

A FULLY PREPARED BRIDE

2 Peter 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

At the heart of the message of the Return of Christ is having a heart FOR the Return of Christ. I want to propose to you in this series more than just facts, timelines, doctrines, and information. My main focus in this series is the calling to connect our heart and desires to the reality that Jesus' absence necessitates His appearing that much more. Our prayer must be for Jesus to come and fill every place and space where His testimony is absent, both in the present and for the ultimate future when He appears in the flesh to live on the earth with us to never leave us again. Many have described the state of Christ's current church on the earth as living in the place of the great in-between; caught between Christ's first appearing and the promise of His second appearing. We look back and we look forward and we ache with the reality that we are caught in the in-between.

I. WE LONG FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

- A. **2 Peter 3:12** looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
- B. **Looking for-** to watch; anticipate; seeking understanding about; desiring; longing for; mourning for (BLB Commentary)
- C. When we are eagerly looking for Christ and His return, we begin to live in a way that agrees with and reflects His eternal Kingdom. To the one who only lives for this current kingdom, they have become enslaved to this current age and temporary system. They have agreed to a death sentence without the hope of a life to come without end. To live for Christ's Kingdom that's coming is to be set free to have hope that will never fade away.
- D. At the heart of the return & second coming of Christ is the return of the beautiful Bridegroom, great King, and the ultimate Judge.
 - a. **Bridegroom-** Jesus is the perfect Lover of humanity and has been promised a prepared and ready Bride. He is a perfect jealous Husband who withholds nothing in His attempt to win the attention and celebrate the very object and focus of His affection and the center of His heart; you. (**Matthew 22:1-14**)
 - b. **King-** Jesus is the perfect and sinless Leader of the nations, both now in part but fully at His return to the Earth. (**Psalm 2:8; Haggai 2:7**) He has been given and entrusted with all power and authority to rule the nations. He has been tested and tried and proven to be the most faithful by His own Father. As a result, the Father has given Him the scroll of creation in order to make all things right again. He can be trusted fully.
 - c. **Judge-** Jesus currently sees and knows all things. He is able to discern the inward parts of the human heart. (**1 Samuel 16:7; John 2:25; Acts 15:8**) Jesus interacts in the affairs of man currently when it brings the greatest amount of fruit in light of eternity. When He returns, He

will reveal all that has been hidden and will confront and sentence all wickedness. If we are thankful for the current honest justice systems of the world, how much more will we embrace the perfect Judge who sees every secret and rules based on righteousness?

- E. **Hastening-** *to desire earnestly; to haste, make haste; etc.* (BLB Commentary)
- The idea is that we are encouraged to quickly respond and begin to earnestly pursue and desire above everything else.
 - The implication is that we are to exhibit a participation in Christ's return. We are eagerly making our own preparations while He is making His preparations.
- F. **The Day of God-** *of the last day of this present age, the day Christ will return from heaven, raise the dead, hold the final judgment, and perfect his kingdom* (BLB Commentary)
- The most bizarre National Holidays in America:
 - Jan. 1- National Hangover Day
 - Jan. 2- National Personal Trainer Awareness Day & National Buffet Day
 - Jan. 9- National Static Electricity Day
 - Jan. 16- National Nothing Day
 - Feb. 11- National Don't Cry Over Spilled Milk Day
 - More: National Do A Grouch a Favor Day, National Get Over it Day, National Common Courtesy Day, National Garlic Day, National Sense of Smell Day, World Naked Gardening Day, (Please skip this celebration)
 - There is a Day that is to come. It's a day that is burning in the heart of Christ. It's a day of promise and fulfillment like no other day. It will be a "great & terrible" day for the whole earth. It will be celebrated and not be hidden. All of creation will witness this day. It's the DAY OF THE LORD.
 - **Revelation 11:15-19 (15)-** *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*
- G. *"I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain...O God, I have tasted thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire."* (A.W. Tozer)
- H. *"Truly the gift is in the groan. Here in the center and thick of the western world, steeped in a culture that is so counter to the ways of God, dulled by a thousand unnecessary stimulants, you and I have capacities that from God's perspective might resemble shriveled up raisins. We are so dried up by our pursuit of lesser things, so clouded by that which is temporal, that we have no capacity for the eternal and no room for God. And this is where the gift of hunger plays its part so well."* (Dana Candler- **Mourning For the Bridegroom**)

II. CHRIST LONGS FOR HIS OWN RETURN

- A. **Matthew 22: 1-14 (8, 9, 14)** *Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'* ¹⁴ *"For many are called (invited), but few are chosen (purified)."*

- B. It's all about a wedding day that has been promised from the Father to the Son.
- C. **Matthew 22:1-2** *And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son..."*
- D. It is so exciting when Jesus begins to describe the Father's Kingdom. Very often (including this passage), Jesus explains that Heaven is about a Bridegroom & Bride, Friends of the Bridegroom, a wedding feast, a marriage supper, a grand wedding celebration, etc. In this explanation by Jesus, He starts by giving a unique look into the elaborate expression of love from the Father to the Son in the form of a cultural norm of searching for and preparing a worthy Bride for Him.
- E. We have to imagine that this celebration will be quite extensive, fully thought-out, and highly anticipated.
- F. **Parable Descriptions:**
 - a. **Verse 1-** Jesus answers a question of His listeners about God's coming Kingdom and the authority He was claiming to teach from. Jesus just "cleansed the temple" of the money-changers. Jesus is physically removing the hindrances of others coming into the House of Prayer (**Mt. 21:13**) to encounter their Heavenly Father & Bridegroom God. How does God 'cleanse His temple'? He removes the hindrances.
 - b. **Verse 2-** The Kingdom of Heaven is 'like' a king preparing an arranged marriage. It is both the celebration of the wedding day but also the eternal marriage of a worthy Bride.
 - c. **Verse 3-** The King sends out servants to invite others to come in and participate with this grand celebration. By inference, we can understand that the Bride of Christ is indirectly being spoken of but directly the parable is focusing on the awareness of this extravagant event the Father wants many to celebrate with Him and His Son. The servant's invitation was rejected by many.
 - d. **Verse 4-** The King sends out more servants with the instruction of explaining the vast extravagance of the wedding preparations and that it was ready.
 - e. **Verse 5-** The guests who were invited "made light" of the invitation and disregarded the invitation and continued in their own routines. I can imagine Jesus thinking of 'the days of Noah' lifestyles.
 - f. **Verse 6-** Those who were being offered the invitations began to persecute and kill the servants.
 - g. **Verse 7-** The king became furious towards those who were rejecting his invitation and killing his servants. He then sends his army out to deliver justice for his servants and judges and destroy their hostile city.
 - h. **Verse 8-** The king says again that the wedding is ready but those invited were not worthy to attend. What is being communicated in the original language is that the invited guests did not recognize or acknowledge the worth of what was being offered.
 - i. **Verse 9 & 10-** The king instructs his servants to broaden their invitations beyond the one city/kingdom to include surrounding villages and towns. The result was that many came, both 'bad' and 'good' so that the hall was filled.
 - j. **Verse 11 to 13-** The king goes in to greet the gathered guests. When he begins to greet them, he recognized that there was one who had not entered with the proper & required attire for attendance. As a result, the king orders this guest to be forcefully removed from the celebration. This must be a VERY SERIOUS act of deception because it led the king to completely extradite this attendee and punish him with banishment from the wedding celebration. This of course is revealing to us the weight of responsibility to follow God's commands of repentance of sin for salvation. At this point of repentance and surrender, we are transformed from

darkness to light and are then given the appropriate “righteous/worthy robes” for attendance at the wedding feast (**Rev. 19:8**).

- k. **Verse 14-** *“For many are called but few are chosen.”* (NKJV) The understanding for this statement is that the King (God Himself) invites all but unfortunately only a few actually except the invitation. This is the overall message of the parable.

G. *“Can a Bridegroom forget his Bride? Can a Bridegroom go away and forget his wedding day? Can a Bridegroom leave his betrothed Bride without also leaving his heart?...Jesus’ heart could not be more involved, more active, or more attuned to this unfolding drama and to the dear ones that He so loves who live right now in the walls of time, the groans of delay, and the oppositions of this present evil age.”* (Dana Candler- **Mourning For the Bridegroom**)

III. THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, “COME”

- A. **Revelation 22:17-20** *The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come...²⁰Surely I (Jesus) am coming quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*
- B. **Revelation 22:17** is one of the most significant prophecies describing the end-time Church in unity with the Holy Spirit, saying and doing what the Spirit is saying and doing. The Spirit is praying for Jesus to come in power to His people (**Rom. 8:26**), and is calling people to come to Jesus, the Bridegroom God.
1. **Vertical:** There is an upward call to Jesus (intercession) to come to us in breakthrough power.
 2. **Horizontal:** There is also an outward call to people to come to Jesus as the Bridegroom King.
- C. The prayer *“Come, Lord Jesus!”* has at least three applications:
1. **Come to us in personal intimacy:** We ask for an individual breakthrough of my heart in God.
 2. **Come to us in corporate revival:** We also ask for a community breakthrough of healing, revival, justice, and transformation.
 3. **Come for us in the clouds:** Ultimately, we ask for a historic breakthrough at the second coming of Jesus.
- D. In these days, the Spirit is universally emphasizing the Church’s identity as Jesus’ Bride for the first time in history. John does not proclaim that the Spirit and the family say, “Come!” nor the Spirit and the army, nor the kingdom, nor the Body, nor the temple, nor the priesthood. Rather, it is the Spirit resting with power on the Church who is the Bride. Forever we will rejoice in the reality of our identity as God’s family, Body, temple, priesthood, kingdom, etc.
- E. As sons of God, we are heirs of the Father’s power, and experience God’s throne (**Rev. 3:21**). As the Bride, we experience God’s heart (His emotions for us). These truths transcend gender: as sons of God we each have access to His power, and as His Bride, to His heart.
- F. The Bridegroom message is first about Jesus’ emotions for us, His beauty, His commitments to us (to share His heart, home, throne, secrets, and beauty); then our response of wholehearted love and obedience to Him follow. **First**, we must experience Jesus’ heart, emotions, and affections for us: He delights in us, enjoys us, values our work, is committed to our greatness, and partners with us in ministry. We refuse all sensual overtones in proclaiming Jesus as the Bridegroom.
- G. The Church in her bridal identity understands that Jesus cherishes her. Jesus will return in the context of the most sinful and perverse generation, but Jesus’ love is more powerful than lust.