

THE READINESS OF THE BRIDE

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' And he said to me, 'These are the true sayings of God.' And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'" (Rev 19:7-10, NKJV)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth chapter of the Revelation opens with the joyful response of a great multitude in heaven. The ploy of Satan [spiritual Babylon] has been brought down by the King of kings. Although it appeared invincible, and enjoyed dominance for an unusual period of time, it could not stand. From its inception, the curse of God was upon it. Now that its purpose has been served, it falls, "broken without hand," as it were (Dan 8:25). But this is not the conclusion of our God's purpose. The objective of the Lord is not merely to overthrow evil, or to remove the devil and his hosts from the realm of influence. The purpose of God will continue to roll forward after momentary obstacles have been removed.

Isaiah prophesied the coming Savior would be a King. He affirmed the Lord would "order" and "establish" His kingdom – not merely decimating opposing kingdoms (Isa 9:7). The "increase" of His kingdom would be everlasting, having no end. Daniel described this "increase" as a stone growing in size, crushing all other kingdoms, and finally filling the whole earth (Dan 2:35,44).

The Revelation is an elaboration of this very theme – the increase and dominion of "the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" (Rev 12:10). Daniel accentuated the political kingdoms of the world, and mentioned spiritual dominions. The Revelation emphasizes spiritual kingdoms and alludes to political kingdoms. It reveals that all opposition has been instigated by the devil within the Sovereign government of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the devil has done nothing that has not been within the circumference of the rule and reign of the exalted Christ. The purpose of God will be fulfilled, and the purpose of the devil will be utterly frustrated.

Every believer will ultimately triumph, and every unbeliever will eventually be thrust from the presence of the Lord. Whether we are speaking of individuals or groups of individuals, faith will be rewarded and unbelief will be condemned. That is the overriding message of the Revelation! Jesus cannot lose, and Satan cannot win! Those following the

Lamb wherever He goes will at last be joined to Him. Those who follow the delusions of the wicked one will be cast with him into the lake of fire. There are no exceptions.

As elementary as that may appear, Satan is tireless in his efforts to obscure the truth. He seeks to attach men to a condemned world, and drown the saints in blood and delusion. However, all of his efforts are futile. Natural assaults like famine, pestilence, and flood fail to move the saints from their place in Christ. Fierce and relentless persecution, and the passing of opposing laws, are powerless to pluck the weakest saint from the hands of an omnipotent Christ. Our adversaries' most sustained effort, religious delusion, also proves to be impotent against the "faith of God's elect" (Tit 1:2). All of this is owing to the reign of Jesus, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The safety of God's people is evidence of a reigning Christ. The frustration of the devices of the devil confirms that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Chapter 2

A BRIDE WITHOUT AN ADVERSARY

In this text we are given to behold the bride without an adversary. No one is present to accuse, malign, or persecute her. She has left the realm of hatred, offense, opposition, and warfare. The enemy has been cast down, banished from the presence of the Lord forever, and consigned to the lake of fire with Satan and his angels (Matt 25:41). Now, the bride of Christ is ready to be joined forever to her Husband. She no longer wears the veil of the flesh. The "law of sin and death" (Rom 7:23; 8:2) is not present with her. She no longer knows in part, or sees through a glass darkly, but now knows as she is known (1 Cor 13:9,12). In this text, the bride is not seen running a race (Heb 12:1-2), fighting a good fight (1 Tim 6:12), or wrestling against principalities and powers (Eph 6:12). She is no longer tempted (1 Cor 10:13), enduring a great fight of afflictions (Heb 10:32). In this bride, a vast number of individuals that no man can number (Rev 7:9), there is not a single person who is, or can be, "troubled on every side," "perplexed," "persecuted," or "cast down" (2 Cor 4:8). Her "treasure" is no longer in "earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7). None in this vast number are subject to beating, shipwreck, perils, weariness, painfulness, hunger and thirst, or nakedness (2 Cor 11:25-28). It is no longer needful to exhort the multitude to abide in Christ (John 15:4,7; 1 John 2:27-28), stand fast (1 Cor 16:13), or be not weary in well doing (2 Thess 3:13).

At the time of this refreshing text, there are some words that have become obsolete: "beware" (Phil 3:2; Col 2:8), "be not" (Rom; Eph 5:7; Heb 6:12), "watch" (1 Cor 16:13; 1 Thess 5:6), "be not deceived" (1 Cor 6:9; 16:13; 6:7), "If" (Heb 2:3; 3:6,14; 2 Pet 1:8), "lest" (2 Cor 2:11; Col 2:8; 1 Thess 3:5; Heb 4:1; Heb 4:11), "take heed" (Rom 11:21; 1 Cor 3:10; 10:12; Heb 3:12), "resist" (James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9), "fight" (1 Cor 9:26; 1 Tim 6:12), "let not" (Rom 6:12; 14:16; Eph 4:26), etc. Those are all expressions relating to their warfare in the world. They are all scheduled to come to an end for those who keep the faith.

This is nothing less than the beginning of an eternal marriage. In this passage we are standing on the threshold of eternity, beholding a relationship that will project throughout the ages to come. It is the beginning of a reign that will never cease. Here is an occasion of inexplicable joy that brings great honor to God.

Here we learn God's people will not be fully joined to the Lord until all enemies have

been publically and finally overthrown. Prophetically, David said, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’” (Psa 110:3). Jesus confirmed this referred to the Father speaking to the Son (Matt 22:42-44). Hebrews 1:13 declares it to be a unique statement, never made to an angel (Heb 1:13). Finally, the Spirit declares the subjugation of all Christ’s enemies to be one of the things occurring during His mediatorial reign. “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb 10:11-14)!

Chapter 3

A POINT OF DOCTRINE

There are two key perspectives that are declared in Scripture. The law foreshadowed these views, and the Prophets foretold them. The Apostles affirmed and expounded them, and the Revelation unveils them in a vision.

1. That sin has been expiated and those believing in the Son have been accepted. This is in strict accord with the predetermined purpose of God, and is thoroughly righteous.
2. That all enemies of God are destined to destruction. Their cause will not flourish, but will be abruptly terminated to the glory of God.

The present reign of the Lord Jesus is being carried out in such a manner as to provoke constant praise in the heavenly places. In that reign, the acceptance of the saints and the rejection of their enemies are being unveiled. While the enemies of God rage, the saints of God remain nestled in the bosom of their Savior. Although assaulted by men and demons, their acceptance cannot be negated as they cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Too, no matter how successful their enemies appear, or how long they seem to dominate, their fall is certain and their demise is sure. They are only here for a while!

From the standpoint of our text, the time of our sanctification is also the time of our enemies subjugation. O, the saints must see this truth. You, dear believer, must see life through the window of the Revelation. In your most fierce and disappointing trials at least two things are taking place. (1) You are being perfected. (2) Your adversary is being frustrated and disappointed. You must not lose sight of these realities. They are the working of God! Your faith can take hold of them, making you victorious over the world. Faith IS the victory (1 John 5:4-5)

JESUS IS ENTHRONED IN GLORY

Prior to His enthronement, He terminated the Law as a means to righteousness, destroyed the devil, and spoiled principalities and powers (Col 2:12-15; Heb 2:14; Rom 10:4). This allowed God to confer His own righteousness upon those who believe. Therefore, God is demonstrating “at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). Now Jesus is reigning righteously. That is, He is guiding, feeding, and sustaining believers in a way that cannot be condemned or found with flaw. His ministry toward the saints is right.

By the same token, His reign over His enemies is right. He uses their wicked devices for His own glory, and brings them down when He is finished with them. Of this aspect of

Divine rule Isaiah wrote, “Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness” (Isa 44:25).

Even though there have been periods of history during which this did not seem to be the truth, we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by appearance. Revelation has told us of righteous people being “slain” (6:9-10; 11:7; 12:11; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2). We have read of the saints being “overcome” (13:7). A vision of unrequited martyrs has been provided (6:9-11). Yet, in all of this, the saints were protected from eternal ruin. Although their enemies will be cast into the lake of fire, they will not! Nothing was able to keep them from arriving at their appointed destiny!

The path to glory does not lead through quiet meadows and soothing and tranquil terrain. There are times of blessed quietness, to be sure. But there are also tumultuous times, when the rattling of the spear and the shout of the enemy can be heard. The mighty Apostle Paul must write from prison as well as when preaching as a free man. Although John lived to be an aged Apostle, his brother James was beheaded at the very beginning of their ministry. Saints enjoyed favor with all the people, yet those very believers were also scattered abroad by aggressive persecution.

When saints experience hardship and difficulties, it does not mean they have been forsaken. When their enemies tread upon them and oppress them, it does not mean they are not invincible. In both instances, the Lord is ruling “until His enemies become His footstool.” His purpose is being served, and He alone will receive the glory.

Our text now confirms all of this to be the case. The smoke of battle has cleared, the enemies have been cast down, and the warfare as been completed. What we will see is nothing less than the fulfillment of Divine purpose. This is what the Lord intended all along. It is why Jesus reigns. What we read is currently in process. The saints are being kept and the enemy is being cast down. The grand conclusion is sure! The King is reigning over both the saints and their enemies. There is not the slightest chance that reign will be interrupted.

Chapter 4

LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE

In this world, gladness and rejoicing are often considered an end of themselves. Thus men speak of “being happy” and “having fun.” It has even become fashionable for people to associate worshipping God and being a Christian with “having fun.” These spiritual hedonists imagine that pleasure is the best thing. They gauge everything by the thermometer of enjoyment. But they are wrong— seriously wrong! Pleasure is good and pain is bad. However, pleasure is not the best thing, and pain is not the worst thing!

The supreme pleasure belongs to God, not to us. This is a teaching of Scripture that is consistent. It is why the Lord Jesus confined Himself to God’s will (Matt 26:42). It is why He taught us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth . . .” (Matt 6:10). The term “good pleasure” refers exclusively to matters pleasing to God (Psa 51:18; Lk 12:32; Eph 1:5,9; Phil 2:13; 2 Thess 1:11). Everything Jesus did and does is to please the Father (John 8:29). The Holy Spirit devotes Himself exclusively to doing the will of God (Rom 8:27). All of the holy angels “do His pleasure” (Psa 103:21).

This is not a theological bypath! We are told of a great falling away where human pleasure would become a primary objective. Religious men would become “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim 3:4). This refers to a religious form of pleasure – an attempt to sanctify worldly and fleshly pleasure by placing the label of “religion” upon it. Wicked men attempt to sanctify such wayward quests by associating them with religion. Their efforts are in vain.

I am going to wax bold and say that a quest for pleasure – or the desire to please men – is of the devil. I know this to be the case. Paul, whose appointed occupation was to reach the Gentile world, refused to be caught up in pleasing men. “For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10, NKJV). One might object that Paul likewise said, “I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:33). In this expression, the salvation of men is the primary objective, not their pleasure. This is another way of saying, “giving none offence,” or not laying a stumbling block before the people (1 Cor 10:32). The appeal was not to the desires and preferences of natural men, but to the deep hunger of fallen spirits.

When we speak about “pleasure,” we must be sure we are not speaking of “the pleasures of this life” (Lk 8:14), “pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:12), “living in pleasure” (1 Tim 5:6), “lovers of pleasure” (2 Tim 3:4), “divers lusts and pleasures” (Tit 3:3), or “the pleasures of sin” (Heb 11:25). The supreme pleasure is “the pleasure of the Lord” (Isa 53:10). That is the only pleasure that is a proper focus.

Chapter 5

MEN MAY REJOICE WHEN GOD REJOICES!

The summons to “be glad and rejoice” is occasioned by the gladness of the Lamb and all the host of heaven. The pleasure of created beings is wrapped up in the pleasure of Him who “created all things.” This is part of having “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). While the Lord “expects,” so do we (Heb 10:13). When He is glad, so are we! The rejoicing of men that is not entwined with Divine joy is not the most profitable, to say the least, even though it is eagerly sought by many professing Christians! Solemnly, Jesus said, “Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep” (Lk 6:25). There is a joy that is out of harmony with Divine pleasure, and will therefore be turned into mourning. Of that you may be sure.

Our text, however, speaks of a genuine joy—genuine because it reflects the joy of the Savior. The spirit now speaks of a time when gladness and joy will be brought to their fullest measure. They will never again be interrupted, or compete with conflicting emotions. “Let us be glad and rejoice.” What God has purposed has come to pass! What the Son has longed for has now arrived, and joy is the demand of the moment!

Even in this world, we have “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1:8). This joy, however, is “unspeakable,” or inexpressible (NASB, NIV). It transcends our abilities of locution. There is something about the present human condition that puts a bottleneck on the expression of the joy of reference. From one point of view, the magnitude of available and valid joy is much larger than is experienced by the average professing Christian. From yet another point of view, there is a legitimate, though grievous limitation placed on the expression of this joy because the treasure of salvation is presently held in “earthen

vessels” – bodies that are in the process of dying, and cannot transport over into the glory (2 Cor 4:7). Those who are not growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15), and being changed from glory unto glory by the Holy Spirit, are not aware of this limitation. They consequently, at the very best, settle for a very limited view of salvation, and thus are not properly motivated by hope (Rom 5:2; 8:24-25; 15:13; Gal 5:5; Col 1:27; Tit 2:13; Heb 3:6; 6:11,19; 7:19; 1 Pet 1:3,13; John 3:3).

But our present condition will not always be the case! There is coming a time when that joy WILL be fully expressible. Our text speaks of that time. Peter also referred to it in his First Epistle, associating it with the revelation of Christ’s glory. “But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Pet 4:13, NKJV). The exhortation to “be glad and rejoice” refers to that time. It will be the time of Christ’s unveiling, when the Father will “show” Him before an assembled universe (1 Tim 6:15). Then we will have the ability to rejoice fully, with no distraction or encumbrance. Then, obviously and eternally joined to the Lord, we will shout for joy as eternity’s ceaseless cycles roll onward.

Chapter 6

AND GIVE HIM GLORY!

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory.”

This is not a mere release of pent-up joy. It is an appointed means through which the heavenly multitude will give God “glory.” In their spiritually intelligent joy, the working of God will be acknowledged. Through it, attention will be drawn to the righteous and effective execution of His good will. Everything will be perceived as having been worked “together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). There will be no question about WHY the redeemed are there, or HOW they arrived safely. There will be no doubt about the effectiveness of the reign of Christ. Every soul will clearly see the righteousness of the salvation of God’s elect, and the uprightness of the condemnation of the wicked! There will be no inquiry about the legality of the path through which the saints came to glory.

There will be no debate about God’s will versus man’s will (Eph 1:5,9), or “the righteousness of God” versus the righteousness of man (2 Cor 5:19). No one will be found disputing whether or not God actually worked in men (Heb 13:21), whether the new birth was real or not (1 Pet 1:23), or if God works to will and to do in men (Phil 2:13). No one will raise a question about whether or not God predestinates, the focus of that predestination, or the details of it (Rom 8:29,30; Eph 1:5,11). The matter of God electing will not be challenged (Rom 8:33; 9:11; 11:5,7,28; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; Tit 1:11; 1 Pet 1:2; 5:13; 2 Pet 1:10;). There will not be a word of disagreement about whether or not baptism saved those present (1 Pet 3:21). No one will be arguing about how they overcame the devil (1 Pet 5:8-9; 1 John 5:4-5). Not a single person will have a question about whether or not Jesus was absolutely reigning during the entirety of “the day of salvation” (1 Tim 6:15). No one will be wondering about which church is the true church (Matt 16:18; Eph 1:22-23; 1 Tim 3:15).

Those are all issues in this world – not necessary issues, but issues that are raised because of the traditions of men. However, once the glorified Savior is seen as He is (1 John 3:1-2), all erroneous reasoning will melt away, being dissipated by His glory. When Jesus

appears, no one will ask who He is. No one will raise a hand against Him, seek to betray Him, or engage in a dispute with Him. All such actions and disputes – all of them – exist because Christ is not seen as He is, and God is not understood, correctly. But those conditions will come to an abrupt conclusion, and in all of the assembled universe there will not be a single personality who does not know Jesus Christ has been the Head of all things all along, and God never has abdicated the Throne.

This is what is involved in giving Him “glory.” The credit for salvation will all go to Him, because it belongs with Him!—i.e. "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev 7:10). "Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God" (Rev 19:1).

All of the gladness and all of the joy will be shouted with our faces toward the Throne! What has made the redeemed glad has been wrought by God. Holy angels will see the effectiveness and superiority of the grace of God. The seraphim and cherubim will behold the completion of a Divine purpose that spanned generations and millennia. With insight, fervor, and expressible joy, all will exclaim, “This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23).

No one should have any trouble with these things now!

Chapter 7

IT IS THE LAMB'S MARRIAGE!

Here is a glorious truth! This is not the marriage of the church, but of the Lamb! “For the marriage of the Lamb is come.” The Lord Jesus is the dominant one in this scene. The church is being presented to Him. As it is written, “that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). This is the presentation to which Paul referred in Second Corinthians: “knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will PRESENT us with you” (4:14). And again, declaring His own involvement in the presentation, Paul wrote, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may PRESENT you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2). Again, this presentation is mentioned in Colossians 1:21-22. “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to PRESENT you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.” And again, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may PRESENT every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col 1:28). And again, “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to PRESENT you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).

This marriage was central in the thinking of Christ when He “dwelt among us.” He referred to Himself as “the Bridegroom,” and His return to heaven as a time of absence from the bride (Matt 9:15). The gathering of the church to Himself is depicted as wise virgins going in to the “Bridegroom” (Matt 25:1-10). In language most precise, and speaking of Jesus, John the Baptist said, “He who has the bride is the Bridegroom” (John 3:29).

Now, in our text, the consummation of the marriage comes to pass. This is the objective behind the Word becoming flesh. This is the reason for His vicarious death and glorious

resurrection. This is why He was enthroned in glory, being given all power in heaven and earth. Here is the reason for the subjugation of His enemies, and the casting down of all opposing power. It was that, in the end, we might “always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17). This is the ultimate reason for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is the objective that caused holy angels to be ministers to the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14). There is not a single aspect of salvation that does not relate directly to “the marriage of the Lamb.” It is the business of the church to prepare for the wedding, and make herself ready (Rev 19:7).

Chapter 8

IN SHARP CONFLICT

At this point we come into sharp conflict with the thrust of most Christianity. The startling effect of “Babylon the Great” (Rev 17:5; 18:2) upon the thinking of men can be seen while contemplating this truth. Satan has fabricated a “Christian” religion that is “this worldly.” Those who embrace it do not think about the “marriage of the Lamb.” Their religion lulls them to sleep as they live and move and have their being with this “present evil world: (Gal 1:4) in mind. The surety of participating in “the marriage supper of the Lamb” Rev 19:9) is the one area where doubt reigns supreme in the professed church.

Mind you, this is what salvation is all about. It is why Jesus came, and why He reigns. All of heaven is supporting this revealed agenda. Yet, myriads of professed believers stand in doubt about their eternal destiny.

Speaking as though they were learned, men refer to what they perceive as the “main thing.” They speak of rescuing men from sin as being fundamental. Others consider “the great commission” as the greatest and most extensive undertaking of all time. All of this sounds very good, and fits in with the institutional agenda very well. But how does it fit into the revealed agenda of God? The deliverance of men “from the power of darkness” is only one side of the heavenly coin! The other side is being “translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son” (Col 1:13). Men are not only turned “from darkness,” they are turned “to light.” They not only are turned away “from the power of Satan,” but “to God.” They not only receive “forgiveness of sins,” but “an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18).

In each of these affirmations the latter expression – “an inheritance” – is the objective, while the former is the means to its accomplishment! The PURPOSE is to be placed into Christ’s Kingdom, be in the light, be toward God, and possess an inheritance. The appointed means to bring us to that condition is deliverance from the power of darkness, being turned from darkness and the power of Satan, and having our sins remitted. If you remove the PURPOSE, there is no reason for the means!

Those who erroneously spotlight the means, by that very emphasis, obscure the purpose for it all. Their theology becomes an obstacle to a proper understanding of God Himself and what He is doing in Christ Jesus. That is why they do not speak of heaven, glory, the coming of the Lord, and the inheritance that is reserved for those who are sanctified by faith. That is why those following their teachings do not have confidence and full assurance. The multitudes of anemic souls that fill the churches of our land are the direct result of a distorted theological emphasis.

Unless our teaching leads those who embrace it to anticipate “the marriage of the Lamb,” it misses the mark. It makes little difference how scholarly the approach, or how effective the methods employed. If those adhering to the teaching in question are not left “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:13), they have been led astray. Questioning and unsure hearts are bad fruit that come from a corrupt tree! The lack of full assurance loudly declares that the fundamental work has not yet been accomplished in the individual, and the primary message has not yet been believed.

When our text says, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come,” the grand purpose of our salvation is being confirmed. Right here we can examine the validity of our emphasis, and the correctness of our doctrine. Lay the reason for living along side this text. See if what you say and how you live is pointed in the direction of “the marriage of the Lamb.” It is here that you can determine whether or not you are in harmony with what God is doing. There is no reason why you cannot be in accord with this purpose! The “great salvation” which the Gospel announces is designed to prepare you for that day. Heavenly resources have been supplied to ensure you arrive safely at the goal.

Chapter 9

HIS WIFE

Remember, it is the Lamb’s marriage, not the church’s! The church is “His wife,” and, in the matter of preeminence, the point is not that He is her husband. That is the world’s perspective of marriage. The marriage of Jesus occasions glory and honor to the Lord. He is the focus of it all. The glory of the bride is her Bridegroom. Her joy flows from His gladness. He is the reason for her blessedness and acceptance.

His ultimate aim is to “present” the church "to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:27). She will be presented” faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). He has saved His people in order to "present” them in the aggregate “holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col 1:22).

Real ministers of the truth labor that they may, with Paul, “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col 1:28). As for Paul, the “apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13; 2 Tim 1:11), he set the tone for all who feed to flock of God: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2). Religious labors and works that do not have this as their ultimate objective for the people are really nothing more than a blotch on the canvas of religion. No person or group of persons has a right to be identified with Christ who is working on a different project than Himself.

Paul wrote letters to churches that had swerved from the path to glory, and had entrenched themselves in vain and reproachful religious pursuits – the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:4), the Galatians (Gal 1:6), and the Hebrews (Heb 5:3). He warned the Colossians of the danger of being subverted by certain teachers (Col 2:8). James wrote to a pretending religious community (James 4:4). John warned of false prophets that had flooded the landscape (1 John 4:1). Paul wrote to Timothy, admonishing him to “charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Tim 1:3). All of these expressions were prompted by a

keen awareness of the objective of salvation – which is to prepare a bride for Christ.

Admittedly, there are valid works that pertain to “doing good unto all men” (Gal 6:10), but if they are not done within the framework of preparing a bride for Christ, they are virtually meaningless. Jesus did not come, die, raise again, go back to heaven, or commence His reign with an aim to make the world a better place to live. As difficult as it may be to receive, He did not come to eliminate poverty and slavery. Nor, indeed, did He appear to correct political systems, and ensure an ideal political atmosphere. In a little over three years He fed multitudes two times – and then, it was only the ones who were following and listening to Him (Matt 14:19-21; 15:34-38). He never addressed a political audience, or launched a crusade to clean up government. His work was on a much larger scale than that – one that included an eternal perspective.

We must never allow the church to become primary, or overshadow its Savior. We will be glorified in His glory, and be honored in His honor. At the marriage, He will be the center of attention. The bride will be glorified IN Him. Until that time, it is the business of the church to draw attention to the Lord Jesus Christ – and that cannot be done while the people are in an impure and ignorant state. If people are not ready to stand before the Lord, and be forever united with Him, they simply will not be allowed to enter into glory.

Chapter 10

THE WORK OF PREPARATION

“. . . and His wife has made herself ready.” Until now, the church has been called “the bride” (John 3:29; Rev 22:17). The “bride” is the prospective “wife” – the “wife” in preparation. To the bride, the marriage is everything. If that is missed, there is no point to anything else. One can only imagine the impact of preparing for a marriage, yet never realizing its culmination – or the marriage arriving, and the bride not being ready.

For the one who has been baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27), all of life is lived in anticipation of “the marriage of the Lamb.” Obedience is yielded with that in mind. Persecutions are endured in consideration of the coming marriage. The challenges of life that are difficult to bear are endured in hopes of the coming marriage. Faithfulness is in order to be prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Edification, or the building up of the saints, is in order that, when the time of the marriage arrives, we will be “ready.” Death itself moves us closer to the marriage! The resurrection further prepares us for the marriage! The day of judgment is a prelude to the marriage! “The marriage of the Lamb” is everything! It is what the Father planned. It is why the Holy Spirit is given to those in Christ Jesus. It is what Jesus is anticipating.

Now we are given to see the life and manners of the church from the standpoint of the consummation of all things. The people of God were making themselves “ready” for the marriage. This is why they looked to the things that are not seen (1 Cor 4:17-18). This is why they perfected “holiness in the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor 7:1). It was to this end they worked out their own “salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:13). This is why they kept “the commandments of God” (1 Cor 7:19). For this purpose they were “called into the fellowship” of God’s Son (1 Cor 1:9). This is why they ran the race set before them and kept the faith (Heb 12:1-2). It is why they put on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:10-18), and fought the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). This is the reason for perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). It is why the saved keep running the race that

has been set before them, all the while looking unto Jesus, who authored their faith, and will finish it (Heb 12:1-2). This is why they sought the things that are above, setting their affection upon them (Col 3:1-2). It is why they remained steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. In doing such things they are preparing themselves for the “marriage of the Lamb.”

The saved are representatives of the Lord, and workers together with Him—but they are more. They are “His wife!” Like Rebekah was chosen to be the wife of Isaac (Gen 24), so the church has been chosen to be Christ’s wife (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 17:14). The realization of her blessed state compels her to prepare for the marriage.

I must admit that, for the most part, it would never enter the mind of an observer that the modern church is preparing for her marriage of the Lamb. Some casually speak about Jesus returning for a spotless and holy bride, but these days it is unusual to see one in the making – or to even hear of the necessity of such preparation. The younger segment of the church can certainly not become prepared by fun and games. And the older segment cannot do so by outings and various forms of pleasure. Brief and infrequent gatherings of the saints will not contribute to the required preparation. A lot of professional training will not do so either.

You may rest assured that anyone and everyone that participates in the marriage of the Lamb will have prepared to do so. The unprepared will be banished from the presence of the Lord – forever.

Chapter 11

A CHASTE VIRGIN

Part of the preparation of the bride involves the maintenance of purity – moral and spiritual chastity. When we are moved from darkness to light, “being born again” of “incorruptible seed” (1 Pet 1:23), we begin pure and clean. We are “forgiven all trespasses” (Col 2:13), and “washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). We begin life in Christ without a single stain or blemish, our hearts being “purified by faith” (Acts 15:9). The very circumstance of our beginning in Christ Jesus should confirm our ultimate destiny to our hearts. We do not have to limit ourselves to our own conclusions, however valid they may be. The objective for the church is clearly stated. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless” (Eph 5:15-17, NASB).

Paul articulated the reason that drove his faithful ministry. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a CHASTE VIRGIN to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor 11:2-3). Doctrinal and spiritual corruption is like a harlot Satan uses to contaminate the would-be people of God. However, Jesus will not court or marry a harlot, or a spiritual adulterer. With the greatest sobriety James wrote to certain professing “Christians,” "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Do not imagine for one moment that moral and spiritual purity is not

an absolute necessity.

UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

A significant part of our preparation is remaining unspotted. James put it this way, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). This is purity from every angle: thought, word, deed, and even motives. An admonition given to Timothy, but not confined to him, was “keep yourself pure” (1 Tim 5:22). Paul also exhorted him to be noted for “purity” (1 Tim 4:12). Peter wrote of “pure minds” (2 Pet 3:1). John wrote that every man possessing hope in Christ “purifies himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:2). Speaking for other faithful proclaimers as well, as himself, Paul said they were approved “by pureness” (2 Cor 6:6). This requires considerable effort on our part, and cannot be accomplished casually.

The incentive for maintaining moral and spiritual purity is provided in the promises. Of particular note is a promise made in the sixth chapter of Second Corinthians. “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty” (6:17-18). Separation from contaminating influences is essential. The reason for the separation is specified—it is an unequal yoke. Righteousness and unrighteousness cannot mingle. Light and darkness cannot commune. Christ and the devil cannot be in accord. A believer and an unbeliever have nothing in common (2 Cor 6:14-15). Moral condition that cannot transfer to the new heaven and earth, must not be nurtured in this one!

We are not to touch the “unclean thing” – the thing that defiles and contaminates the soul. We are to make no attempt to handle what soils our souls, whether it is a thought, an association, or some sensible object brought into our lives.

To assist us in the holy work of preparation, the Lord makes certain commitments. They are based on our response to the specified requirement of being pure.

1. “I will receive you.”
2. “I will be a Father to you.”
3. “You shall be my sons and daughters.”

We must carefully guard ourselves from accepting any theological view that neutralizes this text, rendering it powerless to us. The notion that God receives people unconditionally is not only absurd, it is a thought originated by demons, and designed to make us misfits in glory. Any view of salvation that allows God to receive you while you are willingly defiled is false. Too, remove from your mind the notion that God is a “Father” to everyone. He is not. Although every person had his beginning with God, God conducts Himself as a Father only to those who keep themselves unspotted from the world. For some, this is too hard to receive. They had rather imagine their prayers are heard even when their lives are soiled. But it is not so.

Chapter 12

DEALING WITH SIN

The maintenance of purity is possible because of the provision of an Advocate. "My little

children, these things write I unto you, that ye SIN NOT. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). His advocacy is conditioned upon our acknowledgment of sin. As it is written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Perhaps you have been discouraged by considering you may have sinned without really knowing it – a sin of ignorance, so to speak (Lev 4:2). Gracious provision has even been made for this. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). There is no reason for the child of God to carry the guilt of sin from one day to another! Full provision has been made for continual cleansing and perfection! This is part of our preparation for the marriage of the Lamb!

THE ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the holy work of preparation for the marriage, we are not limited to our own efforts. Our preparation will take everything we have – all of our strength, but will not be accomplished by our strength alone. The work we are called to do is an arduous one. Were it not for Divine assistance, it would be a hopeless endeavor. The Lord Jesus, however, is intent in His determination to "bring many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10). The Holy Spirit is given to us to assist in the strenuous work of subduing the flesh. That is the meaning of Romans 8:13-14. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Those who do not engage in this activity are grieving the Spirit of God, by Whom they were "sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30). The Holy Spirit, given to believers to assist them in preparing for the marriage, is thus distressed and virtually thwarted in the work, because of the obstinance of those He was sent to help.

The very fact that we require the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to "put to death the deeds of the body" (NKJV) confirms the difficulty of the task. Unless there is a commitment to the work by the individual, it is actually a hopeless endeavor. Remember, "His wife has MADE HERSELF ready" (Rev 19:7). She availed herself of Divine enablements, but she did MAKE HERSELF ready. She "perfected holiness in the fear of the Lord" (2 Cor 7:1).

THE WISE VIRGINS

In preparing for the "marriage of the Lamb," the bride must employ wisdom. Her preparation is made in a strange country, surrounded by hostile and aggressive foes, and while housed in a tabernacle of clay. Her foes are crafty, so she must be wise. She cannot afford to be thoughtless or foolish.

Our Lord referred to those who prepared themselves for the coming Groom as "wise virgins." The 25th chapter of Matthew declares a primary trait of this indispensable wisdom. The summons to prepare for the marriage is likened to "ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." They were not all of equal character. "Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish." They all had lamps with them. However, "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them." Those who were wise made plans for a long wait. It is written, "but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." They did not assume a brief sojourn, making preparations

for a long vigil.

The Bridegroom did not come as soon as expected. He “tarried,” or “delayed” His appearance. During that interval of time, all of the virgins fell asleep, and all of their lamps went out. At an unexpected time – MIDNIGHT – the cry went out, “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!” All of the virgins awoke. All of them arose. All of them trimmed their lamps, preparing to light them during the peak of darkness. But that is where the likeness stopped. The five wise virgins were PREPARED – they had extra oil. The five foolish virgins were UNPREPARED – they had NO oil.

You will remember the outcome of the parable. The foolish virgins made an effort to procure oil from the wise virgins, but could not. At that time, there was not enough oil for ten virgins – only for five. The arrival of the Bridegroom was NOT a time to share oil. It is written, “those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.” Later, the foolish virgins, who had once intended to be at the supper, pounded on the door, seeking admittance to the supper. From within came the heart-wrenching words, “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.”

Our Savior’s application of this parable reveals the essentiality of making preparation for His return. “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Matt 25:1-13).

When, therefore, we read, “His wife has made herself ready,” there is a perfect harmony with the remainder of Scripture. The faithful do whatever is required for them to be ready to meet the Lord. Those who are haphazard in their preparations are dominated by unbelief. Unless they recover from their indolence, they will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess 1:9).

Whatever hinders our preparation for the “marriage of the Lamb” is to be avoided. There is no cost too great to pay in this matter. If habits or associations make our preparation too difficult, they should be terminated, abruptly and completely. This is what Jesus means in these arresting words, “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matt 5:29-30, NIV). Mark adds the telling words, “It is better for you to ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mk 9:46-48). In this case, entering the Kingdom of God is equivalent to being ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

I want to emphasize that NO PROVISION whatsoever is made for those who are NOT ready for the marriage. Now – today – “is the day of salvation.” This is the time to avail ourselves of the grace and power of God, preparing for the “marriage of the Lamb.” When the marriage arrives, there will be no time for ANY preparation. All will either be ready or forever unprepared. Simply put, salvation provides no inheritance for those unprepared to receive it. It is evident this is not generally received.

THE HEAVENLY GRANT

“And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

Here the grace of God shines brightly. Remember, the bride is going to be joined to her Lord. She is “His wife,” and He is spotless and pure. In Revelation, we have seen this bride as a “woman,” hounded by the enemy, and chased into a wilderness area. We also beheld another “woman”—a harlot. She “was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls” (17:4). Her apparel was gaudy, and not comely. Her clothing was not given to her by God, but was self-made, and an abomination to the Lord. But it is not so with “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

The clothing she has was “given” to her. She did not make her apparel as Adam and Eve did at first. Her clothing itself was a “grant,” or provision, from her Lord. Like the individual saints of all ages who comprise her, she has nothing she has not “received” (1 Cor 4:7). It goes without saying, the bride received her garments from the Lord. As it is written, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

The apparel to which our text refers is nothing less than the “garments of salvation.” With a shout of joy, the bride can say, “My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10). By that I mean the garments are an aspect of salvation, and are supplied with it.

As to its nature, the covering of the bride is precise and costly – “fine linen.” Her apparel was supplied at great cost, and produced with meticulous labor. The clothing is “clean and white,” unsoiled with the spot of the world. It is “clean and white” in God’s sight, and is so perceived by all the hosts of heaven.

Yet, this text goes deeper than that. By saying “it was given unto her to be arrayed,” the PRIVILEGE of wearing the clothing is emphasized as well as the clothing itself. This accent can be seen in several different versions. “And to her was granted that she SHOULD BE arrayed . . .”(KJV). “. . . TO HER it has been granted to be clothed . . . ” (NRSV).

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SAINTS

The “fine linen” is defined as “the righteousness of saints.” There is a sense in which righteousness is imputed, or credited, to believers. While it is given to them, it really is not theirs. It is “the righteousness of God” Himself, and is imputed “without,” or separate from, “the Law” (Rom 1:17; 3:21-22). This is NOT, however, the point of our text. The declaration is that “His wife has MADE HERSELF ready.” She has entered into the process personally, working out her own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:13). The “fine linen” is pointedly said to be “the righteousness of saints,” NOT the righteousness of God. Some other versions make an even stronger statement of the case. “The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints”(NKJV, NASB, NIV). “The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (RSV). “For the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints” (BBE).

While righteousness is, indeed, imputed to the saints, it must be “put on” by them. This is

expressed in the most wonderful language by the prophet Isaiah. "Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; PUT ON YOUR BEAUTIFUL GARMENTS, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean Shall no longer come to you. Shake yourself from the dust, arise; Sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!" (Isa 52:1-2).

Although the righteousness is given to us, it must be appropriated by faith. This is nothing less than putting on the new man (Eph 4:24). It is walking in the Spirit and participating in the Divine nature (Gal 5:16; 2 Pet 1:4). Thus the Divine nature is evidenced in our personal expressions. This is the "fruit of the Spirit." The fruit comes from the Spirit, yet is expressed through our hearts, minds, words, and deeds. Men put on these garments when they do not quench or grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:20; 1 Thess 5:19).

Our preparation for the "marriage of the Lamb" involves the Divine nature being expressed through our persons. It is something we do, but not something we do alone. It is our involvement that makes it "the righteousness of SAINTS." It is the work of God that makes it "the RIGHTEOUSNESS of SAINTS."

Let it be clear, unrighteousness disqualifies a person from participation in "the marriage of the Lamb." Any theology that states to the contrary is to be scrapped, because it is refuse and dung. The Spirit speaks expressly on this matter. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor 6:9). "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18). It is said of those who allow the flesh to express itself, "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:19-21).

John adds a word to this subject. He affirms this is common knowledge among those who know the Lord. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29). The "righteousness of saints" describes the activities of those who practice righteousness. Thus John again says, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7).

Unrighteous people have no part with the bride, because they are not making themselves ready for "the marriage of the Lamb." But those who engage themselves in the doing of righteousness are, by that very activity, making themselves ready for the appointed marriage. It is the business of those speaking in the behalf of the Lord to continually apprise His people of this. They must be ready for the marriage!

Chapter 14

THE HOPE OF OUR CALLING

"Then he said to me, Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19:9)

Here is a message Jesus especially wants His people to hear. Remember, this is a message to "the churches"—something the Spirit is saying "to the churches;" a statement made seven times in the Revelation (2:7,11,17,23,29; 3:6,13,22; 22:16). Something that is "written" is intended for the saints of all ages. That is one of the principles of the

Kingdom. Those who spend an inordinate amount of time determining context, purpose for writing, and other such things, do not always consider this principle. The word “Scripture” means writing, coming from the word γραφή (grafe). The Word apprizes us, “ALL Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Thus Scripture is identified as writings inspired and commanded by God. They were written to assist “the man of God” in being prepared for Divine use.

Another example of this principle is found in 1 Corinthians 10:11. “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.” John also concluded his Gospel by saying, “But these HAVE BEEN WRITTEN that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

While this may appear a trite point, it is not. The thing that makes the Word relevant is that it has been “written.” The context does not make it relevant. Rather, the fact that it has been “written” makes it relevant. The context will assist in determining the point and manner of the relevance, but not the relevance itself. No Scripture was written to eventually be ignored, placed to the side, or treated as though there was no current value and instruction in it. The fact that the professed Christian masses are woefully ignorant of Scripture confirms that this has not been seen. It is true that a considerable amount of Scripture is in the area of typology, figures, and shadows of good things to come. That, of course, is what makes it relevant to us now.

It is not WHO Scripture is written to that makes it pertinent. The fact that something was written to Israel (Isa 1:1), or to a certain nation (Isa 13:1; 15:11; 19:1), or a certain church or churches (1 Cor 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; Rev 1:4), by no means suggests it is not important to us. And, indeed, it is not WHEN it was written that makes it germane to the saint. The writing itself (Scripture) means it contains things conducive to teaching, reproof, correction, training, and learning. There are different uses of Scripture, to be sure, but all of Scripture is useful, and none of it irrelevant.

Thus, when John is told “Write,” he is being directed to provide the people of God with something essential to their understanding and profit. In this case, it has to do with the hope of His calling (Eph 1:18). That is, this has to do with WHY people “become Christians,” as they say. It is WHY people are placed in the body of Christ. It is WHY their sins are remitted. It is WHY they are given the Holy Spirit, and have access to God. It is WHY Jesus ever lives to make intercession for them.

If you were to ask the average Christian WHY they have come to the Lord, and why their sins are forgiven, many would answer it was in order that they would not be condemned, or go to hell. There is no denying that this is one of the reasons – but it is not the paramount one! The hope of glory, and of being part of the Lamb’s wife – that is the foundational reason for being in Christ!

Chapter 15

ANOTHER BEATITUDE

Here is another beatitude: “Blessed are . . .” To confirm this is a book of blessing, it

contains seven beatitudes.

1. BLESSED is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. (1:3, NASB)
2. BLESSED are the dead who die in the Lord from now on! 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.' (14:13, NASB)
3. BLESSED is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame. (16:15, NASB)
4. BLESSED are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (19:9, NASB)
5. BLESSED and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power. (20:6, NASB)
6. BLESSED is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book. (22:7, NASB)
7. BLESSED are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. (22:14, NASB)

This should confirm to your heart that the book of Revelation deals with salvation. It contains no different message, but is perfectly harmonious with the remainder of God's word. It has been given to bring a blessing to us, not merely information. It is written to give us an advantage by further preparing us for the marriage of the Lamb.

What does it mean to be "blessed?"

First, blessing comes from God, and is not induced by the creature. That is why "blessing" is ascribed to the Lamb – the Administrator of the Kingdom (Rev 5:12,13; 7:12). The Word appropriately refers to "the blessing of the Lord" (Gen 39:5; Deut 12:15; 16:17; 33:23; Psa 129:8; Prov 10:22).

Second, in this case, blessing is a human experience. It is transcendent happiness or joy – a sense of well being because of the favor of God. Vincent says the word "blessed" involves "a sense of God's approval founded in righteousness which rests ultimately on love to God." Because of the unusual richness of his remarks on this word, I now include some of his words.

"Thus the word passed up into the higher region of Christian thought, and was stamped with the gospel signet, and laden with all the rich significance of gospel blessedness. It now takes on a group of ideas strange to the best pagan morality, and contradictory of its fundamental positions. Shaking itself loose from all thoughts of outward good, it becomes the express symbol of a happiness identified with pure character. Behind it lies the clear cognition of sin as the fountain-head of all misery, and of holiness as the final and effectual cure for every woe. For knowledge as the basis of virtue, and therefore of happiness, it substitutes faith and love. For the aristocracy of the learned virtuous, it introduces the truth of the Fatherhood of God and the corollary of the family of believers. While the pagan word carries the isolation of the virtuous and the contraction of human sympathy, the Gospel pushes these out with an ideal of a world-wide sympathy and of a happiness realized in ministry. The vague outlines of an abstract good vanish from it, and give place to the pure heart's vision of God, and its personal communion with the Father in heaven. Where it told of the Stoic's self-sufficiency, it now tells of the Christian's

poverty of spirit and meekness. Where it hinted at the Stoic's self-repression and strangling of emotion, it now throbs with a holy sensitiveness, and with a monition to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. From the pagan word the flavor of immortality is absent. No vision of abiding rest imparts patience and courage amid the bitterness and struggle of life; no menace of the destiny of evil imposes a check on human lusts. The Christian word *blessed* is full of the light of heaven. It sternly throws away from itself every hint of the Stoic's asserted right of suicide as a refuge from human ills, and emphasizes something which thrives on trial and persecution, which glories in tribulation, which not only endures but conquers the world, and expects its crown in heaven.—Vincent's Word Studies

Blessedness is a frame of spirit that comes from understanding – “spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). Under the Old Covenant, “blessing” was nearly always associated with outward prosperity and benefit (Lev 25:21; Deut 7:14; 28:3,6). In Christ Jesus, the idea of blessing has been enlarged. It now projects into eternity – beyond the temporal order. It refers to the favor, or loving approval of God, that makes the individual suitable to dwell forever with the Lord. The person who is “blessed” realizes this to a measurable degree while still in the body. He is thus able to tap into the rich treasury of blessing that is in Christ Jesus. In the powerful effects of that blessing he can resist the devil, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. Peter reminds those in Christ we are “called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (1 Pet 3:9).

Chapter 16

AND WHAT IS THE BLESSING?

“Then he said to me, Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” (Rev 19:9)

What is the “blessing” that is to be written? It is one addressed to faith. It is a blessing that cannot be confirmed to anyone living in the flesh. Only those so blessed know of its reality. “Blessed are they which are called (invited, NKJV, NASB, NIV) unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Notice, the blessing is for NOW – “Blessed ARE they which ARE CALLED.” He does not “write” of a future blessedness – although that is surely coming. Rather, John is charged to “write” for the benefit of those fighting the good fight of faith.

Believers are referred to as “the called of Jesus Christ,” and “who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 1:6; 8:28). Their calling came from heaven, and is therefore called a “heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1). It is also a call to come higher, and is therefore called a “high calling” (KJV), or “upward call” (Phil 3:14, NASB). Because this call comes from a holy God, and demands separation from this world, it is also called a “holy calling” (2 Tim 1:9).

The chief means employed in this call is the Gospel of Christ, through which we become aware of the “call” (2 Thess 2:14). We must never forget that the Lord is the one who “calls.” The “call” is His invitation or summons, and it is personal and effective. Salvation is intimate in all of its facets, and is never impersonal.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter related salvation to the call of God. “And Peter said to them, Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself” (Acts 2:38-39). Years later, Paul related salvation to the choice of God, writing, “whom He predestined, these He also called” (Rom 8:30).

The “call” of God occurs when the human spirit is made aware of His provision of salvation. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Gospel, the “heavenly calling” becomes known to us. This is a fundamental part of Apostolic doctrine that cannot be successfully contradicted.

It is the OBJECTIVE of that call that is the subject of John’s commissioned writing. How frequently the purpose of our calling is mentioned. Here are a few of the references. They all indicate the largeness of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

1. To His kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:12)
2. To the obtaining of glory (2 Thess 2:14).
3. Into the grace of Christ (Gal 1:6).
4. Out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9).
5. To be saints (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2).
6. Into the fellowship of His Son (1 Cor 1:9)
7. Into liberty (Gal 5:13).

And how is all of this accomplished? How are we brought to Christ’s Kingdom and glory? How are we caused to obtain glory? What means are employed to get us into the grace of Christ? How is it that we are brought out of darkness into His marvelous light? How do we become saints? How are we brought into Christ’s fellowship? What method does the Lord use to bring us into this marvelous liberty in Christ Jesus?

All of these blessings are facilitated by a Divine call – by a heavenly summons – by an invitation from the Lord. This presumes sensitivity to the call, and the ability to respond to it. It also infers the call is personal, known by the individual. The grace of God so permeates His calling that those who heed it are guaranteed of the blessing it promises.

Chapter 17

CALLED TO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

What was previously called “the marriage” is now called “the marriage supper.” This is the same occasion, viewed from two different perspectives. As a formality, it is the “MARRIAGE of the Lamb.” From the viewpoint of joyful participation, it is “the marriage SUPPER of the Lamb” – a festive occasion!

Even now, we experience a foretaste of this grand “supper.” Jesus promised to “sup,” or “dine” with the individual who hears His voice and opens to Him (Rev 3:20). Isaiah prophesied of the feast of salvation. “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of

marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa 25:6). The picture is of the joyful satisfaction realized now in heavenly places (Eph 1:3; 2:6). But this is only the beginning! The best is yet to come. From the ultimate viewpoint, the call is a summons to “the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

The Word of God affirms we are called “in one hope of your calling” (Eph 4:4). There is a single ultimate aim, and it has remained the same throughout the centuries. That single objective is the point of our text – “called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” It is a call to forever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17). Take this from the saints, and there is no satisfactory motive for purity, endurance, or assurance. The absence of an emphasis on our coming union with the Lord has occasioned the rise of false doctrines, as well as a lack of confidence and a flood of erroneous expectations.

WE NEED HELP TO SEE IT

The objective of our calling is so grand that it cannot be deciphered with natural resources. However astute the mind may be, and however disciplined the individual, this hope is simply too large to be grasped without help. What is more, the magnitude of it MUST be apprehended, or else the possibility of arriving safely at the “supper” is decidedly reduced. Doubting, stumbling Christians are not apt to make it to the feast!

A PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

In recognition of these things, and under the constraint of the Holy Spirit, Paul prayed and wrote concerning believers seeing the magnitude of this hope. He prayed “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might” (Eph 1:17-20, NASB).

The Ephesians had joyfully received the Gospel of their salvation, and had been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (1:13-14). They had both “faith in the Lord Jesus” and “love for all saints” (1:15). As all believers, they had been blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (1:3). They had been raised from death in trespasses and sins (2:1-2), and made to “sit together with Christ in heavenly places” (Eph 2:6). Their condition, however, was bigger than their apprehension of it. The room into which they had been brought by grace was larger than what they saw. The Spirit wanted them to see the greatness of what they possessed, so they could say with David, “Thou hast set my feet in a large place” (Psa 31:8).

The very first matter mentioned in the required illumination is “the hope of His calling.” By this, he means the objective, or end to which, the calling was issued. We might say, “WHY the Lord called us.” And why did the call come to us? What was the purpose the Lord was implementing? To many, the intention is to remove us from our past. To others, the call is into Divine service and the winning of souls. Still others see the purpose as solidifying domestic life. While all of these things are involved, they are not the ultimate purpose of God’s calling. Those are matters relating to life in this world – but there is more to the call than that!

We have been invited to “the marriage supper of the Lamb” – called to participate in an

eternal festive gathering. It is a “supper,” or feast, that God has prepared for His Son, and we are invited to participate in it. It is the point at which we will fully become “joint heirs with Christ,” “inherit all things,” and begin our “reign” with Him (Rom 8:17; Rev 21:7; 2 Tim 2:12).

This is the time when the bride will be presented to Christ. She will be “holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:4). This “bride” will be “the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27, NASB). That is God’s revealed objective, and it must be perceived to some measurable degree for us to participate in it.

This is why Paul prayed for the eyes of our understanding to be opened to see the grandness of the hope of His calling. Churches that have left their first love, have either not seen this hope, or have forgotten what they did see. Those who entertain false doctrine as though it were inconsequential have also failed to grasp the hope. Congregations that seek greatness in this world have been blinded to “the hope of His calling,” as well as those who have grown lukewarm.

When “the hope of His calling” is not seen, the heart grows hard and calloused. The Word of God ceases to grow and produce fruit in the individual. There is no valid Christianity where this hope is not apprehended—only a feeble attempt to simulate the life of Christ!

The blessing is to be “called” to such a glorious “supper!” When the world grieves our hearts, we take joy in the supper to which we have been called. When the condition of the professing church weighs heavy upon our hearts, we contemplate the supper to which we have been invited. The very best is yet to come! It will be according to Divine appointment, and there is no chance it will not take place.

An abundance of heavenly resources have been made available to us to enable our preparation. Let us throw ourselves into a fervent preparation for the supper! Declare war on all that hinders your preparation, and make friends with those who assist it. If you are not ready for the marriage of the Lamb, your life shall have been wasted. If you ARE ready, you will enter into the joy of the Lord – a joy never to be interrupted!

Chapter 18

SAYINGS THAT ARE TRUE

“And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God.”

Why is such a statement necessary? Should it not be obvious that what God has revealed is true? From a lower perspective, this is true – but it does not take the whole scope of life into consideration. In the glory-glow of the vision, the truth of Divine utterance was obvious. Truth is not spoken, however, with only the present time in view – even when it is a time of spiritual exhilaration.

Just as there came a time when the very message that was sweet in the mouth was bitter in the belly (10:9-10), so there would come a time when the blessedness of the invitation would not be so apparent. The people of God, whether John the Apostle or you, receive the promises of God in a war-zone, where a remarkable degree of opposition, resistance, and indifference exist. The saints have an adversary that attempts to cloud the Word with the entrance of “other things” (Mark 4:19).

The mind of the believer is an area of great conflict! It is assaulted with “fiery darts” (Eph 6:16) from the wicked one (Eph 6:16) – temptations that are hurled relentlessly by the devil. Only “the shield of faith” “quench” those fiery darts, taking their power from them. Also, “the peace of God” can effectively keep our hearts and minds stable in this warfare (Phil 4:6-7). Human resources simply are not enough. The wisdom of this world is, in this matter, wholly inadequate.

While memory is a wonderful thing, and not to be neglected in the apprehension of the truth, Divine affirmation and enlivenment is what makes the memory spiritually productive. Simply recalling truth as a person remembers the mathematical tables, is not what sustains the soul. That is the initiation of sustaining power, but it is what comes from God, through the Holy Spirit, and by faith, that makes it effective.

Now the heavenly voice reminds John that what has been said (“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”) are “the true sayings of God.” John writes them, but they are “the sayings of God.” They came to him through the instrumentality of an angel (1:1), but they were “the true sayings of God.” These are words that convey the intentions and will of God Almighty. They are NOT merely history written in advance, but a revelation of an eternal purpose that cannot be thwarted.

God’s people must learn to trace the Word back to God. Whether it is a record of what was done, a commandment, or a promise, the Word must be viewed as “the true sayings of God.” Those words can only be effectively retained when this is comprehended and received.

Chapter 19

TRUE SAYINGS

“And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’”

Faith needs “true sayings,” and, bless God, they have been given! Faith cannot take hold of an opinion. It cannot build upon an assumption, or navigate on the sea of doubt. It is a unspeakable tragedy that so much contemporary religion is speculative. It is shrouded with human opinion, and produces doubt and confusion in the hearts.

The voice itself does not relate what John has been shown and told to linguistic accuracy. He does not elaborate using the most precise human language in which the words are to be written. It is enough to know they are “the true sayings of God.” Believers of all ages will be able to derive comfort from this. When living by faith does NOT yield the best of earthly circumstances, they can remember “the true sayings of God.” They have not been called to comfort and ease, but to “the marriage supper of the Lamb.” When, like prophets, Apostles, and sages of old, their words are not received, and they even suffer for speaking them, they can remember “the true sayings of God.” They have NOT been called to be accepted and lauded by men, but to “the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

The Lord uses this method of affirmation elsewhere in Scriptures. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim 1:15). “For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. IT IS A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT deserving full acceptance” (1 Tim 4:9, NASB). “IT IS A FAITHFUL SAYING: For if we be dead with

him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:11-13). "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. THIS IS A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men" (Tit 3:5-8, NASB).

Faith lays hold on the Word of a God who "cannot lie" (Tit 1:2). Those who receive the Word of God, by that very reception, certify that God is true. Thus Jesus said, "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful" (John 3:31-33, NIV). By this, Jesus meant the person receiving what He says will personally benefit from the truth of God. Faith will bring the blessing! Those who reject or doubt what He says CANNOT receive benefit from His words.

Again, John is told to write what he has been told because they are "the true sayings of God." Jesus does not want men to trust the words because John gave them, but because God said them! Then, and only then, will they produce hope within the heart, and enable the believer to endure. Faith must have a word from God!

Chapter 20

AN IMPROPER REACTION

"And I fell at his feet to worship him."

The reaction of John to the angelic messenger reveals the greatness of the revelation more than the weakness of John. Those unduly critical of the aged Apostle easily forget the magnitude of what was given to him. He has not only heard from heaven, but has been vouchsafed the privilege of writing a Divine commitment for all generations. John was no ordinary man, the messenger sent to him was not a common messenger, and the commission given to him was no typical commission.

The truth so gripped John that he "fell" at the feet of the angel "to worship him." John does the same thing at the conclusion of the book (22:8). These responses indicate the exceeding greatness of the Revelation given to John.

Some suppose John thought this to be Christ Himself, and therefore fell down to worship. There is no indication this is the case. It rather appears that the character of the revelation is what constrained the action.

"But he said to me, See that you do not do that!" The holy angel will not receive worship from John. He knows the Lord alone receives such adoration. Though "a little" higher than men in the flesh, yet the angels will not receive worship from them. With heavenly abruptness the angel says, "You must not do that!" (NRSV). The heavenly hierarchy does not allow for such worship! Would to God men were as aware of these things as angels!

"I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus." The

Scriptures reveal we have come into the fellowship of “an innumerable company of angels” (Heb 12:22). They are part of the heavenly companionship into which we have been called. They are employed in the very same purpose we have embraced. They work under the same King we worship and serve.

Is this not a most blessed description: “your fellow servant.” Working for the same Master on the same project! Jesus taught his people are “fellow servants” (Matt 18:28; 24:49). Paul referred to co-laborers as “fellow servants” (Col 1:7; 4:7). Those beheaded for their testimony, residing under altar, were told they must wait until their “fellow servants and their brethren” who were to be killed joined them (Rev 6:11).

There was an occasion revealed in the book of Acts where men sought to worship the Lord’s messengers. The response of the messengers was strong, like that of the angel John confronted. Barnabas and Paul had powerfully preached the Gospel in Lystra. Paul, in a loud voice, had commanded a man crippled from his mother’s womb to stand up on his feet – and the man “leaped up and began to walk.” When the people “saw what Paul had done,” they lifted up their voices and shouted, “The gods have become like men and have come down to us.” They then referred to Barnabas as Zeus, and Paul as Hermes “because he was the chief speaker.” The priest of Zeus, whose temple was close by “brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.” As soon as Barnabas and Paul heard of this, “they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM . . . ’” (Acts 14:8-15).

Holy angels and holy men refuse the attention that is due the Lord alone. Part of serving God is drawing attention to Him, and away from ourselves. With joy we join John the Baptist in his insightful confession. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). For us, all glory goes to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us!

Here is a strong factor in the unity we enjoy. We give honor to the same Lord, and labor in the same purpose! We even serve with the holy angels! Each of us must strive to be conscious of this privilege. May we also seek to yield acceptable responses when we receive insights into the heavenly agenda

Chapter 21

THE PROPER OBJECT OF WORSHIP

“WORSHIP GOD!”

“Worship God!” What a word is this! And it was spoken to an Apostle. Not just your average Apostle, but the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 20:2; 21:7,20). Among other things, this confirms the highly tenuous nature of human experience. If an Apostle in the very midst of receiving a message from the glorified Christ must be admonished to “Worship God,” what of those who occupy lesser positions and lower ground? I realize there is a sense in which “we are the circumcision which [do] worship God” (Phil 3:3). Still, because of the infirmity of the flesh, high and lofty experiences can be the occasion of unacceptable responses. Should such times occur, may the Lord grant the presence of one swift to exhort, “WORSHIP GOD!”

This is more than an exhortation to assume a certain physical posture – although that is involved. While not fashionable in the Western world, those in the Eastern part of the world are accustomed to such conduct. To the Corinthians Paul wrote, “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you” (1 Cor 14:24-25). There is no question but that exposure to Divine influences is like a searchlight to the soul. Profound revelation not only uncovers the intentions God, they also reveal the deficiency and weakness of human nature.

Precisely what is meant by the admonition “Worship God!” ? For those given to word studies, the word “worship” comes from the Greek word *proskuneo*. The word is lexically defined as “(1) a basic sense bow down to kiss someone's feet, garment hem, or the ground in front of him; (2) in the NT of worship or veneration of a divine or supposedly divine object, expressed, falling face down in front of someone worship, venerate, do obeisance to; (a) toward God (Matt 4:10); (b) toward Jesus (Matt 2:2); (c) toward the devil and demons (Matt 4:9; Rev 9:20); (d) toward idols (Acts 7:43); (e) toward human beings as given or claiming to have divine power or authority (Rev 3:9; 13:4b).” Candidly, such definitions approximate spiritual impotency.

The Worship of God calls the entire person into activity – spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23). No part of the human constitution is omitted. Such activity is seen in the wise men who came to “worship” Jesus (Matt 2:2). When confronting the holy child, they “fell down and worshiped Him.” They also “opened their treasures” and presented gifts to Him (Matt 2:11). All of this was done out of a lively sense of the Person of the “King.” While the word “worship” includes the idea of posture, that does not at all exhaust the word. More than the activity, the point of worship is the One to whom it is directed. No mere procedure will satisfy the demands of the admonition, “Worship God!”

If we are going to bow, let it be to our God! If we are going to give homage, let it be to our God! Let our service be directed to Him! Let us present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him! Let us present the sacrifice of our lips to Him! WORSHIP GOD! Perceive all blessing as coming from Him! Understand your salvation as being sent from Him! See the Lord Jesus as His Lamb and His Christ. See the purpose for the world as conceived by Him. WORSHIP GOD! See your salvation as His work and WORSHIP GOD!

Chapter 22

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

“FOR the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Here is another profound utterance. In it is found the pulse of Divine life, the reason for Scripture, and the focus of Divine commentary. Every major translation reads exactly the same way: “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, YLT).

This is sited as the REASON to “worship God.” The angel assumes this to be explanation enough for his admonition to John. It reveals at least two things.

1. First, the worship of God is bound to the Person of Jesus. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, valid worship is neither possible nor accepted. This is involved in our Lord's

telling remark, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Worshiping God “in spirit and in truth” results from identity with a Person, not a procedure. Those who spend their time trying to find and codify a procedure of worship are in serious error. When the role of Jesus as Savior, Mediator, and King is perceived, men will “Worship God.”

2. Second, the message John has received relates primarily to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a revelation of His reign, which is in strict accord with the revealed purpose of God. That reign is revealed through bringing many sons to glory, and subjugating every foe that opposes that work. All of this is a revelation of a purpose designed by God before the foundation of the world. When this is seen, and the vision is maintained, men will “Worship God.”

TESTIMONY

The “TESTIMONY of Jesus” is the declaration of Him. It is the evidence, report, or record of Jesus. This is what occurred at our Savior’s baptism, when “the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased” (Mark 1:21-22). God testified of Jesus, affirming His identity as the Son of God.

JESUS

“The testimony of JESUS” is the report of His Person and accomplishments. It is the overriding subject of the prophecy, the theme and thread of the message. “Jesus” is our Lord from the redemptive perspective. The testimony is primarily a declaration of “the MAN Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5), the things He did and is doing in that capacity.

SPIRIT

The “SPIRIT of prophecy” is the breath, or life, of prophecy. It is what makes it pertinent and powerful. Jesus is to “prophecy” what the spirit is to the body – He is what gives it life and relevance. Prophecy has a pulse to it – something that makes it alive, causing to yield affects in the hearers. Miss the life, and you miss the prophecy.

PROPHECY

The “spirit of PROPHECY” is the life of the utterance or declaration. Prophecy takes place when one understands and declares the purpose and work of God – even in the face of opposition. The Spirit defines “prophecy” in a poignant statement concerning the one who prophesies – the prophet. “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” (1 Cor 14:3). Prophecy, therefore, builds up and strengthens men. It exhorts or moves men to spiritual activity. It also consoles and cheers, causing hope to rise within the heart.

Chapter 23

WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

What, then, is said in this remarkable statement?

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point of all inspired utterances – “The testimony of Jesus is the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY.”

2. Prophecy is validated by its relationship to the Savior of the world – “The testimony of JESUS is the spirit of prophecy.”
3. The centrality of Jesus in the prophecy is what gives it effectiveness. “The testimony of Jesus is the SPIRIT of prophecy.”
4. God gives no word to humanity that has no direct relationship to His Son. “The testimony of Jesus IS the spirit of prophecy.”
5. There is NO edification, or building up, apart from a proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ. “The TESTIMONY of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”
6. There is no effective exhortation or admonition that does not center in the Lord Jesus Christ. “The testimony of JESUS is the spirit of prophecy.”
7. There is no comfort or consolation in any message that does not bring Jesus nearer to the heart and conscience. “THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS is the spirit of prophecy.”

The “testimony of Jesus” is what gives the book of Revelation vitality. It is what makes it relevant, yea needful, to the believer. This is NOT a record of the rise and fall of governments, but of the overthrow of the kingdoms of this world by Jesus! Revelation is NOT a declaration of the rise of an antichrist, false prophet, harlot, city, or beast, but of their eradication by the Lord’s Christ. The vision given to John is NOT the record of the oppression of God’s people, but of their triumph over oppression. It is NOT a report of the rule and reign of Satan and his animated cohorts, but of the reign of our Lord and His Christ!

Those who take this book and strike fear into the heart of the people of God have added their opinions to it, and taken the breath out of it. By so doing, they have incurred the curse of God upon themselves. The Lord Jesus does not close this book until He has sounded the solemn warning. “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Rev 22:18-19). It is the business of every preacher and teacher who handles this book to make Jesus known. If the Savior cannot be seen in the book, let men lay their hand upon their mouth, and cease to speak concerning it. “The testimony of Jesus” is the spirit of THIS prophecy, as well as all others!

Chapter 24

IN KEEPING WITH THE REST OF SCRIPTURE

“Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Because of the centrality of this truth, it is necessary to show its consistent declaration throughout Scripture. “The testimony of Jesus IS the spirit of prophecy.” It is NOT the “spirit,” or heart and life, or A prophecy, but of prophecy itself–ALL prophecy.

THE GOSPEL

The message of salvation, which is the most precise declaration of eternal purpose, centers in the Lord Jesus. That is why it is called “Gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God,” “the Gospel of Christ,” “the Gospel of His son,” “the glorious gospel of Christ,” and “the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1; Rom 1:9,16; 2 Cor 4:6; 2 Thess

1:8). “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

When the Scriptures speak of “the Gospel of the Kingdom,” they are speaking of the reign of Jesus (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk 1:14). That reign is evidenced in the reconciliation of sinners, their guidance to glory, and the overthrow of their adversaries. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

When we read of “the Gospel of the grace of God,” it is the good news of Divine favor upon men because of Jesus that is the emphasis (Acts 20:24). The Lord removed the obstacle between God and man, thereby opening the door of grace to humanity. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

“The gospel of peace” emphasizes the benefit received because of the effective work of Jesus (Rom 10:15). It is because of Him that believers have peace with God, and can be at peace with one another. Jesus is the One who MADE peace (Col 1:20). “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

“The gospel of your salvation” again affirms the effectiveness of Christ’s vicarious sacrifice (Eph 1:13). God is pleased with what He has done, and therefore joyfully saves those receiving His Son. In doing this, He is declared to be both “just and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

“The gospel of the blessed God” and “the Gospel of God” underscore the impact of Christ’s work upon the Father Himself (1 Tim 1:11; 1 Pet 4:17). He is “blessed,” happy and jubilant because Christ put away sin, took the condemning law out of the way, destroyed the devil, and spoiled principalities and powers. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE

Here is a truth that is scarcely known in the professed church. It is rarely preached because it is hidden to many who represent themselves as preachers and teachers. Like those who “want to be teachers of the law,” these “do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm” (1 Tim 1:7, NIV).

Jesus is the Subject of ALL of Scripture. Remove Him from the Word, and nothing is left – no life, no vitality, no hope, and no power. There is a resounding testimony to this truth by both

Jesus and the Apostles.

Chapter 25

THE SCRIPTURES TESTIFY OF HIM

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

To His enemies, Jesus once said, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39, NKJV). This means that those who read the Scriptures, yet rejected Christ, had missed their message! “The Scriptures,” in this case, were Moses and the Prophets, although it is now true of all of the Scriptures following Malachi. The THEME of Scripture has never changed. From Genesis through Malachi, and now from Genesis through Revelation, the overriding testimony is of Jesus! He was, and is, their theme. The sacrifices pointed to Him. The

promises were about Him. “The testimony of Jesus IS the spirit of prophecy.”

HIS SUFFERINGS AND GLORY

Peter takes all of the prophets prior to Jesus, and summarizes their message. “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Pet 1:10-11). His “sufferings” related to the atonement. His “glory” relates to the result of that atonement: the salvation, justification, and glorification of men. Though shrouded with hard-to-understand words, that was the theme of the prophets. They sensed they were prophesying of something larger than themselves – something beyond their time. That is why they diligently sought to understand what the Spirit was pointing to through their words. Those in Christ now behold the Savior in those ancient prophecies. They see Him in the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices. They behold Him in the poignant prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Malachi. “The testimony of Jesus IS the spirit of prophecy.”

PREACHING CHRIST

When Philip was directed to the Ethiopian eunuch, he found him reading from the prophet Isaiah. The eunuch, though a man of great authority under the Queen of Candace, did not understand what he was reading. Because he saw Jesus in the Book, Philip “began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Philip had proclaimed in the same manner earlier, when he “preached Christ” in Samaria (Acts 8:5). As soon as he was converted, Saul of Tarsus did the same thing “in the synagogues,” where he “preached Christ” (Acts 9:20).

Later, Paul acknowledged, “But we preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23). He also confessed the Gospel in power was nothing less than “the preaching of Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:25). From the standpoint of the MEANS of salvation, Paul referred to “the preaching of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18). Everything that the New Covenant messengers preached centered in Christ Jesus. He was their dominant theme. If it did not relate directly to Jesus, they did not proclaim it. It is ever true, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Chapter 26

MOSES, THE PSALMS, AND THE PROPHETS

When Jesus confronted Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus, He made Himself known to them. How did He do so? He did not show them a sign, work a miracle, or ask them to study His appearance. The Author of all Scripture took the Scriptures and showed those disciples that He was their Theme. “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Lk 24:27). Not things concerning the family, but things concerning Himself. Not things concerning the nation, but things concerning Himself. Not things concerning them, but things concerning Himself. There does come a time when every person needs to hear what the Scriptures say concerning Jesus Christ Himself.

Later, sitting at their table, He said, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of

Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Lk 24:44). Toward the last of His ministry, Jesus began to focus the attention of His disciples upon His imminent death. Thus it is written, "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry" (Matt 17:22-23). And again, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day He shall rise again" (Matt 20:18-19). And again, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matt 26:2). And yet again, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt 26:24).

Somehow, the meaning of these words had escaped the attention of the apostles. When the events actually took place, it struck them down, and despair took hold of them. Now, these two disciples were confronting the risen Christ, and did not know it. They had not recognized Him at all. Mark says of this event, "After that He appeared IN ANOTHER FORM unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country" (Mark 16:12). Now, however, Jesus Himself is sitting at their table, and their perspective and lives are about to be marvelously changed.

Jesus then opened the understanding of these two disciples. As it is written, "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45). No mere academics here! No appeal to “the original language,” or the “context,” or any other form of intellectual inquiry. In a discretionary and arbitrary act of grace, Jesus “opened . . . their understanding.” They did not ask for it, but Jesus did it anyway. He knew their hearts.

With telling words, He summarized the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations” (Lk 24:45-46). Moses had spoken about the Messiah suffering and death as His heel being bruised (Gen 3:15). He was also seen in all of the sacrifices for sins. The Psalms referred to His betrayal and sufferings (Psa 22:1,13-26; 34:20; 69:21,26; 109:25). The prophets also foretold His sufferings and death (Isa 52:14; 53:7-12; Dan 9:26; Zech 12:9-10; 13:6-7).

Who cannot behold the grandeur of the statement, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!”

Chapter 27

PETER ON THE DAY OF [PENTECOST

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

On the day of Pentecost Peter saw the centrality of Christ in the Scriptures, as he preached Jesus from Joel (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21; Psa 110:1; Acts 2:34), the Psalms (Psa 16:8-11 Acts 2:25-28), and Second Samuel (2 Sam 7:11-16; Acts 2:30-33). What a marvelous correlation of Scripture! “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!”

1. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit

upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-31)

2. "For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool." (Acts 2:34-35; Psa 110:1)

3. "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." (Acts 2:26-28; Psa 16:8-11)

4. "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33; 2 Sam 7:11-16)

TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION

Time would fail us to expound the many references on this subject. Jesus first revealed Himself by unveiling His Person and ministry from the book of Isaiah (Lk 4:17-22).

In preaching the Lord Jesus, Paul said he spoke "no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come; that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23).

James perceived the extensive ministry of Jesus to the Gentiles when he understood the writings of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea--seeing Jesus in them (Acts 15:14-18; Amos 9:11-12; Isa 2:2-3; Jer 16:19; Hos 2:23).

The Gospel itself is said to be "according" to the Scriptures of Moses and the Prophets. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3-4).

Referring to the whole of Scripture (at the time referring to Moses and the Prophets, Paul said, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15).

Chapter 28

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

On one occasion, Paul gave what appeared to be an extensive teaching concerning marriage. In it, he spoke of the responsibilities of both husbands and wives.

1. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." (Eph 5:22)
2. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body." (Eph 5:23)
3. "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." (Eph 5:24)
4. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph 5:25-27)
5. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Eph 5:28-29).

At the conclusion of the teaching, he adjusted the focus of every believer. "This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Eph 5:32-33, NIV). Although husbands and wives are to conduct themselves in strict accord with this text, they are really not what it is all about.

The comparison of Christ and the church with marriage is not readily apparent – it is a "great" or "profound mystery." It is NOT that Christ and the church are understood by studying marriage. That is not the point of the text. The point is that marriage is comprehended by perceiving the relationship of Christ and the church. That is the reason for marriage – the reason why God created that relationship. It was ultimately in order that we might obtain an intelligent view of the union that has occurred between Christ and His church. While the duties of wives and husbands are to be carried out as specified, the real matter to be considered is that of Christ and the church. The failure to be obedient in this area of life will cause the people to fail to see what occurs between Christ and the church – and that is a matter that must not be misunderstood!

Again, the focus is the Lord Jesus. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Chapter 29

WHY SO MUCH TIME ON THIS?

Why give so much time to this matter? Simply because it is generally unknown. Working through Babylon, the great harlot, Satan has drawn a veil over the Scriptures. Even though the heart and life of Scripture is Jesus, that is not apparent to the religious masses. Think of the inordinate amount of time expended by professed teachers of the Word on contextual considerations, historical backgrounds, etymological (language) concerns, hermeneutics (laws of interpretation), the original language, and Biblical customs. All of this appears wise, and has launched countless careers and fame for many men and women. But this is not really comprehended: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!" Has the individual that perceives Jesus in the text missed the point? None but a fool would affirm this to be the case! Those perceiving the spirit of Jesus is the spirit of

prophecy will find the door of revelation opening, and the cloud of mystery dissipating.

What of those who approach the Bible as a handbook of human conduct? They imagine that the EMPHASIS of Scripture is how men ought to live. That this is present in the word cannot be denied. That it must be believed and incorporated into our lives is equally true. But directives concerning how we ought to live are NOT the “spirit of prophecy.” They are not what gives the Word of God life and power. The “testimony” of Jesus is what makes the Word “living and powerful” (Heb 4:12). As soon as you magnify human responsibility, you have diminished the Person and work of Christ. However, when you enhance Jesus, you at once open up the nature of human responsibility. You also bring the power to live within the reach of we weak mortals.

Others, even lower on the theological totem pole, see dietary and economical considerations as the fundamental thrust of Scripture. They see the Bible as a handbook of health and wealth. Indeed, they resurrect texts that appear to justify their emphasis. However, as soon as they major on “diet” and “economics,” Jesus goes into hiding, and is no longer seen. These people are oblivious to the declared destruction of this world and all that is within it (2 Pet 3:10-12). They do not speak of the day of judgment or of being joined to the Lord, for that has little bearing on what they are doing.

Still others emphasize the pattern of the church and religious procedures. They nearly always speak of elders, deacons, church government, and imagined patterns of worship. They love to speak of the role of woman, the name of the church, and how to orchestrate the work and service of God. Such people speak little of the Lord Jesus, for He has no immediate relevance to their program.

But enough of this. It should be apparent that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” He is what gives the Scripture importance. He is the theme of everything God has revealed. The very first prophecy of Scripture related to Jesus. “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel” (Gen 3:15, NASB). The remainder of Scripture also relates to Him.

The Lord has never quit talking about Jesus! He was in mind when He gave the Law, which “was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:24). The prophets spoke of “the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet 1:11). The Gospel is a proclamation of Jesus. All Apostolic doctrine, or teaching, centers in the son of God. On the day of His baptism, God shined the spotlight of Divine attention on the Son. He has never removed the attention from Him. O, that men could see it more clearly – that they had a better grasp on this verity! “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Chapter 30

CONCLUSION

This text (Rev 19:7-10) is one that further opens the message of the Revelation. It assists us in not being moved off-center, or being deceived by our adversary the devil. The Revelation has the same emphasis as the rest of Scripture – the Lord Jesus and His salvation. Its message is “to the churches,” and not to the world. It does not major on history, but on the ages to come – eternity. The Ruler of emphasis is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of significance is the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. The

throne of preeminence is “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” The predominate purpose belongs to the Lord. The most prominent people are the saints of God. The triumphant One is the Lord Jesus. The defeated one is Satan, together with the beast and the false prophet.

These are the things that make Revelation comforting to the saints. Its message confirms that those with Jesus cannot lose, and those against them cannot win! Its message deals with certainties, not possibilities. It announces Divine appointments and the assuredness of their fulfillment.

These are realities the church must know. The hardships endured by the saints are lessened in the knowledge of these things, and its burdens are lightened. The word sent by God through Jesus to the churches is not intended to strike fear into the heart of the saints, but good hope and everlasting consolation.

The professed church has spent too much time theorizing and speculating on the message of this book. Their time is to be spent reading, hearing, and keeping the words of this book (Rev 1:3). They are not to occupy their time with considerations of a coming beast, world government, economic disaster, or the mark of the beast – all of which will be finally removed by the King of glory. They are rather to prepare for the marriage of the Lamb. If they are prepared for that, they will be able to pass through any tribulation, regardless of its greatness.

If, in the end, we have made ourselves “ready” to be the Lamb’s wife, all will be well. Further, we must be encouraged in the work of preparation. Everything we need to be prepared for the marriage has been supplied. A living Christ now intercedes to ensure we receive those resources. The Holy Spirit has been dispatched to assist the preparing bride. The holy angels have been sent to be her ministers, working behind the scenes to guarantee no ultimate harm comes to her. The salvation of God has removed the part of the bride that separated her from God, and brought to her the things that unite her to Him. Only time stands between her and the marriage. What good news this is! What good reasons this gives to prepare for the marriage to which grace has called us!