

Session 17 Bridal Paradigm of Prophetic Ministry

INTRODUCTION

“Bridal Paradigm of Prophetic Ministry.” *Paradigm* is a very common word today. Webster defines it as the “pattern or model of an overall concept.” I like to think of it as a lens with which to view or interpret prophetic ministry. There are many ways to interpret the Scriptures, and many ways to interpret prophetic ministry. It’s a grid or a lens in which we see the whole subject of the prophetic.

There are various paradigms of the kingdom of God. We talked in the last session about our threefold identity as believers. We’re servants of the Lord. We view ourselves through the paradigm, or through the lens, or through the grid of being servants.

We also view ourselves through the paradigm of sonship, being sons of God, sons and daughters, but the highest identity that we talked about in the last session is the paradigm that I’m using for prophetic ministry—that of viewing the prophetic ministry through the lens of bridehood.

Incidentally, as I’ve said a number of times, women are called sons of God and men are called the Bride of Christ. It’s something that transcends gender. It’s a position of proximity to the heart of God; that’s really what we’re talking about. Our call to the Father and our call to the Bridegroom have nothing to do with gender. It has nothing to do with sexuality, or sensuality, but it has everything to do with the position of privilege. It has to do with partnership with God. It has to do with proximity to the heart of God. All those started with *p*, so that’s pretty neat.

There are various paradigms in the kingdom of God, and you might write there in B that there are various paradigms for the prophetic ministry, for evangelistic ministry, and, really, for any kind of ministry. It’s the way in which we view the ministry. It’s the paradigm by which we view ourselves in that ministry.

All three of these identities or paradigms of the kingdom—servanthood, sonship, and bridehood—are valid. All three of them are essential to seeing the fullness of the heart of God. Each one of them is complementary to the other views of the kingdom of God. Each one of these points of view—that’s another word for *paradigm*, *perspective* or “point of view”—is eternal.

We will call ourselves God’s servants. Even a billion years from now we will still see ourselves as servants. We will still see ourselves as sons and we will still see ourselves as the bride. As we looked at in the last session, each one of these relates to a person in the Godhead. Servanthood obviously relates to the faceless One, the Holy Spirit, the ultimate Servant, the One that comes to help. He’s called the Helper. That’s what Jesus titled Him, the Helper (Jn. 14:16). He’s the Servant. He’s the faceless Helper. He empowers us to serve God, to do acts of service, tasks in the kingdom. He may anoint us to an apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, or teacher type of gifting. It makes no difference. Those are different types of servants. There are different gift mixes in the paradigm of servanthood.

Then, obviously, the point of view or paradigm of the kingdom of sonship relates to God the Father. Then bridehood relates to the Lord Jesus. I don’t know if this is true, but someone I was talking to suggested the three

parts of the temple, the outer court, the inner court, and the Holy of Holies. I don't know if you can do that with that, but for those who are more daring, I'll throw that out there for you.

THE REVELATION OF THE GREAT WEDDING AT THE END OF NATURAL HISTORY

Defining prophetic ministry. Revelation 19:1-10. That's where we're at right now. You're opened to the book of Revelation. The reason I put verses 1-10 instead of verse 10 is because verse 10 is the actual definition. I wanted to enlarge the definition. The definition of the prophetic ministry at its highest is in the context of the marriage supper of the lamb. Verses 1-10, as we know from many sessions ago, are the three responses of the bride on the wedding day. Really, though, the point of it is the marriage supper, the revelation of the great wedding at the end of natural history. It's the great day of the Lord. It's when the great mystery of God is fulfilled.

“THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY”

It's interesting that the angel of the Lord picks this context to define prophetic ministry. This is one of the very few times that prophecy is actually defined in the Scriptures. You can find a prophet doing something: for example, before Elisha prophesies, he calls the singers and the minstrels. From that we understand that when the singers come and sing, the spirit of prophesy moves and comes on the prophet of God, on Elisha. We can put a lot of things together in understanding the prophetic ministry in the Old and New Testaments.

Very rarely is prophecy actually defined and laid out. Verse 10 is probably the most prominent definition of prophecy. It's called “the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 19:10b). This is the angel looking at John and saying, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (ibid). I like to use the phrase, “The purpose of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.”

THE TWO MAIN EVENTS OF THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

Before we talk about that in more detail, the bigger point is the occasion on which the angel said this. The ultimate prophetic event of all the ages is where the angel defines the purpose of the prophetic ministry. Like anyone else, the testimony of Jesus involves what He thinks and what He feels and what He does. His testimony, like your testimony, involves what Jesus thinks, what He feels, and how He acts or what He does. It involves the past, present, and future, just like your testimony does. We don't typically think of our testimony as future, but when you live outside of time, your future becomes your testimony because it's past tense to you. That's where the Lord is.

The two main events of the testimony of Jesus are the work of the cross and the wedding supper of the Lamb. Those are the two great aspects of Jesus' testimony. It's what He did on the cross and it's what He produced—a bride for Himself. That's the testimony of Jesus. Again, in the more general sense, it's what He thinks, feels, does, or acts, past, present, and future. It really focuses on the cross and the wedding supper, or the wedding ceremony; “providing a bride” is another way to say the wedding supper.

THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY: REVEALING THE BRIDE TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

So in place of “the spirit of prophecy,” you might put, “the purpose of prophecy.” In one sentence, the purpose of prophecy at its very highest is to reveal the bride to the people of God, because that's what the angel just did. He revealed the bride to John so that John could reveal the bride to the people. The spirit of prophecy is to reveal the bride to the redeemed, who actually is the bride; to reveal our bridal identity in order to empower bridal worship or bridal love.

Because, as you see, in verse 10 the angel said, “Worship God.” And then he said, “Because. . .” (Rev. 19:10a, paraphrased). He links worshiping God with his description of the purpose of prophecy. Worshiping God is the ultimate bridal love. The ultimate bridal heart is to be an extravagant worshiper of God.

What’s the highest purpose of prophecy? We can use prophecy to make someone feel better about circumstances today. The prophetic word comes forth and people feel like their job is going to be rescued or redeemed. Or they feel like a relationship is going to be touched. They feel like a loved one is going to be saved and they feel like their body is going to be healed. That’s a very valid part of the prophetic ministry, but the highest purpose is to reveal the identity of the redeemed as the Bride of Christ. Why? To awaken bridal love or worship in their heart. That’s the highest purpose of prophetic ministry, which the angel of God is sharing in the most dramatic prophetic event, which is the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Of course, what’s John’s response? He falls. Tragically, he falls and worships an angel. He confuses the message and the messenger. He’s so overwhelmed by the message that he begins to worship the messenger, which is completely out of bounds. There’s never, never an occasion where that’s OK.

The Lord understood; at least that’s what I think, because John slipped from receiving a commission to reveal the bride. In verse 9 the angel says, “Write these things” (Rev. 19:9, paraphrased). “Make them known,” is the point. “Write these; let the Church know about them.” He’s being commissioned to reveal the bride in verse 9. What I think happened in verse 10 is that he slipped from receiving a commission. He took the revelation intensely personally. He said, “That’s my story. That’s not just a theological proclamation; that’s what I’ll do one day at the throne of God.” He saw the response of the bride and it slipped over. He slipped over from receiving a commission to seeing his own personal destiny. He’s completely overwhelmed. He falls down and does the unthinkable because his heart is undone. That’s the point.

Here’s the point I want to point out in his response. John falls to worship. Remember back in Mark 10:35, when John was before Jesus. He was asking Jesus if he could be at His right hand in His kingdom. In other words, way back sixty years earlier, before the great prophetic event, the great testimony of Jesus, the cross, John isn’t even thinking about Jesus. He’s not concerned about the cross. Just a short while before the cross, possibly a week or two before—I don’t have the timing right here, but it’s in Matthew 20, just before the triumphal entry, which is in Matthew 21—John says, “Can I be the main man in eternity over everyone forever?”

Right before the cross, John wants to be first place in the kingdom. That’s no small request. He wants to be over all the redeemed forever. He has a very different response here before the revelation of the other part of the testimony of Jesus, the wedding supper. He falls down to worship. That’s the impact it has. The revelation of the bride will transform anyone’s heart from seeking their own to being overwhelmed with extravagant love when they see this. That’s what happened to John: it transformed his heart. This revelation will transform our heart in a very, very dramatic way.

JESUS’ FINAL PROPHETIC REVELATION IN SCRIPTURE

Jesus’ final prophetic revelation in Scripture. This is self-evident, but I want to point out that the very last thing that Jesus reveals is the bride in the *logos*, in the written Word of God. I don’t believe that’s a coincidence; it’s very deliberate, very strategic, very purposeful. The Word of God begins with a bride in earthly paradise, in the

garden of Eden. God says, “Let Me tell you the story of the human race. It begins with a bride in an earthly paradise called the garden of Eden.”

When God finishes the story of the human race, it ends with a bride in a heavenly paradise, in the paradise of God. I don’t think that’s an accident. I don’t think the recorded Word of God beginning with a bride in the garden and ending with a bride in the garden is an accident. This is the A to Z of the highest dimension of God’s purpose in the written Word of God.

THE AUTHORITATIVE, DELIBERATE SELF-REVELATION OF GOD’S HEART

What is the Scripture, in essence? There are many, many definitions you could give to that question, but I want you to consider this. It’s the highest and most authoritative, deliberate self-revelation of God’s heart to us. There are many things that are true that aren’t in the Scriptures. There are things that angels do in heaven that are true that aren’t mentioned at all in the Scriptures. There are things that God thinks about His eternal plan that we can’t even imagine. There are things about your life that are true that God knows. He never put them in the Scriptures. There are many true things not in the Scriptures. All Scripture is true, but there are pieces of information that God doesn’t want us to know until that day.

The *logos*, the written Word of God, is a very deliberate, strategic unveiling of what God wants us precisely to know. It’s what God wants us to focus on. That’s the dilemma in some of the renewal that has gone on, because many true acts of the Holy Spirit took place. God knew they were true acts of the Holy Spirit; they’re from Him. He didn’t put them in the Scriptures, not because they aren’t valid, but because He didn’t want us to focus on certain things that were taking place. He says, “They’re OK; I’ll let them happen, but focus on what I reveal.” The Word of God has really clear boundary lines. It’s what God wants us to know. It’s what He wants to focus on, and there are volumes of true things He doesn’t want us to have in that category.

It’s interesting that what God wants us to know, what He wants us to focus on, what He calls the prophetic standard in the earth, the written Word of God, begins with a bride in the garden and ends with a bride in the garden. It begins with a bride in paradise and ends with a bride in paradise. I don’t think that’s an accident. That speaks volumes. That in itself is prophetic; I mean, the Scriptures are a prophetic revelation. They’re a very purposeful self-revelation of God to the human race. They end with a bride clothed in the glory of God.

Back in Genesis 1 and 2, Adam and Eve had a certain glory of God on them. They were clothed. They were naked and unashamed with the glory of God as their garment. At the end, the bride is clothed in the splendor of that eternal city. This is a wonderful strategy of God to reveal His purpose to the human race. It begins with a bride and ends with a bride.

John’s response in Revelation 22:8 is to fall down again. This is an amazing thing. John falls three times in the book of Revelation. He falls in 1:18 when He sees the majesty of Jesus; he falls like a dead man. In 19:10, he falls and worships an angel. Then in 22:8, he falls again to worship an angel. This is after he has been warned. It’s like the angel says, “Wait a second. I just warned you some time ago not to do this.” It’s interesting that the thing that produced this extravagant, overwhelming response, this unthinkable response, both times, was the revelation of the bride. In chapter 19, it was the response of the bride on the wedding day. In chapter 21 and 22, it’s when he sees the bride in her full glory. He just can’t contain himself. Something is undone on the inside of him.

The final prophetic revelation. Jesus is the Word of God. He says, “I’m revealing the thing I want you to know most about My heart. I’m the Word of God. I began with the bride in mind and I end with the bride purchased and clean and filled with glory, standing beside Me.” This is what Jesus, the written Word of God, the *logos* of God, wants us to know about His heart. I think that’s powerful.

THE FINAL REVELATION OF THE SPIRIT TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The Holy Spirit’s final prophetic revelation in history. Look down at Paragraph C. “Our bridal identity.” Actually, that should be A, because he’s in Revelation 22:17. Just go ahead and look over at that verse. We’ve looked at this several times. At the end of the age it says, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’” (Rev. 22:17). The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.”

In Rev. 22:20, Jesus says, “I am coming quickly.” Then there’s a cry: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20)! There’s a cry to come in verse 17. The cry is to the Lord, and, actually, to the unsaved nations. “Come to Him. Come, Lord Jesus, and come, nations, to the Bridegroom.”

It’s interesting that the identity of the people of God at the end of the age is a bride. We’ll always be a family; we’ll always be a body. We’ll always be a temple and we’ll always be an army. I don’t know about the army. I don’t know how the army works in eternity in the future, because the enemy is subdued entirely. Maybe we’re not always an army. I never thought about that.

It’s interesting that the Church is crying out in the identity of the bride at the end of the age. This is the Holy Spirit’s final revelation to the people of God in natural history: the revelation of the bride to the Church. Because the Church ends with a bridal identity, crying out, “Come, Lord Jesus!” That’s our final identity. That’s our main confession at the end of the age.

I’ll add in Revelation 21:9 since you’re right there. The angel comes to John and says, “I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9).

As the Holy Spirit showed to the first generation, I think He will show to the last. The Spirit of God is going to use angels, dreams, visions, and the spirit of revelation on the written Word of God. The Spirit of God is going to show us the bride, the Lamb’s wife. In various ways, He’s going to repeat verse 9 of Revelation 21. I’m not saying that’s the exact language, but there will be a season when the Holy Spirit says, “I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. I will show you the people of God.” That’s what’s going to convince the people to cry out; to say to the Lord, and to the nations, “Come!”

It’s the final prophetic revelation in history at the end of the age. We looked at Hosea 2 last time. I won’t take time to talk about the passage there, but it’s Hosea 2:14-23. It’s talking about the final generation of human history before the Lord returns. We will call the Lord our Husband (Hos. 2:16). That will be the Holy Spirit’s activity at the end of the age.

It’s also in Paragraph B here. “The Lord will call the redeemed, ‘My delight is in you.’ And the Lord will call the redeemed, ‘Married’” (Isa. 62:4-5, paraphrased). It says He will call the land *married*. There are many passages in the Word of God where we can take the land and the people and the purpose and it means one thing. There are a number of times when God speaks to the land, but He’s referring to all the inhabitants and all the blessing and all the purpose on the land, which is the purpose of God with the people.

Again, it should be Isaiah 62:4-5. This happens at the end of the age, right before the second coming of the Lord. The Lord will call us, “Delighted in the Lord,” and the Lord will call us *married*. This is what the Holy Spirit will be revealing at that time.

JESUS’ FINAL PUBLIC TEACHING BEFORE THE CROSS

Jesus’ final public teaching before the cross. This is a powerful prophetic statement. This is what Jesus Christ held in His heart from eternity past. Jesus, the Word of God, knows every single thought and impulse of the Word of God. He knows the ten levels of meaning to every passage. He is the Word of God. He waited from eternity to say with His lips on the earth His final message to the human race. It’s the ultimate prophetic invitation, because He only got to do it one time.

We looked at this passage some weeks ago: Jesus’ final message to the people of Israel, and therefore to the redeemed in history. He knew that His last words, His last sermon, would be recorded. He obviously knew that. He knew that even 2,000 years later someone could ask, “What were His final words?” and we would have them recorded in Matthew 21 and 22 in terms of His preaching ministry to the masses.

His final message contained three parables. It had three points. I like to think of it as three points. Matthew 21 and Matthew 22 had three points. The first point was the message, “Even if you’re a tax gatherer or a harlot, no one has sinned too much to be out of reach this invitation.” That’s what the first parable means. That’s what His first point is. I don’t care how much you’ve messed up. Tax gatherers and harlots were the two most despised types of sinners in the nation of Israel in that century. There were no prevalent sins that were more despised than the tax gatherers, who portrayed Rome, or the harlots, who portrayed the family unit. One portrayed the nation; the other portrayed the family. They were the two most despised classes of sin in Israel’s history.

Jesus hits the thing straight on. He says, “I’ll tell you, the tax gatherers and the harlots can come to what I will announce in a moment” (Mt. 21:31, paraphrased).

They said, “Whoa!”

COMMENT:

So politicians and lawyers have hope.

MIKE BICKLE:

Politicians and lawyers have hope? Now I didn’t say that. Yes, they do. Of course, they do. That was kind of cute.

THE FINAL SERMON OF INVITATION TO THE REDEEMED THROUGHOUT HISTORY

The first point of Jesus’ last message was that the worst sinners could come into the kingdom of God. It’s a three-parable sermon; if you time it, it’s only about ninety seconds long. It’s pretty quick. The second point is this: “The kingdom of God is like a man who had a vineyard, and it was an inheritance for his son” (Mt. 21:33, paraphrased).

One of the main points of this second parable is that this whole issue is about a rich man who has an inheritance for his son. Jesus is saying, “I’m the Son. The rich man is My Father. Therefore, I can invite anyone I want because it’s My inheritance.”

The third parable is the one I have here. Look at Matthew 22:2. This is it; this is the final teaching of His earthly ministry. This is the final sermon of invitation to the redeemed throughout history. What would it be? He got up in Matthew 22:2 and He said, “The kingdom of God is like a great king arranging a marriage, a wedding for his son” (Mt. 22:2, paraphrased). Come on, what was on His heart? He knew what was taking place.

Here’s the thing that’s really powerful about this. Jesus only preached on two wedding parables in His entire recorded ministry, only twice. This is the first time, in His last public sermon. The second one was in His final teaching to the disciples. We’ll look at that in a minute. In His entire three- and-a-half-year ministry, it’s like He looked up to Abba and said, “Can I tell them? I mean, Lord, I’ve listened to Hosea tell them. I’ve listened to Isaiah. I looked at all the types of Rebekah and Ruth and Esther and Eve. I’ve looked at all the prophecies. Lord, Father!”

And the Father says, “No. You can hint.”

John the Baptist hinted. He said, “The Bridegroom has come.” John the Baptist gave a hint.

Jesus might have said, “Well, if he can say it, why can’t I say it?”

He said, “OK. You can only say as much as John has said until Your final sermon.”

We’ll look at this in a moment, but Jesus only said as much as John had said already. There was one hint, but it was His very last sermon where He gave the proclamation. That’s prophetic, because it’s the Holy Spirit’s last revelation of the age. It’s Jesus’ last revelation before the cross. It’s the last revelation of the whole written Word of God. The bride is the best wine saved for last. It’s the last of the Word of God. It’s the last preaching of Jesus. It’s the last intercession of Jesus. It’s the last revelation of the bride in church history before the second coming. I’m getting ahead of myself on my notes here. It’s a wedding parable. Jesus never taught the wedding parable until the final message of His final sermon. It was the final point of His final sermon. I think that’s powerful.

He stands before the people. The Lord said, “You can do it in Jerusalem at the Passover, one time, at the very end of Your earthly ministry before the cross.”

The verse that we’re all familiar with in Hebrews 12:2 says that “Jesus, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2, paraphrased). The joy was the people He was calling to Himself right there, the very people of Israel—the very people throughout history who would say yes. The joy that was set before Him was a truth that was set before Him, but literally there are people right in front of Him who are saying yes to Him. It’s as though God the Father gave Him encouragement in His heart. He actually got to witness the joy of the people who were saying yes to Him in His final sermon when He was preaching the bridal message to them. The bridal message was His final sermon.

“MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN”

The wedding invitation. He ends His teaching ministry in this regard. He says, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt. 22:14). That’s how He ends it. When it says, “Many are called,” you can write the phrase, “Many are invited.” The nations are invited: every tax-gatherer, every harlot, every politician and lawyer, as our brother pointed out. Everyone in the nations is invited. Everyone is invited. Many are invited, but only few are chosen.

What does He mean by *chosen*? I believe it means that only a few step over the line. It’s like the Lord is drawing a line in the sand and He says, “Step over the line.” If you step over the line, you respond so as to be in the position to be chosen to be prepared as the bride. The Lord speaks to your heart and says, “You’re called.”

When you say yes, then you change positions from resisting to responding. The Lord says, “Now you’re in the line to be prepared as the bride. You’re now chosen to go through the preparation, as Esther was chosen to go through the preparation to sit upon the throne one day.” Being chosen doesn’t mean just chosen to be the bride. The invitation is to be the bride. Being chosen means actually becoming the royal bride who will sit upon the throne, as Esther did.

I have one final word here on the final teaching. As you read the book of Matthew, you say, “Wait a second. Matthew 23, 24, and 25 were all before the cross. The cross is in Matthew 26. What about those?” In Matthew 23, Jesus isn’t giving a public invitation. He’s not calling the people to Himself. He’s not even giving a teaching, *per se*. He’s giving a statement of judgment on the leaders of the nation of Israel who rejected the bridal message. In Matthew 22, He gives the bridal message. Still, in Matthew 22, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, all three classes rejected it and tried to trick Him.

In Matthew 23, He pronounces judgment upon them. He pronounces His judgment upon them. Matthew 23 isn’t a teaching. It’s not an invitation to the people to come to His heart. It’s a proclamation of their doom: the doom of the leadership of that generation.

Matthew 24 and Matthew 25 are private instructions to the twelve. He’s not in His public ministry in Matthew 24 and 25. This is in private. Incidentally, that’s where He delivers the parable of the ten virgins, about being prepared for the Bridegroom.

So when it says, “The final public teaching,” you want to put a dash on that and say, “That was prophetic,” because He carried the purpose of God in His heart from eternity. At exactly the right time, God allows Him to release this. It’s very prophetic, because He couldn’t release it until a specific time. When a teaching has a deliberate timing in God, then it’s a prophetic teaching. Many teachings apply to every time, every place, and every situation. There are some teachings that have their most powerful meaning in a specific time and season in the Holy Spirit’s plan. That becomes a prophetic teaching. This was the ultimate prophetic teaching, because He carried this in His heart and couldn’t release it until this hour.

Jesus’ final public prophecy. Here we are. We’re still within the context of the wedding parable. He teaches the parable; that’s the context. Then what happens in the context? The scribes, the Pharisees—let me say them in order: the Pharisees first, the Sadducees second, and the scribes third, came and resisted Him. They were tricking Him, if you remember the passage we looked at some weeks ago. They asked Him, “What is the greatest commandment?”

In Matthew 22:37, the answer to the greatest commandment becomes the greatest prophecy of Jesus' lips. They said, "Well, what's the great commandment?" They were tricking Him. It says it right in the passage. They expected Jesus to give one of the Ten Commandments. This was a politically divisive question. As we looked at earlier, there was no good answer. It was like right before Election Day in Israel, because the nation was coming to Jerusalem for the Passover. The leadership of the nation had already determined to kill Jesus that very week at Passover. They fell right into the purpose of God at the Passover. The nation was gathering and they were going to turn the multitudes against Jesus. They were tricking Him to divert the morale and the momentum of the people from following Jesus.

A scribe was a teacher, a really smart man. He said, "I've got it. I'll ask Him which is the greatest of the Ten Commandments. Because whatever He answers, at least 50 percent of the people will be mad at Him."

Because the people who had had their families broken by someone being murdered would say, "He had better say, 'Thou shalt not murder,'" because they would be really mad if that was not number one.

Another group of people would say, "Yes, our families have been destroyed by adultery. He had better say, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'"

Another man would say, "Well, our whole future's been destroyed by thieves. He had better say, 'Thou shalt not steal,'" and on and on.

They were going to ask Him a question, but He couldn't answer it in a way that would satisfy the crowds. He avoided the Ten Commandments altogether. He went right back to the theme of bridal love, because He was going to die that week in order to purchase a bride.

The scribe said, "What's the great commandment?"

He said, "It's wholehearted love for God. This is the first commandment. 'You shall love the Lord your God'" (Mt. 22:37-38, paraphrased).

That scribe said, "Man! He kind of tricked *me*."

He came back and they said, "Well, what was His answer?"

He said, "He wants lovers. I don't get His answer. I was looking for one of the Ten Commandments." Jesus went right back to the theme of the wedding.

THE GREATEST PROPHECY THAT JESUS EVER GAVE

Here's my point. Jesus was actually quoting the promise of Deuteronomy 30:6. Because He wasn't just giving an answer; He was stating a proclamation. He didn't say, "You could, should, or would." He said, "You shall love the Lord your God." He was looking at the people before Him that were the joy set before Him, and the people whom He knew by the Holy Spirit in history would say yes to Him. He said, "You shall love the Lord your God." He turned it into a proclamation. He turned it into a promise of enabling the people of God. "You shall be a lover of God." He said, "I will purchase a bride that will be equally yoked to Me in love."

“You won’t finish your life except as a lover of God,” is the promise He made to the Church of Jesus Christ on the earth and the Church of Jesus Christ in history. In Deuteronomy 30:6, Moses told them this; He wasn’t referring to what he said, but to the language of it. In essence, Moses said, “Israel, one of these days you will fall away from God. You will be scattered in the nations. The bride is going to gather you back one day.”

Deuteronomy 4:30 actually tells us when the gathering back will be: in the “latter days,” in the last days of the age (Deut. 4:30). The re-gathering will be at the end of time, in the last days.

Anyways, in Deuteronomy 30:6, here’s what Moses said, “And when you gather back, and you turn your heart to the Lord, which you will do, here’s the promise.” He says, “God will circumcise your heart, and you will love the Lord your God with a whole heart. You will love the Lord your God with a whole heart” (Deut. 30:6, paraphrased).

Jesus knows this promise. It’s not just a challenge. Moses prophesied it over the nation of Israel. “You will be wholehearted lovers of God.” Jesus is picking up in the Holy Spirit on that promise of Deuteronomy 30:6. Obviously, Jesus knows it’s the whole purpose of the intention of His coming to the earth, to produce lovers of God.

Here’s my point: Jesus Christ is going to have wholehearted lovers of God. Why? Because God the Father promised Him that He would. God the Father promised Him that He would. It’s the greatest prophecy. It’s often seen as just an answer to a question. Jesus is standing over Israel one last time. The last time He stood before Israel was on the cross. He prophesies over the nation the prophecy of Deuteronomy 30:6 that would be fulfilled in the last days (Deut. 4:30).

JESUS’ FINAL PRIVATE TEACHING TO THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

It’s not only His final public prophecy; it’s His final private teaching to the twelve. What I mean by final is this: He gives six parables in Matthew 24 and 25. He gives three in Matthew 24 and then He gives three again in Matthew 25. Then we have the teaching at the upper room, John 13-17, which is loaded with the understanding of the love of God, Jesus’ love for them, and how He’s going to empower them to have His joy in them. It’s loaded with bridal imagery if you’re looking through the lens of the Bride of Christ. It’s absolutely filled with the language of the bride from the Old Testament.

My point is this: Jesus only gives two parables about the bride, and He gives them both in the very last hours of His earthly ministry: one on Sunday to the masses and the other on that same Sunday to His disciples in private. Then we have the upper room, the night before the crucifixion, in John 13-17. In His final private teaching—I don’t mean the final exact sentence, but in the last week of the three and a half years—He has permission to speak the second bridal parable. It’s the only one He spoke to them as leaders. He was giving them teaching as leaders in how to understand the kingdom.

Jesus’ final private intercession. Let’s turn to John 17. Again, John 13-17 was one of the sessions that we don’t have time to do, but it’s loaded with bridal imagery. For example, I’ll give you one for fun. Look at John 15:9. He says, “As the Father loved Me, this is the way that I love you” (Jn. 15:9, paraphrased). We looked at this a little some sessions ago, but Jesus says, “Look at the way that Abba loves Me. This is the only standard to describe how I love you. I love you with the same quality that Father loves Me.”

This is the bridal love. This is the love of the Bridegroom.

“AS A BRIDEGROOM REJOICES OVER A BRIDE, SO WILL YOUR GOD REJOICE OVER YOU”

He goes down in verse 11 and says, “I have spoken these things to you that My joy would be in you” (Jn. 15:11).

What is His joy? We think, “Well, that’s neat. What does it mean?”

In Isaiah 62:5, He describes His joy. The joy of God over people is stated maybe ten times in the Old Testament, but to my knowledge only once is it actually defined and described in the entire Bible. Maybe it’s defined and described a second time; I don’t know. I’ve studied this fairly diligently, but I could have missed one. Maybe ten times He says, “I have joy over you.” One time He describes it, in Isaiah 62:5. He says, “God rejoices over you like the bridegroom rejoices over the bride” (Isa. 62:5, paraphrased).

That’s God’s joy right there. He describes it with His own lips in the *logos* of God, in the Word of God. He says, “You want to know what My joy is? Go back to the promises. I rejoice like a bridegroom rejoices over a bride.”

Here He skips that. He says, “You’ll figure it out later. The Holy Spirit will put it together.” Because the only Bible they had was the Old Testament. Isaiah is pretty hot on bridal imagery. He says, “Just go study your Old Testament. You’ll see it.”

He says, “When I tell you in verse 9 that I love you like the Father loves Me, I tell you in verse 11 that My joy is going to be in you.” In other words, “What My joy is will be revealed to you. You will have some of that joy. It’s the joy of a bridegroom over a bride. You will see it.”

That’s what I mean: these entire five chapters, John 13-17, are loaded with connections to Old Testament terminology about the bride. In verses 1-5, He prays for God’s help before the cross. In verses 6-19, He prays for the disciples. I’m telling you verses 1-26 to give you a feel for the chapter. In verses 1-5, is Jesus praying for help. “Lord, help Me. I’m going to the cross in a few hours.”

In verses 6 to 19, He prays for the disciples; in essence He’s praying for the leadership of the early church. Because if they get it right, the whole first century is going to get it right. He’s praying for the birthing of the early church.

In verses 20 to 27, He’s praying for the believers throughout church history. He changes direction in verse 20. Now He’s not going to pray for the early church *per se*. He’s going to pray for everyone in history. This is in verse 20. He prays for everyone who hears by someone who hears from someone who hears—the generations of the believers.

“FATHER, I DESIRE THAT THEY . . . MAY BE WITH ME WHERE I AM”

Now verses 20-26, seven verses, is Jesus’ prayer for the Church in history. Here’s the good news about those seven verses: they all have to happen. Whatever He prayed has to happen, right? They can’t fall to the ground. It’s impossible that Jesus would pray in the will of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit, recorded in the Word of God, and be disappointed. It cannot fall to the ground. This is impossible. Everything and everyone is in

agreement: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Scriptures. Everything is in agreement that needs to be in agreement.

This is a bunny trail; those are seven verses where you can go and really get some stuff about what God is going to do before the Church is over in this age. It must come to pass.

We're looking at the final three verses, but I wanted to give you the context. Look at what He says in verses 24-26. He ends His intercessory ministry in front of the disciples, right before the garden of Gethsemane. He says here in verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me, for You have loved Me before the foundations of the world" (Jn. 17:24).

Then He says in verse 26, "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn. 17:26).

Look at verse 24 again. He's coming to the end of His intercession. He says, "Father, I desire that they whom You gave Me would be with Me." He says, "Father"; He's changing gears here. He says, "Father"; this is so personal. He says, "You know why I came to planet earth. I desire those whom You gave Me, that they would be with Me." He doesn't mean with Him in the garden; He means with Him in eternity. He's reminding God of why He's going to the cross right here. When Jesus Christ changes gears here and says, "Father, I desire the ones You gave Me," there's so much emotion behind this. Imagine the Son of God, hours before the cross. He's about to shed drops of blood and agony in Gethsemane, and the desire of His heart is "those whom You gave Me, that they would be with Me."

He's not saying, "O Father, I'm afraid of the cross right now." He's saying, "Father, I desire her! Father, her! The one that You gave Me. Those You gave Me." What? "That she would be with Me. Don't let her forget Me. Father, remember the promise You gave Me, that she would be with Me in eternity."

That was the whole point of the cross. Then He reminds the Father in verse 26 of His great prophecy, of the great prophecy that He just gave, and of Deuteronomy 30:6. He says, "Father, they will love Me in the way that You love Me. They will have the love that You have for me. You will put it in their hearts for Me. They will be wholehearted lovers of God."

Jesus ends His final recorded intercession for the Church by reminding God that the way that God loves Him is the way the Church would love Him. They would be wholehearted lovers of God. That's how Jesus ends His intercession. My point is, it's a bridal prayer. It's absolutely a prayer that the bride would be with Him in eternity filled with glory.

"THIS DAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE"

I'll just quote Luke. 23:43, when the thief is on the cross and looks over at Jesus. The thief says, "Hey, remember me."

Jesus utters the very words He prayed in the garden. He said, "You'll be with Me. You'll be with Me in paradise" (Lk. 24:43, paraphrased).

Of course, paradise is the bridal city. Imagine the power of the phrase, “You will be with Me,” because He just finished saying, “Father, that those whom You gave Me would be with Me.” The whole point is partnership. It’s not that they would go to heaven. It’s not that they would escape hell. “That they would be with Me”—that’s the whole point. This thing is still lingering on His heart.

He looks over and the thief says in essence, “Deliver me from hell.”

Jesus says, “Far more than that: you’ll be with Me.” He pulls him in to the bridal language and he doesn’t even know it. He says, “You’ll be with Me.” That’s the whole point of the bride, because in Genesis 2:18 the point was that God was making a companion that was suitable for Him—a companion that could be with Him. That’s the point of it. Then He showed the theme: He said, “By the way, you’ll be with Me in paradise. You’ll understand when you get there.”

That’s the bridal city. The city that’s called, “The bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9) is paradise. He actually utters those very words to the thief on the cross, right from His prayer. It’s still lingering on His heart. The fragrance of that prayer is still in His spirit.

THE FINAL INTERCESSION OF THE BRIDE AND OF THE LAMB

The bride’s final intercession. We’ve already looked at that. I just want to note one little point. The last cry of Jesus before the cross is “that she would be with Me.”

The last cry of the Church before the second coming is “that we would be with Him.”

I love it! I think the last two cries uttered, the last cry of Jesus in terms of intercession and the last cry of the bride in history, are for each other. That’s the point I’m making here. Our last cry is the cry of a bride saying, “Come.”

His last recorded intercession: I don’t mean His prayer in the garden for divine help; I don’t mean His statements on the cross, although one of them has a bridal flavor to it—the statement to the thief, as I just said. Our last intercession before His second coming is, “I want the Bridegroom!”

Jesus’ last cry of intercession before the cross is, “I want the bride.” I think that’s wonderful! I like that.

THE FIRST PROPHETIC MESSAGE TO THE CORPORATE CHURCH

Jesus appears to the twelve and gives them a message at the resurrection: the Great Commission. That’s certainly to the Church, but I’m talking about more than stating the purpose of the Church. Sixty to sixty-five years later,

on the island of Patmos, Jesus appears and gives a prophetic message to John the apostle to spread to the churches. He’s not laying out their purpose in the Great Commission, but He’s actually speaking into their situation to correct them.

It’s the first prophetic message after the resurrection to the corporate church. There are seven points to it. It’s really one message to the seven churches, but it’s a message to the Church at large.

He starts off with His very first point. He says, “Tell the church at Ephesus that they have lost their first love.” His very first words are, “They aren’t lovers of God like I told them they should be when I was with them last. I want them to be lovers of God.”

That was His first point in that seven-point message. I take each church as a main point because it’s one large message in Revelation 2 and 3. He says, “Tell them I want them to be lovers before they’re workers.” That’s the very first correction He gives to the corporate church. “I want them to be lovers before they’re workers.”

Then, the very last point of that seven-point message is directed at the most carnal church, the church of the Laodiceans, in Revelation 3:20-21. In verse 20, He says, “I stand at the door and knock, and anyone who will open can dine with Me” (Rev. 3:20, paraphrased). He invites them to a feast with Him. Guess what feast He’s talking about? The ultimate feast of the ages. He says, “I will dine with them.” Yes, there’s a sense in which He’s feeding us as we meditate on the Word. There’s a sense in which He touches us when we eat at the large supper. The ultimate way we will dine with Him at the table is in Revelation 19:7, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Just so you don’t think I’m just pulling that out of the hat, in Revelation 3:21, the next verse, He says, “And as I sat upon my Father’s throne, you will sit with Me on My throne” (Rev. 3:21, paraphrased). He invites her to a feast and a throne together, a feast and a throne. This is a sub-point: Jesus reveals the throne and the feast to the most carnal church of that generation. Their participation is a way to motivate them to lay aside their unrighteousness.

The final presentation of the prophetic church. The Church is prophetic all throughout history. The Church is apostolic, and prophetic, and all the fivefold ministry. It’s all of those, but the final presentation of the Church is a church filled with glory, pictured as a bride.

John the Baptist was the greatest prophet. He was the Bridegroom prophet. He was called “the friend of the bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29), the Bridegroom prophet. It’s the highest order in prophetic ministry that the Holy Spirit has: the Bridegroom prophet.

Jesus’ messianic ministry is in itself a parable. It’s not a parable *per se*. He wasn’t teaching a parable, but it is a parable. The very activity is a parable. He begins His ministry in a wedding feast. He’s anointed by the Spirit. He’s done His forty days of fasting. He has resisted and prevailed over Satan. He has the power of God resting on Him. It’s not an accident that it began at a wedding. It could have begun anywhere, but it began in one place, in a wedding.

Jesus’ ministry of miracles, His messianic ministry, begins at a wedding. I’ve shared this before, but I just love to say it. Like any man who’s engaged to be married, His marriage is soon coming and He’s at a wedding. I tell you, He looks down the aisle and sees that bride coming down the aisle and there’s only one thing on His mind: in a few months His bride will be coming down the aisle. I imagine Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit. He knows the purpose of God. He’s heard the prophets. He’s seen the types and shadows. He knows the whole story. He looks down that aisle sees that bride marching down the aisle. He says, “Abba, Abba!”

The Father says, “Yes, You can begin right now.” The power of God breaks forth and His messianic ministry begins right there at that wedding.

The Father was saying, “Yes; I’ll let You start it right now.” Then the people looked at Him and they made a statement, which I think is so powerful. It’s a parable, though it wasn’t meant to be a parable to the people there, but the guests said, “Who saves the best wine for last?” There’s only one Person who does: God does. Jesus saved the bridal revelation until His final sermon. Jesus saved the bridal revelation for His final week of teaching to the twelve. Jesus gave the cry for bridal intercession at the very end of His prayer in John 17. Jesus gave His last conversation to any human being to a thief on a cross, and He gave it in bridal language. He said, “You will be with Me, not just escaping hell, and I’m taking you to the bridal city.”

Jesus’ first message when He comes back in the resurrection in terms of warning and correcting the Church is this: “I want lovers more than workers.” The Holy Spirit’s final revelation is God as our Husband and us as His bride. He’s saving the best wine for last. Amen.