

Session 2 Calling Forth the Bride

INTRODUCTION

This is Session 2, “Calling Forth the Bride,” from Matthew 21-22. One thing I want to mention from the last session about Satan and Lucifer. There’s a certain speculation, and we don’t know exactly how this happened; I don’t know that he wanted to be the bride. I don’t know that. But he wanted the position that Jesus gave the bride. He wanted that. I think he understood that he was created; obviously he knew that. He couldn’t be the uncreated God, but possibly he wanted the highest position that he knew was available. I don’t know that he knew that. That would only be conjecture. He wanted the highest position that God had planned for the bride.

That’s part of the reason that he hates the Church so much. He has such bitter hatred towards the Church. He wants to kill and destroy the Church. It’s not an accident that Satan’s main plan crescendos with what? Bringing forth a harlot at the end of the age (Rev. 17 and 18). The great harlot manifests herself and all of her defilements spiritually and physical. This impure harlot is the great enemy to the bride. He raises up a harlot to resist and destroy the bride and to kill her and shed her blood. Certainly he’s got his own rage and hatred, but there must be some connection in his heart that the bride received the position he wanted and he was cast down into the pit. We were chased down and it was given to us freely. It’s an amazing thing.

JESUS IN JERUSALEM IS CALLING FORTH A BRIDE TO HIMSELF

Matthew 21 and 22 to me is a fascinating passage of Scripture, because it’s Jesus’ last visit to Jerusalem. It’s very dramatic for Him, because He’s coming to Jerusalem, and He’s going to invite the bride; He’s going to call her forth to Himself. As far as I can see, it’s the only time He gets to do this. There are three parables about the bride, and this is the most direct one right here. The second one is just a short time later, in Matthew 25. It’s actually right after this one.

Here’s the context. It’s Palm Sunday. Jesus is entering into Jerusalem. It’s called “the triumphal entry.” He rides into Jerusalem on Sunday on a donkey, being hailed as a king. All the palm branches are laid at His feet, and everything is going wonderfully, but there’s something in His heart. Of course, He knows where this thing is going. I like to talk about the drama from eternity past. Of course He knew Hosea 2:16. Here He is bending over the balcony of heaven, and He hears Hosea say, “In that day they will no longer say to the Lord, ‘You are my Maker. They will say to the Lord, ‘You are my Husband’” (Hos. 2:16, paraphrased).

I imagined Jesus bending over the balcony of heaven saying, “Abba, that’s Me! They’re talking about My inheritance. Can I go? Can I go, Father?”

Abba says, “No, You can’t go. It’s not the fullness of time yet.”

Obviously, Jesus being fully God doesn’t have to have all those conversations, but it’s not the fullness of God. I just imagine His heart being stirred hearing the prophets crying out about the generation in which the people of God will see themselves as the bride.

THE SUPERNATURAL REVELATION OF JESUS BEGINS AT A WEDDING

Then here He is in His earthly ministry. He’s longing. He knows Revelation 19 is where it’s ending. He knows history is going on the fast track to one place—to a wedding feast, a wedding ceremony that’s His. He knows

that He's engaged. He's betrothed; He's espoused already to a people, to the people of Israel. Then, through the release of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, He's betrothed to the nations that will say yes to God and become a part of the company of the redeemed. The Lord knows He's already espoused to the redeemed that were redeemed at that time. I imagine that every time He watched the bride walk down the aisle, however they did it in that day, like any man who's engaged, waiting for his bride, He said, "Lord, what about My bride?" What about My bride? That's why I'm here. I laid aside the form of God for her. That's why I'm here."

In John 2, at the wedding feast of Cana, in Galilee, Jesus has already been anointed in the wilderness. He's been tested in the wilderness. He overcame Satan's temptations. He's anointed. He's ready to go. I don't think it's an accident that it all begins at a wedding. His supernatural ministry, the beginning of His revealing of Himself as Messiah, begins at a wedding. I imagine Him sitting in that wedding, in that chair, and she walks down the aisle. He says, "Abba, I'm anointed. I've been tried and tested face-to-face by Satan. Can I have her?"

I imagine the Father saying, "Yes," and boom, the power of God is released in Him and the miracles begin right there at that wedding. He still can't call her to Himself yet. He still doesn't have the authority to call her to Himself in love for a wedding.

Imagine the tensions. It's Palm Sunday, and His final visit to Jerusalem. He's going to be crucified on Friday. He knows it. No one else does. Of course, a few discerning women are the only ones who get it. None of His men do in the old boys' club. All they're thinking about is ruling and reigning and who's going to be bigger. Mary of Bethany and a few others understood what was happening. Praise God for them.

THE JOY OF THE BRIDE AND THE SHAME OF THE CROSS

Here are the three things that are taking place in His heart as He approaches this city. Number one: He has the agonizing anticipation of the crucifixion. He knows it's coming in three or four days. It's Sunday; He knows it's coming on Friday, in five days.

Secondly, He knows that He can call His bride to Himself, and He has permission right here in these parables to do it. It's not Hosea. It's not a wedding where the power breaks forth out of Him for the first time, but He can't say anything. He gets to say it to all of Israel. He's excited. Hebrews 12 talks about the joy set before Him (Heb. 12:2). I'm convinced that the joy that was set before Him is Isaiah 62:5: "As a bridegroom rejoices with great joy over his bride, so God rejoices over you" (Isa. 62:5, paraphrased). The rejoicing, the joy set before Him, was His bride. He had waited for her from eternity, but then also He feels the painful despair of the rebellion of the people whom He loved. He loved the nation of Israel. The leadership is going to write Him off. They couldn't do that without bringing significant pain to His heart.

Here He is: the cross is in front of Him and He dreads it. He despises the shame (Heb. 12:2). He despises the thought of the cross. The joy of the bride and the pain of the rebellion is all colliding in Him right here at this hour, and He gives these three parables of Matthew 21 and 22. I just want you to feel a bit of the tension that He's experiencing as He's preparing to give this cry.

A REVIEW OF THE FINAL WEEK OF JESUS' EARTHLY LIFE

Let's give an overview of His final week in terms of His teaching ministry. First He gives the three parables here on Sunday in Matthew 21-22. By the way, it's three parables, but it's only one message. It's three parables, but it's one message. It's not like He gets to Jerusalem, sees the cross, the shame, the bride, His own yearning to

call her to Himself, and the rebellion of the nation that He's loved from the beginning, and says, "Ah, let Me see. Boy, the crowd's assembling. Let Me see. Let Me pull out a good one. Oh, I know! This worked at the Galilee conference. Let Me whip out 'The Prodigal Son.' Boy, that really got them."

That's not what He was doing. Does everyone agree with that? His heart was so captured. His heart was so focused. He was waiting to give this message. He was waiting to deliver this. He comes to Jerusalem, and this is what's on His heart. It's one message in three parables.

The next thing He does is to pronounce judgment on the rebellious leadership (Mt. 23). The reason they get judgment is because they persistently resist. There's no yes in their spirit. There's a, "You're a demon and You're of the devil. That's who You are." That's what their response was.

In Matthew 23, it's not His teaching ministry in terms of inviting the nation, but He pronounces judgment on them so that when He sees them the next time He comes, as He told them in Luke 13, "When I see you again you will say to Me, 'Did You not teach in our streets?'" (Lk. 13:26, paraphrased).

He says, "I want you to know that I told you in time that you were under a serious, serious condition. Woe unto you. When You see Me again you won't say, 'Yes, but you never made it clear.'"

That's what Matthew 23 is about, in my opinion; it was directed to the whole nation, not just the whole gang that was there.

Then, in Matthew 24 and 25, He gives private instruction. He pulls aside the twelve and gives them some teaching. Then follows the teaching of the Last Supper in John 13-17.

JESUS' FINAL PUBLIC TEACHING TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL

My point is this: Paragraph A. The wedding invitation, these three parables in Matthew 21-22, is His final public teaching. That's the point I want to make. This is His final public teaching in His incarnation on the earth before the cross. This is it. This is it right here. He knows it's not only His final time to cry to the people in the flesh, but that it's the one that will be recorded. All of history will say, "What are His last words? What was the final thing He said before they took Him?" It's very, very clear; it's in these three parables. These are His final words before they took Him. It's the bridal invitation—three parables but one message. You all can study some more of this at home and in your own time.

THREE PARABLES, ONE MESSAGE

The first parable: Matthew 21:28-32. This is the parable of the two sons. Here's the message: even the worst sinners are invited. He says in verse 31, "Even the tax gatherers and the harlots will enter the kingdom, but rebellion alone will disqualify you" (Mt. 21:31, paraphrased). It's the resistance; the refusal to say yes. The tax gatherers and the harlots were the two worst sinners in terms of the perception of the nation. The tax gatherers joined Rome. They were a scandal. The harlots, well, there are all sorts of reasons why they were the worst. They were perceived as the worst, but they weren't the worst in God's sight. Jesus said, "I don't care how despicable you think they are; they're invited." That's the message, but rebellion will keep even the best self-righteous man out of the picture. Resistance to the free gift will disqualify you.

The second parable is the parable of the wicked vinedresser (Mt. 21:33-44). It focuses on the message that God has an inheritance for His Son. The key point of the message is that this man sent his son, because it was his son's inheritance. He said, "Surely they won't mistreat him." At the center of the parable is a son with an inheritance. Again, rebellion will disqualify you.

So we know from the first parable that everyone is involved. We know from the second that it's all about a Son and His inheritance. It's all one message. He starts off the third parable in Matthew 22:2, and here's His final teaching. This is it. They say, "What did He say? What was His last teaching?" Here it is: "The kingdom of God is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son" (Mt. 22:2, paraphrased). Jesus in the flesh is giving His final message; here He is. He says, "Let Me tell you. There's a king; it's My Father. He has a plan. He's arranging a wedding." He's crying out to the nation. He says, "I'm the Son and you're the bride."

THE POWER OF GOD IS INTERPRETED THROUGH THE LENS OF BRIDAL AFFECTION

This is the final teaching of Jesus Christ in the flesh right here. There are many lenses or many views of the kingdom of God. It's likened unto many things. It's likened unto a garden. It's likened unto a building. It's likened unto this and that and all these things, but this time here He likens it to the wedding. He said, "The kingdom of God is like a wedding."

Here in number one, I've written that the power of God is interpreted through the lens of bridal affection. The phrase "the kingdom of God" theologically describes the power that will be the norm in the age to come. Here's the point of this proclamation: that power is available now in part. The kingdom we'll enjoy in the age to come has broken into this world and is already somewhat manifest. The good things of the age to come are now happening a little. That's what He's saying.

In terms of our point of view, the bottom line is this: the power of God is to be interpreted through a bridal lens. In other words, why does God release His power? The kingdom of God is the message of God's release of power. Why does God release His power? To express His bridal love. Why does God release His power? To bring you into the experience of it. When we heal someone, we can look at them and say, "He loves you! He's healing you as a token that He wants you. It's about a wedding."

The person says, "Wow! Who is the man getting married?"

"You're getting married!"

"Wow!"

Jesus says you're to interpret the power of God; the reason God gives it is so that you can feel bridal love and so that you can bring other people into it. It's the kingdom of God viewed through the lens of a wedding.

I love it. I can just see Jesus. He says, "Lord, I've waited for this parable from the first time I heard Hosea proclaim it, 700 years ago. I said, 'I've got a proclamation. I've got a proclamation.'"

We'll talk about this point later: Why does He speak in a parable? I don't mean later today; later in the series here in this class. Instead of speaking directly when He talks about the subject of bridal love, He almost always veils it, because He knows that the law of hunger will get to the center and the core of it. When it comes to love,

love itself will draw itself. When your heart is pricked by this, you won't leave any stone unturned to get to the core of the center of it. It's in the language of love. It's in the mystery of, "Come and find out more. Come and unveil the parable and drink deep of what's in My heart." That's one of the reasons He speaks through parables when He speaks about the bride. Often He does that.

"COME TO THE WEDDING"

Look at verse 8. "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready'" (Mt. 22:8). Here's how I picture Him. He stops; the cross is before Him. He sees the very bride in front of Him and He cries out, "The wedding is ready!" He says, "It's ready!" He says, "It's not Hosea prophesying. It's not Me being released in Galilee at Cana. I, the Son of Man, under the authority of My Father, am here to declare to you: I'm dying soon. The wedding is ready!"

That's what's happening. That's what He's saying. He's trumpeting it down the corridors of history. "The wedding is ready!" Meaning, "I'm paying the full price for it. The bridal price will be paid on Friday. It's all settled. It's no longer something that will be; it's here now."

This is His final teaching. I don't think it's an accident. It's not only His final teaching in His earthly ministry, but it's the final revelation in the Church of this age. It's the revelation of which Hosea said, "In that day they will say, 'My Husband,'" talking about the Spirit and the bride. It's the final revelation of the people of God.

Now in each one of these parables He's warning the rebellious not to resist Him and not to refuse the free gift of love; that's what He's all but saying. He explodes with, "The wedding is ready!" in verse 8.

"MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN"

Verse 14 is the bridal invitation, right here. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt. 22:14). When He says, "Many are called," under Paragraph C here, you can put the word *invited*. He says, "The nations are invited. The Jews are invited. The Gentiles are invited. Everyone is invited."

He said, "But only so few of you were chosen." I think the appropriate understanding is, "So few respond." Here's what it means to be chosen. It's like we draw a line, and if we step over the line by saying yes, now we're chosen to be prepared as the bride. The Lord says, "Anyone who steps over that line, I'll prepare them to be My bride. I've invited you." We step over it. He says, "Now you're the chosen to go through the series of preparations that I've ordained for My bride."

The multitudes in all the nations are invited. But so few step over the line into bridal preparation, to be in position to be prepared to be the Lamb's bride. That's what's going on here. That's His final teaching. Again, it's not an accident that it's the final revelation of the people of God. It's the final way they see themselves. The Church has seen itself as a temple, as a body, as an army, but in these days, in this last generation, when you take into account the last 2,000 years, the Church is going to see herself as a bride—not just a family, or an army, or a temple, or a body, but a bride. Her identity will come to maturity.

We're still a body, an army, and all these things, but we're mostly a bride. That's the highest thing: to be at His right hand with Him. There's no higher relationship into which we can grow. Being in the army is kind of cool; you get to do the stuff. Being the bride is far higher revelation than being in the army, amen? There's no higher

revelation or identity for the people of God than the bridal identity. I don't think it's an accident. That's His final cry to the people.

THE OMINOUS APPROACH OF PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

What happens next? First, the Pharisees come out. They don't like it. Now, I don't want to get spooky about it, but I think that this whole last visit of Jesus is prophetic, and there are things that can be applied in ways that I don't necessarily know how to do. I just know Him. He's the ultimate Prophet, yea, and more than a prophet. I just know that in everything He does He can speak at many levels at one time.

The Pharisees come, and Jesus is calling His bride. They talk about the thing they really love: they talk about money. Their love was money and that's what they talk about. Boom! They don't want to talk about what He loves; they want to talk about what they love. In Luke 16:14, Jesus told them, "You know what your problem is, Pharisees, specifically? You're lovers of money" (Lk. 16:14, paraphrased). He said, "You love money. It's one thing to appreciate it and all this, but it has a grip on you and it will get you in trouble." Because Jesus was a threat to their economics. I don't mean in a small way; I mean in a major way.

Next come the Sadducees. Again, you can read it more in-depth yourself, and verse 28 gives you a little touch. They're asking Him a question; they're asking Him this cynical question to trap Him. They don't care about the answer; they're playing tricks with Him here. They said, "In the resurrection there's this man who dies and his wife has seven brothers. Whose will she be in the resurrection? All of them were married to her" (Mt. 22:24-28, paraphrased).

Here's what the Sadducees do. They look at the Pharisees and say, "You guys are so dull. He's talking about a wedding and you talk about money. At least we'll bring up the wedding thing. Let's be a little more subtle." They say, "OK, let's talk about the wedding."

They want to capitalize on Him. They were far more intellectual than the Pharisees were. Actually, the Sadducees really were. They were the liberals of their day. They engaged in all these doctrinal debates, and they were very liberal. They didn't buy all this stuff; they were trying to put Him down.

Next comes a scribe. He's not identified as a scribe here in Matthew, but we know that he's a scribe from Mark 12:28. That's how I get that. Here it says in verse 35 that he's a lawyer, and Mark 12:28 calls him a scribe. The lawyers and the scribes get together. Here we have the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the scribes—three totally different groups that don't even like each other. It really is the Republicans, the Democrats, and Ross Perot. It really is. That's what's happening. They don't like each other at all. These men are against each other. These are three enemies that are united by a common enemy. They don't like each other at all, but the only thing that they are united by is their common hatred of Jesus.

They get together. The Pharisees say, "Well, we tried to get Him."

The Sadducees said, "That was pathetic. We will at least trap Him."

This scribe comes up and says, "Here, I've got it. I know how to get Him."

They knew the Passover was coming up. They said, “We will set Him against people. We will put Him in a political position where He’ll have to compromise one part of the group. At least the group will be divided.”

Someone says, “What?”

The man says, “I’m a lawyer; I’ve got the answer.”

They’re all gathering together, asking him, “What is it? What is it?”

“We have to break this power He has over the masses of Israel.”

He says, “Well, you know how people are. They’re so biased and they don’t know it. They’re so prejudiced and they don’t see it. Let’s ask which law is the best.”

Someone says, “Well, that’s no big deal, you know: don’t have idols. That’s the first law, the first commandment.”

He says, “No, no; let’s ask Him which law, because if someone just caught their spouse in adultery, they’re going to say adultery is the main commandment. If someone had his son killed, he’s going to say, ‘Don’t murder’ is the main commandment. Someone else will say, ‘One of my sons ran off and joined a cult group down the road,’ and he’ll say, ‘Oh, the idols; that’s the big one.’” He said, “They’re going to pick the one that touches them the most, and they won’t like Him. No, He can’t answer this rightly.”

I believe this scribe has torn allegiances, because it says here he’s testing Him, but in Mark 12 Jesus saw sincerity. He doesn’t know what he’s doing, but he’s using his gifts to test Jesus. He’s not fully sincere, but Jesus sees something in his heart. He says, “OK, which is the great commandment?” Here’s the crowd. They all want to hear.

Some of these old men out there are saying, “You had better answer the one that I’m hurting over. That had better be the main one on your agenda. Someone just broke in and stole my stereo. It had better be, ‘Thou shall not steal,’ or You’re out of town, because I don’t have any insurance.”

It’s that kind of stuff. Jesus looks at him, and here He is. We’re talking about the White House, the Senate, and the main governmental leaders of the nation, people who are far older than Him, assaulting Him in a public forum. He’s completely unshaken.

He goes back and in verse 37 He says, “I want wholehearted lovers.” He says, “I won’t be distracted. I’m going back to the theme. I want lovers. I’m talking about a wedding. My wedding is at hand” (Mt. 22:37, paraphrased). He goes right back to the theme of the wedding. He’s not at all shaken from His focus. He says, “I want lovers.”

I can imagine that scribe coming back, and the man says, “What did He say?”

“He says He wants lovers. I don’t understand it. He said He wants people to love. I didn’t expect that answer. I was expecting Him to pick one of the ten, you know.”

He's shaking them up, but Jesus is crying out and He says, "I want wholehearted lovers of God, because My Father arranged a wedding and the wedding is ready. You shall love the Lord your God."

JESUS' FINAL CRY OVER ISRAEL: A CALL TO LOVE

He's crying out, and this is actually the end of that teaching. This is where He cries out across the nation, right here. This is His final cry over Israel; Matthew 22 is it. This is where His public ministry ends in terms of inviting the heart of the nation to Himself.

Let's look at two words here. It's the word *first* and the word *great* in verse 38. This isn't redundant, by the way. When He said, "This is the first commandment and this is the great commandment," those are two totally different issues. These aren't the same issues.

When He says, "the first commandment," what does He mean? He's speaking of the fact that God the Father promised Jesus an inheritance of people who were lovers of God. He says, "Let Me tell you, it's the first commandment. It's the one highest on God's priority list. There's no commandment higher on God's heart, because He promised Me that I would have a faithful bride. It's the number one thing on His agenda right here— that I would have lovers of God."

WHAT CAN YOU GIVE TO ONE WHO HAS IT ALL?

It's the first commandment because it reveals what God enjoys. Jesus enjoys His bride. You can measure a man's wealth, not every time, but often, by the inheritance that he gives his children. For instance, there's a man who has x-amount of money and his son graduates from college. He has a few million in the bank and he gives his son a \$30,000 car. His son says, "Wow!"

His friends say, "Boy, his dad has some money. Things are going well for them, you know."

There's another man that's worth a few hundred million. He already has a few \$30,000 cars. He buys his son a three million-dollar house. He says, "Son, you know, this is a little commensurate with the wealth I have."

If you go back a few hundred years to the kings of Europe, they had the most power of anyone in the world. They gave their sons countries. They said, "Well, I don't want to give you a chariot or a house. Why don't you take England, and you take France, and you guys be nice to each other, OK? Because lots of people will get hurt if you're not nice to each other." They would give their sons nations because they had so much wealth. Why? Because that revealed their wealth, and an inheritance reveals the passion of the heart of the father as well. It reveals what the father feels towards us.

Whenever I'm over in Europe, whenever I touch this even for a moment, I like to ask them, "What's the best nation? What king is the best king?" They all scream and shout, and anyway, that's part of their culture. I've got a few little jokes I do with that.

What does God the Father give His Son? What do You give a Son that has everything? What do You give a Son to reveal Your wealth? Jesus is the architect of the eternal city. You know that verse in Hebrews 11; it says, "Abraham looked for a city whose builder and architect was God" (Heb. 11:10, paraphrased). That's the eternal city. They're looking for the city. Jesus built the city. Do you know how He built it? He spoke and created it. He

spoke and the worlds were fashioned by His own words. My goodness, this is awesome. This is a city radiant like diamonds glittering. It's so powerful. Whatever theory you take on the new heavens and the new earth, we all agree that they exist. This city glitters like diamonds and lights up the new heaven and new earth. There's no need of a sun because of the brilliance of the city shining like jaspers and diamonds. Jesus built this city. One kind of man marries his wife and gives her a diamond ring. Jesus gives His bride a diamond city. He hands her this jewel. I don't know if you knew, but your Husband is a jeweler. Did you know your Husband is a jeweler? He deals in diamonds at the highest possible level. Anyway, that's who you're married to; your Husband is a jeweler.

What do you give someone who can create the celestial, eternal city by His own word? What do you give if you're God the Father? He looks over all creation; He says, "There's only one thing that expresses the power that I have and the passion that I feel."

God gives Jesus your heart. That's what He gives Him. He gives Him you! He works in such a way that you're cleansed and made in the image of God—cleansed from your sin and then exalted. You're the gift that He gives His Son. This is fantastic!

Jesus understands this. He says, "The number one thing on the heart of My Father is My inheritance and wholehearted lovers. This is the first thing My Father cares about. He promised Me lovers of God." It's the first commandment. It's a very, very important thing.

WE ARE CREATED TO BE WHOLEHEARTED LOVERS

It's not only the first commandment; it's the great commandment as well. It's different. I remember once we went on vacation and came back. The neighbors asked our two boys, Luke and Paul, "How was vacation?"

They said, "It was great!"

How many of you know that, man, when your kids say it was great, whew, you made it? You've got one year behind; the pressure is off. Well, the pressure is on again. We hope they think it's great. Anyway, they said it was great.

It's the first commandment because it's the commandment that God enjoys. Jesus enjoys His inheritance. It's the one the Father promised His Son. It's the great commandment because it's the one that brings pleasure to our life. When we drink this commandment, after it's all over, the Father says, "Well, what did you think about that main commandment?"

"Oh, it's great! I gave my heart."

Do you know why? We are created to be wholehearted lovers. One of the problems in the Body of Christ is this, that if we don't have anything to die for, we don't have anything to live for. The Body of Christ is struggling right now of sheer boredom. They think they're looking for something exciting. Well, we've seen this blessing of the Spirit come and we've seen as many bored people in the blessing meetings as we have receiving. Let me tell you this: there's not an atmosphere and there's not a power manifestation that's going to take away the boredom. Because the heart was created to be wholly abandoned to God in a manner that's unrelated to circumstances.

WHOLEHEARTED LOVE IS THE CURE FOR OUR MALAISE

We were built to be lovers. I didn't say we don't work right until we're mature, but we don't work right until we reach to be a wholehearted lover. Until we have something to die for, we have nothing to live for—in the same way an engine is built for gasoline, and I don't care how sincere you are, if you put water in the engine it's not going to work. You can say, "I was so sincere. I was so sincere."

I'll stop and tell you a story since I'm here, because no one would appreciate it out there, but I put diesel in a gas engine. It was John Paul Jackson's car once, but anyway. He didn't tell me it was diesel. I was driving it home from a retreat and he took off with someone else to go tell them the secrets of their life or something. I drove his car and it was on empty. I pulled it over and put gas in it. I told him, "John Paul, I'm sincere. I didn't mean to do that."

It didn't change a thing. That old car was stuck on the highway and I was in big trouble with my neighbor. Anyway, every time I think of that analogy, it doesn't matter how sincere I am; I have a bit of investment in that analogy. Anyway, I've always wanted to tell who it was I did that with.

In the same way, the human spirit is designed to be wholehearted. We were built this way. We can't live passively. We can try it, because someone out there tells us that passivity in the comfort zone is where life is. We build this nice life to be passive and we die on the inside.

I'm not trying to do weird things to be weird; that's not what I mean. That's not the answer. I'm talking about wholeheartedness in our heart to God. That's where excitement is. Lots of people are bored in all kinds of ways, and what I would suggest is that wholehearted love is the answer. The kind that says this: "I want to give myself to You so much. I want to begin to cast down immoral thoughts. When someone treats me poorly, I want to give myself to You in such a way that I don't respond with evil." I'm talking about wholeheartedness that pulls the very deepest passions of our life into play here. That's the kind of love that makes Christianity exciting. It's called *wholeheartedness*.

Most people are looking for an exciting meeting, an exciting worship team; they're looking for a place where everyone falls down, and there are all kinds of exciting ideas. In the end, those are fun for a while, but they never, ever connect with the design of the human heart.

We're designed to be wholehearted. If we reach for it, there's something that's already working, even if we don't attain. The reaching is what I'm talking about; I'm not worried about the attaining.

Someone says, "Well, have you attained?"

I say, "I don't know. It's none of my business." My business is only to reach. My business is to look at my life and not try to earn a thing from God, because I've been embraced by Him like His Father embraced Him.

He's embraced me in my weakness. I say, "I want everything, everything to be Yours!" I want to think this thing through and out of love give everything. There's a certain dynamic that only operates in that posture.

THE COMMANDMENT THAT DEFINES WHO WE ARE BEFORE GOD

Jesus is looking at the human race and saying, “It’s not just the first commandment. It’s the one that makes your life work. If it’s the one that makes Me happy; it’s the first one, My inheritance.

“If it’s the one that makes You happy, it’s the great one.”

When you do it for a season and someone says, “What’s it like?” you’ll say, “It’s great pursuing a life of wholehearted love. The comfort zone never really made things connect on the inside. I mean, I got everything I wanted, but on the inside it was just like, ‘This can’t be that.’”

Jesus comes to earth, and His first strategy for human happiness is the first commandment. God’s highest concern for His Son is the first commandment. It’s the first and the great commandment. It’s the one that defines who we are. It’s the one that defines how we work. That’s what Jesus answers them: He says, “It’s the first and it’s the great commandment.”

THE FATHER PROMISED JESUS A PEOPLE WHO WOULD LOVE HIM LIKE HE LOVES HIM

I’ll end with this last point here, this last point. We’ll spend a session on the first commandment. There’s so much on the first commandment in the Old and New Testament. It’s really worth looking at for an entire part of an evening. We’ll do that some weeks down the road. I just want to introduce it to you here. It’s not just the first and great commandment. It’s not just the one that thrills Jesus’ heart. It’s not the one that makes you work. It’s also what I call “the great prophecy.” Because Jesus isn’t looking at Israel and saying, “You know what? You really should pay more attention to Me.” That’s not what He’s doing.

He’s saying, “Let Me tell you, from the standpoint of eternity I’ve already seen the end. I’ve already seen Revelation 19. It’s not even written yet. I’ve seen the wedding feast. I’ve seen an equally-yoked bride filled with love for Me. I’ve seen the power of My embrace already to its fullness. Let Me tell you, Israel, you will love Me with all of your heart! I’ve already seen the end of history. You shall love Me!”

He was prophesying over the nation of Israel. He was saying, “My Father has promised Me a people who will love Me like He loves Me.” This is His last teaching: “You will love Me. You will. My Father has already shown Me.”

It’s not an accident that His final prayer, the High Priestly Prayer, ends how? “Father, that they would love Me with the love wherein You love Me” (Jn. 17:26, paraphrased). He ends His intercessory prayer that way. He ends His teaching ministry prophesying that wholehearted love would win the day before it was over.

The people of God will end with wholehearted love. What the Holy Spirit wants to do is to make the first commandment first again. I’m absolutely convinced of that. One thing that I like when I go around is to say that we have almost everything in first place for the first commandment. I believe in the second commandment, and the second commandment isn’t the tenth; it’s the second. It’s way up there on the list. It’s above all the other commandments. The Great Commission is way up there, but when the first commandment isn’t first, everything else is in disarray because there’s no fuel in the engine.

The pleasure of the Christian life, in my opinion, is reaching to give myself fully out of the discerning of His embrace in my life—wanting to give myself back. Not to try to get Him to embrace me, but because He *has*

embraced me: that, to me, is the power of the Christian life. Yes, He's the Lord of the harvest. He wants the Great Commission to happen, but He's the Lord of the Sabbath, too.

He's the Lord of the Sabbath, too. He looked at Mary, as she sat at His feet, and He said, "Mary, you have chosen the best part" (Lk. 10:38, paraphrased). He says, "You've chosen the best part, Mary. You've come and sat at My feet. You've come to give your heart to Me." He said, "This is where things will be a little different, in this posture."

THE MESSAGE OF THE SPIRIT THROUGHOUT THE EARTH

I'm not saying everything bad becomes good. I'm just saying that's the only place that life works. The number one message of this class, I think, is that the Lord is going to release a bridal revelation before He returns. If that's this generation, then we're in a great position. I think as it was His last revelation in His teaching ministry, as it was His last prophecy over the nation of Israel, it will be His message for the last generation.

I think it will come to pass, but it's also what the Holy Spirit is saying.

People ask me, "What's the Holy Spirit saying to Germany?"

I said, "One thing for sure: the first commandment has to be first."

They say, "Well, we mean, what's He really saying?"

I say, "I guarantee you, what He's saying to every city, to every nation, to every ministry, every time, is that the first commandment is first."

That seems so simple, but you open the magazines and you look around and you look at everything here and there. I'm not trying to be critical, because I'm trying to give myself to the purpose of God. I say, "Lord, where are the conferences, the teachings, the cry for the first commandment in the land?"

The answer I get from the Lord is, "It will be there. You wait and see. I'm going to raise up 10,000 preachers for whom the first commandment is first place in their focus."

Amen. Let's stand.