

Session 18 Overview of Bridal Theology

INTRODUCTION

“Overview of Bridal Theology.” Some of last session is in here because I wanted to give one session where I just take a whole bunch of thoughts and lay them out one, two, three, four, rather than explaining them. This is almost a summary statement of the course; not actually, but you’ll recognize a number of these points. I wanted one document where you could have it all.

Between Sessions 17 and 18 you’ll have many of the points laid out like this, just one, two, three, four. Session 17 was the prophetic part. Every point had to do with prophetic ministry or prophetic revelation. Since the revelation of the bride is so prophetic, obviously some of that is going to show up in this overview, because you couldn’t eliminate the prophetic part of the revelation of the bride.

I don’t have anything to say on Roman numeral I. I put it there just in case. I told Jane to start with an introduction because I had all these wild thoughts right beforehand. I would like you to put last session with this one, because it makes a whole overview of what’s happening with the bridal theology.

GOD’S PLAN FROM BEFORE CREATION WAS A BRIDE FOR HIS SON

God’s original eternal plan. God’s plan from eternity was always a bride. This was the original plan. This is the eternal plan. The final destination, or the final destiny of the redeemed, is a bride. That’s obvious, but the reason the final picture is clear is because the blueprints are clear. That’s the point. God is working from blueprints that He had from the eternal councils, before He even created the earth, because the plan is an eternal plan. It wasn’t a plan that started when the earth was created; it started in eternity past. It was the original plan; it was never secondary.

It’s an eternal one. It’s eternal in the past and it’s eternal in the future. God created the blueprints from which He’s been working. God can declare the end from the very beginning (Isa. 46:10). God can look at the end of history and declare. He can declare Revelation 19 way back before Genesis 1. He can declare the end of a matter from the very beginning, because God is sovereign and He’s working from a plan.

There’s a plan (Eph. 3:6). It’s an eternal plan. In that phrase, “eternal plan,” I like to think of the eternal blueprints. They’re already set; they aren’t changing as we go. God is working off of a plan the entire time. The reason that we have the final destination is because the blueprints are clear, and they show where this thing is going.

ADAM WAS CREATED IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD

The original design of the human race. Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24. What that passage says is that Adam was created in the likeness and the image of God. Here’s the point, and we’ll look at this more next week. This is where Eve comes in, next week, Lord willing. Eight separate times in Genesis 1 and 2, eight separate times God created and then made another of the same race, of the same species, after its own kind. God created a plant that made a plant of its own kind. God created a certain species of animal and then created after its own kind for the purpose of generating life.

Then suddenly God makes this radical move. He creates the human spirit, but it's after the image of God. The angels are saying something like this, and again we will look at it in a lot more detail next week. There are a number of verses that say the angels don't know what God is doing, but they are watching the unfolding to figure out the mystery, the plan. Why? Because a mystery needs a plan. It's not planned. The angels are up there watching as this happens. He makes a cat and then makes another cat after its own kind. He says, "OK, it will generate life."

Then He goes from the earth, to the plants, to the animals. And then He skips way past the angels, past the archangels, cherubim, and seraphim. He makes this new creation, this new race, but it's in the image of God, so God can generate life in union with it.

The angels are asking the question, "Why so noble? Why so exalted? Where is this thing going?" It was stunning to them, because the genetics, the "engine," so to speak, in the human spirit was built to have union with God—not with any other creature that was made on the earth. This is where this thing begins. In the original design of the human spirit, we were designed for intimacy with God for eternity. God was working from a plan. That's the point. When the human race began, bridehood was in the mind of God. That's why we're made in the image of God: to have union with God forever, and to generate life out of that union.

MAN WAS MADE IN GOD'S LIKENESS IN ORDER TO HAVE UNION WITH GOD

Paul the apostle comes along years later, 4,000 years later, in Ephesians 5:31-32. He interprets what happens in Genesis 1 and 2 by the Holy Spirit, by apostolic revelation. Paul the apostle says, "Do you want me to tell you what's really happening?" He says, "God was fulfilling the mystery, which is Christ and the Church."

And again, we will look at this in a lot more detail next week. But the thing I want you to see in III is the continuity of this plan. That's the point I really want to reveal here. In Ephesians 5:31-32, what's happening is that Paul is quoting Genesis 2: "A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Gen. 2:24, KJV). That's the passage where God says, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18). God is speaking these to Adam. "A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife."

Paul says, "Do you want me to tell you what's really going on?" God wasn't just giving a history of creation. He did do that, but that wasn't the highest thing on God's mind. He wasn't just giving divine order for marriage. Paul said, "I'll tell you from apostolic revelation what's happening." He was talking about Jesus and His people. When He said a man will leave his father and cleave unto His wife, Adam went under a deep sleep, and a rib was taken from his side.

Paul says, "I'm telling you from the throne of God, He was talking about Jesus first, and He was talking about the order of marriage and giving a history of creation second and third."

Again, that's the theme of next week. We'll look at that in a lot of detail. The point of it is this: God saw the final destination because He knew He was working from a blueprint. He designed the human spirit for this destination. He made it in God's likeness to have union with God.

The original call of the nation of Israel was a bridal call. Here we are in Jeremiah 2:2. Jeremiah prophesied about 600 years B.C. Moses lived 1,600 years B.C., right? So 1,000 years after Moses, Jeremiah was speaking,

1,000 years later. Like Paul, Jeremiah was looking back at a point in history, 1,000 years earlier, and he was giving prophetic interpretation to it in a way that they didn't even fully understand in their day.

Adam is up in heaven listening to Paul. Paul says, "Well, I'll tell you what was happening when God was speaking to Adam. He was talking about Jesus."

Adam says, "How does Paul know that? That's exactly what was going on. I didn't know that down there, but I know it up here."

"I REMEMBER YOU, AND THE DEVOTION OF YOUR YOUTH"

To the nation of Israel 1,000 years later, Jeremiah turns around and says, "I'll tell you what was really happening at the exodus." He says it right here in Jeremiah 2:2, interpreting the Bible with the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

"Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, 'Thus says the Lord: 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase. All that devour [Israel] will offend; disaster will come upon them'" (Jer. 2:2-3).

Of course, we know that at the end of the age, everyone who comes against the purpose of God encounters disaster, and it's a disaster which happens in the context to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The ultimate disaster they're talking about here is Revelation 19. This is the marriage supper of the Lamb. It's the great supper of God on the earth. Remember, there's a celebration in heaven; then there's a disaster on the earth where all the enemies of God are slain.

Here's the point of this passage, in verse 2. Jeremiah says, "God wants you to know that He remembers your devotion, the devotion of your youth as a nation. He remembers the love you had when He first betrothed you to Himself in the wilderness."

The NIV says, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me" (Jer. 2:2, NIV). That's what the NIV says. The NKJ says, "I remember . . . the love of your betrothal" (ibid, NKJV).

Jeremiah is looking back 1,000 years later and interpreting what God did in Exodus 19 when He made the covenant, where the words of the covenant were first spoken (Ex. 19:5-8). We understand through Jeremiah that it was a bridal covenant.

Let's go ahead and look at that passage really quickly. In Exodus 19, they're in the wilderness. I've written verses 5-8, but actually, look at verse 4. This is God speaking. "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians" (Ex. 19:4). This is the covenant, right here on Mount Sinai, and the Ten Commandments is in the next chapter.

This is the bridal covenant. God told Jeremiah, "This was their love to Me as a bride in the wilderness." This was their official betrothal as a nation, when the nation of Israel officially began in covenant with God as a whole nation. We know Abraham had a covenant. This is the whole nation coming in covenant out of Egypt. It was a betrothal. It was a marriage. It was an official engagement to a nation. It says, "You saw what I did to you

in Egypt, until I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself" (Ex. 19:4, paraphrased). That's the whole point: God was bringing Israel to Himself on eagles' wings.

THE BRIDE BECOMES THE ULTIMATE TREASURE OF ALL CREATION

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be a special treasure to Me above all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine" (Ex. 19:5, NKJV). They would be a special treasure.

Ultimately, the bride is adorned with jewels (Rev. 21). The bride becomes the ultimate treasure of all creation. It's the bridal city that lights up the new heavens and the new earth, adorned with jewels, like we discussed in one of those earlier sessions. God is literally going to make them His treasure—not only as endearing to His heart, but He's going to adorn her with treasure in Revelation 21 and 22. He knows this, because this was a betrothal. This is a bridal arrangement that's going to end in Revelation 21 and 22.

"YOU ARE MINE, AND I WILL MAKE YOU JEWELS IN MY HAND"

Malachi 3:17 was the verse with which the Lord quickened my heart for the women in the prophetic conference. This verse is the same language. God says, "You are Mine, and I will make you jewels in My hand."

God is going to make the people of God a jewel in His hand. He's going to do that in terms of beautifying their life, but He's going to do it in terms of making the city a jewel. I'm talking about the bridal city, literally. Most of these things have a corresponding fullness in the age to come. For example, Jesus says, "You are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14). Well, the bride's light illuminates and brings glory to everyone who touches it, to everyone who sees the illumination of the bride (Rev. 21:11). Literally, we will be the light of the new heaven and the new earth in partnership with Jesus. Jesus had so many things more in His mind when He said His teachings on the earth, because He knew where the end of this thing was going.

In verse 8, the people essentially said, "Yes, we will obey You" (Ex. 19:8, paraphrased). This is where the covenant is made, right here. But it's a covenant to be Jehovah's bride; that's the point. In Malachi 3:17, God said, "You are Mine; I will make you the special treasure that Exodus talks about. I will make you a jewel in My sight" (Mal. 3:17, paraphrased). In Revelation 21:2, God says, "I will adorn you" (Rev 21:2, paraphrased). We know from Revelation 21:9-21 that we're adorned with jewels as a city that's called a bridal city. We're adorned with jewels.

JEREMIAH BEGAN HIS MINISTRY WITH A CALL TO THE BRIDEGROOM

It's interesting—we'll get to this point later, but I want you to see it now that we're in Jeremiah 2. Jeremiah is speaking during the reign of Josiah. If you've taken the Kings of Israel course, Josiah led the last great reform before the Babylonian captivity. What happened in Israel's history is that in about 586 B.C., God came in and smashed Judah, the southern kingdom. The northern kingdom had already been annihilated. He came down. He had warned them for years, "I will take you into captivity." He did. Babylon came and took them away.

But before that happened, they had one last spurt, one last reform, one last revival that touched part of the nation, and it occurred under the preaching of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was preaching during Josiah's reform. If you put the dates together, Josiah's reform was directly related to Jeremiah's first sermon. Jeremiah's first sermon reminded Israel that they were betrothed to the living God. There's a bridal revelation with which Jeremiah began his ministry. Jeremiah 1 is Jeremiah's call, and Jeremiah 2 is his first message. His first message begins, "'Remember, I called you as My bride. I remember when you loved Me as a bride. I betrothed you to Me in the

wilderness with promises. You were holy to Me,' the Lord says. 'You were unique to Me. I will make you special. Remember Exodus 19.'"

That's the message that Jeremiah is trumpeting when Josiah's reform covers the land. That's the last "revival," as they call it. I don't know if you would call it *revival*, because there were many people in the nation who didn't receive it at all. That nation ended up in judgment, but because Josiah led the revival, God said, "You won't see it in your day. I won't do it until after you die" (2 Chron. 34:23-28, paraphrased).

Why? Because Josiah the king was the most righteous king in Israel's history. It says he obeyed as David did, except he didn't commit David's sins. Josiah was the young, eight-year-old king who was impacted by the ministry of Jeremiah. Jeremiah begins his ministry with a bridal revelation. Jeremiah 2 and 3 is all about the Bride of Christ. Actually, that fits in another part of the notes, but there you have it. It's the continuity I want you to see. It begins with God's original plan, God's eternal plan.

THE BRIDE REVEALED IN JESUS' EARTHLY MINISTRY

Some of this we looked at in the last session. "The bride revealed in Jesus' earthly ministry." His messianic ministry begins at a wedding. Incidentally, we have John 2:1-12: that's the story of the wedding at Cana in Galilee. In the next event, in John 2:13-22, Jesus cleanses the temple. Some people have speculated that the cleansing of the temple took place in Jerusalem, but it was communicated by John in this sequence because the temple that Jesus is thinking about is the people of God and the temple in Revelation 21. He wants the temple clean after He begins His ministry at a wedding. I don't know if you can really do that, but I'll throw that out again for the risky.

Right after John 2, Jesus is revealed by John the Baptist as the Bridegroom. That's the next event that takes place, in John 3. John introduces Jesus as the One who has the bride. He said, "I'm coming to tell you about the One who has the bride." That's the title he gives to Jesus the Messiah. His first introduction of Jesus is the One who has the bride. What an introduction of the Son of God! Israel had been waiting for the One who has the bride—for Jehovah, who has a bride. John the Baptist begins his ministry with the proclamation of the coming One who has the bride.

Then, right after that, Jesus proclaims Himself as a bridegroom. Again, I imagine Jesus saying, "Lord, let Me call the bride."

The Lord says, "Not until Your final message."

"Well, John at least got to say I'm the Bridegroom."

"OK, You can say as much as John has said, and You don't get to say anything more than what John announced."

Anyway, that's my imagined conversation. It probably didn't happen that way. Jesus calls Himself the Bridegroom who will be taken away. That's how He describes Himself. He's talking about the cross. He says, "I'm the Bridegroom that will be taken away." That's how He first describes Himself. Then He calls the disciples the friends of the Bridegroom (Mt. 9:15). The point I'm giving you is an overview of the theology. I'm watching this thing build as it goes.

Jesus ends his earthly ministry with a focus on the bride. We looked at it in the last session. Again, my point is just to give you the continuity of the whole thing. There's the final public invitation. Remember that parable—the final private training in that final week. That's the second parable, His final recorded intercession for the bride; His final recorded conversation with anyone in the human race. It has bridal language to it. It's the very language that He used in interceding for the bride in John 17:24.

Jesus' ministry after the resurrection: His first message called them to bridal love. Again, this is a little review, but I just wanted you to have it all one, two, three, in one document. We didn't look at this in the last session, but in the first message to the seven churches, He tells the church of Ephesus, "Remember the love that you've fallen away from" (Rev. 2:4-5, paraphrased). Then, here in Revelation 2:7, He calls them to the paradise of God. Here in His very first message, He's actually re-emphasizing the last thing He said on the cross. He talked about paradise (Lk. 23:43). He brings it up again in His first message after the resurrection, when He speaks to the corporate church a word of correction. He brings up the paradise concept again. The paradise promise is in Scripture very few times. It's His last words to the thief on the cross and His first words when He speaks to the church, giving them a corrective note of a prophetic message. He brings up that paradise promise again.

Again, the first message is all of chapter 2 and 3. He ends it with a call to a feast and a call to the throne.

Just so you have it here, again, it's reviewed from in the last session; we looked at the prophetic part, but it's the fact that Scripture begins with the revelation of a bride, and it ends with a fulfillment of a glorious bride. It begins with a type of a bride and ends with the fulfillment of a glorious bride.

PROMINENT BRIDAL PASSAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now look at this: "Prominent bridal passages in the Old Testament." The point is, there's a multitude of Old Testament witnesses. God has been speaking this all the way through. That's the point I'm making here. This isn't something that was kind of an afterthought after Jesus came.

These are some of the key chapters. You've got Isaiah 62; you might put Isaiah 60-66. All seven chapters have a number of references, but Isaiah 62 is one of the most prominent. These are key Old Testament places where you find the bride. You can study that yourself. You can study it on your own.

TYPES OF THE BRIDE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Types of the bride in the Old Testament. You have Eve, who is the suitable companion to God. You have Esther reigning over the enemy. You have Ruth triumphing over hopelessness. You have Rebekah, in partnership with the Holy Spirit. You have the types of the bride all throughout the Old Testament.

BRIDAL PARABLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I don't have to mention anything on Roman numeral X, but I just wanted it there in order. We have the New Testament bridal parables. Remember, Matthew 22 is His final public message. Matthew 25 is a private message, just for His disciples. John 2 isn't actually a teaching, but I believe it's a parable. It's an event that's a picture of the best wine being saved for last, and Jesus' ministry beginning. I think of that as a parable. It wasn't a parable that Jesus taught with words; it's a prophetic parable.

Again, we're on an overview of bridal theology, just so you can get a feel for the Genesis-to-Revelation snapshot of this thing.

The bride as a paradigm of New Testament ministry. It's a lens. It's not the only lens, because you can look at New Testament ministry through the lens of a servant—through the paradigm of being servants. You can look at New Testament ministry through the lens of God the Father and the fathering ministry, but you can also look at the New Testament ministry through a bridal lens.

Jesus called John the Baptist “the greatest man ever born of a woman” (Mt. 11:11, paraphrased). He was the greatest prophet who ever lived. What does he call himself? “The friend of the Bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29, NKJV). Here's the greatest prophet in history; the most righteous man who ever lived. He is amazing, this man. There's no one more honored in ministry than the A, B, C, D, and E here. I have an E; I haven't gotten down there yet, but I'll give it to you in a second. These are the most honored ministries in history. I'll rip off a few verses for you where John the Baptist's ministry was prophesied. Whose ministry was prophesied with this kind of weight of Scripture behind it? No one's except for Jesus'. I'll give you a list of prophecies that said, “There's one coming as a voice in the wilderness to prepare a people.” Imagine if you opened the book of Isaiah and saw your ministry prophesied directly!

The greatest man in history sees his ministry in one way: as a friend of the Bridegroom preparing the heart of the people to receive, who? The Bridegroom. This is the greatest ministry in the whole Bible in terms of righteousness, besides Jesus. Look at this list: Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1, Malachi 4:5-6, and each of the four gospels quote the prophecy about John. Very few things show up in all four gospels, but this is one of the few things that are noted in each of the four gospels: Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4-6, and John 1:23.

My point is this: the greatest man, the greatest prophet who ever lived besides Jesus who is, yea, more than a prophet, was asked to identify his ministry. What did he say? He's the friend of the Bridegroom preparing the hearts of the people for the Lord, but he's preparing them for a bridegroom. The New Testament ministry viewed itself as preparing the hearts of people for bridal love.

THE HIGHEST UNDERSTANDING OF MINISTRY IS TO BE FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM

The twelve apostles didn't have a clue what was going on when He called them. These men were a wreck. When people didn't show up to their conference in Samaria, John said, “Burn the city with fire!” They were arguing about who was going to be the main guy in eternity. These men were out of control. Peter was rebuking Jesus; Judas was stealing money. The other ones all fell away. If you read about those guys, it really gives you encouragement that you can make it. I mean it. I look at them and I say, “I know I can make it because of those men.”

Jesus looks at them in Matthew 9:15 and He defines them in the same grid in which John the Baptist saw his ministry. He says, “I want you to see your ministry like John sees his.” He says, “OK. You men are also friends of the Bridegroom” (Mt. 9:15, paraphrased).

They don't have a clue what He's talking about. They say, “Wow!”

Jesus says, “You don't even understand.” Because they were only after the promotion and growing their ministries at the beginning, but at the end they were going to be after preparing the hearts of the people for the

wedding feast. He said, “You don’t know it yet, but I’m naming you right now.” When Jesus names you, He’s indicating the way you will function and relate before God. When Jesus gives them a name, He’s prophesying the way they’ll function and the way they’ll relate to God and people.

He said, “Before it’s over, I’ve already named you. You’re friends of the Bridegroom. You will function like John does. You’ll prepare the people uniquely for Me. I’m the Bridegroom. You’ll prepare them for Me.” The highest understanding of ministry is to be friends of the Bridegroom.

Jesus was so excited. *Excited* isn’t the right word, but after they replaced Judas as one of the twelve, Jesus put their names on the foundation of the bridal city. The friends of the Bridegroom have their names on the eternal city. That’s truly amazing. They had so little understanding of what was going on. They were going to be anointed to reveal the bride and reveal the Bridegroom. They were going to have their names on the bridal city. Here they are fighting and arguing, and all this crazy stuff. My point is, the greatest apostles eventually saw their life through the lens of the Bridegroom.

THE GREATEST MINISTRIES OF HISTORY PROCLAIM THE BRIDAL PARADIGM

Look at 2 Corinthians 11. Paul was undoubtedly the greatest apostle. When he ministered, he viewed his ministry in its highest form as betrothing people as pure virgins to Christ Jesus in bridal imagery. When he went to the carnal Corinthians, the most carnal church, he said, “Don’t you understand? I’ve betrothed you. I’ve led you into a legal engagement with the Son of God. You’re legally married to Him because of the way I’ve led you to Him, and I now present you as a pure virgin before Him when I pray for you. And I’ll present you that way on the last day” (2 Cor. 11:2-3, paraphrased).

Jesus, the King, in his prophetic sermon to the Church, His prophetic correction, is revealing the bride. He’s revealing the love to which He’s called them. Jesus had His ministry on the earth, but now that He’s accomplished His work on the cross, He goes down to give one prophetic message. He begins it and ends it with references to love, and to being loved, and letting love dominate them more than anything else. Then He concludes with the feast and the throne in Revelation 3:20-21.

The other one I want to mention is Moses. Put down the verse we just looked at, Jeremiah 2:2. God was betrothing Israel to Himself using the leadership of Moses. Moses functioned in a role that was similar to that of Paul and the apostles and John the Baptist. He was leading them, betrothing them, bringing them into the relationship of being the special treasures to God. The greatest ministries of history have a paradigm of the bride.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 12. I want you to see a verse or two. Look at Paul’s experience. He says in verse 1, “I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord” (2 Cor. 12:1). He’s talking about more than revelations that are from the Lord. I think he’s actually talking about revelations of the Lord. Because you can get something from the Lord, like, “You will buy a new house,” or something of like nature—who knows? But this is the Lord revealing Himself in His splendor. The whole book of Revelation is called a revealing of the heart of Christ Jesus (cf. Rev. 1:1). We looked at that in an earlier session.

The point I want you to see is that now he’s going to describe the revelations he’s had of Jesus. At the end of verse 2, he says, “I was caught up to the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2, paraphrased). Then in verse 4, he’s going to be a bit more specific. He says, “If you want to be more specific, I was caught up into paradise” (v. 4,

paraphrased). This is one of the very few references to paradise in the Bible. “I heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (ibid).

Here’s what Paul is saying. He says, “I have seen a revelation of Christ Jesus. Specifically, I was caught up into paradise.” The bride is paradise. The bridal city and paradise are identical. You’ve got to put a bunch of verses together, but I think you’ve got enough of them to do that, so I won’t spend seven or eight minutes doing it. Paradise is the bridal city. Paul says, “I’ve seen a revelation of the Lord.” Paul saw paradise. He saw some version of the city.

He says, “It is not lawful for me to speak of it.” Paul heard things that were inexpressible. He says, “Number one, I don’t have language for it. I couldn’t express the splendor of what I saw.” He references this in 1 Corinthians 2, to a degree. In 1 Corinthians 2:9, he says, “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it has never entered into the heart of a man, the things that God has prepared for the people who are His” (1 Cor. 2:9, paraphrased). He says, “I saw things that are impossible for me to describe to you. There are no human words. There’s nothing to which I can compare it. It’s beyond human description. It has never entered into the heart of a human being, the glory that God has prepared for His people.”

Then he says, “There’s another part of what I said, though it’s not lawful for me to speak of it to you. I have no permission from God to reveal it because there are some categories of revelation that aren’t to be verified and revealed to be put into the Scriptures.” He said, “I saw things that God doesn’t want established in the *logos* of God. They are awesome.” It has to do with paradise—both the inexpressible and the unlawful; the things that he might be able to say, but he has no language for them. The things that he’s forbidden to speak are all about paradise, which is about the bride. Paradise is the bridal city.

Paul’s revelation, he tells us in Ephesians 5, is that the great mystery is Jesus and the Church in context with the bride. He calls it the greatest mystery, and we know from another session that *mystery* is the plan hidden in the heart of God. The great mystery was the one about the bride. There are a number of facets to the mystery of God, but the highest one, Ephesians 5 says, is the one about Jesus and His people—Jesus leaving and cleaving to His people. That was the greatest plan that was in His heart.

Paul has a commission to reveal this mystery. He has a commission to reveal it. He saw things he hasn’t been given permission to speak. In Ephesians 3:8-11, God has now said, “I want everyone to know the mystery of God,” at least at an introductory level. Everyone is to know the mystery of God. Paul sees the purpose of his ministry as revealing the mystery which he tells us in chapter 5 is the bride. We learn from 2 Corinthians 12 that he was caught up and saw paradise face to face. He saw parts of the revelation of the bride. Paradise and the bridal city are identical.

This is all from the book of Ephesians. Paul’s greatest intercessory cry is Ephesians 1:17-18: that they would see themselves as Jesus’ inheritance. He knows where this thing is going. He has prayed that they would see the revelation of the bride. If you saw what he saw, you would pray what he prayed. Paul had confidence in the Lord. He described Jesus as nourishing and cherishing (Eph. 5:29). I believe the Holy Spirit will release the cherishing and nourishing of Jesus to His bride at the end of the age like no other time in history. Paul is confident that the Church will be brought to glory (v. 27). When He nourishes and cherishes, when the cleaving ministry of Jesus is fully revealed, when He cleaves unto His bride, when He nourishes and cherishes, when He does this to weak people, Paul has confidence that this is going to bring the Church to the glory of God.

I know I've given you a ton there. Again, these are just seeds meditate on. We won't really look at this, except for one verse, because we've already looked at it under the section of the prophetic, but I just wanted it laid out there.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL AWAKEN THE HEART OF THE BRIDE AT THE END OF THE AGE

The bridal focus of the Holy Spirit's end-time activity. Well, let's go through this really quickly. Hosea tells us that we will call the Lord, "My Husband," at the end of the age (Hos. 2:16). Isaiah tells us, "You will see yourself as *Hephzibah* and *Beulah*: God delights in you and calls you married" (Isa. 62:4-5, paraphrased). This prophecy is for the end of the age. As a bride, we will say, "Come" (Rev. 22:17)! We will have the bridal identity at the end of the age.

The Church is going to be radiant and full of glory, radiant and full of glory when the Lord comes for the Church (Eph. 5:27). Again, Ephesians 5 is in the context of the husband and wife, Jesus and the Church. So it's in the context of the Bride of Christ.

In John 2:10, Jesus is accused of saving the best wine for last (Jn. 2:10). I don't think this was just placed in the Scriptures as a keen observation; it's spoken that way, but I believe it's in the Word of God because it's true. God is saving the best wine for last.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7; I've got to sneak that one in there. The end of a progression, an eight-chapter progression, ends with the bridal seal on the heart. The progression of Song of Solomon is an individual progression, but there's a progression that's historical as well. The Church is going to end with a bridal seal. Individuals will, and the Church in history as well will end with Song of Solomon 8:6 as the final seal of fire on the heart.

"I WILL TAKE WHAT IS MINE AND REVEAL IT TO YOU"

John 16:12 and 15. This is a new verse I haven't introduced yet. Jesus tells them at the Last Supper, "I have many things you cannot bear right now" (Jn. 16:12, paraphrased). Do you know what I think the word *bear* means? I'm not talking about the Greek word for *bear*. I mean the concept, because He's going to die tomorrow. I don't think He's saying, "I'm not going to tell them I'm about to die." He told them that over and over. I don't think He's telling them Greek. He's saying, "There are many things you don't have the capacity to comprehend right now." He means, "You don't have the spiritual capacity to interpret them or comprehend them. You can't bear them right now." When He gave them to John, John worshiped an angel. He said, "You're not ready." John had spent sixty years as a mature apostle, and he still worshiped an angel twice.

He says, "Right now, you can't bear what I'm about to tell you." There's a progression. First He reveals them as servants; then as children of our Father; and then as a bride for the Bridegroom.

In John 16:15, He tells the things they can't bear. He says, "I will take what is Mine and reveal it to you" (Jn. 16:15). What's His that He's going to reveal to us? The Bride of Christ. Remember the original covenant, when the covenant nation started. He said, "I will make you My possession." Now He's at the Last Supper saying, "I will take what is Mine and I will reveal it to you. I will reveal what is Mine to you." There are hints of the bride there. There's more than that, but that's the highest thing that's His that He's going to reveal to us. It's who He is to us and who we are to Him. That's the whole purpose of the cross.

A THREEFOLD IDENTITY: SERVANTS, CHILDREN, AND BRIDE

The impact of bridal revelation. My point here is this: there's a threefold identity, servants, children, and bride, and the highest of these is the bride. It's the one that takes the most preparation, and it has the greatest impact as well. There's something about this revelation that impacts us even more than the other two, which has a very powerful impact on our heart. Being anointed servants of God, accepted at the throne of God like the angels, with the gift of righteousness, really has a powerful impact when it connects with our hearts.

The whole Reformation was based on the fact that we're accepted fully in the courts of God. We have full access to God. It's the revelation of the affectionate Father that produces such security, such desire for full obedience, as we saw in Sessions 15 and 16. But the revelation of the bride is more than security before the Father. It produces extravagant love, way beyond the call of duty or obedience, way beyond what He asks us to do. This has the greatest impact, but it also takes the greatest preparation to receive it. We can't understand the bride until we've understood that we're children before our Father, and we can't see that until we're servants before a good master. Our hearts simply can't comprehend it. One builds on the other; at least that's my theory. This is the greatest impact—the bridal revelation.

WHEN WE HEAR THE VOICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM, WE REJOICE GREATLY

Here's John the Baptist. John says this: "I heard the voice of the Bridegroom and I greatly rejoiced, and my joy was made full" (Jn. 3:29, paraphrased). How could some guy rejoice in the wilderness? He has no pleasures whatsoever. Yet his spirit is full of rejoicing because he heard the voice of the Bridegroom. When we hear the voice of the Bridegroom, whatever wilderness we're in, we will rejoice. When your heart connects with Revelation 19, no matter what wilderness you're in, something will explode on the inside. I'm totally convinced of this, having not experienced much of it, but having the theory of it. Again, I'm in the same position as you. I'm trying to get this, but I've had a little touch of this and I begin to look at life a little differently; when I encounter a little revelation of this, I'm saying, "Lord, God!" This is really bigger than someone stealing your car or someone putting you down or someone betraying you. This is bigger than all of that. It really, really is. It's bigger than someone stealing your mailing list; to a pastor that's tragedy, but anyway.

OK, here's what happens to John. Let me tell you how it transforms John. John is a voice in the wilderness, right? The twelve apostles want to be a name. They want to be the first in the kingdom. John says, "I don't want to be a name. I'm happy to be a voice. I'm a nameless, faceless man. I'm happy to be a voice." Why is John content to be a voice instead of a name? Because he has heard the voice. When we hear the voice from heaven, we're totally content to be a voice in the wilderness instead of a name among men that's fortunate and famous.

John says, "I'm happy as a faceless ministry. I don't care. If all my disciples fall Him, I'm totally alive inside. I've heard the voice. Therefore, I'm content to be a voice. My whole ministry can shift over now. I can go and die by Herod; so what?"

I believe this with all my heart: that we will be content to be a voice instead of a name when we hear His voice, the voice of the Bridegroom. This had a tremendous impact on his heart; he rejoiced amid contentment, even with all his people leaving him and following Jesus in another part of Israel. John said, "That's great. I love it."

Of course, John has taken a beating. I've already given him a beating when he was worshiping that angel. John's going to say, "Hey Mike, you really, gave me a hard time down there. I went for 2,000 years and almost

no one ever preached on it, and you preached on it everywhere you went.” My point is, he’s overcome. The man with the greatest spiritual capacity was John the apostle. He experienced more than anyone. Still, this revelation overpowered him.

FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM, JESUS ENDURED THE CROSS

Jesus’ joy. We already touched on this when we looked at Isaiah 62:5. His joy is as a Bridegroom. In Hebrews 12:2, He says, “My joy is set before me. It empowered Me to endure the cross” (Heb. 12:2, paraphrased). The joy of Jesus, which is His people as a bride, empowered Him to endure the shame of the cross. The spirit of Jesus didn’t need a whole lot of empowering, but the angels came and encouraged Him in the garden when He was shedding drops of blood. The joy that the Father showed Him empowered Him to endure the cross. That was it. The joy did something to Him that even the angels, I don’t think, fully did. The angels strengthened Him, but the joy actually empowered Him in the end to embrace the cross.

My theory is, God showed Him the city again. God showed Him when He prayed, “Father, that those whom You gave Me would be with Me where I am in My glory” (Jn. 17:24, paraphrased).

I believe the Father somewhere gave Him a glimpse of the city and said, “They will be with You.” There it is again. The joy set before Him empowered Him. We will be empowered to bear the cross in our own life when we see the joy set before us by the Scriptures.

Paul’s intercession. The reason I’m putting this is that Paul knew the impact of bridal revelation. That’s why he prayed that the Ephesians would get it in the first, big apostolic prayer in the book of Ephesians, because there are three of them in Ephesians. Paul said, “Lord, I know they’ll get it. And I know that if they get this revelation, they’ll be committed to You.”

Again, Josiah’s reform was the last great reform before the Babylonian captivity, under the bridal preaching of Jeremiah in Jeremiah’s first sermon in Jeremiah 2:2.

THE BRIDAL NATURE OF THE NEW COVENANT

The bridal nature of the new covenant. In Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah prophesies the new covenant. Do you know what it will be? The laws of God burned on the heart and the mind. That’s the point. The Word of God is going to be burned and stamped into the human spirit with fire. The new covenant isn’t just something we do on the outside with our neighbors, although we want to win our neighbors. The glory of the new covenant isn’t just the tasks we do. It’s the fact that the human heart has the thumbprint of God writing God’s Word. It’s inflaming the human heart. That’s the point.

Hebrews 10:16 quotes Jeremiah 31. It’s the same thing. God is going to write the Word, the law of God, on the heart. It will inflame the heart.

Jesus called John the Baptist the man with a burning heart. He said, “He’s a burning and a shining lamp. His heart burns and his life shines” (Jn. 5:35, paraphrased). John had the Word written on his heart. His heart was burning.

In Luke 24:32, the disciples on the road to Emmaus asked, “What happened? “Did not our hearts burn within us” (Lk. 24:32, paraphrased). It’s the Word of God burning on the hearts, stamped on the human heart, and on

the mind as well. I should mention this. “On the mind” means revelation, and “on the heart” means we’re empowered with it.

Exodus 32. I just wanted you to get the verse where God took the finger of God and wrote on the tablets of stone. You like that? God had the finger of God, and He wrote on the tablets of stone (Ex. 32:16). There are all kinds of little principles there that we’ll skip.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul takes that passage from Exodus 32. Look at 2 Corinthians 3:1-18: the point of it is that what God did with His finger on tablets of stone, God now does by the Holy Spirit on tablets of heart. He writes the Word. He inflames the heart.

Someone knows the verse about the finger of fire. I don’t know if that’s the verse or if that was just *The Ten Commandments* with Charlton Heston. I can’t remember if I saw that or read that. Is that a Bible verse or is that a movie? It is? The finger is a fire? I would love to see that. I looked for it a few minutes the other day and couldn’t find it. I said, “That was just a movie, I guess.” It was a good one, though.

2 Thessalonians 1:8. when He comes, He comes with flaming fire, in the atmosphere, and that’s bridal love. Yes, it destroys the enemies, but it’s love first. “Our God is a consuming fire,” but it’s love before it’s destruction. When the Bridegroom comes, the atmosphere is filled with flaming fire. “Our God is a consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24, Heb. 12:29). There you go. That’s it.