

## **Part 2 Understanding the Message of the Bride of Christ**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. The essence of the Bridegroom message is the revelation of Jesus' emotions for us and His commitments to us as our Bridegroom God and our wholehearted response to Him and His will.
- B. The **bridal paradigm** refers to having a bridal perspective of the kingdom. (Paradigm refers to one's perspective or view). We see the kingdom through the eyes of a Bride with wholehearted loyal love. It focuses on Jesus' beauty and affection and how they are imparted to God's people.
- C. Jesus was the first to introduce the bridal paradigm to the Church. Jesus referred to Himself as a Bridegroom (Mt. 9:15); He compared the kingdom to His Father arranging a marriage for Him (Mt. 22:2); He described ministry as those encountering Him as a Bridegroom (Mt. 25:1); He will return in answer to the prayers of His Church crying out in her bridal identity (Rev. 22:17).  
<sup>2</sup>***The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son. (Mt. 22:2)***
- D. There are many paradigms of the kingdom of God in Scripture including agricultural, military, and economic paradigms. The bridal paradigm is the most effective in transforming our hearts so that the first commandment may be restored to first place in the Body of Christ.

### **II. WHAT THE MESSAGE OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IS NOT**

- A. We must refuse all sensual overtones to the Bride of Christ message. Jesus is not our lover or boyfriend. We do not go on "dates" with Jesus. Receiving the "kiss of God's Word" in Song 1:2 has nothing to do with physically kissing God!!! Neither the spiritual interpretation of the Song of Solomon nor references to the "romance of the gospel" have anything to do with sensuality, but with the adventuresome love that is filled with a spirit of abandonment that sacrificially loves and obeys Jesus. An example of this is seen when Paul and Silas sang songs of love to Jesus after being beaten and thrown into prison (Acts 16:22-26).
- B. We are not "married" to Jesus in this age. Paul describes believers as betrothed or "engaged" to Jesus. The "consummation" of the marriage is in the age to come when we see Him face to face. Single women do not "marry" Jesus in this age. Even in the age to come, they will not be married to Jesus in a special way that differs from married women or men who love Jesus.  
<sup>2</sup>***I have betrothed [engaged; promised, NIV] you to one husband [Jesus]... (2 Cor. 11:2)***
- C. There is a great blessing in living single for Jesus in this age, but it is about securing undistracted devotion to Jesus now rather than about "getting married" to Jesus in this age.  
<sup>32</sup>***One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;*** <sup>33</sup>***but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,*** <sup>34</sup>***and his interests are divided...*** <sup>35</sup>***I say for your own benefit...to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord. (1 Cor. 7:32-35, NAS)***

### III. MEN AND WOMEN ARE CALLED THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

- A. As women are called to be sons of God, so men are called to be the Bride of Christ. Both describe a position of great privilege before God for the redeemed. These privileges do not point to something that is intrinsically male or female, but to that which transcends gender (Gal. 3:28).  
<sup>28</sup>*There is...neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28)*
- B. As sons of God, we are in a position to experience God's throne as heirs of His power.
- C. As the Bride of Christ, we are in a position to experience God's heart, His deep desire for us.
- D. Most Christian women do not struggle with the idea of being sons of God because they do not see it as a call to be less feminine. However, men often struggle with the idea of being the Bride of Christ because they wrongly conclude that it is a call to become less masculine. Experiencing the truth of the Bride of Christ does not undermine a man's masculinity, but rather strengthens it.
- E. Some of the greatest men of God functioned in the essential reality of the Bride of Christ.
1. King David was Israel's greatest warrior king, yet he was a lovesick worshiper, ravished by God's desire for him and fascinated by His beauty (Ps. 27:4). A foundational issue in David's life, as a man after God's own heart, was in being a student of God's emotions.
  2. The Apostle John described himself as one Jesus loved (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).
  3. John the Baptist was the fiery prophet that Jesus called the "greatest man" (Mt. 11:11). He understood Jesus as the Bridegroom God (Jn. 3:29).

### IV. WHAT IS THE BRIDEGROOM MESSAGE?

- A. Intimacy with God: We are called to experience God's emotions, secrets, and commitments to us as our Bridegroom God and to respond with wholehearted love and obedience to His will. Jesus spoke on intimacy with God by calling us to abide in Him as a branch abides in a vine (Jn. 15).
- B. The Spirit reveals to us the deep things of God's heart (His emotions, desire, and thoughts about us) so that we can know some of the vastness of God's love and enjoy active intimacy with God.  
<sup>10</sup>*The Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...<sup>12</sup>*We have received...the Spirit ...that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Cor. 2:10-12)*  
<sup>18</sup>*You may be able to comprehend...the width and length and depth and height—<sup>19</sup>*to know the love [vast affections] of Christ which passes knowledge... (Eph. 3:18-19)*  
<sup>5</sup>*Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered... (Ps. 40:5)***

- C. We can know Jesus and be known by Him *in a similar way* to how He and the Father know each other. We must not settle for less because Jesus won't settle for less. We cannot be content with a dynamic ministry alone when we can also know God in the way that Jesus insists on here. One difference between Christianity and world religions is in experiencing intimacy with God.  
*<sup>14</sup>I know My own, and My own know Me, <sup>15</sup>even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. (Jn. 10:14-15, NAS)*
- D. **Partnership:** Jesus shares His power and heart with us because He wants us to be with Him where He is and to work together with Him in building the kingdom and ruling the earth forever.  
*<sup>22</sup>The glory which You gave Me I have given them...<sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory... (Jn. 17:22-24)*  
*<sup>21</sup>To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me [Jesus] on My throne... (Rev. 3:21)*  
*<sup>10</sup>Have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:10)*  
*<sup>20</sup>They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. (Mk. 16:20)*
- E. **Delight:** Jesus is filled with delight and gentleness towards us even in our weakness. He takes pleasure in believers who seek to obey Him and treats them tenderly and with great gentleness.  
*<sup>19</sup>He delivered me because He delighted in me. <sup>35</sup>Your gentleness made me great. (Ps. 18:19, 35)*  
*<sup>4</sup>The Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble... (Ps. 149:4)*
- F. **Gladness:** Jesus has a heart of gladness—a happy heart—more than any man in history (Heb. 1:9). Many through church history have viewed God as mostly mad or mostly sad (grieved) when He relates to us. The good news is that Jesus is mostly glad when He relates to us.  
*<sup>9</sup>God has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions. (Heb. 1:9)*
- G. **Secrets:** Jesus entrusts the secrets of His heart to His Bride. We each long for the intimacy of knowing and being known by God. Jesus rejoices and weeps with us (Rom. 12:15). Jesus understands the secret aspects of our life that are unknown, unnoticed, and misunderstood by others. He has intimate knowledge of our victory, passion, sacrifices, pain, and struggles.  
*<sup>14</sup>The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him... (Ps. 25:14)*  
*<sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice...weep with those who weep... (Rom. 12:15)*
1. He shares with us in our victory: He knows our greatness and nobility in redemption.
  2. He shares with us in our passions: He knows our longings and dreams to love Him.
  3. He shares with us in our sacrifices: He recognizes all our sacrifices to love Him.
  4. He shares with us in our pain: He walks with us through difficulties and setbacks.
  5. He shares with us in our struggle with sin: He forgives us and understands our struggle and the shame of our failure. He protects and covers us by not disclosing our sin.

- H. ***Cherishing:*** The Church is cleansed by experiencing Jesus' nourishing and cherishing heart.  
*<sup>26</sup>He might...cleanse her...by the Word...<sup>27</sup>present her...a glorious church...<sup>29</sup>for no one ever hated his flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as the Lord does the church. (Eph. 5:26-29)*
- I. ***Beauty:*** Jesus possesses indescribable beauty that fascinates our hearts (Ps. 27:4).  
*<sup>4</sup>One thing I have desired of the LORD...to behold the beauty of the LORD... (Ps. 27:4)*
- J. ***Fiery affections:*** Jesus the Bridegroom has fiery affections and burning desire for His people. God loves us in the way God loves Himself (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). Jesus feels the same intensity of love for us as the Father feels for Him. He loves us with His "all" and He wants this from us.  
*<sup>9</sup>As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. (Jn. 15:9)*
- K. ***Abandonment:*** Jesus wants the first commandment to be in first place in our lives. He desires exclusivity and abandonment in our love for Him. A man does not marry his wife out of mercy, but desires her exclusive love and partnership. There is joy in wholeheartedness as we feel the power to love without reservation. Having something to die for gives us something to live for.  
*<sup>30</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. (Mk. 12:30)*
- L. Jesus abandoned all to save and establish an eternal relationship with His people. He seeks this same wholehearted love from His Bride.  
*<sup>9</sup>He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you...might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9)*  
*<sup>6</sup>Who, being in the form of God...<sup>7</sup>coming in the likeness of men...<sup>8</sup>He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:6-8)*
- M. Jesus greatly desires the beauty of His people as they respond to Him with abandonment or wholeheartedness (Ps. 45:10-11). When we deny our own heritage, we do it for love. The bridal heart is expressed in giving our "all" to Jesus. When a man asks a woman to marry him, he is asking her to leave her father's house and to leave all that gets in the way of love.  
*<sup>10</sup>Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house; <sup>11</sup>the King will greatly desire your beauty... (Ps. 45:10-11)*
- N. Jesus is responsive to our love for Him. Foundational to the message of the Bride of Christ is the truth about our impact on Jesus' heart and His impact on ours. It isn't mostly about mercy, (though mercy is greatly involved). Mercy is related more to revelation of the Father.
1. A woman doesn't relate to her husband primarily based on mercy, but on partnership, respect, and feeling beautiful in the eyes of her husband.
  2. Marriage is very different from a parent-child relationship, because in marriage there is mutual partnership with both people bringing their all to the relationship. We do not bring our own righteousness (we receive His), but rather we bring our voluntary love.

- O. Jesus called for this when He said, “Take up your cross,” and “Hate your father and mother.” He was speaking as the Bridegroom God calling for loyal love. By taking up our cross, we begin the journey to become equally yoked to Him in love. There is nothing that moves Jesus more than this. When we deny ourselves because of our love for Him, it moves Him so deeply, because this is how His personality is and how He loves us. He is the Lamb who gave all in His sacrificial love for His Bride.

<sup>24</sup>*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross... (Mt. 16:24)*

<sup>26</sup>*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate [by comparison of loyalty to Jesus] his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup>*And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple...**

<sup>33</sup>*Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Lk. 14:26-33)*

- P. Jesus said that if we love Him, we would keep His commandments. Denying our lustful desires is the way God chose for us to express our love to Him. Each of us has a different struggle and, thus, a different assignment from which we offer our gift of love to God.

<sup>21</sup>*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word...” (Jn. 14:21-23)*

- Q. Our longing to be wholehearted and abandoned to God requires the impartation of God’s love to our hearts (Rom 5:5). Only by living abandoned to Jesus can we know the joy of lovesickness. The heart of the Bride desires to walk in the power that enables her to give the deepest affection of her heart to Jesus (Mt. 22:37), to have an enlarged capacity to love Jesus more, and the power to be loyal in love. The power to walk abandoned to Jesus frees us from boredom, passivity, and compromise which leave us broken, burned out, discontent, and filled with shame.

- R. The Holy Spirit is restoring the first commandment to first place in the Body of Christ. Jesus gives us the power to be passionate, because He is a passionate God and we are created in His image. Love is not satisfied until it is fully returned in a reciprocal way. Think of the person you love most. You will never be satisfied until you have the capacity to fully love them. *If we don’t have something to die for, then we don’t have anything to live for.* The human heart does not work properly in half-heartedness. The passive heart is bored and is therefore vulnerable to many destructive lusts. In order to be emotionally whole, we must live wholeheartedly.

- S. The revelation of the Bridegroom filled with tenderness leads some to laziness because they have not seen the revelation of His heart of abandonment or His call for us to be abandoned to Him.

- T. **Jealousy**: Jesus the Bridegroom is filled with a holy, jealous desire for our love.

<sup>14</sup>*You shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Ex. 34:14)*

<sup>4</sup>*Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* <sup>5</sup>*Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?* (Jas. 4:4-5)

U. Phinehas stood against idolatry and immorality because of God's jealousy burning in him. God is patient, but not passive or indifferent, with that which compromises our love or causes us pain.

***<sup>1</sup>Israel...began to play the harlot...<sup>3</sup>Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel...<sup>7</sup>When Phinehas...saw it, he arose...<sup>11</sup>Phinehas...turned away My wrath...in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy...<sup>13</sup>It shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God... (Num. 25:1-13, NAS)***

V. God is moved by His memory of our past love and devotion to Him.

***<sup>4</sup>Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (Rev. 2:4)***

***<sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD: "I remember you, the kindness [devotion, NAS, NIV] of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness..." (Jer. 2:2)***

W. ***Zealous:*** Jesus the Bridegroom is zealous for our safety, blessing, and honor (Zech. 1:14; 8:2; Ezek. 38:18-19; Prov. 6:34). In His zeal, He will destroy all that hinders love. Jesus intervenes to fight against that which injures His Bride. He rescues, protects, and vindicates His Bride.

***<sup>1</sup>I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her. (Zech. 8:1-2)***

***<sup>2</sup>He has avenged on her [harlot Babylon] the blood of His servants shed by her. (Rev. 19:2)***

***<sup>7</sup>Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him... (Lk. 18:7)***

***<sup>34</sup>Jealousy is a husband's fury...he will not spare in the day of vengeance. (Prov. 6:34)***

***<sup>13</sup>The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war...He shall prevail against His enemies. (Isa. 42:13)***

X. The beauty that God possesses is the very beauty that He imparts to us in redemption (Isa. 61:3). The things that He declares as beautiful are our heart responses, rather than any exceptional abilities or dynamic ministry impact. Whenever God speaks of the beauty of His people, it is related to their heart responses, because that is where He is looking and that is what moves Him. He searches the heart, because what happens in our heart is so personal and intimate.

1. Praise from an upright heart is beautiful to God.

***<sup>1</sup>Rejoice in the LORD...for praise from the upright is beautiful. (Ps. 33:1)***

2. A gentle and quiet spirit is beautiful and precious to God.

***<sup>4</sup>The incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (1 Pet. 3:4)***

3. Walking in the benefits of our salvation is beautiful to God (Ps. 149:4).

***<sup>4</sup>The Lord...will beautify the humble with salvation. (Ps. 149:4)***