hence, like the Hebrew believers in the early days, we will be unable to comprehend the revelation of God's deeper word and thus be unable to participate in God's New Testament economy. The wisdom in God's economy can be spoken only to the full-grown. To enter into God's New Testament economy, into God's eternal plan, requires that we grow and mature in the life of God.

**Ephesians 4:13-14.** These verses shows us that **after our regeneration** as believers, although we may no longer be newborns in the life of God, **we still may be babes, easily tossed** by waves and **carried about** by every wind of teaching, **deceived** and led in craftiness with a view to a system of error, being tricked by Satan. We need to grow and mature in order, on the positive side, to comprehend the revelation of God and to know His economy and plan, and on the negative side, to not be deceived or tricked by Satan. (*Life Lesson Vol.4, Message 46*)

### Day 3

**James 5:7** - Therefore be **long-suffering**, brothers, until the **coming** of the Lord. Behold, the farmer **eagerly awaits** the precious fruit of the earth, exercising **long-suffering** over it until it **receives** the early and late rain.

**Song of Songs 4:4** - Your **neck** is like the tower of David, built for an armory: A thousand bucklers hang on it, all the shields of the mighty men.

### III. In his Epistle, James uses the illustration of a **farmer awaiting with long- suffering the precious fruit of the earth**—5:7:

- A. The **Lord Jesus** is actually the **real Farmer**, the **unique Farmer**—Matt. 13:3.
- B. While **we are awaiting with long-suffering** the Lord's coming, He, as the real Farmer, is **awaiting with patience our maturity in life**, as the firstfruits and harvest of His field—Rev. 14:4, 14-15.
- C. If we pray, "Lord, come back quickly," the Lord may say, "While you are awaiting My coming back, I am awaiting your maturity; **only your maturity can hasten My coming back.**"
- D. It is a great help for us to realize that if we are serious about awaiting the Lord's coming back, **we need to grow in life unto maturity.**

- IV. To be **mature** is to have **Christ fully formed** in us; it also means that we have been **fully transformed into His image**—Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18:
- A. Since the time of our regeneration, the Lord has been working in us so that **we may have His image**—v. 18; Rom. 8:29.
  - B. When the Lord has fully worked His image into us and is **fully expressed through us**, we will be **mature in life**—Eph. 3:16-17.
- V. **Chapter 3 of Song of Songs** shows us the **maturity of the seeking one**, and **chapter 4** continues by explaining that such maturity is reached by the **subduing of the will**; the secret of the maturity of the seeking one is that **her will has been completely subdued and resurrected**—v. 4:
- A. The **neck** signifies the **human will under God**; the Lord considers the **submission of our will a most beautiful thing**—vv. 1a, 4.
  - B. If we have a **submissive will**, our will is expressed like the tower of David that holds all kinds of weapons:
    - 1. First, our will must be **subdued**; then it will be strong in resurrection and like the tower of David, the **armory for the spiritual warfare**—Eph. 6:10.
    - 2. The weapons for spiritual warfare are **kept in our subdued and resurrected will**—2 Cor. 10:3-5.

Hair in the Bible always indicates something of the will. All her scattered wills have been gathered together into rows to appear as a flock of goats on a mountain. A **flock of goats standing on a mountain** presents a picture of **submission**. Some of the goats are standing on a lower part of the mountain, and some are standing on a higher part. If they were standing on a flat plain, there would be no impression of submission, but for them to be standing on a mountain presents a picture of submission.

The goats are **not scattered but gathered**; they are not on the plain but on the mountainside, giving a picture of **submission**. This means that by the improvement from a mare to a palanquin, all the wills of the seeking one have been dealt with. They have been subdued and gathered together to be made into rows full of submission.

Chapter 4 is a continuation of chapter 3. It tells us the secret of how the seeking one made such an improvement: her will was subdued and dealt with. By the time she was the moving vessel of Christ, all her wills had been dealt with and gathered together to present a picture of submission.

Now we understand what the Lord means when He says, “Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.” Her beauty is now not only in her insight but in the insight within her locks. Her beauty is seen in her changed concepts within her subdued will. There is not only the **renewing of her mind** but also the **subduing of her will**. This is exceedingly fair and comely to the Lord. Formerly, she had only the beauty of the renewing of her mind, but now she also has the beauty of the subduing of her will.

Many times in the past forty years I have come back to the Song of Songs. I have had many experiences in this book, and I have come to realize that it speaks not only of love but also of the subduing of the will. To have complete, adequate, and thorough transformation, there must be the subduing of the will. The more our will is subdued, the more we will be transformed.

Many of us love the Lord, but we still hold on to our will. Our concept has been changed, and our mind has been renewed, but our will needs subduing. Many of us are so stubborn—not only the brothers but also the sisters. The problem is not with our heart. We do love the Lord. I believe that in the past few months the Lord has heard many voices saying, “Lord Jesus, I love You!” But in answer to these voices, I believe the Lord would say, “Yes, I know that you love Me, but what about your will?” To have our concept changed is not enough. **We must go on to have our will subdued.** (CWWL, 1972, vol. 1, chapter 6)

#### Day 4

*Colossians 1:28* - Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man *full-grown in Christ*.

*Hebrews 12:10* - For they disciplined for a few days as it seemed good to them; but He, for what is profitable that *we might partake of His holiness*.

#### VI. The goal of Paul’s ministry was to present every man mature, **full-grown, in Christ for the one new man**—Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11:

- A. The Greek word rendered “full-grown” in Colossians 1:28 may also be translated “perfect,” “complete,” or “mature.”
- B. Paul’s ministry was to **dispense Christ** into others so that they would be perfect and complete by **maturing in Christ unto full growth**.

#### VII. **Genesis 37—47** is a record of the **process of Jacob’s maturity**:

- A. In Genesis 27 we see a **supplanter**; in chapter 37, a **transformed man**; and at the end of chapter 47, a **mature person**.
- B. The **last stage** of transformation is maturity, the **fullness of life**:
  - 1. God’s eternal purpose can only be accomplished **through our transformation and maturity**—1:26; Col. 1:28; 2:19.
  - 2. Maturity is a matter of having the **divine life imparted into us again and again** until we have the **fullness of life**—John 10:10.
- C. **Maturity** is a matter of the **enlargement of capacity**—Psa. 4:1:
  - 1. Maturity in life is the sum total of **receiving the discipline of the Holy Spirit**—Heb. 12:5-11.
  - 2. Others may see a person who has matured in life, but they cannot see the **accumulated discipline of the Holy Spirit** which that person has received secretly day after day throughout the years—2 Cor. 1:8-10; Gen. 47:7, 10.

## Day 5

*Genesis 43:14* - And may the *All-sufficient God* grant you *mercy* before the man...

*Genesis 48:15-16* - And he blessed Joseph and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has *shepherded me all my life* to this day, the Angel who has *redeemed me* from all evil, bless the boys...

- D. God will **sovereignly** use persons, things, and events to empty us of everything that has filled us and to take away every preoccupation so that we may have an **increased capacity** to be **filled with God**—Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:6.
- E. The life of Jacob reveals that **everything that happens to us is under God's sovereignty** for our **transformation** and **maturity**; nothing is accidental:
  - 1. In order to become mature, Jacob first had to **suffer the loss** of Joseph, the treasure of his heart—Gen. 37:31-35.
  - 2. A mature believer has learned that God is **merciful** and **all-sufficient** to meet his needs in every kind of situation—43:11, 13-14; 17:1; Phil. 1:19-21a; 4:11-12; cf. 1 Tim. 6:6-8.
  - 3. His **trust** and **rest** are altogether in the **mercy of his all-sufficient God**, no longer in himself or in his ability—Rom. 9:16.
  - 4. The strongest sign of Jacob's maturity was his **blessing others**—Gen. 47:7, 10; 48:14-16; Heb. 7:7.

## Day 6

*Revelation 19:7* - ...*The marriage of the Lamb* has come, and His wife has made herself *ready*.

*Revelation 19:9* - And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are *called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb*...

*Revelation 20:6* - Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

### VIII. The **mature bride** is the **goal** of God's will and purpose—Rev. 19:7-9:

- A. The **readiness** of the corporate bride **depends** on the **maturity in life** of the overcomers—v. 7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.
- B. The **marriage of the Lamb** is the **issue** of the completion of God's New Testament economy, which is to obtain for Christ a bride, the church, through His judicial redemption and by His organic salvation in His divine life—Gen. 2:22; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2.
- C. In the Gospel of John, Christ is revealed both as the **Lamb** who came to take away sin and as the **Bridegroom** who came that He might have the bride—3:29.



- D. Christ's goal is not to remove sin; it is to have the bride:
1. In the book of Revelation, we see that Christ is the Lamb and the coming Bridegroom; therefore, as the Bridegroom, He must have a wedding—19:7-9.
  2. The wedding of the Lamb will be a universal wedding; it will be the marriage of the Redeemer and the redeemed.
  3. Christ is coming as the Bridegroom, and we are going as the bride.
- E. A very crucial matter is the readiness of the bride—v. 7:
1. According to Revelation 19:8 and 9, the wife, the bride of Christ, here consists only of the overcoming believers during the millennium.
  2. The readiness of the bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers, who are not separate individuals but the corporate bride.
  3. In Revelation 19:6 the voice of the great multitude proclaims, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns":
    - a. The reign of God, the kingdom, is related to the marriage of the Lamb.
    - b. The wedding will bring in the reign of the Lord, the kingdom, because all the guests called to the wedding will be both the corporate bride and the co-kings of the Bridegroom; all His co-kings will be His corporate bride.
    - c. To the overcomers, the thousand years of the millennial kingdom will be a wedding feast.
    - d. Everyone invited to the wedding feast will also participate in the thousand-year reign as kings.
    - e. For the overcomers, reigning with Christ in the kingdom will be the wedding feast—v. 9.