

PREFACE

In our Heavenly Father's eternal plan for expressing Himself in the universe through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, He has also purposed that His Son have an Eternal Companion, His Bride.

What are the marks and characteristics of those who will be privileged to be part of this glorious Church? Will all who are merely 'saved' automatically become part of the Bride?

This booklet, though merely an outline, is intended to bring the reader's attention to the above questions and motivate him to undergo further study.

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*“...Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the
Lamb’s wife.” (Rev.21:9)*

“Come, I Will Show You the Bride”

(Revelation 21:9)

For the most part, a high degree of ignorance exists as to what shall transpire at the return of the Lord and what is to be the position of the church in relation to it. Our hope of participating in future events seems to be founded in our initial salvation and in a sudden rapture which will qualify us regardless of our condition. The language of readiness or preparation of the Bride is rarely found in the vocabulary of today's popular church.

Yet, the epistles of Paul reveal that he labored always with 'the day of Christ' in view, in hope of being able to present to Him a glorious Bride, holy and without blemish. His vision was that of a virgin church, undefiled by the hands of man and preserved from the influence of '*another gospel, another spirit or another Jesus.*' His rejoicing would come from saints found in Christ, mature and in His likeness.

The Apostles John and Peter also warn us to take heed how we walk lest we end up with a condi-

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tion unacceptable to Him. John exhorts us to '*abide in*

Him lest we would *'shrink in shame from Him at His coming.'* (1 Jo.2:28 - Rev.) And in 2 Peter 3:14 we find: *"...be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."* [The word 'diligent' in the Greek is "*spoudazzo*", meaning 'to be in earnest', 'to make an effort'.]

One of the strongest themes of the New Testament is that of developing holiness and moral character and becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ. This grand all-encompassing purpose of salvation is stated simply and powerfully in Romans 8:29:

*"For whom he did foreknow,
he also did predestinate
TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON"*

PREPARATION

"...his wife hath made herself ready." (Rev.19:7)

The above text indicates there *will* be a people involved in ***preparation*** for the day of the Bride's

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marriage to Christ. This people will have a different

mentality from the masses. Whereas the majority continue in their carnality, immaturity and self-centeredness, these will be circumspect to make themselves ready for the Lord.

The thought of preparing a people for the Lord was first introduced when God's angel spoke about the ministry of John the Baptist. To his father, Zacharias, the angel said,

*“And he shall go before him
in the spirit and power of Elias,
to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,
and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,
**TO MAKE READY
A PEOPLE PREPARED FOR THE LORD.”***
(Luke 1:17)

This ‘friend of the Bridegroom’ charged the religious Pharisees and Sadducees not to make his baptism an outward show but to bring forth fruits ‘worthy of (or to accompany) repentance’. (Mt.3:8) The fruit worthy of repentance would be a heart experience resulting in a change in their lives.

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How can we be a people prepared for the Lord

if we continue in our carnality, embrace the ways of the world and reject the way of holiness? Being ready for the Bridegroom will require deep life-changing experiences which produce His image in us.

In Jesus' parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, only five were found ready to meet the Bridegroom. Being virgins, all could be classified as 'saved people' but the five foolish had failed to provide sufficient oil for their lamps for the midnight hour. Beloved, we cannot rely on a one-time experience of being filled with the Spirit to make it through to the marriage. (Let us not pride ourselves in being 'Pentecostal'). We must *keep* ourselves filled with His Spirit in order to be sustained in this hour of gross darkness. I know many who were once baptized in the Spirit but who (like the church at Sardis) have become lifeless.

If the only qualification for the Bride is to be saved, then we need not bother with this study nor be concerned about preparation. But if the ultimate condition of the Bride is accurately described in Colossians

1:22, then we must conclude that a great work of preparation is to be done. The picture given us in that passage is of a Bride to be presented *'holy, unblameable and unreprouable'*! Beloved, it appears that we are far, far from that condition! We could either lose hope or acknowledge His word and trust Him to do the work. Remember: “***Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it***”! (1Th.5:24)

Many today are being taught to exercise faith for healings, deliverances, finances, homes, cars, etc..but our greatest need is to exercise faith for a change in our spiritual condition. Those who are qualifying for the Bride are taking seriously this possibility of being changed into the likeness of Christ. May we study the word and realize this is our calling and destiny! Oh, never, never can this be achieved in our own strength, yet we must look to Him and depend on Him just as we do for all else in life!

Let us keep reminding ourselves of that which is spoken concerning the Bride: ‘***...his wife hath made herself ready!***’ Be assured, there ***will*** be a people in whom this shall become an actual and real experience!

HIS HABITATION

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3)

The Bride is to be the habitation of God in fullness. God, who is Spirit, has ever desired to find expression in a many membered Body. First, the charge was given to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth. Had they not sinned, they could have become a family reflecting the image of God. Thus, the picture concerning God’s purpose in creation is not that of two people caring for a garden, but a vast family, populating the earth and giving expression to all that God is.

In his selection of Abraham, God revealed He would make him a great nation that would bless the ends of the earth. Israel, therefore, was given opportunity to become God’s vehicle of expression. But, only temporarily, and that in a natural way, did Israel become the instrument God wanted.

As we fleetingly pursue the historical record, we find the same purpose being passed on to the church. The Apostle Paul, in his excitement over God's new man, the church, declares:

*“To the intent that now
unto principalities and powers in heavenly places
might be (made) known by the church
the manifold wisdom of God.”
(Ephesians 3:10)*

And again in Ephesians 3:21:

*“Unto Him be glory in (through) the church
by Christ Jesus
throughout all ages, world without end.”*

Gods' purpose has always been that the glory of the Lord fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. And this glory will not come as a cloud or blanket out of heaven. It will come through a people that have been made in the likeness of Christ. In spite of all the man-made counterfeits in the religious world today, we declare there *will* emerge a Church that will qualify as His habitation and be an expression of His glory!

Now God is very particular as to where He dwells. His dwelling place must be a proper habitation. He demands holiness, righteousness and purity. He will not dwell in an unclean vessel nor with unclean spirits. The temple of God must be suitable and solely for Him. Thus the Bride must be cleansed and purified to become a *Holy City*. It is spoken of her:

*“And there shall in no wise enter into it
anything that defileth,
neither whatsoever worketh abomination
or maketh a lie...”
(Revelation 21:27)*

Even in the time of type and shadow, God made it clear that when His habitation became defiled, He would leave it:

*“For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of the camp,
to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee;
therefore shall the camp be holy;
that He see no unclean thing in thee,
and turn away from thee.”
(De.23:14)*

When the temple of God had become utterly filthy with countless abominable things, He caused Ezekiel to view it and said:

*“Son of man, seest thou what they do?
even the great abominations
that the house of Israel committeth here,
that I should go far off from my sanctuary?”
(Ezekiel 8:6)*

The narrative in the book of Ezekiel gives us a sad picture of the gradual departure of God’s glory from His sanctuary.

As Jesus began His ministry He showed how ardent was His zeal for purity in His Father’s house when he cleansed the temple of the money changers and their covetous practices. He made it known that His Father’s house would be a house of prayer.

God’s standards remain the same. He will not tolerate defilement in His Church habitation. Those who practice sin habitually - as referred to in 1 John 3:9 - will not qualify as members of the Bride. Some

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are bound by carnal and unclean habits and give little

or no thought to becoming pure and holy vessels fit for the Lord to dwell in. Let us note the strong indictment God pronounces against those who defile the temple of God:

*“If any man defile the temple of God
him shall God destroy (bring to ruin - Knox)
for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”
1 Corinthians 3:17*

In Matthew 13:36-43 we find a reference to a work I believe God is performing even now, the removal of tares from the wheat. In this awesome operation of the Spirit, God will

*“...gather out of His kingdom
all things that offend and them that do iniquity...”*

His objective, as seen in verse 43, is an outshining of His glory from His Kingdom!

Many churches today have opened their doors to all types of unclean spirits from the world. They have embraced the world's music (rap & other), and the beat and spirit of the world's music. The lyrics may

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speak of Jesus and young people may be turned on by

it, but folks, this *grieves the Holy Spirit and represents a compromise!* If the spirit of what we allow is unclean or worldly, then we are guilty of defiling the temple of God!

But, oh, we insist on being entertained in some way! We ‘eat up’ the Hollywood-type presentation with its hype, glamour and excitement. Whereas God is calling His Bride to holiness, today’s popular worldly church goers are bent on enjoying themselves. One report from their ranks actually admitted, “*We are finally learning how to have fun in God!*”.

I am reminded of the scene around the golden calf:

*“...and the people sat down to eat and to drink
and rose up to play.”
Exodus 32:6*

But, beloved, the Bride will not be involved in any unclean thing, no matter how gratifying. She will be careful to keep herself a *virgin*, untouched and undefiled by flesh or spirit. Many voices cry out for

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revival today. Oh, indeed, may there be revival, a restoration of holiness!

HAVING HIS GLORY

*“And he ...showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem,
descending out of heaven from God,
having the glory of God,
and her light was like unto a stone most precious,
even like a **jasper stone**, clear as crystal...”*
Revelation 21:10-11

*“And he that sat was to look upon
like a **jasper stone**...”*
Revelation 4:3

When we consider the above passages together, we get a clear insight into what God will produce in His Bride, the true Church. In Revelation 4:3, the one who occupies the heavenly throne is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, and his appearance is likened unto a *jasper stone*. Then in Revelation 21:11, the glory of the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is also described as being like a *jasper stone*, identically the same as the glory of the Bridegroom!

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O, beloved people of God, may we see what God is after! He is after a Church which will be holy

as He is holy and pure as He is pure! No compromises, no lowering of any standards! In her will be found no blemishes! In fact, the phrase ‘without blemish’ is used only twice in the entire New Testament. Once it is used of our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Peter 1:19] and once it is used of the Bride [Ephesians 5:27] Again we see that the condition of the Bride will be comparable to that of the Bridegroom! ***She will be like Him!*** [Isn’t that what this so great salvation is all about? To be made like Him?]

When we see the magnitude and awesomeness of God’s work, we could be overwhelmed and draw back in unbelief. But, may we be encouraged! We are abiding within the context of His word and we are trusting fully in His ability to do it! Let us not attempt to reason how we can measure up to such a high calling, but in faith, like Mary the virgin, we say,

“Be it unto me according to thy word.”
Luke 1:38

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PUTTING ON THE GLORY

Putting on the glory of Christ is at the very heart and core of the working of the New Covenant in Christ. We find in 2 Corinthians 3 that both the Old and New Covenants came with glory, but that the glory of the New Covenant far excels. (See 2 Corinthians 3:7-11)

The glory of the New Covenant is found in Christ, the glorified and anointed one, He who is the *'brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.'* (He. 1:3) The Holy Spirit's ministration of the New Covenant is summarized in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Also, a marvelous verse confirming this ministry is found in 2 Corinthians 4:6:

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

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And again in Hebrews 10:16:

*“This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, saith the Lord,
I will put my laws into their hearts
and in their minds will I write them.”*

Taking on the glory! First of all, what is the glory? It is nothing short of

‘the sum-total of all the moral and spiritual virtues and divine attributes found in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ!’

What words can describe it? Wonderful, marvelous, awesome? Yes, but also far more than that! Far beyond what any words can describe. Think of it, that wretched sinners filled with hate, lust, envy, covetousness, and all kinds of corruption can be saved and take on His holiness, righteousness and all the attributes of His divine nature!

Now let us explore further this work of putting on Christ, or the glory of Christ. It must be fully and

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purely the work of the Holy Spirit. It occurs only when we are operating in the realm of *revelation*. The

speaker must speak in and by the spirit of revelation and the hearer must receive by revelation. Or, if one is reading or meditating, he will experience a sovereign impartation by the Spirit apart from the natural processes of reasoning and deduction. He will suddenly *'see something'*! And in this 'seeing' is conveyed to the (human) spirit something of the essence of the glory of Christ. This is the reason why Paul prayed that we might receive *'the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.'* (Eph.1:17)

Only that which is imparted by revelation can carry the substance of the glory of Christ. The impartation of head knowledge or the dead letter will not produce it. Putting on the glory will be a transaction from the Holy Spirit to the human spirit, not from the natural mind to the natural mind. ***The human spirit, not the mind or soul, is the receiver of all spiritual things.*** When God deposits His life in us, it is deposited into our spirit. From the spirit, then, are the soul and the body gradually impacted and converted (saved). The natural man, no matter how intelligent,

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cannot receive the things of God. Since the things of

God are spiritually discerned, they are but foolishness to him. (See 1Corinthians 2:14)

It is also within this context that we can better understand Jesus' statement to Peter,

*“...upon this rock I will build my church,
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
Matthew 16:18*

Peter had become a rock by virtue of the revelation he received from the Father. And it is always with such *'living stones'* that the true church is built. All such individuals will have touched and appropriated something of the glory of Christ into their beings. At the time of completion, when the Holy City will be ready for the earth, it is these who will be referred to as ***the Bride, the Lamb's wife, having the glory of God!***

THE MATTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*“Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor unto Him,
for the marriage of the Lamb is come,*

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and His wife hath made herself ready.

*And to her was granted that she should be arrayed
in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen
is the righteousness [Gr: righteous acts] of saints.”*
Revelation 19:7,8

The robe of fine linen with which the Bride shall be clothed in the marriage day is better translated *‘the righteous acts’* of the saints. This indicates that the members of the Bride have progressed from the gift of *imputed righteousness* to a manifestation of the *fruit of righteousness*.

All believers rejoice in the gift of imputed righteousness granted us by our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Our acceptance by God the Father is indeed *‘not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy...’* (Titus 3:5) Praise and thanksgiving to the Lamb shall resound through all eternity, for He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

But what is to follow salvation? Fruit-bearing!

In John 15, the believer in Christ is likened unto

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the branch of a vine and is expected to bear fruit. The

husbandman - our heavenly Father - is seen periodically inspecting His vine to evaluate the fruit-bearing process. One of two things is taking place. Branches which are not bearing fruit are taken away and branches that are bearing fruit are purged (pruned) that they might bring forth more fruit. Every branch is exhorted to abide in the vine for the purpose of fruit-bearing. Jesus said,

*“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit -
so shall ye be my disciples.”*

John 15:8

What is the fruit?

Quite often I have heard that fruit-bearing means winning souls for Christ. As a result, many have been driven into a whirlwind of activity to bring others into the church. It is true that sheep need to reproduce and the lost need to be won for Christ. However, in the majority of times in the New Testament, the word ‘fruit’ refers to moral character or the fruit of the Spirit. (Examples: Mt.7:20; 12:33; Lu.3:9; Ro.7:4; Gal.5:22)

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In Philippians 1:11 we find an exhortation for

all believers,

*“Being filled with the **fruits of righteousness**,
which are by Jesus Christ,
unto the glory and praise of God.”*

The fruits of righteousness, unlike imputed righteousness, are not a gift, neither can they be imparted by the laying on of hands. Although imputed righteousness can be credited to our account in a matter of minutes, the fruit of righteousness is the result of a process of yielding to and obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As we repeatedly obey the Spirit and mortify the flesh (do not respond to it), we develop certain patterns of behavior which form moral character.

In Hebrews 12:11, we note,

*“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous,
but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth
the peaceable **fruit of righteousness**
unto them that are exercised thereby.”*

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The fruit of righteousness - the harvest of an

upright character - is here seen to be the product of the Spirit's chastening in our lives. After we are born into our Father's family, he will expose us to a process of chastening for the sake of our proper growth and development. This is affirmed in Galatians 4:1,2:

*“Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child,
differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all;
but is under tutors and governors
until the time appointed of the father.”*

What is chastening?

It can be defined as *'discipline'*, a combination of instruction, correction and training in the Father's ways and work. In Israel's history - a type of our walk with the Lord - is seen God's ways with His people to prepare them for rulership in His Kingdom. After their deliverance from Egypt, he led them into the wilderness for a time of chastening. In Deuteronomy 8:1-5 is found a summary of this process. It concludes with this statement in verse 5:

“...as a man chasteneth his son,

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so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.”

The ultimate goal for Israel was not simply to enjoy the bounty in Canaan. They were called and destined to be a 'dominion' people, that is, to subdue and rule over nations. To fulfill this, they needed to be a holy and spiritually prepared people. Only the younger generation ended up qualifying for their high calling while the unbelieving, the carnal and the rebellious died in the wilderness.

In a spiritual sense, the church walks in the same pathway as natural Israel. Her grand and glorious objective is to become a kingdom and to have a ministry from the very throne of God. (See Rev.2:26,27;3:21) The reason the believer runs the race is not to gain 'heaven' but to gain the awesome privilege of sharing the throne of Christ in His Kingdom. 'Gaining heaven' is settled at the point of repentance and conversion, but gaining the Kingdom is secured by cultivating righteousness and holiness.

In making herself ready for Him, the Bride is also preparing herself for her glorious role of being co-

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regent with Him in His coming Kingdom!

She will have a song:

*“...Thou art worthy to take the book,
and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain,
and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood
out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;
**And hast made us unto our God kings and priests;
and we shall reign on the earth.**”*
Revelation 5:9,10

THREATS TO THE BRIDE’S PURITY

*“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 Corinthians 11:2

The above passage conveys to us the intense yearning of the Holy Spirit that the Church be preserved as a chaste virgin. The burden of the Apostle Paul throughout this chapter is that of protecting the Bride-to-be from defilement. He is speaking in the same manner an earthly father would speak regarding his own dear virgin daughter.

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It is of great interest to note that the main threat of contamination was coming, not from the secular

world, but from the religious world - *another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel*. False apostles and deceitful workers were making inroads into the church! Even satan, he warned, transforms himself into an angel of light in an effort to deceive. His concern strikes the tone of alarm in verse 20, for he saw that the process of deception had already begun in their giving place to the deceivers.

Beloved, the church of today is in a place of equal or even greater danger of being deceived *'from the inside'*. (From my limited observations, I have seen that some segments of the church are already totally deceived. I say this because I have seen the acceptance of *'another Jesus, another spirit and another gospel'*. My heart weeps, for many do not know the difference between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean.)

What, specifically, are the false teachings and practices which today are defiling the church? It is beyond the scope of this short message to touch on all

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the false, but let us call your attention to some of the most prevalent errors.

At the top of the list is the '*super faith and prosperity*' movement which majors on a corrupt and imbalanced teaching on how to use faith for personal gain. This movement focuses much on material and financial prosperity, the riches of this world. It says that no Christian should be poor. Money-hungry preachers are teaching God's people how to prosper, that is, how to accumulate riches and wealth. Their own lifestyles are characterized by luxury cars, lavish homes and expensive goods of every kind. According to this teaching, the poor of this world don't stand a chance to be part of the Kingdom.

Without question, this is clearly 'another gospel', conceived in lustful and covetous hearts and not supported by scripture. Though many, many scriptures could be used to refute this deceptive doctrine, we call your attention to but a few:

"..hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith.."
James 2:5

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*"And He said unto them, Take heed and beware
of covetousness;
for a man's life consisteth not*

in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”
Luke 12:15

*“Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds
and destitute of the truth,
supposing that gain is godliness
(godliness is a way of gain):
from such withdraw thyself.”*
1 Timothy 6:5

As in the early church, some deceivers today call themselves apostles and prophets. Great numbers of believers are now involved in muddy and questionable ‘prophetic movements’ and/or coming under the sway of false apostles. We cannot here describe all the characteristics of a false ministry to guarantee our protection, but scripture clearly exhorts us to exercise *discernment*. Some would cry, “*Don’t judge!*”. Yet the scriptures cry, “*Discern!*”

*“Beloved, believe not every spirit,
but try the spirits whether they are of God:
because many false prophets are gone out into the world”*
1 John 4:1

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*“...thou hast tried them which say they are apostles,
and are not, and hast found them liars (false).”*
Revelation 2:2

Although we believe that God is restoring the 'five-fold' ministry of Ephesians 4:11 for the maturing of the church, the threat of the counterfeit is a stark reality. The false, looking and sounding very much like the real, always comes first and deceives the undiscerning. Some comments about the false:

> ***False prophets***, failing to discern the sub-par condition of the church and seeking to please people, do not deliver the true word of the Lord. Instead of calling a people to repentance and helping to turn a nation toward God, they major on speaking good things. Their general message is that 'all is well'. There's revival, blessing and prosperity everywhere. At the same time, God's true messengers are despised, rejected and called 'prophets of doom'. Again, we strongly exhort all saints to TRY THE SPIRITS!

> ***False apostles***, glorying in their newly given titles and positions, are prideful and vain, seeking more their own personal advantage than the welfare of the church. Another form of church hierarchy is in the making, as these deceivers demand both recognition and submission from the people. In some circles, it is advocated that they, the apostles, along with

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prophets are the very foundation of the church! What blatant error! Jesus alone is the foundation of the church! (1Co.3:11)

O, virgin Church, we pray you will remain

untouched by the hands of man and preserved from spirits which are not of God!

Another major pollutant in the spiritual stream of today's popular church can simply be termed '*hype*'.

I refer to a highly emotional, loud, spectacular and entertaining environment which gives people the same type of '*highs*' available in the world. Since these productions are done in Jesus' name and in plush church auditoriums, they become a popular alternative to the world's entertainment. Such are not produced by the Holy Spirit but by man, in order to make people feel good. Crafty religious leaders know what is required to keep the crowd coming and to keep their programs financially afloat. I am afraid that hype, with its lightness and frivolity, has become a replacement for the awesome presence of God and its fruit of reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28)

Beloved, have we forgotten how God reacts to

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that which has been produced by the flesh, even good, well-meaning flesh?

** God rejected Cain's offering because He smelled in it the strength and sweat of Cain's hands.*

** Ishmael could not be in line with the covenant promises because he had been 'born of the flesh'.*

Jesus Himself taught:

*"That which is born of the flesh is flesh
and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."
John 3:6*

***The Bride of Christ will not be a mixture of
flesh and spirit. She will be pure as He is pure and
holy as He is holy.***

THE 'HOW' OF PERSONAL PURIFICATION

*"Beloved, now are we the sons (Gr: children) of God
and it doth not yet appear what we shall be,
but we know that, when he shall appear,
we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

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*And every man that hath this hope in him
purifieth himself, even as he (Christ) is pure."
1 John 3:2,3*

The members of the Bride will take very seriously the possibility of becoming like Christ. Also, they will not accept the erroneous teaching that our spiritual condition will be totally transformed at the coming of Christ. They realize that transformation is an ongoing process that happens by our present cooperation with the working of the Holy Spirit. At the return of the Lord, our physical composition will be changed but the spiritual state we end up with shall then be expressed through our glorified bodies. There will be differences. (See 1 Corinthians 15:37-42a)

I will admit that the thought of becoming like Christ is overwhelming and could easily be set aside. One could draw back from the challenge and simply say, "I just thank God I am saved." This was my mentality as a young man. This truth was to me like a huge mountain I had no hope of climbing.

But, as the years rolled by, I kept searching and

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asking the Lord in my meditations, "What am I here for? What is to be my objective as a Christian?" Repeatedly, two scriptures have kept coming to my remembrance,

*“For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate
to be conformed to the image of His Son...”*

Romans 8:29

“...when he shall appear, we shall be like Him...”

1 John 3:2

Then, gradually, it began to ‘hit home’ that, according to 1 John 3:3, I must have a **genuine, living hope** for this and must **cooperate with God** in a process. The word ‘hope’ here is not used casually as we would use it in every day expressions. We say, “I hope it won’t rain tomorrow.” or “I hope Spring will come soon.” But in the Greek, the word ‘hope’ is much stronger than that. It actually means **‘a confident anticipation or expectation’!** Thus, if we have a real hope - born of the Spirit - of becoming like Him, we are both expectant and confident that it will happen! *O, Lord, may such a hope be birthed in our hearts as we read your promises!*

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Although the above truth is mind-boggling, to say the least, we are promised that the Holy Spirit will be at work in our lives. May our hearts embrace both the challenge and the promise given us in Philippians:

*“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed,...
work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”
Philippians 2:12 (KJV)*

*“For it is God that worketh in you
inspiring both your will and your action.”
Philippians 2:13 (Goodspeed)*

Work out your own salvation? To many this sounds like the realm of works which we are to avoid. How can we get involved with any kind of *works* without departing from grace?

But, to the Christian who is attuned to the Spirit, the above scriptures refer to common daily occurrences. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work in our lives to inspire (direct) our will and actions in the pathways of God's will and purpose. He has been given to us as a guide. But, in order for us to realize the full purpose for our salvation, the Holy Spirit

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must have our cooperation! We must become abandoned to Him, willing to be led, not by our own intelligence, common sense or what others are doing, but by Him.

*“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God,
they are the sons of God.”*

Romans 8:14

The Spirit will speak to us concerning actions we are to make or directions we are to take. He will also warn us against certain courses of action. These ‘leadings’ will come, not by an audible voice, but in the form of messages impressed on our own spirit as we walk with Him.

Now the Holy Spirit will be faithful to do His work. That is God’s part. ***Our part is obedience!*** O, the awesome consequences of obedience, or the lack of it! Adam’s failure in obedience caused the whole human race to fall into sin and Jesus’ faithful obedience has made the way for all to be restored!

It is only by obedience that we progress in the

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matter of being made into the likeness of Christ.

Each time we obey the Spirit, the old nature is

crucified and the divine nature flourishes and prospers. This is how we ‘mortify our members’ (Col.3:5) and at the same time ‘put on Christ’ (Romans 13:14). Let no one think that this matter of becoming like Christ is but an elusive ideal. It is, in fact, an experiential reality to those who embrace it in faith.

I feel I would be remiss were I not to refer to the very clear word from Romans 6 regarding the need for daily obedience to the Spirit’s promptings. First, may we realize this word is not for the sinner in the world, but for the believer. If you have any doubts about working out your salvation through obedience, please read and re-read this chapter until full understanding comes. In this booklet, I cannot enter into a verse by verse study, but let me summarize its message in my own words:

“You will be molded by obedience. You are given two choices, two directions, two possibilities. You can become either a servant of righteousness or a servant of sin. His servant you are to whom you obey. Obedience to righteousness

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(the inspiration and promptings of the Holy Spirit) will set you free from sin and enable you to reap life and holiness. However, if you habitually obey sin, it will reign in your mortal

body (enslave you) and ultimately bring forth death. You can be victorious over sin, you can yield your members to righteousness, you can walk in newness of life - all because of Christ's 100% identification with us in His death and resurrection! The reason we can obey is because He who always perfectly obeyed the Father dwells within us and makes grace available for us to do it!" All glory to Him!

Let us insert a prayer. ***"Lord, we could easily be overwhelmed by the challenge, but instead of rejecting your word and becoming drop-outs, we turn to you in faith, hope and dependency. We believe all that your word says is possible. We believe that we can be fully made into servants of righteousness and bring forth fruit unto holiness. Thank you for the grace made available by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."***

INTIMACY

*"...let me see thy countenance,
let me hear thy voice..."
Song of Solomon 2:14*

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An obvious characteristic which establishes any genuine marriage relationship is the existence of *intimacy*, that continual interaction of two lives which

grows unto eternal union. Wherever a true marriage exists, its partners love one another, live for one another and pursue oneness with every opportunity. Thus it will be with the Bride of Christ. The consuming passion of her heart will be to find, to have and to know **Him**. He will be, not only her first love, but her only love.

Do we have a deep, throbbing passion just for Him?

At times, when distractions come and when enough time is not spent alone with Him, I re-read the love story in the Song of Solomon. I am both convicted and stirred afresh by the revelation of a young maiden's heart that earnestly sought after her King. The following expressions taken from that story reveal the burning desire and passion of her heart toward the one she loves:

"...draw me, we will run after thee..."

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"...I sought him whom my soul loveth..."

"...I found him whom my soul loveth..."

"...I held him and would not let him go..."

"...he is altogether lovely..."

(Various from Song of Solomon)

It is a day when intimacy of any type is extremely difficult to establish. Husbands and wives are often so preoccupied with their own careers and work schedule that they have very little time for each other. Many children spend more time with a babysitter and with the T.V. than with their parents! And the schedule of many believers has become so hectic that time with the Lord is squeezed out.

The Laodicean Church age is upon us! We are rich and increased with goods - material and religious - and conclude that we have need of nothing. Yet the very alarming truth is that there is *no fellowship, no communion, no intimacy with the Lord!* Imagine the scenario in Revelation 3 and again today: The Lord is found **outside** the church and no communion is taking place! Communion, fellowship with our Lord - the very thing Jesus died to restore - is practically non-

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existent. O, much activity and many programs are in progress, skillfully planned to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of people, but our Lord's need for fellowship is not met! He is knocking at the heart's

door seeking for intimate fellowship in the secret place.

*“Behold, I stand at the door and knock,
if any man hear my voice, and open the door,
I will come in to him and will sup with him
and he with me.”
Revelation 3:20*

It is rather incredible, but, O, so very real how intimacy can vanish. Carried by great waves of emotion, we can make solemn vows and commitments in the beginning but later slowly drift away from them. Newly-weds cannot imagine how anything could possibly bring separation, yet the divorce rate in the church is today the same as that of the world. New Christians firmly declare they will never stray from the one who died to give them eternal life, yet polls show that a year after conversion, only 15%-20% can be found attending church.

Many things can hinder the cultivation of a

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relationship with the Lord. Perhaps the greatest of all hindrances are the *cares and riches and pleasures of this life*. (Luke 8:14) Since our involvement in these

things is not categorized as sin, we allow them - as thorns - to take root in our lives and to spread to the detriment of our spiritual welfare. It is remarkable how we make time and spend money for so many things that enrich our soul life while our spiritual resources gradually diminish. Of the generation that came out of Egypt it is recorded,

*“They...lusted exceedingly in the wilderness
and he gave them their request,
but sent leanness into their soul.”
Psalm 106:14,15*

It has always been significant to me to note the things Jesus warned about with regard to His coming. He indicated that conditions would be similar to those of the days of Noah and the days of Lot. (Lu.17:26-28) However, He made no reference to the corruption and violence existing in the days of Noah or the gross immorality existing in the days of Lot. Instead, he said,

“They did eat, they drank, they married wives,

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*they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah
entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.
Likewise, also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat,
they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded*

*But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom,
it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed
them all.”*

All the above-mentioned things in normal usage cannot be classified as evil, but could it be that men were so abnormally and excessively involved with such that God was totally left out of their lives? I believe we cannot but conclude that a life-style of overindulgence and preoccupation with earthly things had destroyed their spiritual senses. They knew not the time of day till judgment was upon them.

We, the church, very much stand in danger of the same thing today!

Now, would you believe that another subtle element in our lives that could divert us from pursuing intimacy are the very *blessings* that come from His hand??

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O, yes, beloved, we can settle for His blessings to the neglect of a *relationship*. When our lives are richly blessed and cared for, we tend to leave the

prayer closet and stop seeking Him. We fail to realize that prayer is not just a matter of bringing our list of requests before Him, but an avenue of *communion*. It should be a time when we not only talk to Him but He talks to us.

God warned His people of this very thing on their way to Canaan land:

*“When thou hast eaten and art full,...
beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God...
lest, when thou hast eaten and art full,...
thine heart be lifted up,
and thou forget the Lord thy God...”
Deuteronomy 8:10-14*

How wonderfully the Lord blesses his people! With the Lord as our Shepherd, there is no lack, for He supplies abundantly. He daily loadeth us with benefits. Provision of every sort, comfort, guidance, strength, victory in conflict - indeed, goodness and mercy follow

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us all the days of our life. Personally, I have proven Psalm 23 to be an experiential reality in my life. I can say with the psalmist that I have been young and now

am old and have never seen the righteous forsaken nor His seed begging bread. Yet, there is something greater than the blessings. ***It is knowing Him intimately!*** O, may our heart's cry be one with that of the Apostle Paul, "*That I may know Him!*"

FULFILLMENT OF PURPOSE

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."
Revelation 19:14

"...and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."
Daniel 7:22b

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be (made) known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."
Ephesians 3:10

The Bride of our Lord Jesus Christ will be an instrument of purpose. She will not only be totally fit for Him - righteous, glorious and holy - but shall be

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united with Him in establishing the Father's will in the earth. The soulish mentality of '*going to heaven to walk on streets of gold*' must be replaced by the truth

of an *awesome army going to war*. (S.O.S. 6:4,10;
Rev. 19:14)

Each of the clear Old Testament types of the
Bride is seen becoming part of a God-ordained
purpose.

Let us consider Eve, the bride of Adam.

Of Adam - a clear type of Christ (Ro.5:14b) -
God said, *"It is not good that man should be alone."*
So God brought a deep sleep on Adam, took out a rib
and formed a woman. Her presentation to Adam has
become a very real symbol of both the mystical and
actual (organic) union of Christ and His Church.
(Eph.5:30-32) Eve's calling was not merely to
provide companionship or to help with earthly chores.
She was co-recipient of God's charge to,

*"Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth,
and subdue it; and have dominion...over*

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every living thing that moveth upon the earth."
Genesis 1:28

If Adam and Eve had not sinned, they could

have become a vast family bearing God's image and administering God's kingdom in the earth. We know that because of their sin, Adam and Eve disqualified themselves from participation in this grand and glorious purpose. But, beloved, God's purpose remains the same - *to have a corporate man involved in the establishment of His kingdom on earth.*

This truth is vividly seen in several of the other clear types of the Bride:

** Rebecca was carefully chosen to become a bride for Abraham's son, Isaac. In becoming Isaac's wife, she became linked with the Abrahamic covenant, whose outworking would impact the entire earth.*

** Ruth, the Moabitess, is first seen gleaning in the fields of Boaz (a type of Christ), then sitting with him at his table, but ultimately becoming married to Him. Out of this union came Obed, a vital link in*

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producing God's king, David.

** Esther was raised up in a time when a diabolical plot could have annihilated God's people*

from the face of the earth. She became instrumental in assuring the continuance of God's purpose in the earth.

The most detailed and complete type of the Church is Israel of the Old Testament. In the new Testament, several strong references are made concerning Israel's fall in the wilderness. (1Co.10, He.3,4) In these passages, we are warned against falling into the same patterns of lust, idolatry and unbelief, thereby coming short of God's full purpose.

What was God's purpose for Israel?

God's purpose certainly did not end with their deliverance from Egypt. That was simply a beginning, as is our salvation in Christ. From Egypt, they were to embark on a journey whose final destination was Canaan land. In this unfolding story we actually can see a blueprint of God's purpose for His Church.

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After the application of the blood and salvation from Egypt came a time of chastening in the wilderness. (De.8:5) As a father disciplines his children in hope of growth unto full stature, so God

was preparing his people for adult responsibility. (They were not going to Canaan to simply enjoy all its blessings.) In this process, they were brought to Him in vital relationship, separated from other nations by the law, and prepared as an army to do battle in Canaan. Throughout the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy we have repeated references to *'the armies of Israel.'* In fact, as part of their training for taking Jericho in Canaan, they attacked and utterly destroyed 60 walled cities in the kingdom of Bashan. (See De. 3:4-6) After crossing Jordan, the picture is not of everybody sitting under a vine or fig tree to enjoy life. ***It would be a time of warfare!*** All the Canaanites had to be driven from the land!

The teachings of Fundamental and Pentecostal Christianity - focused on an escape rapture - have molded the minds of believers so as to distort the true picture of end-time events. When reference is made to the 'marriage of the Lamb' (Rev.19:7), natural minds

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think of marriage as it is undertaken among men. We envision a great celebration, a beautiful honeymoon and happiness forever. But, if we follow in the context of Revelation 19, we see a totally different picture.

In Revelation 19:11-15, we see heaven opened and the Bridegroom riding into the earth to judge and make war. (There is no mistaking this one whose vesture is dipped in blood and whose name is called, 'The Word of God'.) What follows is the smiting of the nations with the sword of His mouth and the establishment of His rule (Kingdom) over them.

But, let us observe that He is not alone! No, He is not alone because there has been a marriage! His Bride is with Him in the form of *'the armies of heaven'*. The 'fine linen' seen in verse 7 appears again! These are not angels or other spiritual beings, but those who bear the marks of inwrought righteousness! They, according to the promise of Revelation 2:27, will share with Christ in the ruling of nations with a rod of iron.

The above picture is equivalent to the establish-

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ment of the kingdom of God in the earth and corresponds to the word in 1 Corinthians 15:24:

"After that comes the end, when he delivers

*the kingdom to God the Father,
after rendering inoperative and abolishing
every (other) rule and every authority and power.”
(Amplified)*

For further confirmation of the above picture,
please see Jude 14,15 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

Seeing that the Bride is called to such an
awesome and glorious participation in God’s purpose
for all creation, it becomes all the more urgent that she
‘make herself ready’.

One last note concerning the preparation of the
Bride. It concerns her need to *‘follow the Lamb
wherever He goeth.’* The Bride will not initiate her
own works for her own gain or glory. Nor will she be
induced into fleshly programs or activity for the sake
of gaining numbers or becoming ‘successful’. In all
her ministry and activity, she will follow the Lamb in
a way that gives Him the glory and preeminence. Her
commit-

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ment, like that of Jesus, is, *‘to do the will of Him that
sent me...’*. Many workers of iniquity can be seen in
the religious world today, as described in Matthew

7:21-23. They will seek a place in the Kingdom on the basis of their own works, all done in Jesus' name. Shocked and mystified at their rejection, they will protest that they have prophesied, cast out devils and performed many wonderful works. But they will hear the Lord say that *'not everyone who saith Lord, Lord shall enter the Kingdom, but only he that doeth the will of the Father.'* This means that many good works, signs and wonders, healing and miracles may not have His approbation! What a challenge to develop a seeing eye and a hearing ear so that we may do only His works and speak His words!

In conclusion, we declare that a Bride will be prepared and made ready! This is the main work of the Holy Spirit today. One by one, her members are emerging from the Babylonish confusion of our day. As clay in the potter's hands, they are willing to be disciplined and molded according to His design. They take seriously the matters of preparation, righteousness and holiness. Anticipating the upcoming marriage, they

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keep themselves pure for their Heavenly Bridegroom. Their spiritual eye is single - for Him - and their

spiritual ear delights in one thing only - His voice.

Soberly and humbly they anticipate the fulfillment of their divine calling and destiny.

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***“Rise up, my love, my fair one and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of the singing of birds is come,
and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one and come away.
Song of Solomon 2:10-13***

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Note: Our mention of an ‘*escape rapture*’ may have raised some questions. We do believe in the personal return of our Lord Jesus and our ‘*catching up*’ unto Him. However, it is our conviction that the catching up will be for the purpose of our bodily glorification followed by a return with Him to the earth. (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Jude 14)

“Come, I Will Show You The Bride”