

A TIMELY WORD CONCERNING THE WORLD SITUATION AND THE LORD'S RECOVERY, Week 6

The Preparation of the Bride

Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:7-9, 11-21; 21:2

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.
Revelation 19:11	And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.
Revelation 19:12	And His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written which no one knows but Himself.
Revelation 19:13	And He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God.
Revelation 19:14	And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.
Revelation 19:15	And out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword , that with it He might smite the nations ; and He will shepherd them with an iron rod; and He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.
Revelation 19:16	And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, King Of KINGS And Lord Of LORDS .
Revelation 19:17	And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come here; gather yourselves to the great dinner of God,
Revelation 19:18	That you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free and slave and small and great.
Revelation 19:19	And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.
Revelation 19:20	And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone.
Revelation 19:21	And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeds out of the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.
Revelation 21:2	And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

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. The Lord's recovery is for the **preparation of the bride of Christ**, who is composed of **all His overcomers**. Although you may be saved, you must become an overcomer in order to receive the kingdom as your reward. For the overcomes, reigning with Christ in His kingdom will be the wedding feast. (*Life-Study of Revelation*, pp. 629-630)

The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the **maturity in life of the overcomers**. Furthermore, the overcomers are not separate individuals but a **corporate bride**. For this aspect, building is needed. The overcomers are not only mature in life but also built together as one bride. Christ will not marry each believer individually; instead He will marry His corporate bride composed of His overcoming believers. When we have been fully saturated with the Triune God so that He flows out of us, we will be completely built and fitted together to become the glorious church, the beloved bride of the Lord Jesus. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 4320-4321)

The bride's **wedding garment** is of "**fine linen, bright and clean**". The fine linen indicates our overcoming life, our overcoming living. It is the very Christ whom we live out of our being. For the presentation of the bride to the Bridegroom, the **bride needs beauty**. Today we must prepare ourselves to be the bride by taking in the element of Christ's riches as our nourishment. Christ is the food for the church. Therefore, as she prepares herself to be presented to Christ, the church must eat Christ....By eating Him we become a beautiful and even glorious bride. (*Life-Study of Ephesians*, pp.799-800) Then the bride must also be a **warrior** for the defeating of God's enemy. The church is both the bride who is presented to Christ and the **warrior who fights with Him against God's enemy**. They are also both the bride and the guests invited to the wedding feast and the bride are the same. The bride consists of the invited guests, and the invited guests make up the bride. After the wedding, all the guests will become the army. The fighting of Christ is the speaking of the Word of God. His fighting is the speaking of God's Word. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 4337-4340)

Day 1

- I. 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, 9-11.
- II. The Lord's recovery is for the preparation of the **bride of Christ**, who is composed of all His **overcomers**—19:7-9; cf. Gen. 2:22; Matt. 16:18:
 - A. **All the overcomers** will be the New Jerusalem as the **bride of Christ** for one thousand years in its **initial and fresh stage**—Rev. 19:7.
 - B. Eventually, all the believers will join the overcomers to **consummate and complete** the New Jerusalem in full as the wife of Christ in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:2, 9-11.

Day 2

III. The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the **maturity in life** of the overcomers—19:7-9; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13-15:

- A. In the New Testament the word **perfect** is used to refer to the believers' being **full-grown**, **mature**, and **perfected** in the life of God, indicating that we need to grow and mature unto perfection in the divine life—Matt. 5:48.
- B. We need to **continue to grow until we are matured** in the divine life to become a full-grown man, arriving at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—Eph. 4:13.
- C. In order for the bride to be mature, her faith and love need to be fully developed—Titus 3:15:
 1. **Faith** and **love** are two **inseparable**, excellent virtues of the believers in Christ—1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:13; Gal. 5:6.
 2. Through faith we **receive** the Lord, and through love we **enjoy** the Lord whom we have received—John 1:12; 14:21; 21:15-17:
 - a. **Faith** is given to us by God that by it we may **receive Christ**, the embodiment of the Triune God, and thereby enter into the Triune God and be joined to Him as one, having Him as our life, life supply, and everything—2 Pet. 1:1.
 - b. **Love** issues out of faith and enables us to **live out** all the riches of the Triune God with those who have believed into Christ with us in order that the Triune God may have a **glorious corporate expression**—Eph. 3:19-21.

The Readiness of the Bride Depending on the Maturity of the Overcomers

When Christ comes back, He will marry the overcomers who represent all the saints in the church (vv. 7-9). For this reason, the readiness of the bride depends on the overcomers' maturity in life. Verse 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 (1 Cor. 1:30). 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 Lesson, Level 4, Vol. 1, chapter 17, section 2)

IV. In addition to being mature in life, the bride must be **built up as a corporate person**—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16; Rev. 19:7; 21:2:

- A. God's building is the **desire of God's heart** and the **goal** of God's salvation—Eph. 1:5, 9; Exo. 25:8; 1:11; 40:2-3, 34-35.
- B. God intends to have a building in which God and man, man and God, can be a **mutual abode** to each other—John 15:4a; Rev. 21:2-3, 22.
- C. The principle of God's **building** is that God builds Himself into man and builds man into Himself—John 14:20; 1 John 4:15:
 1. God's **mingling** Himself with man is God's **building** Himself into man.
 2. Man's mingling with God is man's being built into God—Eph. 3:17.
- D. To be built up with fellow believers is the Lord's **supreme and highest requirement** of His faithful seekers—4:15-16.
- E. **Being built up** with the fellow partakers of the divine life is the highest virtue of one who pursues Christ in God's eternal economy—1 Tim. 1:4.

Day 3

V. The bride's **wedding garment** is of "**fine linen, bright and clean**"—Rev. 19:7-8:

- A. **Clean** refers to the **nature**, and **bright** refers to the **expression**.
- B. The fine linen with which the bride is clothed is "the righteousnesses of the saints"—v. 8:
 1. **Christ is the righteousness** by which we have been **justified by God** so that we may be reborn in our spirit to receive the divine life—1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:10:
 - a. As our **objective righteousness**, Christ is the One in whom we are justified by God—3:24, 28; 5:1, 9; 4:25; 5:16, 18.
 - b. 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—Matt. 5:6, 20.
 2. If we are to be **found in Christ**, we must fulfill the condition of not having our own righteousness but instead having a righteousness which is not our own—a righteousness which is **through faith in Christ**, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith—Phil. 3:9.
 3. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8:
 - a. The righteousness we received for our salvation is objective and enables us to meet the requirement of the righteous God, whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming saints are subjective and enable them to meet the requirement of the overcoming Christ—1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9.
 - b. 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.

For the bride to be prepared means that she has the **fine linen, bright and clean**. No doubt, these righteousnesses are related to the righteousness in Ephesians 4:24, where we are told that the new man was created in righteousness. The fact that the clothing of the bride is clean, or pure, means not only that it is without dirt but also that it is without mixture. The righteousnesses of the bride here denote the **subjective righteousness**, Christ as the righteousness which has been constituted into our being. The more this subjective righteousness is wrought into the church, the more she is prepared to become the bride. Those who compose the bride have been **redeemed and regenerated**. But they also need to have the subjective righteousness interwoven into their being in order to have the fine linen, bright and clean. Actually, it is this linen that is the beauty of the bride.

The bride in Revelation 19 refers to the redeemed and transformed tripartite mankind. This bride will wear white linen, which is the righteousnesses of the saints. If we would have a share in this bride, we need to adorn ourselves with the **bright, shining, and pure righteousness**. Day by day we need to prepare bright linen clothing to cover ourselves. This is our daily righteousness. We produce such a garment of righteousness by walking daily according to the Spirit of life and by having a life that is a life of the Spirit. If we prepare our wedding garment day by day, month by month, and year by year by living such a life in the Spirit, we will not be found naked when the Lord comes. Instead, at His coming, we will be wearing a bright and clean, or pure, wedding garment (3:18).

(Conclusion of the New Testament, The (Msgs. 415-436), Chapter 10, Section 3)

Day 4

VI. For the **presentation of the bride to the Bridegroom, the bride needs beauty**—S. S. 1:15-16; 4:1, 7:

- A. In Song of Songs the lover and the Beloved both have beauty, and they appreciate the beauty in each other—1:15-16; 4:1-5, 7.
- B. Ephesians 5:27 speaks of the **beauty of the bride**, revealing that Christ will “present the church to Himself glorious, **not having spot or wrinkle or any such things**, but that she would be **holy and without blemish**.”
- C. 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.
- D. Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us; what Christ appreciates in us is the expression of Himself—Psa. 50:2.
- E. “Your eyes will see the King in His beauty” (Isa. 33:17a); “the King will desire your beauty” (Psa. 45:11a).
- F. “You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, / As lovely as Jerusalem, / As terrible as an army with banners”—S. S. 6:4.

BEAUTY FOR PRESENTATION

In chapter one we have a general sketch of the church, and in chapter two, the creation, birth, and formation of the one new man. Then in chapter four we have the growth of this new man for functioning. Also in chapter four we see the daily life of the new man. Then in chapter five we come to the presentation of the church to Christ. At the time of this presentation, the church will be the **Bride**, not the new man. As the new man, the church needs the functions. But as the Bride, the **church needs beauty**. The growth in chapter four is for the function of the new man, whereas the beauty in chapter five is for the presentation of the bride.

The spots and wrinkles do not affect the function of the church. However, they very much detract from the beauty of the church. What a man looks for in a bride is not firstly ability; it is **beauty**. The church as Christ's Bride must also be beautiful. For this reason, Paul goes on from the function and daily living of the new man in chapter four to the presentation of the bride **without spot or wrinkle** in chapter five. If we grow in the Lord, eventually our functions as members of the Body will come forth. However, we may function properly and have an excellent daily living according to the spirit of the mind, but still not be beautiful in the eyes of the Lord because of our spots and wrinkles. After saying so much about the church in chapters one through four, Paul goes on in chapter five to speak about the church as the Bride. In this chapter he says nothing concerning the creation of the church, the growth of the church, or the daily living of the church. Instead, he speaks of the beauty of the church. When Christ presents the church to Himself, the church will not be a strong man; **she will be a beautiful Bride**. Christ is the universal Man. As this universal Man, He needs the church to be His Bride to match Him. In order to be the Bride of Christ, the church must become beautiful and have all the spots and wrinkles removed.

(Life-Study of Ephesians, Chapter 95, Section 2)

Day 5

VII. The bride must also be a **warrior** for the defeating of God's enemy—Eph. 6:10:

- A. In Ephesians 5:25-27 and 6:10-20 we see the church as the bride and the warrior; in Revelation 19 we also have these two aspects of the church.

Day 6

- B. On the day of His wedding, Christ will marry those who have been fighting the battle against God's enemy for years; that is, Christ will marry the overcomers, who have already overcome the evil one—vv. 7-9; 1 John 2:14.
- C. Christ will come as a **fighting General** with His **bride as His army** to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21:
 1. When Christ comes with His army, He will come as the Son of Man—Matt. 26:64; Rev. 14:14.
 2. As the Son of Man, He will need a counterpart to match and complete Him; this counterpart will be His bride—John 3:29.
 3. Because the Lord is the Word, **His fighting will be the speaking of the word of God**—Rev. 19:13.
 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.

Ephesians shows us how the church expresses God's interests on the positive side and deals with God's enemy on the negative side. The two important aspects of God's creation of man are that man was created in the image of God to express Him and that man was committed by God with His authority to represent Him in order to deal with His enemy. Man was created to rule the earth and in particular to rule over the creeping things, among which is the serpent, the devil (Gen. 1:26). In Ephesians there are also these two main items. First, the church is the expression of the Triune God; 4:24 tells us that the new man was created according to God, that is, in His image. Then the last chapter tells us that the **church fights against God's enemy to deal with the evil forces** (6:10-20).

This battle is fought by the church in Christ Himself as the might and the power. Therefore, we must stand in the Lord, be strong in Him, and fight the battle by **Christ as the whole armor of God**. The different items of the armor are the different aspects of Christ that we experience. The more we experience Christ, the more we have the armor to cover and protect us to fight the spiritual warfare in Christ as the power and by Christ as the armor. Moreover, the unique way to fight the battle in Christ as our strength, power, and armor is in **spirit and by prayer** (v. 18).

(General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, A - Part 2: Romans through Philemon, Chapter 9, Section 5)

VIII. The corporate Christ, Christ with His overcoming bride, will come as a stone to crush the aggregate of human government to bring in God's kingdom—Dan. 2:34-35; Joel 3:11; Rev. 19:11-21; cf. Gen. 1:26:

- A. Whereas Daniel 2 speaks of Christ coming as a stone cut out without hands, Revelation 19 speaks of Christ coming as the One who has His bride as His army.
- B. **Before** Christ descends to earth to deal with Antichrist and the totality of human government, He will have a wedding, **uniting His overcomers to Himself as one entity**—vv. 7-9.
- C. **After** His wedding, the Lord will come **with His newly married bride to destroy Antichrist**, who with his army will fight against God directly—vv. 11, 13-15; 2 Thes. 2:2-8:
 1. The Lord Jesus, the Word of God, will slay Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, **by the breath of His mouth**—Rev. 19:13-15; 2 Thes. 2:2-8.
 2. Out of Christ's mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might **smite the nations**—Rev. 19:15a; cf. 1:16; 2:12, 16.
- D. After crushing the human government, God will have cleared up the entire universe; then the corporate Christ, Christ with His overcomers, will become a great mountain to fill the whole earth, making the whole earth God's kingdom—Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:22, 27; Rev. 11:15.