

Session 3 The First Commandment and the Book of Revelation

I. THE BIBLICAL STORYLINE: THE SPIRIT IS RAISING UP A PREPARED BRIDE

- A. **Review:** Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:37-38 reveals God's mission statement for the human race. The Spirit will reveal the supremacy of the first commandment to the Church before Jesus returns.
- ³⁷“***You shall love the Lord...with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.***”
- ³⁸***This is the first and great commandment.***” (Mt. 22:37-38)
- B. The theme of the book of Revelation is to “reveal” the beauty of Jesus (1:1) who is returning (1:7) as King to reign (1:5; 11:15-17; 15:3; 17:14; 19:16) with His Bride (1:6; 5:10; 19:7; 20:4-6; 22:5).
- ¹***The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants...⁵[He is] ruler over the kings of the earth...⁶and has made us kings...⁷He is coming...and every eye will see Him...***” (Rev. 1:1, 5-7)
- C. John made a stunning prophetic declaration that the end-time Church will be a prepared Bride (Rev. 19:7). The biblical storyline includes far more than a great end-time revival (Rev. 7:9, 14), it includes the Father raising up a *prepared Bride for His worthy Son*.
- ⁷***...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.*** (Rev. 19:7)
1. The greatest corporate miracle in history is the transformation of the end-time Church from spiritual compromise into a “*prepared Bride*” walking in the first commandment.
 2. God's ultimate eternal purpose for creation is to provide a family of faithful children for Himself and an equally yoked Bride for Jesus as His eternal companion.
 3. If we lose sight of Jesus coming for His Bride, then the book of Revelation may be reduced to end-time events, facts, and charts.
- D. The Spirit will use the great end-time outpouring of God's power and presence and the establishing of His people as a family together with great persecution to transform His Church.
- E. ***Bridegroom revival:*** Jesus will come to His people as a Bridegroom who wants all of their heart. The end-time “*Bridegroom revival*” will be far more invasive than any revival in history. Jesus will reveal and impart His love in an unprecedented way that will transform the Church.
1. Jesus is a Bridegroom King who is coming back for His cherished Bride. He is King with power and a Bridegroom with desire for relationship with His people.
 2. As a King, Jesus desires that His servants faithfully serve Him; as a Bridegroom He wants all of her heart.
 3. As a King, Jesus anoints the ministry of His servants with power; as the Bridegroom, He wins the heart of His people with His extravagant love and beauty.

II. THE END-TIME CHURCH IN HER BRIDAL IDENTITY

- A. Revelation 22:17 is one of the most informative and significant prophecies describing what truths and activities the Spirit will powerfully emphasize in a new way in the generation the Lord returns.
- 17The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come!” Let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come...20“Surely, I am coming quickly.” Even so, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:17, 20)***
- B. Revelation 22:17 describes the Church saying and doing what the Spirit is saying and doing.
1. ***What is the Spirit saying?*** He is *revealing* the Bridegroom and the redeemed as His Bride.
 2. ***What is the Spirit doing?*** He is *praying* for Jesus to come in power as the Bridegroom, and He is *calling* thirsty people to come to Jesus as the Bridegroom and to see themselves as His Bride. Thus, He is *praying* and *calling* the nations to Jesus through the lips of His people.
- C. The body of Christ will walk in her identity as a cherished Bride.
1. This indicates a great increase of fresh understanding of Jesus as the Bridegroom King and of the redeemed as His cherished Bride.
 2. Only as the Church sees Jesus as a Bridegroom will they see themselves as His Bride.
- D. For the first time the Spirit will universally emphasize the Church’s identity as Jesus’ Bride. John does not proclaim that the Spirit and the *family* say, “Come,” nor the *army*, the *body*, the *temple*, or *priesthood*. Forever we will rejoice in our identity as God’s family, body, temple, etc.
1. As sons of God, we are in the position to experience ***God’s throne*** as heirs of His power (Rev. 3:21; cf. Rom. 8:17).
 2. As the Bride, we are in the position to experience ***God’s heart*** (emotions or affections).
- E. John prophetically described two activities that the Spirit will emphasize in the Church worldwide.
1. The Spirit will inspire and anoint the Church ***to pray*** (for Jesus to come in power as Bridegroom)
 2. The Spirit will inspire and anoint the Church ***to proclaim*** the prophetic message (of Jesus as the Bridegroom and the redeemed as His bride).
- F. The Church can pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, as a Bridegroom!” in three different ways:
1. ***Come NEAR US in intimacy*** (individual breakthrough of our heart in God).
 2. ***Come TO US in revival*** (regional or national breakthrough of the Spirit in revival).
 3. ***Come FOR US in the sky*** (historical breakthrough of the second coming of Jesus).

III. JESUS IS RETURNING FOR A CHURCH FILLED WITH GOD'S GLORY

A. Jesus' commitment is to present the Church to Himself in the end times, filled with glory

²⁵Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her...
²⁷that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle...²⁹For no
one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church...
³¹"For this reason a man shall...be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."
³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:25-32)

1. **Present her to Himself:** The high point of God's plan is to present His people on the wedding day in His glory and splendor. This is the greatest day in history.
2. **Sanctify her:** Jesus separated us to Himself in the highest position of favor and privilege.
3. **Cleanse her:** Jesus will cleanse His Church from all compromise and feelings of shame.
 - a. The end-time explosion of pornography is the enemy's direct attack against the first commandment. He is seeking to seduce the nations with a counterfeit dark passion.
*¹"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why should I look upon a young woman?"
(Job 31:1)*
 - b. In the generation the Lord returns, immorality and sexual perversion will reach its fullness (Rev. 9:21; 14:8, 18; 17:1-4; 18:2-4, 9-10; 19:2; 21:8; cf. Dan. 8:23).
4. **Nourishes the Church:** The Spirit will help the Church receive more of Jesus' nourishing.
5. **Cherishes the Church:** We love God more by "seeing more." When we see more, then we feel more, leading to being transformed more. I encourage people not to "try harder" but to invest time to "see more."
6. **For this reason:** The drama seen when Adam received Eve (Gen. 2:18-25) is replayed again as Jesus, the second Adam, draws the end-time Church in intimacy with Him as His Bride.

B. The Spirit is raising up His messengers who will reveal the cherishing heart of Jesus and who will call others to define loving Jesus as God's highest priority. They will make encountering Jesus' heart and walking in the first commandment the primary focus of their life and ministry.

- C. David prophesied the Father’s promise to give Jesus an inheritance consisting of a people whom He fully possesses in love. No one else can give God all “your love” except for you. A unique part of Jesus’ inheritance has been entrusted by the Father to you—it is the love that only you can give.

⁸I [the Father] will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. (Ps. 2:8)

1. *Mandatory obedience*: God will cause all creation to obey Jesus (Phil. 2:9-11).
2. *Voluntary love*: God will raise up people who voluntarily choose to love Him.

- D. Moses prophesied Israel would love God with all their heart in the end times (Deut. 30:1-6).

⁶The Lord...will circumcise your heart...to love the Lord...with all your heart. (Deut. 30:6)

IV. JESUS’ PRIMARY MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (REV. 2-3)

- A. Jesus gave a strong correction to three churches—Ephesus, Sardis, Laodicea—for having drifted into spiritual dullness and compromise, and He counseled them how to overcome it. He corrected these three churches for neglecting His primary message to love Him with all their heart.
- B. These churches represent the common ways that believers drift into spiritual dullness without being aware of it. We are to apply His counsel here to our personal life and to those to whom we minister.
- C. Jesus corrected the church of Ephesus for neglecting to love Him in the way that was initially so prominent in the great Ephesian revival (Acts 19). They had a unique history in revival.

¹“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write...²‘I know your works...³you have persevered... and labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. ⁴...I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Remember from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works.” (Rev. 2:1-5)

1. They drifted into spiritual dullness by over-activism—by working for Jesus without communing with Him. Over-activism hinders us from cultivating a responsive heart of love. Service is very important, but it can never replace taking time to cultivate love for Jesus.
 2. Jesus called them to respond in three ways to restore their love—to remember, repent, and act.
- D. The church in Sardis had a reputation for its dedication to Jesus, but it had become spiritually dead. They drifted into dullness by having confidence in the reputation related to their past dedication.

¹“To...the church in Sardis write, ‘...you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ²Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...³Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.” (Rev. 3:1-3)

1. They were dead or asleep in their spiritual life as evidenced by their lack of hunger for His Word and being weighed down with things like fear, shame, despair, compromise, etc.

2. Jesus gave them five exhortations for restoring their spiritual passion—to be watchful, to strengthen things that remained, to remember, hold fast, and repent.
- E. The church in Laodicea drifted into spiritual dullness by misinterpreting God’s blessing on their finances and circumstances as His approval of their spiritual lifestyle. Jesus gave them five exhortations—to buy from Him gold, to buy garments, to anoint their eyes, be zealous, and repent.
- ¹⁴“To the...Laodiceans write, ‘...¹⁷Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire...and white garments...that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” (Rev. 3:14-19)*
- F. **Buy from Me gold:** The gold of a deep relationship with Jesus makes us rich by tenderizing our heart to feel more love from Him and for Him. We *buy gold* or engage in the God-ordained process of acquiring a deep relationship with God. In buying gold, we do not earn it, but invest in a costly way to position ourselves to receive it—by placing our cold hearts before the fire of His presence.