

The End-time Revelation of Jesus: Bridegroom, King, and Judge

INTRODUCTION

Paragraph A. The years leading up to the return of Jesus will be very dramatic and very unique. There will be unique dynamics that are positive and unique dynamics that are very negative. They'll both be happening at the same time in one generation. The greatest revival in human history, surpassing even the book of Acts, is going to be released. Not only is the greatest revival going to be released, but sin will also increase at a level beyond any time in human history. Satan's rage against the human race will roar with fury like no other time in human history. The judgments of God against the kingdom of darkness will be the most severe. The greatest revival, the worst sin, Satan's greatest attack, and God's most severe judgments on the kingdom of darkness, will all be taking place at the same time. Beloved, that will be the most unique hour in human history.

THERE WILL BE A DRAMATIC INCREASE OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS SIMULTANEOUSLY

In my opinion, there are people alive right now who will see these dynamics, these events, with their own eyes before they die. Maybe it's your generation, the twenty-year olds. Maybe it's the two-year olds. I don't know. No one knows the day or the hour, but I believe there are people alive today on the earth who will see this dramatic increase of light and darkness happening simultaneously. What's your picture of the future? How do you picture the world twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years from now? I believe that the Bible gives us insight into what the decades ahead will look like. The light will get lighter: in other words, the revival will increase; but the darkness will get darker. Jesus said that the wheat, which is good, and the tares, which are bad, will mature together at the end of the age.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD OF GOD WILL EMPHASIZE THREE FACETS OF JESUS

Paragraph B. Matthew 13:30. This is a very important, very simple sentence. I'm not going to prove it all tonight; I'm just going to declare the conclusion without proving it in detail. If I had time, I could; but for now I'm just going to say it to you, and I have quite a bit in the notes that I won't go through tonight. Here it is: the written Word of God and the Holy Spirit, the prophetic spirit, speaking to the Church, will emphasize Jesus as Bridegroom, King, and Judge in a very strategic and dynamic way in the generation in which the Lord returns. I'll say that again; the Bible backs this up. The Spirit is going to emphasize three facets of Jesus' character and ministry in the generation in which the Lord returns. I believe we're in the early days of that generation. The Holy Spirit is going to reveal Jesus as the Bridegroom God. The Holy Spirit is going to reveal Jesus as the great King with great power. The Holy Spirit is going to reveal Jesus as the great Judge.

In the Bible there are over three hundred names or descriptions of God. They describe three hundred different facets of His personality. All three hundred of the names of God are very, very important; but there are three of them that will be emphasized above all the others.

JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM GOD: THE GOD WITH BURNING DESIRE FOR HIS PEOPLE

Paragraph C. Jesus as Bridegroom God. This is a new idea to many people, but it's firmly established in the Bible. I won't describe all that's involved in Jesus the Bridegroom, but I'll give you a few phrases; then I'll leave you to study it more on your own. Jesus the Bridegroom is the God with burning desire for His people—the God who desires, who delights in, who enjoys His people, in a profound way. He enjoys relating to them and He wants to be with them and He wants them to be with Him wherever He is. That's the Bridegroom God: the God of desire, desire for close relationship with people.

JESUS THE KING: THE OMNIPOTENT GOD, THE PROVIDER AND PROTECTOR

Then there's Jesus the King. He's the God of power. He's the One who heals the sick. He's the One who provides supernatural miracles of finance. He gives protection and direction. He has power over all the works of darkness. Jesus the King: that's the Jesus most people are familiar with, the Jesus of power.

JESUS THE JUDGE: THE GOD WHO REMOVES EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS LOVE

Then there's Jesus the Judge, who is zealous to remove everything that hinders love on the planet. Jesus, who is Judge, is the most unfamiliar of these three faces of God: the righteous Judge who is zealous to remove everything that hinders love. The reason He judges is because He moves everything out of the way that gets in the way of love.

THERE'S NO CONTRADICTION IN THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF JESUS' PERSONALITY

There's no contradiction between Jesus as Bridegroom filled with desire, Jesus as King full of power, and Jesus as Judge, zealous to remove everything that hinders love. Some people pick one of the three. Some streams in the Body of Christ say, "We're really into the King with power. We don't know much about the Bridegroom with great desire."

Some people say, "We know about the Bridegroom with desire, but we're not as much into supernatural power and healing and finances and miracles and all those things; we're just into being alone with Jesus." They don't understand Jesus the King.

Very few emphasize Jesus the Judge, but let me tell you: Jesus the Judge is expressing His desire as a bridegroom to remove everything that gets in the way of love. Jesus is going to intervene with great zeal to take matters into His own hands and He's going to transition this planet to the age to come. He has a very specific plan; He's going to be intervening in human history like He never has before. He's going to stop the oppressors; He's going to confront the wicked and He's going to cleanse the entire planet of darkness. That's Jesus the Judge. Again, there's no contradiction. The Jesus of desire, the Jesus of power, and the Jesus with zeal to confront oppression, are different facets of the one diamond of this glorious Man who is fully God and fully Man.

YOU WANT A VISION TO KNOW EACH FACET OF THIS ONE GLORIOUS DIAMOND

Look at paragraph C. The passionate Bridegroom. The God with burning desire for people. As a king, He shows His power; as a bridegroom, He expresses His desire. As a king, He calls for obedience; as a bridegroom, He calls for partnership. He wants obedience, but He says, "I want to do it with you." As a king, He gives us mandates and assignments and tasks to accomplish; as a bridegroom, He wants dialogue with our heart. He wants to do it together with us. There is no contradiction in these different facets of His heart.

My emphasis tonight is more on Jesus the Bridegroom God. I'll touch on the King and the Judge a little, but I want to leave you with a vision that you want to know all three facets of Jesus' personality and ministry as described by these three titles: Bridegroom, King, and Judge. You won't pick one against the other. The reason is this: the Bible backs up all three of them in a very, very specific way. The Spirit is emphasizing all three of them. We'll never understand Jesus the King with power unless we understand the Bridegroom and Judge. We'll never understand the Bridegroom unless we understand the King and the Judge. We must understand all three in order to understand each specific truth.

WOMEN ARE CALLED TO BE SONS OF GOD, MEN TO BE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Men may say, “Bridegroom? What’s that about?” Well, women are called to be sons of God and men are called to be the Bride of Christ. It has nothing to do with gender; it has everything to do with a position of privilege in relationship to God. What I mean is this: as sons of God, men and women, we experience His throne, His power. As the Bride of Christ, men and women, we experience His heart. Which do we want most? His power or His heart? The answer is: you don’t have to choose. He wants you to experience both.

THERE ARE NO SENSUAL OVERTONES IN THE RELATIONSHIP OF JESUS TO HIS BRIDE

One thing that we emphasize over and over is that there are no sensual overtones in the relationship of Jesus the Bridegroom God to the Church as His Bride. There are no sensual overtones in that relationship. Sometimes we’ll have some young ones come into our Bible School, some young ladies, and they talk about Jesus like He’s their boyfriend. He’s never going to be your boyfriend! Never! He’s not your boyfriend and He never will be your boyfriend. That’s only about 1 percent, but some of them are heartbroken. I say, “You don’t go on date nights with Jesus.” That’s not the right paradigm! 99 percent of you have that clear. There are always a few who light the candles, turn off the phone, and have date night with Jesus. I say, “Keep the candles on; that’s cool, that’s fine, but it’s not a date night.” He’s the Genesis 1 God who is filled with majesty and power and holiness. There are no sensual overtones at all.

THE GREATEST WARRIOR KING IN ISRAEL’S HISTORY WAS A LOVESICK WORSHIPER

David, the great warrior king of Israel, was the great lover of God. The greatest warrior king in Israel’s history was a lovesick worshiper of God. There was nothing that violated his masculinity in being a lover of God. We use the term here at IHOP–KC, “lover of God.” Some people misunderstand how we use that term. I want you to understand it so you apply it rightly. When we say, “lover of God,” we don’t mean sensual romance. We mean we’re more than workers, we’re also lovers. We’re not just on a work assignment; we actually love Him.

“NEVERTHELESS, I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU, THAT YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE”

In Revelation 2, Jesus appeared and spoke to the Church and said this: “You work very hard; you’re so diligent in ministry. I see the perseverance that you have in your work. You minister night and day, you reach the poor. You work, you work, you work. That’s good.”

Then He shocked them. “Even though you work for Me, I have this against you” (Rev. 2:4, paraphrased).

“‘Against you?’ How could Jesus have anything against a ministry that worked as diligently as they did?”

Jesus said, “I have this against you: you don’t love Me like you once did. You’re workers, but you’re no longer lovers.” Again, we’re not using the word *lovers* in the sensual sense of boyfriends and girlfriends; we’re using it in opposition to being only workers. He says, “I appreciate your work, I like it, but that’s not enough for Me. I’m a God who desires love and relationship; I’m not just looking for a work force.” He rebuked them because they didn’t understand the nature of His heart and the nature of redemption.

HE’S NOT JUST A TASKMASTER; HE WANTS CONNECTION WITH YOUR HEART

How many of you know He’s not just looking for a work force? He actually likes you. He wants you. But this is new to many people, though they may know it a little. But I have good news for you: the Holy Spirit is going to emphasize the revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God in the generation in which the Lord returns. I want to encourage you to do this: to set your heart tonight, and say in the next year or two, “I’m determined to grow in

understanding of Jesus the Bridegroom God. I don't really understand it, but I want to go after it." God is stirring up men and women across the earth; they're writing on this subject. There are new songs on this subject and there's a new emphasis going on in the last ten or fifteen years, worldwide, that's unveiling Jesus the Bridegroom, the God of deep, burning desire.

THE FINAL EMPHASIS AND REVELATION OF GOD IN THE BIBLE

Paragraph G. The end of page seven. Jesus, in His final week of ministry, twice presented God as the Bridegroom, King, and Judge. He gave two sermons, in Matthew 22 and 25, that ended His earthly ministry before the upper room. In both of these sermons, He presented the Godhead as Bridegroom, King, and Judge. If you think of the Bible itself, the last four books of the Bible, in the final four chapters of the book of Revelation, Jesus is set forth as Bridegroom, King, and Judge. It's not an accident; it was His final emphasis and it's the final revelation of God in the Bible and it's the final revelation of the Holy Spirit before the Lord returns.

GOD IS CALLING FORTH MESSENGERS TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH WITHOUT DISTORTION

Top of page nine. Why do you care about this? Because God is calling many of you to be messengers, not of only one of these; He doesn't want you to pick your favorite. He wants you to understand His heart and faithfully proclaim the truth about who He is to this generation. Beloved, there's much distortion of truth being preached about Jesus, even in the Church today. It's a distortion of truth. We're zealous to say whatever Your Word says; we want to stand with Your Word, whether it's popular or not popular. It doesn't matter to us.

I'm telling you tonight, many of you twenty-year olds, twenty-one, twenty-two: Bridegroom, King, and Judge. Note it. Decide in your heart, "This is where I'm going, Holy Spirit. I want to go with what the Word says about Jesus in that final generation, and I want to say and do what the Spirit says and does." It's not enough to pick one over the others.

THESE REVELATIONS OF JESUS ARE CENTRAL TO THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY

Paragraph H. John the Baptist, the forerunner. He was the first man in the New Testament to bring together these three truths: Bridegroom, King, and Judge. He was the first forerunner. He's a prototype of the end-of-the-age forerunners.

Paragraph I. These truths are central to the forerunner ministry. Many of you are called to the forerunner ministry. You say, "I don't fully know what it means, but I know in my spirit that my life has something to do with this calling, the forerunner calling, like John the Baptist had." As John prepared the first return of the Lord, there will be millions of forerunners preparing for the second return of the Lord across the earth.

MIKE RECOUNTS HIS OWN DISCOVERY OF JESUS IN HIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL GLORY

I'm telling you just a little of my personal journey so that some of you can relate to it and learn from some of the mistakes I made and some of the hesitations I had. In the 1970s, a long time ago, I began my pastoral ministry. Back then, we were all focused on Jesus the King. He was the most familiar. He would heal, He would deliver, He would provide finances, He would open doors, He would give favor in relationship. He would flex His muscles, so to speak, show His power, and do great works. Everyone I knew was into Jesus the King, and that's good. That's really good. But it's not the whole message.

In the 1980s, the most surprising thing happened. I'll give you a little short story. God interrupted my life and said, "I want you to talk about the Bridegroom, not just the King."

I didn't understand any of this. I said, "Bridegroom? I'm a man; what do I care about a bridegroom?"

Men, the revelation of the burning heart of God doesn't undermine your masculinity; it will establish it, even as it did with David and John the Baptist and John the apostle and the others. I assure you, David was no wimp. He was consumed with the beauty of God and the desire of God for him and his desire for God.

In the 1990s, He began to challenge me with the most difficult of the three, the revelation of Jesus the Judge, the God who breaks in, who intervenes to remove everything and confront everything that hinders love. This was new to me. Technically, I knew Jesus was a judge. I never thought about it much, I never heard about it, but the Lord visited me in various ways. I'll tell a few short stories in a moment.

He began to say, "I'm not just a bridegroom, not just a king, but a judge. I want you to bring all three of them together, and those are foundational to the forerunner ministry."

Many of you are in your early twenties. You don't have to wait twenty or thirty years to put the pieces together like I did. You can begin right now with clarity in all three of those dimensions. Again, tonight my real emphasis is on Jesus the Bridegroom. I encourage you to determine in your heart, "I want to know this facet of Your heart, Jesus, the God of desire." Determine: I will learn about the Bridegroom God. I'm going to learn more about the King in power and I want to know more about this mysterious dimension of the zealous Judge who intervenes and removes everything that gets in the way of love. All three of them are coming together, very possibly within the lifetime of people in this room. You want to be a part of the solution, not a part of the problem. Because Jesus the Judge is going to cause a lot of confusion to a lot of people.

THERE WILL BE A CRISIS IN THE EARTH ON THE RIGHTNESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Roman numeral two. The crisis of God's judgment. There will be a crisis related to the subject of God's judgment. Many people who love Jesus see His judgment as contradicting His love, and that's the Devil's number one lie: that Jesus is a liar if He's a judge. That's the Devil's lie, and that lie fills the Church today. You don't want to participate in that; you want to expose it and point your finger at the truth of who Jesus is. The Devil comes along and say, "If God was a God of love, there would be no judgment." It makes sense to the humanistic mindset. Let me tell you this: it's His love that motivates Him to intervene. He looks at what's happening on the earth and He says, "No, I'm going to do something. I'm going to intervene. I will stop darkness; I will drive it off the planet. I won't violate anyone's free will. If they won't say yes to Me, I'll deal with it like never before in history, because I love My people and I love the planet." His judgment is actually an expression of His burning desire. It's not a contradiction. A lot of people don't get this.

"BLESSED IS HE, WHOEVER IS NOT OFFENDED IN ME"

Paragraph A. If people lack understanding about this feature, they'll be far more vulnerable to have fear and offense for God. They'll be mad at God; they'll be in confusion. They'll be tempted with compromise and deception. In other words, the Bible is clear on the revelation of Jesus as Bridegroom, King and Judge. There's no man who can trump and dismiss part of the revelation of the Word of God. Jesus isn't running for a popularity contest. He's a God of burning desire; He's about to cleanse the entire planet of darkness and establish not just righteousness and justice, but love and relationship between Him and His people throughout the whole earth. I believe that transitional generation could be the one you're living in, where He transitions this earth to the age to come. Maybe it's not in your generation; it may be in your children or grandchildren's generation. I believe it's coming soon. No one knows the day or the hour.

ENCOUNTERING JESUS: SUPERNATURAL AFFIRMATION OF GOD’S REVELATION

Roman numeral III. Middle of page nine. I’m going to tell just a few stories about how the Lord interrupted my life. I’m only telling the stories to help you relate to these things for your own life. As Brian mentioned earlier, we have a series called the “Encountering Jesus” series, where I took eight one-hour sessions before our whole staff at our ten-year anniversary and told testimonies or reports. “Testimonies” isn’t quite right; it’s more than testimonies. I told about supernatural events that have happened over the last twenty-five years. I took eight one-hour sessions to tell these stories. The reason I tell these stories is because it caused the people in our world, our little IHOP–KC world, to understand how God emphasized these messages. It’s not about IHOP–KC; I believe God is emphasizing these truths to many, many outside of all the other streams, whatever stream you’re in; God is visiting the whole Body of Christ across the earth. I also told these stories because I wanted people to grow in faith and understanding of what I believe is happening in your generation. These eight-one hour stories are events about angelic encounters, the audible voice of God, and a number of supernatural interventions where God emphasized in an undeniable way, from my point of view, what He wanted us to emphasize. I believe that a number of you will find it relevant for your ministry in your city and your region back home. I’m talking about the IHOP–KC call, but I think some of you can relate to it in your ministry back home: our call to emphasize Jesus as Bridegroom, King, and Judge.

THE AUDIBLE VOICE OF THE LORD DECREES TWENTY-FOUR HOUR PRAYER

The first encounter was in May 1983. I won’t go into the details here because I spend half an hour telling the story on one of those eight sessions called the “Encountering Jesus” series. There were about five hundred to a thousand young adults in May 1983, and we were fasting and praying for twenty-one days. This was twenty-eight years ago. We were crying out to the Lord. I was in my twenties; all of us were in our twenties. I’ll let you hear the story if you want, but the Lord spoke audibly back in May 1983. The audible voice of the Lord said, essentially, “Do twenty-four hour prayer.”

I had never thought of such an idea. I was completely surprised by this. I thought, “Why would I want to do twenty-four hour prayer? That doesn’t even make sense to me!” Honestly. Because my focus was on being an evangelist. I was a soul winner. I thought an intercessor was a would-be evangelist who went astray and used Bible verses to back it up. When I saw an intercessor, I went, “Yeah, total wimp. Using Bible verses to get out of the battle! Right, intercessor, how convenient. You sluggard, rise up and do the work of the kingdom!” For real, I’m not even joking. Intercessors bugged me.

The Lord said, “Do twenty-four hour prayer.” Today, twenty-eight years later, it’s exciting; I’m glad. But at the time, it was bizarre.

“THAT I MAY DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE”

He spoke Psalm 27:4 as the primary verse. Let’s look at it. This was the statement of David. “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord” (Ps. 27:4).

The Lord told us to do twenty-four hour prayer based on this passage. I said, “The beauty of God? What?” My approach was, “Devil, come out or I’m coming in after you!” That’s how I prayed. “Gaze on the beauty of God and do twenty-four hour prayer? What?” It’s a long story, I’m not going into it tonight, but He spoke it audibly. I was riveted.

We put a sign on the wall. Twenty-eight years ago, we put the sign on the wall: “Twenty-four hour prayer.” Everyone who visited our church said, “What’s that?” We had that sign on the wall for sixteen years before we started IHOP–KC. They would say, “What’s that?”

I would say, “I don’t know...?” Seriously. “Twenty-four hour prayer with the beauty of God? What?” I wasn’t disrespectful, I just couldn’t feel it. I couldn’t understand it.

“COME BE THE FIRE INSIDE OF ME”

Paragraph B. Bottom of page nine. Five years went by and I was still pastoring. In July 1988, I had the most surprising experience I’ve ever had in my life. I was going through my mail one morning and I got a wedding card. On the wedding card was written Song of Solomon 8:6-7. You have it right there, written down for you. Jesus says, “Set Me as a seal upon your heart” (Song 8:6, paraphrased). What a cool verse! What a great verse for a wedding card. I looked at it and said, “Wow.”

I began to pray, “Jesus, touch my heart with fire,” and a very unusual thing happened. Suddenly, instantly, I began to weep. The presence of God came on me. It was the most unusual experience I’ve ever had like that. I’ve had one or two of those in my life. I didn’t know what was happening. I felt His presence. I was saying, “Lord, release Your power on me and be the seal of fire on my heart.” That’s awesome.

I picked up the phone and said to the receptionist, “No matter who calls, don’t let anyone disturb me. Something unusual is happening to me. I don’t know what’s happening!” I hung up. It was a ten-second conversation. I was weeping before the Lord, on my knees, reading Song of Solomon 8:6.

GOD IS GOING TO RELEASE THE ANOINTING TO LOVE HIM ALL OVER THE EARTH

Ten minutes later, the receptionist called. He said, “Bob Jones is on the phone.” Bob Jones is a very powerful prophetic man. “He said he’s heard the audible voice of God for you. I thought I had better interrupt you.”

I was weeping. I said, “What?”

He said, “Bob Jones just called. He heard the audible voice of the Lord. I thought I should let him in. It’s the audible voice of God. I mean, what was I supposed to do?”

I said, “No, that’s good. That’s good. Anyone who hears the audible voice of God, go ahead and let them in.”

I was on my knees, weeping. I said, “Yeah, Bob.”

He said, “Mike, I only have one minute. I heard the audible voice of God. He told me to call you now.”

I was just thinking, “Hurry up,” because I was so touched by the Lord.

“The Lord said He’s going to speak to you from Song of Solomon 8:6. He’s speaking to you right now.”

I didn’t even tell Bob, “I know.” I just said, “Yeah.” Click. It was like a forty-five second, one-minute conversation.

Before he left, Bob added, “God is going to release Song of Solomon 8:6 to you. He wants you to know two things: He’s going to release this across the whole Body of Christ worldwide, the anointing described in this verse, which is the anointing of the first commandment, to love God. Number two, He wants you to focus on this passage, this truth, for the rest of your days.”

I hung up, and I wept and wept. I mean, the power of God was touching me. I didn’t know what was happening.

MIKE DECIDES TO READ THE SONG OF SOLOMON SERIOUSLY FOR THE FIRST TIME

So some time goes by; it lifts. I’m wrung out. I call my wife: “Diane, remember five years ago when God spoke audibly and said twenty-four hour prayer? Well, here we are five years later, He did it again, and He said Song of Solomon.”

Incidentally, in my thirty-five years of ministry, those are the only two times it has ever happened—on those two occasions. Why did it happen on those two occasions? Because I didn’t have enough discernment to understand those truths just by reading the Bible. I needed a supernatural wake-up, an alert, because I couldn’t see the power of those truths from my own Bible study. I needed help; I needed something to wake me up to how important this was. I didn’t receive it because I was special; I received it because I was dull and I couldn’t find those truths in the Bible, though they were in the Bible all along. Twice in thirty-five years the Lord has given me an audible voice-of-the-Lord directive: twenty-four hour prayer with singers and musicians, and focus on the Bride of Christ and the first commandment.

I was so excited; this had happened twice in five years. I thought I was on a roll. I thought, “Maybe in the next five years I’ll have two more.” Those were the only two times ever.

My wife Diane was very excited. I hung up the phone; it was still morning. I thought, “Since I’m going to be teaching this book all my days, I should read it at least once. I’ve never read it before.” Well, that’s not entirely true: I had read the Song of Solomon when I was a youth pastor to make jokes for the youth group. That’s not really reading it the real way. Don’t you dare do that! I read the Song of Solomon in a serious way for the first time—all eight chapters. I was horrified! It was like “fragrance, perfume, body part, pearls, jewels, gardens, roses, body parts, perfume, fragrance”—I was horrified.

I went home. My wife Diane said, “What an awesome day.”

I said, “This is a horrible day! Horrible!”

She said, “What? I thought you heard the audible voice of God.”

“I did!”

“What could be bad about that?”

“Have you ever read the Song of Solomon?”

She said, “Yes, it’s awesome!”

I said, “Give it to the women’s ministry! I want nothing to do with it.”

For real! I said, “I want to teach the life of David, the book of Romans, even the book of Revelation. I don’t want any wimpy Song of Solomon stuff. I’m not even interested.”

INTIMACY WITH GOD IS THE FUEL OF THE PRAYER AND WORSHIP MOVEMENTS

Well, the Lord wasn’t asking my opinion when He gave that mandate. It was a shock. It was so surprising. I began in 1988. I said, “Well, I don’t think I’m getting out of this.” I was confused: “Am I supposed to do twenty-four hour prayer or am I supposed to do the Song of Solomon, the Bride of Christ, the first commandment, love God with all your heart?” That’s what Song of Solomon is really about, the first commandment: the desire of God. I said, “Which is it, God? I’m totally confused. Do I do twenty-four hour prayer? Do I do the Song of Solomon?”

It took me a few years to understand that it’s the same calling. I remember when I figured it out, that the only way twenty-four hour prayer will work is if people are energized by experiencing intimacy with God’s heart. Intercessors, let me tell you: intercession without encountering the desire of God’s heart will wear you out over the years. It really will. You can’t sustain twenty-four hour prayer if the singers and the musicians and the intercessors don’t encounter the God of Song of Solomon—or, let me say it this way: the revelation of God’s desire for His people.

THE MESSAGE OF THE PASSION GOD FEELS FOR WEAK AND BROKEN PEOPLE

It’s 1988. I don’t know anything about Song of Solomon, but I begin to study it. To my complete surprise and shock, that book transformed my life. It was one of the most gracious assignments God ever gave me. It took me a few years to connect the dots and make sense of it. Again, we have lots of teaching on the Song of Solomon on our website. Though I believe the Song of Solomon is about the beauty of married love in the natural, because that’s the original purpose for which it was written, there’s a higher meaning. I believe in both interpretations. I believe it’s about the beauty of married love; but it’s not only about that. It’s about the desire of Jesus for His people with no sensual overtones whatsoever. It’s about the heart of God engaged with the heart of His people, and the delight and the passion and the love that He feels for us as weak and broken people. It will radically change your life.

Top of page eleven. I’ll tell you another story. It’s now seven years later. I’ve been reading the Song of Solomon now for seven years and I’m really starting to like it by 1995. I’m thinking, “Wow.”

NOVEMBER 1995: “CALL THEM HEPHZIBAH, FOR THE LORD DELIGHTS IN YOU”

Roman numeral IV. I had this prophetic dream back in 1995, fifteen years ago. In this prophetic dream, I was in a large auditorium. I believe it was this auditorium. I was in a large auditorium with young people, with a cement floor and big walls. I’m convinced it was this auditorium. I was standing on the stage and there were thousands of young people.

This dream was very vivid, very real. The audible voice of God, like thunder, came from over there, and He said this: “Call them Hephzibah, call them Hephzibah, for the Lord delights in you! The Lord delights in you!”

I woke up from this dream and the presence of God was on me. I turned to Isaiah 62 and the Lord said this: “You shall be called Hephzibah” (Isa. 62:4). Here is what *Hephzibah* means in the Hebrew: God really, really

likes you. He delights in you. Surely the Lord knows that we're weak and broken people. The Lord said, "Tell them in that big auditorium that I really, really delight in them. Tell them. Tell them this."

Beloved, it's my joy to stand before you fifteen years later and say, with the authority of the Word of God and the Spirit's prophetic unction, that He looks at you and He says, "I like you. I delight in you. You're not just a work force; you're the passion of My heart, and you have no idea who you are to Me. You can't know how I feel about you."

Of course some of you would say, "Lord, I'm weak and I'm broken." There's not a person in this room, myself included, who's not weak and broken. This isn't about how good we are; it's about the passion in this Man's heart, this Man who is fully God and fully Man.

As I proclaimed that message over this large congregation, hearts shifted. They had a new view of God and therefore a new view of themselves. As I proclaimed this truth, their countenance changed right there in that meeting. It shifted everything. "You mean He enjoys me? He likes me? In that case I won't run from Him, I'll run to Him." The Hephzibah message is the message that God delights in you. It's very similar to the Song of Solomon. It's the first commandment.

"AS THE BRIDEGROOM REJOICES OVER THE BRIDE, SO SHALL YOUR GOD REJOICE"

Look at this verse. Intercessors, pay close attention. I want to help you avoid a very serious mistake that I made. God is speaking in verse 4: "You shall be called Hephzibah ... for the Lord delights in you ... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isa. 62:4-5). *Rejoice* or *enjoy*, you can use either word. Again there are no sensual overtones in this; that's not what we're talking about when we relate it to God.

God enjoys you. When I come before Him, when you come before Him, He doesn't say, "Oh no, Bickle again! What do you want? You're repenting again of that same thing. Haven't we had that conversation a thousand times? What is it you don't understand about *stop*, Bickle?"

That's not what He does. I come brokenhearted and I say, "Lord, I did this; I did that."

He says, "I see the cry of your heart. I love you; come near Me. Don't run from Me; come to Me. If you know who I am, you'll run to Me."

THE SECRET TO NIGHT-AND-DAY PRAYER IS THE GOD OF DEEP DELIGHT

Look at verse 6: "I have set watchmen on your walls ... They shall never hold their peace day or night" (Isa. 62:6)—they shall never be silent. Here's the point: I preached that message, telling intercessors to cry out night and day. I always started with verse 6; I never read verses 4-5. For years I led prayer meetings from verse 6, crying out night and day to God, trying to get a bunch of young people to cry out to God. I didn't know that the secret to night-and-day prayer in verse 6 is understanding the heart of God in verses 4-5. If you get verses 4-5 into the hearts and into the songs of your singers, you'll be able to sustain night-and-day prayer far better. I didn't realize these were related. It was when I had this dream that it came together. The Lord was saying to me, "Yes, you'll do night-and-day prayer like I told you in 1983." That's verse 6. "You won't be silent, but you'll only be able to do it through the paradigm or from the perspective of the Bridegroom God who enjoys you."

THE GOD OF BEAUTY LOVES YOU AND IMPARTS TO YOU HIS BEAUTY FOREVER

Roman numeral V. This was one year later, three or four years before IHOP–KC started. I was at an all-night prayer meeting. I love this story. It was one of those prayer meetings that went from 10:00pm to 5:00 in the morning. I was pastoring a church. We had a Friday night prayer meeting for a year or two. On November 30, at around midnight, I was reading the Song of Solomon because He had told me to do that about eight years earlier. I was reading it and enjoying the beauty of God. I was enjoying His desire for me. I was getting excited. I mean, if God is beautiful and He likes you, and the beauty He possesses, He imparts, beloved, you have it made forever. It changes everything. Everything!

NOVEMBER 30, 1996: “JESUS, YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL”

I was in the prayer room. I remember this vividly. I was walking back and forth in this one little area because I was reading the Song of Solomon. This one little sentence slipped out. I said, “Jesus, You’re beautiful. You’re so beautiful.” I just said it. I was reading the Song of Solomon. The Spirit of the Lord came on me, swoosh! That was intense. I mean, I don’t get things like that very often. The power of God came over my whole body.

I thought, “Let’s try that again.” I said, “Jesus, You’re so beautiful.” Swoosh!

I stopped. I said, “That happened twice in a row.” I had never done anything where something like that happened twice in a row. I tried it yet again: “Jesus, You’re so beautiful.” The Spirit of the Lord came over me, in this exhilarating feeling, for three, four, five seconds.

“Whoa, what is that?!”

I said this sentence for five straight hours, walking back and forth. There were maybe fifty or a hundred people in the prayer room. I didn’t speak to any of them; I was having the greatest night of my life. No one knew it; I wasn’t manifesting outwardly. No one knew anything that was happening. I didn’t want anyone to talk to me, no one to have me pray for them. I was so enjoying Jesus.

So there I was at 3:30am: “Jesus, You’re so beautiful.” Swoosh!

I said, “I don’t get why this is happening.”

At 4:25am: “You’re so beautiful.” Swoosh! “Why is this happening? This is so strange...”

“GOD IS GOING TO OPEN UP TO YOU THE REVELATION OF THE BEAUTY OF JESUS”

Five o’clock came around, and we all went home. I was so happy. I went to bed at 5:00am and maybe got to sleep at 6:00am. I awoke now a few hours later at 9:00am. I went back to that very same spot—not that it has to be the same spot. I thought, “Hey, if it’s not broke, don’t fix it.” I said, “I’ll try it again.” I didn’t tell anyone. I don’t believe in going to the same spot; that’s not how I think. I don’t think that was the important thing about it, but I went there anyway. I said, “What if it works again?”

I said, “This is so weird. Jesus, You’re so beautiful.” Swoosh! I thought, “What’s happening?” Two more hours went by like this. I was so mystified. I didn’t tell anyone. I said, “This is bizarre. Huh...” If you told me, I wouldn’t believe it, so I wouldn’t tell you; I wouldn’t have told anyone, but I was aware that the Holy Spirit was saying, “Mike, pay attention to the beauty of Jesus.”

I said, “Yes, yes, yes, I’m paying attention, I really am.”

A week later, I got a letter in the mail. A woman said, “Last Friday night, Saturday morning, on November 30, I had a very powerful dream about you. In this dream, the Lord said to tell me to tell you this: He’s going to open up to you the revelation of the beauty of Jesus. Last Friday night and Saturday morning was very important, because God was visiting you.” She said, “I don’t know if you understand it, but He’s calling you to the subject of the beauty of God. He wants you to call the Church”—not only me. Millions of you will do this.

GOD ONLY DELIGHTS IN YOU BECAUSE OF HOW BEAUTIFUL HE IS

I said, “Lord, this is fantastic.” Here is the sad thing. This was 1996. But back in 1983, thirteen years earlier, God spoke audibly and told me to do twenty-four hour prayer. It was then that He gave me Psalm 27:4: “This one thing . . . I gaze on your beauty” (paraphrased). He was telling me to focus on the beauty of God way back in 1983. All I heard was twenty-four hour prayer; I didn’t catch the “gaze on His beauty” part. I was so perplexed and even bothered and challenged by twenty-four prayer. It was like the Holy Spirit was saying, and I didn’t hear Him, “Mike, that’s not all I said. I said gaze on His beauty.”

Now it was thirteen years later. On this night in November 1996, it dawned on me that all along He had wanted me to focus on His beauty, but I missed it because I had no paradigm; I had no perspective. I knew no one who spoke on the beauty of Jesus. No one talked about these subjects. I said, “I lost thirteen years. Why couldn’t I have figured this out?” I even had the Hephzibah dream, that God delights in you. Beloved, He only delights in you because of how beautiful He is.

SEPTEMBER 1997: FIRE AND A TUNNEL OF WIND IN THE PRAYER ROOM

One last story. I’ll make this one brief. Now a year went by. I already had Jesus the King. I don’t mean I *had* it, I still had much to learn, but I believed in the God of power: the power to win the lost, to touch cities, to provide money, and to heal the sick. I was into the God of power; all of us were in the 1970s. Everyone I knew was into the power: power for the harvest, for the mission field, for the Great Commission, we all believed in power. That wasn’t so confusing. Now the Bridegroom God, that was different. And I encountered Him in that way throughout the 1980s, but here we were in the 1990s. Now the Lord was saying something I hadn’t known at the beginning. He said, “There’s yet one more focus I want you to take up: Jesus the Judge. Jesus the Judge.”

I’ll skip parts A and part B of this and get right to paragraph B. In early September 1997, I was in our prayer room. I’ll give this to you briefly and then pray for you, but I want to give you a little deposit. Although Jesus the Judge isn’t the main emphasis, I believe it’s critical to understanding the King and the Bridegroom that we understand the Judge at least a little. This was the most challenging of all. In 1997, He began to say, “Focus on Jesus the Judge.”

I was in the prayer room. I had the most dramatic experience awake I’ve ever had in my life. I was sitting there. On Wednesdays for some years I would usually go to daily prayer meetings for a really long time, for six hours—from six in the morning until noon. I always looked forward to Wednesday mornings because I could really unpack my heart.

I was in the prayer room and the Holy Spirit led me to these three verses in the book of Revelation: Revelation 2:7, 3:12, and 19:12. I was reading these verses, and these verses are about God revealing His name—in other words, God revealing new insights about God. He was speaking to me. The one that was the strongest was

Revelation 3:12. He said, “I will write My name on you” (Rev. 3:12, paraphrased)—meaning, “I will reveal what My heart is like.” Because when God puts His name on you, that means He’s showing you what He’s like. His name and His heart are synonymous. When God says, “I will write My name on you,” He’s saying, “I will reveal My heart to you.”

I’m wide awake. This is different from when I said, “Jesus, You’re beautiful,” and I felt the exhilarating power of the Spirit on that one night in 1996. This is different. It’s now almost a year later. I was sitting there and all of a sudden burning fire came all over my body. I had no idea what was happening. I had fire. It was so hot, I was thinking, “I don’t get what’s happening. It’s not hot in the room...” And I felt wind around me everywhere. I looked at the air vents; I didn’t want to be a fool. Nothing.

TERRY BENNETT DECLARES THAT GOD IS GOING TO REVEAL HIS NAME

This went on for two or three hours—fire and wind. I was thinking, “I don’t know what’s happening right now.” But I went on reading these three verses.

So the time was up. It was noon. I had to leave. I thought, “Wow.” I was kind of wobbly, thinking, “I’ve never been awake and had the fire of God and wind touching me where I could feel wind.” I had never had something like this happen.

A man handed me a note—a man named Terry Bennett. I didn’t really know him. I had met him once; he’s a man who lives in Tennessee. He said, “I saw an angel pouring wind and fire on you.”

“OK...”

He said, “And he gave you these three verses.” He gave me the exact three verses that I had been on for six hours.

I thought, “I’ve never had anyone give me the exact three verses I was reading.” I mean, the Bible is big. It’s this thick! He said, “The angel spoke three verses.” He laid them out to me. He said, “God is going to reveal His name to you.”

I left and said, “Who is Terry Bennett? Wow.” I didn’t even talk about this experience; I just hid it in my heart and said, “I know one thing for sure, I will take those three verses in the book of Revelation very seriously. I’m going after these three verses.” Imagine having a supernatural manifestation and a man on the other side of the room gives you the exact same three verses you’re currently reading. Bob Jones did that with Song of Solomon 8, way back in 1988. That happened once, but here I had been reading three verses. I said, “My goodness. I had better pay attention.” I said, “God, what is it You’re trying to tell me about Yourself? What is it You want me to know?”

SEPTEMBER 1997: THE FIRE AND TUNNEL OF WIND RETURN TO THE PRAYER ROOM

End of the story. Top of page thirteen. It’s two weeks later. I’ll just finish with this story really fast and pray for you. It’s Wednesday again. I have that six-hour block. I love that six-hour block; no one can get to me. I’m in the prayer room, just me and the Lord. Although there are other people, they’re all engaged in prayer.

It happens again. This is the only other time it has ever happened—on these two occasions in September 1997. Fire and wind comes on me. I say, “This is happening again!”

Now, I’m a Bible man. I love the Word. There are so many goofy things that people claim to be the Holy Spirit. I don’t believe most of them to be straightforward. Most of them are so hokey, and I’ve heard them for thirty-five years. I say, “Whatever.” Don’t be so open-minded that your brains fall out. Use discernment; use the Bible. Even when I have a dynamic experience, I don’t normally tell people. It’s not for me to tell people so they can say, “Wow, can I have that experience?” It’s God talking to me or to you; it’s not a trophy. It’s not a story to tell. It’s about Him trying to touch you in a deep way in your heart.

So the fire and wind came again. These are the only two times it has ever happened in my forty years of walking with the Lord—twice in September. It went on for two or three hours. I said, “It’s happening again, like it did two weeks ago.” I said, “I don’t understand.”

“WHO IS THIS COMING FROM EDOM, WITH DYED GARMENTS FROM BOZRAH?”

This time I’m reading Isaiah 63. Beloved, Isaiah 63 is one of the most intense passages in the Bible about the second coming of Jesus. It’s a description of Jesus at the time of His second coming. Look at this. This is Jesus talking in this passage. It starts off with Jesus marching. He’s going to do this in the future, by the way. When He returns, He’s going to march into Jerusalem and liberate the Jewish people from the oppression of the Gentile nations. That’s a real truth about what’s going to happen in the future. Isaiah 63 is describing this.

The prophet Isaiah asks a question: “Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?” (Isa. 63:1). Who is this Man? Meaning, “Who is this unusual man? He has red garments and He’s marching up through Edom.” By the way, that’s modern-day Jordan. He’s on His way to Jerusalem, and why are His garments red? That’s what Isaiah asks.

Jesus speaks up and answers Isaiah, “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save. It’s time for Me to save the nation of Israel. That’s what I’m about to do” (Isa. 63:1b, paraphrased).

Isaiah says, “OK, I have a question: Why is Your clothing red? Why are Your garments like those of a man who has been in the winepress?” (Isa. 63:2, paraphrased). Because in the ancient world, people would put all their grapes in a winepress, a winepress several feet high, made of stone. They would put in all the grapes, get in, and smash them, and the grapes would produce wine. Those who smashed them would get grapes all over their clothing, and the clothing would be dyed the color of the grapes. Isaiah said, “Why do You look like You’re smashing grapes and Your garments have red all over them? What is this? It looks like You’re in a winepress. You’re confusing me!”

“I HAVE TRODDEN THE WINEPRESS ALONE, AND . . . NO ONE WAS WITH ME”

Jesus answers by describing the second coming: “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples”—the nations—“no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes” (Isa. 63:3). In other words, “Their blood has sprinkled My garments because I’m bringing My judgment to the nations. I’m destroying oppression from the earth.” It’s a bloody work. For real, it’s bloody.

Then the Lord says, “For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come” (Isa. 63:4)—which means the second coming of Christ.

Here is the description. Isaiah sees this Man. He doesn't know who it is. It's Jesus. He sees Him in the future at the second coming. He's marching up to Jerusalem. He's trampling all the wicked nations of the Antichrist. Blood is everywhere and He's delivering the people from oppression. You can read this verse on your own. I realize for most of you this is a new passage and you're thinking, “What on earth is that?” It's about the second coming of the Man you love, Jesus. You want to know this verse, trust me. It's one of the most dynamic passages of the second coming in the whole Bible.

“WILL YOU AGREE WITH ME WHEN I COME IN JUDGMENT?”

So I began to ask the Lord, “Why is Your clothing red?” I said, “I don't get it. I don't get what's happening here. Jesus, why is Your clothing red?”

The Lord said, “Because I'm treading the winepress,” which means, “I'm judging the nations.” Here is the key word. He said, “I'm doing it alone. No one will stand with Me. No one will. Of all the nations of the earth, there's not one government in the earth that will stand with Me and agree with My judgments. All the kings of the earth say that I'm wrong, so I'm going to judge the nations without their participation. They resist Me, so I'm going to do it anyway.”

The Lord spoke and said to me, “Will you agree with Me? The kings of the earth won't; will you agree with Me when I come in judgment? Will you be against Me or will you actually understand the purity and the love and the wisdom of what I'm doing?”

I began to weep. I said, “Lord, I'll agree with You. I'll agree.”

WILL WE AGREE WITH HIS LEADERSHIP, EVEN WHEN BLOOD IS SPILLED?

It says, “No one will stand with Me” (Isa. 63:3, paraphrased). He meant, “No king of the earth,” not, “No individual.” No king, no nation, no government.

The wind and the fire of God was on me just as it had been two weeks earlier in early September 1997. The Lord went on to say, “You're going to be rejected. If you stand with Me as the God of judgment, many people will be angry at you.”

Everyone likes the King. I mean, who doesn't like power? The Bridegroom throws off some people and they say, “Umm, I don't want to do that heart-to-heart thing so intensely. That's a little intense.” But the Bridegroom doesn't offend them; it might bore them, but the Judge is offensive.

He said, “Will you stand with Me?”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Will you stand with Me when I come in red?” Because in the Song of Solomon, Jesus wears white garments.

I said, “I love the Jesus of dazzling white and the Jesus of beauty.”

He said, “But will you stand with the Jesus who walks in red? Will you stand with the Jesus who comes as Judge?”

I said, “Yes, I will, Lord. I will stand with whatever is true about You.” The fire and the wind of the Holy Spirit went on for two or three hours, just as it had before—again, the only two times this has ever happened in my life.

Now, this Terry Bennett person—I don’t even know him. I shook his hand once, but I don’t know him. He taps me on the shoulder. He’s the one who gave me the note two weeks earlier, but he handed the note to someone else. This time he comes up himself. He taps me on the shoulder. My eyes are closed. They’ve been closed for a few hours. I’m saying, “Yes Jesus, I’ll stand with You, the Jesus in red. If blood is spilled, I’ll believe Your leadership; I’ll trust Your love. I’ll trust Your wisdom. I don’t care who is offended; I won’t be offended at You. I love You, Jesus.”

“JESUS WANTS TO KNOW, WILL YOU STAND WITH THE JESUS IN RED?”

I was weeping and he didn’t want to bother me. He tapped me. I said, “Can I help you?”

He said, “I don’t want to bother you, but that angel I saw two weeks ago that poured wind and fire on you, he’s there again. I’ve never seen this sort of thing visit someone twice in a row. You have wind and fire all over you.”

I didn’t say yes or no; I just said, “Yes, keep going.” Because, remember, he had given me the three verses from the book of Revelation a week earlier.

He said, “Jesus wants you to know to study Isaiah 63. He wants to visit you as the Jesus in red and He wants to know, will you stand with Him in red?”

I looked at him like, “Just go away now.” No, I was shocked. I mean, twice in a row. Three verses in early September, the exact three verses.

He asked me, “Will you stand with the Jesus in red? Will you not be offended? Because He’s putting a mantle on you”—or a grace, is what that means. “He’s going to anoint you if you’ll stand for the Jesus who is a Judge. He will anoint you and cause you to open the eyes of many people to see that the Judge is a God of love and a God of wisdom. He’s not the cruel God that the Devil says He is. Will you stand with Him?”

I said, “Yes.”

We talked much more a short while later. I said, “I can’t even talk right now.” I said, “Jesus, I will stand before You. I will stand with You as the Jesus of red. Yes, You’re the Bridegroom God of beauty. Yes, You’re the King of power, but You’re the God who removes everything that hinders love. I won’t be ashamed of You; I won’t draw back. I don’t care what men say.”

Bridegroom, King, and Judge: the Bible says it, the Spirit emphasizes it, and we'll be faithful until the end by the grace of God. Amen.