

Session 4 The Bride's Response at the Wedding Celebration, Part 2

INTRODUCTION

The wedding announcement; let's read it. This is the bride speaking: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come" (Rev. 19:7). I like to add the word, *finally*. I just imagine some of us in that crowd saying, "Finally it came." But maybe not, I don't know. I just play with that word there. "And His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:7-8).

In verse 6 we ended with what I imagined to be the wedding vows. I imagine the Father saying, "Do you want Him? Do you trust Him? Do you believe in His leadership?"

Our answer on that day with the voice of authority is, "Yes! We see like He sees and we agree with His leadership over our life. We're glad. We rejoice and we give glory because the marriage of the Lamb has come."

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF ALL CREATION

God's mission statement: "For the marriage of the Lamb has come" (Revelation 19:7b). As I said in Session 1, this is the guiding principle of all of creation. The only way we can interpret life accurately is through this sentence right here: that we're called to a marriage celebration, a marriage ceremony, a marriage relationship, a marriage supper. They're all synonymous. This one sentence gives a different interpretation of human history than any other sentence could. God is preparing a companion for His bride. He's preparing a companion for His bride. We will see the wisdom of this. As a matter of fact, all of history will see the wisdom of this very clearly on that day. On that day when we see where it ends up, we will see the wisdom of how God has led history, because His goal is to get people to grow in love.

OBEDIENCE IS MANDATORY, BUT LOVE IS VOLUNTARY

As I've said before, on the last day, obedience is mandatory for believers and unbelievers, angels and demons. Everyone will obey in the sense that they'll bow their knees at His command. Every tongue will confess, "He's the One. He's the Lord."

When He says to the demons, "Go to the lake of fire," they won't say, "No." They will obey Him and go to the lake of fire. Everyone, every creature will obey Him. There's very interesting language in Revelation 5; it says, "Everything on the sea, in the sea, on the earth, and under the earth will obey Him" (Rev. 5:13, paraphrased). I don't know where all those groups are, on the sea and in the sea, and maybe it's those who died. Those phrases always kind of surprise me. Anyway, obedience is mandatory for all creation, but here's the key. Love is voluntary. That's the difference right there. Obedience is mandatory, but love is voluntary. God is producing voluntary love in the hearts of redeemed people in the way He's leading planet earth and the way He's leading history.

SATAN'S RAGE, OUR SIN AND FOLLY, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD'S PLAN

He's allowing the combination of three things. I'm just repeating. I've said it before, but I think it bears repeating. There's Satan's rage. He wants to devour us. We have to resist it. There's our own sin and folly. We have to repent of it; humble ourselves and repent of it. There's God's training plan to bring us forth in love. It

has discipline in it, where He allows certain disciplines to come on us circumstantially. We have to endure the Father's discipline. We have to repent of our folly and sin and we have to resist the rage of Satan. All three of those forces work together in our circumstances.

Most theologians disagree with which percentage goes on what at any given time. I'm the first to tell you, I don't really know in many circumstances which one is mostly taking place. Sometimes it's very apparent. Sometimes you just can't figure it out. Satan wants to devour us. The Bible tells us to resist him and he flees. Our own sin and folly contribute to our peril and our plight. We're supposed to repent of it and humble ourselves, and confess it. Then the Father has a certain discipline that He Himself puts upon us in circumstances. We're supposed to endure that, according to Hebrews 12:5-13. Between the three of them, He's producing love in the heart. You might end up with messed-up circumstances in all kinds of areas of life. There are spiritual struggles; there are financial struggles; there are relational struggles. There are health struggles. There are career struggles; there are ministry struggles. There are so many areas in which we stumble. We might not end up with blessing in every one of those areas in our circumstances. Probably the areas that are causing us pressure will always be different.

I know this: between Satan's rage, our sin and folly, and God the Father's plan, the three of them work together. If we say yes to God, He overrules the whole thing and it produces love in the heart. It produces a growth in love. That's the thing that we have to know. That's the missing piece which human history can't see, that we'll have a marriage supper where bridal love, voluntary love, is the glory of the human race. When this is imparted to us, this will be the most powerful thing to possess, obviously excluding Jesus, but in terms of our own personhood possessing this love, we will see the wisdom of it in that day. We will say, "Oh, Lord, our blessed circumstances can't do anything for us now." But the presence of love is like jewels that adorn the bride on that day. It's the currency of the eternal city.

THE JEWELS OF DIVINE LOVE WILL ADORN US FOREVER

I constantly try to realign my soul to this. I don't always. When I get into all different pressures and pains, I say, "Wait a second. Time out. Why am I on planet earth? I'm loved by You. I'm a lover of You." That's the reason I have life on planet earth. It's not even primarily to do these other things. Secondly those things are important, but they're secondary. I'm loved and I'm a lover; therefore I'm successful.

I have pressure. Whether it's the devil's rage, whether it's my own folly creating it, whether it's God the Father's plan and discipline creating it, I don't always know, but I know it pushes me to the only place of comfort I can get. I realign my soul, and again, I don't do this every time. Many times I say, "Wait, You love me. I love You. Therefore I'm already successful. The jewels of divine love will adorn me forever if I can find You in this pressure. The people over there and over here are mean. They're doing this thing and that thing wrong. That's all really secondary. You love me; I love You."

THE MISSING PIECE THAT ALL OF HISTORY IS GROPING AFTER

I can find comfort in that dialogue. You know what happens? Your heart grows in love. God overrules the whole thing. It produces good in you. It doesn't necessarily mean you get a good car at the end of the month. It doesn't necessarily mean you'll be over the thing for which they kicked you out. That's not necessarily what good means. You'll have that which is precious and that which is valuable forever on that day. It will be good unto you, but it's only through this sentence, "The marriage of the Lamb has come," that you can interpret life according to God's leadership. Because this is the missing piece that all of history is groping after.

When they're saying, "How could a God that's so good let this happen?" He's producing voluntary love in the hearts of people who will come to Him in the vacuum and the pain of our life.

Two vital statements on the wedding day. Number one: voluntary love. Number two: sovereign help. She makes these two vital statements on their wedding day. First she's seen. She says with her own mouth, "The wedding is here." Her own lips are proclaiming it. Remember, she has the authority of Jesus on her lips. She sounds like the waters. She sounds like the thunder.

THE GLORY OF JESUS IS A BRIDE WITH VOLUNTARY LOVE

Now let's look at the two vital statements. These are very critical. She proclaims that the bride has made herself ready. This sounds like maybe a self-absorbed statement of bragging. That's not at all what's going on. Basically, it's a statement of desire, not a statement of achievement. She's saying, "I said yes because I wanted to say yes. It was voluntary. I agreed to go through with the process. I said yes to Jesus Christ." It's a statement of desire, not a statement of achievement.

She's not saying, "Hey, I'm the reason I'm here." She's saying, "No one made me say yes to You, Jesus. I wanted to because You were beautiful and lovely and You're worth it. I would do it again! I love You, I love You, I love You!" That's what she's saying here. "I've said yes from my own volition to You."

The angels love that. The angels love to hear that out the bride, because we have this position that they would look at and say, "Wow! What a position."

They love it when the saints say of their own free will, "I would love Him again and do it again with Him." That's what she's saying on her wedding day. "I chose to love You. I would do it again. I want You. It's worth it. I made myself ready. I did say yes to You."

It's a very important deal. It's not mandatory obedience; it's voluntary love. Because God has put boundary lines on redemption, we have to say yes by our own will or it doesn't count. This is what she's saying: "I said yes because I wanted to."

It's wonderful. This is Satan's rage against us. He hates this part of us. He says, "I gave you all the pleasures of the world. I confused you and you kept coming back and saying yes to Him." This really infuriates him, that he gives all the treasures of this world. We turn them aside if there's compromise in them and we say yes to Him. That really, really upsets him. This is the glory of Jesus: a bride with voluntary love. She has made herself ready.

THERE'S NO DETAIL TOO SMALL FOR A PERSON IN LOVE

Another thing besides voluntary love: under B, I would like to add the words, "careful love." There's nothing more careful than a bride adorning herself on her wedding day. I've been doing weddings for twenty years. I love weddings. They're such a privilege to be a part of and to attend. There's just love and celebration. People are happy. It's great!

Many times I've had the opportunity right before the wedding starts to go back and pray with the bride. It's wonderful. I want to say *cute*, but that might sound demeaning. *Endearing* is the word. She looks in the mirror

one last time. She turns her hair right; then she turns it back. Then she puts it back left; then she turns it back right. Then she turns it again. Then she turns the cuffs up. Then she turns them down. Then she turns them up. Then she turns them down. It's so cute. I say, "She's so careful to do it exactly the highest way she can see." It's endearing. Bridal love isn't just voluntary; it's careful love. There's no detail too small to a person in love. I love that.

It's one of my things to watch them do all of that. I walk out and I say, "She loves him. She really wants this thing to work."

Anyway, let's go to the next point. The moment she says, "I did it because I wanted to do it," she's so quick to acknowledge God's help. She says, "However, it was granted to me. There was sovereign intervention. You did help me, Abba." Of course, Abba knew it but she says, "I want to be very clear: I did it because I wanted to do it. However, it was granted. It was given to me by sovereign intervention." She's acknowledging the grace of God and the Father's help in it. It was granted. She acknowledges the Father's favor and the Father's help; she acknowledges His sovereign intervention.

Jesus talks about how He did the works of the Father. These were things the Father granted to Him to do. When our lives are fully arrayed, we will end up at the end of the day saying, "Lord, You gave us the works that we did. You're the One who gave us the idea to do the things You told us to do."

He'll say, "That's right, because I love My Son and I know what's in His heart." There are the works of the Father that He'll give us, like Jesus did, so we won't take credit. They're the Father's works, but He's promised the fullness, too.

When the bride stands in fullness, we will say, "The reason we have the fullness, the full revival, is because You promised it. It was Your work that did it." Then we will give Him the credit for it. The harvest is going to be accomplished; the nations will be disciplined. The Church will be mature. It will be the work of God the Father. The Church will attain to the fullness of maturity before it's over (Eph. 4:13). That's the work of the Father that's granted to the Church. We won't take credit for our maturity. We'll say it was our decision in this respect: "We loved You because You were lovely and we wanted to do it."

Those are the two statements that she makes on the heels of proclaiming the glory of her wedding day. She's quick to say, "I loved You because it was in my heart." Secondly, she acknowledges that the Father really helped her in this.

GOD THE FATHER MADE BEAUTIFUL A BRIDE FOR HIS SON

It says this in this passage that "she was arrayed in fine linen." What a great sentence: "arrayed in fine linen." I like the word *adorned* in Revelation 21:2. Well, let's just read it; we're right here.

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2)—and by the way, we'll spend a whole evening on Revelation 21 and 22 in both sessions in the next two weeks. The city is the people in the city. It's all together, and there's a reason why the city and the people are merged together as one entity and one identity. We'll look at that later. The holy city came down from heaven, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

God the Father made beautiful the bride. The word “adorned” suggests that He made the Church beautiful for Jesus. This is Abba. This isn't only His girl. It's His boy; it's His Son. He made her; He adorned her. He's the One who released the influences of the Spirit, because the Spirit is under the Father's authority. He adorns the city; He adorns the people of God for His Son.

“THE FINE LINEN IS THE RIGHTEOUS ACTS OF THE SAINTS”

One of the ways that we're adorned is with fine linen. Very clearly he defines the fine linen right here in this passage. “The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev. 19:8). “The righteous acts of the saints”; “clean and bright”: those are all interesting phrases. The gift of righteousness, the robe of righteousness, is a free gift. All of us will receive the robe of righteousness as a free gift. Our righteousness is as filthy rags, right? We all know that (Isa. 64:6). We can't earn the position of God's favor as the bride, but once we've said yes and the robes of righteousness are around us, now the Lord declares that our decisions to obey really matter. He says, “You get your entrance into this city and you get your entrance into the bride as a free gift, but the garments that you wear that will adorn you are according to the yes that was in your spirit.”

Some say yes thirty-fold. Some say yes sixty-fold. Some say yes onehundredfold. The Lord rewards the yes because He wants to make this point. It matters that you say yes in costly ways. It matters to God; it counts. He says, “I actually remember the yes.” The Scripture doesn't emphasize so much the penalty of the no. He doesn't look at the thirty-fold and say, “Man, you're 60 or 70 percent short.” That's not how it's presented. If you do say yes, it doesn't mean you make up things to do for God. But you say yes to His leadings. He says, “I won't forget it. I will reward you.”

Though you have the gift of righteousness, the robe of righteousness on you, part of your reward forever are the different types of garments of the bridal attire. Just like in the world, wherever you go in the world, the garments depict the position that a particular person has in society. You can tell what position a person has by the garments they wear. You can tell if they're beggars or kings. You can tell if they're lieutenants or waitresses. You can tell many, many things by the attire that a person wears in a society.

The same is true in the society of heaven. There are certain linens that will be given to you according to the yes; according to the maturity of how you said yes to the Holy Spirit's leading. We don't try to make things up for God. In my early days I gave God ideas about how I should obey. Don't do that, OK? I said, “I'll do it.” I did things for Him that He had to actually stop me from doing.

Instead He said, “I appreciate the effort, but no, don't. Don't do that.”

Here's an exciting thing. I'll give you a few more verses here that go with this linen. Malachi 3:17: just add that verse to your notes. He will make us like jewels on that day. He will give jewels to us. There will be jewels that we wear on our garments on that day. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 talks about gold, precious stones, and silver. I don't think that's just a metaphor. I think there's a metaphor dimension to it, but there are a number of places where jewels are pictured in the eternal city. The exciting thing is that the reward is based not on how big the thing was, but on simple obedience. The cup of cold water is important to the Lord. I don't think He penalizes us for not giving the cup of cold water; He just remembers when we do it out of love. He says, “I remember your love. I love the fact that you loved Me back in 1994.”

You say, "'94, man, that was twenty years ago. I was still only thirty-two back then. Wow! You remember that?"

He says, "I absolutely remember that."

It's God valuing the small acts of love. Don't get an attitude of, "Well, I have to go out and be Billy Graham." It's not about impact; it's about the yes in our spirit. It's all about love.

These linens are clean. They aren't linens of selfish ambition. They aren't bragging. They're not the Pharisee strutting. It's clean linen. It's linen that was motivated by love. I don't know that everyone's motives are ever 100 percent pure. Some people spend a lot of time figuring out if it's 80 percent, 85 percent, 72 percent. Who cares? Do it. I don't even spend any time worrying about that. If someone is in need, I do it. If someone says, "Great job," I say, "Thanks." It's just that simple, and I hope it shows up in heaven, and if it doesn't, don't worry about it. I don't know that's there's ever been a totally purely-motivated act in a fallen heart. It doesn't really matter. You just love the best you can and don't worry about it, because you love Him. It's just that simple.

The linen is bright. That's interesting. It's bright linen. Revelation 19:14, the very same chapter, says it's white. It's bright and it's white. Possibly those are the same: bright and white. In Mark 9, when Jesus appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, His clothes were exceedingly white. Maybe He was wearing His wedding garments. I don't know, but His clothes were exceedingly white when He appeared to them. Mark was written mostly by Peter, and Peter was struck by that because he was on the Mount. He said, "Wow! The clothes He had were exceedingly white."

Matthew 17:2 says, "Jesus' face shone like the sun and His clothes were made white as light" (Mt. 17:2, paraphrased).

Under number 3 I have, "Psalm 104." God wraps Himself in garments of light. Jesus wears garments of light. Somewhere I think there's a literal dimension to this light in our garments, and the jewels we wear. I mean, not that these things are wrong, but I doubt we'll wear Levis in heaven or something. We'll have clothes so befitting of royalty. I doubt that we've ever imagined it. The Master Designer is designing them as rewards for His Son, and adorning His Church for His Son, Christ Jesus.

One more verse comes to mind that you might add there: 1 Corinthians 15:41b-42a. "As one star differs from another star in glory, so also do we differ in glory in the resurrection" (1 Cor. 15:41b-42a, paraphrased). It's the clothes that are white, wrapped in garments of white. It's the jewels that adorn the clothes. Another verse that comes to mind is Daniel 12:3. It says, "He will make His saints shine like the sun in that day" (Dan. 12:3, paraphrased). They will literally shine. The righteous ones will shine like the sun on that day, or something like that. That's close. That's the wedding garments. We're arrayed in these. It does matter. It definitely does matter.

"BE GLAD, AND REJOICE, AND GIVE HIM GLORY"

The bride's response is a response of gladness. This is her third response in the wedding ceremony. Actually, she has three different responses under this category of gladness. She's glad, she rejoices, and she gives Him glory.

Let's read it here. Revelation 19:7, "Let us be glad, let us rejoice, and let us give Him glory" (Rev. 19:7, paraphrased). Because it's all related to the revelation of the marriage.

"Let us be glad." We don't want to underestimate this statement. I've said this before: every one of these statements is like the title of a book. I don't think it's, "Let us be glad," and that's it. I think the book is called, *Boy, are They Glad!* There are like fifty chapters in the book about how glad we are. Don't think of this as just short, little sentences, and we don't have much to say on that day. These are titles of the volume of what's in our heart. Read it that way.

The songs are that way. When they have these little, one-sentence songs, it's simply the title of the song giving glory and honor to God. Probably the song is tremendously long and in-depth and beautiful beyond anything we could understand. I perceive the book of Revelation as hints and seed thoughts of the splendor of Christ Jesus. One of these days we'll open the book called *Boy, Is She Glad!* and we'll enter into the realm of eternal gladness that we can't even comprehend.

WE LIVE BY BEING ANCHORED IN THE REALITY OF OUR FUTURE

Remember, this is your story. I'm talking about you right now; I'm not talking about them. This is your story. When you connect with this story, it changes the way you interpret life. I tell you, you will enter into a realm of eternal, infinite gladness beyond anything you ever knew existed. The greatest gladness of this age will never touch the filling of our spirit like the gladness in the Holy Spirit at the wedding supper, the gladness of being the Bride of Christ. This is a gladness related to being the bride. It's directly related, because it says we're glad that the wedding has come. It's gladness because of another event: our identity as the Bride of Christ. I just love the idea of how God the Father has planned our future for us. Abba has really planned this thing well. There have been so many years of disappointment and pain; so many years of sorrow. Forever you'll be free from heaviness and depression, forever. No matter how it might dog you in this age, one day it will forever be gone. You may be sad today in circumstances, but you won't be very long. That's a promise from the Word of God.

When we connect with our destiny and our identity, some of that gladness begins to touch us a little, even now. Because as believers one of the powers of our life is that we live by hope. We live by future certainties. We talked about that last week. Hope is a future certainty. It says, "Now abide faith, hope, and love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Those are three streams that empower the Body of Christ. Faith does, and love does, but so does hope. We live by being anchored in the reality of our future. We live by hope, not just by faith and love.

Some of this gladness will touch us in this age when we connect our heart with that. This thing is worth meditating on: speaking to one another and thanking God in praise. We asking Him to reveal it; you know the prayer in Ephesians 1:17-18, "Show us the wealth of being Jesus' inheritance" (Eph. 1:17-18, paraphrased). A sentence I've said over the years is that this is as bad as it will ever get for you. It will never, ever be worse than earth. This is as bad as it will ever be for you, but for an unbeliever this is as good as it ever gets for them. That's terrifying. This is as good as it will ever be for them, right now. This is as bad as it will ever be for you. It will never be worse than this.

EVERY SINGLE MOVEMENT OF YOUR HEART WILL BE REWARDED IN THAT DAY

OK, there's another book: *Boy, Is She Going to Rejoice!* That's the name of that book. There are fifty chapters in that book. It's a little different than gladness. Here's what I think this means. My definitions are all subject to whosoever. As one man said, "I feel God in that passage."

This here is how I feel God in this passage, in rejoicing. There are times when you do sacrifice to obey God and sacrifice to serve in costly obedience. One day it will fully make sense to you. You'll look at the costly obedience. You broke the wrong relationship. You stood for the truth in a way that cost you. You were misunderstood because you were serving. You were overlooked. Everything will make sense one day—every sacrifice you made. When He pulls out this extravagant reward for cups of cold water, you'll say, "Lord, it's disproportionate kindness to us."

He's going to say, "Oh no. I saw there was a heartbeat in you towards love when you did that. You didn't put that person down. You didn't slander them when they slandered you because you looked at Me and said, 'I don't want to because You don't want me to.'" He says, "I remembered that."

We'll say, "Wow! You remembered that?"

He says, "Oh, I remember far more than that. I remember every movement of your heart to Me in love. I absolutely remember every one of them." In Hebrews 6:10, God says, "If I forget one of them, charge me with injustice" (Heb. 6:10, paraphrased). God challenges even the Body of Christ to call Him unjust if He forgets one act of servanthood to a person because you loved God. He says, "I will not forget a single one; I'm unjust if I do."

This is so great. Everything will be remembered. All the photos, all the family pictures, every one of them will be present; not one of them will be missing. On the first day you were a Christian, you did this. Every single photo will be present there when the family gathers. Because He's a husband, our heavenly Bridegroom loves us so greatly that no small act goes unnoticed and unappreciated by Him. He doesn't misinterpret any of them. He registers and notices and is grateful for every single, small act of devotion of His bride. What man on the earth can dwell with his wife in the way that the Lord dwells with His wife? Every single movement of your heart matters to Him. When you serve a cup of cold water, He says, "Yes." He says, "I'll not forget it. My memory is perfect. It's not unappreciated." How many times have you served, and you were misunderstood or overlooked and unappreciated? But every single photo will be present on that day. It's a very, very wonderful day for each movement of our heart to Him.

John the Baptist connected with the reality of rejoicing. Because remember, we rejoice for what reason? Because of the marriage; it's all related to bridal revelation. It's all related to the image of being the bride. It's all related to the identity of us being at the marriage supper in the end. Again, that rejoicing can touch us now.

John 3:29 is a great verse. Here's this old ascetic in the wilderness. Think about the pleasures he had. He had no MTV, he had nothing. No Haagen-Dazs or anything. I'm trying to be cute here, but anyway, he had no pleasures whatsoever. I don't really watch MTV, although I did on my vacation. Actually, some of the songs were pretty interesting. John the Baptist was out in the wilderness with absolutely nothing. He had the wilderness. He had caves, locusts, and honey and that's it. He said in John 3:29, "I heard the voice of the bridegroom," and he says, "and therefore I greatly rejoice" (Jn. 3:29).

Oh, I love that. He was tapping into this book, *Boy, Is She Going To Rejoice!* He was already experiencing some of those chapters ahead of time. Why? Because he heard the voice of the Bridegroom. He didn't say, "I greatly rejoice because my ministry is big." He didn't say, "I greatly rejoice because everyone is turning." He

says, "I heard the voice. I heard His voice." I'm not trying to be mystical, but through the teaching of the Word, right here, there's a faint voice of the Bridegroom. I'm not trying to say, "Listen carefully"; I'm not trying to do one of those. I'm not talking about a literal experience. All I'm saying is that through the simple revelation of the Word of God, Revelation 19, when I study this in just a faint way, my heart is wooed to the revelation of being the bride. In that sense I hear the voice of the Bridegroom. That's why I like talking about it. I just put all the talking about it behind me and say, "This is real." My heart rejoices all the more.

John the Baptist said, "Man, I don't have anything out there in the wilderness, but I tell you one thing: I heard His voice." Something starts percolating on the inside. It starts happening. I know where I'm going and I understand life when I hear the voice of the Bridegroom. I interpret everything differently when I hear that voice. When I lose that voice, well, I think we have trouble when we lose it, because the rejoicing is related to the bridal revelation here. I rejoice because of the marriage. There's a cause-and-effect relationship going on here.

NEVER AGAIN WILL WE BE DISTRACTED FROM PURE AND SIMPLE DEVOTION

Her third response here is to "give Him glory." There have been so many years of sinful desires and compromise and fear of failure and all these things, but finally she's God-centered. She lives with a focused heart. Jesus is her first love. Glory to God, she's God-centered. She has a total focus on the Man Christ Jesus. It takes God to do that. We can't do that without God's power. It takes God to love God. One of my greatest pains in life is that I lose the focus of being centered on the Man Christ Jesus, but the day will come when I will give Him glory. Never, ever again will the first commandment be second in my life. That's one of my goals in life in the Holy Spirit. I want the first commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Mt. 22:37), to be first in my life, and it's not. I lose it. I lose it regularly and I have to realign my heart.

I say, "Wait! Wait! I don't want to do it this way," but one day the first commandment will be first in me, and it will be first forever. There will be no fear of failure; no more struggle; no more sinful desire mingling in with our worship. Oh, I can't wait until I have the excellence and the purity of an undivided heart. How excellent it will be when our hearts are undivided. We will give Him glory. Never again will we be distracted from pure and simple devotion.

That's what Paul told them in 2 Corinthians 11:3. He said, "Oh, you're so distracted from pure and simple devotion" (2 Cor. 11:3, paraphrased). One day no one will be distracted from that again. Never again are we going to lose our first love.

The bride's identity. Page 4. I don't know why those are mentioned: gladness, rejoicing, and glory. There's a reason those three made it into the record. Those are just things to ask the Lord about and rejoice in and be happy about. Remember, there's a book behind every little subtitle. There's a reason why those statements were recorded at the wedding supper.

"THESE ARE THE TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD"

Look at verses 9 and 10. "Then he said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, 'These are the true sayings of God.'

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’” (Rev. 19:9-10).

First, this angel comes up to him. The bride has just responded in these ten verses. The angel comes to John and he wants John to connect with his future in a really personal way. He says, “John, first thing: the Lord wants you to know that these are the true sayings of God.” When God re-emphasizes His own truth, you know you’re touching the deepest truth on the Father’s heart. The angel of the Lord says, “Abba wanted me to tell you something, John. I mean, you’re really heavy in truth and you’ve really been around the block and you’ve seen it all. But let me tell you, these are the true things on the heart of God, this marriage revelation. Father especially wanted me to tell you that, and to emphasize that to you in your mature apostolic ministry.”

It’s like the arrow of God struck that apostle’s heart when he said, “The true sayings of God.” He said, “These are the things that Father is trying to convince you of more personally, John. The true sayings of God are the things that Father wants you to be sure of.”

That’s why He’s emphasizing this truth by calling it truth. The whole Word of God is truth, but in those very few passages where God emphasizes the truth of the truth, He’s saying, “I especially want you convinced of this truth. It will deeply impact you. That’s the first thing I want to say.”

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER”

Then he tells John, “This is the place of blessing. This is where the human heart is blessed, right here. Do you want to know fullness, John? Do you want to bring fullness to the people? They will be blessed when they find their life and truth and image and identity in this place.” Blessed are the people who are connected in their heart to Revelation 19. They will live life differently.

I want to say this: you’ll be most fulfilled when the voice of the Bridegroom increases in you more and more and more. I’m talking about the Holy Spirit revealing who we are as the inheritance of Christ Jesus. That’s why Paul the apostle wrote Ephesians 1:17. I’ve quoted it several times already. He prayed for the saints at Ephesus. He says, “O Father, the wealth of the riches of being God’s own inheritance. Oh, if they could see who they are” (Eph. 1:17, paraphrased)! He said, “The wealth that would come into their experience if they saw by the opening of the eyes of their heart. They are the inheritance of God Himself. They are the thing He longs for. They are what He’s waiting for. They are the companion the Father has promised His Son.”

Paul prayed that the wealth would come to the Ephesians when they connected with this. The angel says it very simply. He says, “Blessed.”

We think, “Whoa!” Because there are many chapters in that book right there. Blessed are the people.

John the Baptist said, “Oh, I rejoiced because I have heard the voice of the Bridegroom.” Fantastic!

THE REVELATION OF THE LOVING HEART OF JESUS AT THE END OF HISTORY

Then the angel tells him, “I want you to make the truth of this passage known. I want you to impart the testimony of Jesus to others.” Because he calls it the testimony of Jesus. This revelation is Jesus’ testimony. It’s not the whole testimony of Jesus, but it’s on the very top of the list from what I understand.

He says, "I want you to make the truth of the wedding known. Write it! Get out the word wherever you go. Write this thing down. Don't let this truth go into disrepute." The Holy Spirit will so emphasize this truth. We'll look really in-depth at some of these prophecies which reveal that there will be a revelation of the people of God at the very end of redemptive history in this world. The angel says, "Write. Get the word out, John. Make it known to other people."

Here's how I picture this. I picture the Holy Spirit coming up to us, and He's tenderly taking this beaten up, discouraged, shame-filled woman, the Bride of Christ. He's holding her chin up. He's saying, "Look up into His eyes. Hold your chin up. Do you know who you are? Write. Speak it right to her."

The Holy Spirit, I believe, is lifting the chin of His bride and saying, "Look into the face of the One that loves you. You're His eternal companion. You're the one He longs for." The Spirit was telling John, "Get the word out. Make this known to all that you come in contact with."

THE HIGHEST DEFINITION OF THE APOSTLES' MINISTRY

First, we can do it by proclamation. Whether we're speaking it on the phone, or face to face, it doesn't matter. You don't have to speak to crowds, but there's the proclamation.

It's interesting that John the Baptist and the apostles, in their ministry, were called "friends of the Bridegroom." I have the verses right here. Isn't that interesting? When Jesus spoke about John the Baptist, He thought of John's ministry first as being a friend—one who prepared people for bridal love. That was also how John saw his ministry. That's how the apostles saw it, right there in Matthew 9:15.

Jesus says, "I want to tell you apostles, you're part of the bride, but in terms of your ministry you're preparing bridal love in their hearts. You're preparing them to receive from Me the love of Jesus, and then to receive the impartation of the love of God in your heart back for God."

Paul the apostle said it there in 2 Corinthians 11. He said, "This is my whole point: to betroth you as one virgin; that you would have a pure heart for God" (2 Cor. 11:3). He said, "That's my whole point—to betroth you to God, to Jesus."

It's not about getting a big following and having power. It's about winning the hearts of people to the first commandment. That's not the only point, but it's the highest definition of the apostles' ministry: connecting them to love to become lovers of God. First they receive it; then they become it. All the other mandates find their expression in this one. As friends of the Bridegroom they are a part of the bride, but in their ministry function they are friends. They are preparing bridal love in the hearts of the people. Paul interceded that they would know they were Jesus' inheritance. He did it through prayer.

ANGELIC REVELATION OF THE BRIDE TO THE END-TIME CHURCH

I'll add a third one. God is going to reveal it supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. Before this thing is over the angels are going to bring revelation of this. Oh, I love this one. The angel comes to John and in Revelation 21:9 says, "I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9). How would you like to have an angel show you the bride, the Lamb's wife? What a cool revelation for an angel to show you. With all of my heart I believe there's going to be angelic interaction revealing the Bride of Christ to the end-time church. We will see the

dreams and visions of Acts 2:17. I can't imagine anything more important than us seeing, even through the revelatory ministry of the Spirit, who we are.

The angel says, "I want you to worship God, John. I want you to be a worshiper of God. That's your first occupation. That's your first purpose of life—being a worshiper, a lover of God."

To be a worshiper, you receive love and you give love. That's what a worshiper is. You receive the embrace of Jesus and then you embrace Him back. You're an extravagant lover of God.

When he said, "Worship God," he was saying, "I've just introduced the bride to you. Your number one calling is to be an extravagant lover of Christ Jesus, an extravagant worshiper." I'm not talking about a ministry style or a worship style; I'm talking about wholeheartedness. Some people think extravagant worship is louder or softer or higher or lower. It's not style and form I'm talking about. I'm talking about wholeheartedness. Because the quietest temperament can be an extravagant worshiper, no less than other temperaments.

We say, "I love You." We give the cup of cold water out of love. We love Him! "I love to give anyone a cup of cold water, Lord, if You want me to. Anything!" That's what I'm talking about as a worshiper. That's our identity.

We're blessed in A. We're people who make the bridal revelation known. We're worshipers. We're lovers of God, and this is the essence of being prophetic people.

I have something out of place here, but I will put it here regardless. John's response. He completely flips out! He just starts worshiping the angel. I have that actually in the other session. We're talking about the most mature apostle in history, an apostle for sixty years. Think of the capacity of John the apostle. Think of the discernment and the ability to receive revelation; think of this man's capacity in the Spirit. He's so overwhelmed at the bridal revelation. He looks at this and he can't contain it. He's so overwhelmed.

Do you know why? He took it personally. He forgot he was an apostle. He forgot he was writing a letter to some other churches. He says, "Wait, this is who I am?! My God!" He falls down and confuses the messenger with the message. He's so happy about the message that he totally misinterprets the messenger. He says, "Oh, I love you, I love you, I love you. I love you, I love you."

He says, "John's just telling everyone 'I love you'!"

"Oh, I love you, I worship you and I love you, I love you."

The angel says, "John, John! Get a hold of yourself. John, do you know who I am?"

"Oh, I love you. I worship you, I worship you."

He says, "No! Don't! Stop! John!" Because he saw who he was. The only other time John did this was in chapter 22:8. He falls down and worships the angel again. He does that only two times in his whole recorded ministry. After the whole bride is revealed in chapters 21 and 22, he falls down again and worships the angel. I

don't know if it's the same angel. Maybe it is. This is an amazing thing. He had just been corrected. I'm telling you, when this thing touches us, it's so overwhelming.

OUR HEARTS ARE OVERJOYED AND MADE BEAUTIFUL BY LOVE

I love to tell the story, and I have to tell it in a veiled way so that I don't embarrass anyone, but it's someone in our church here. There was this gal who got married. She was dating this man, and the relationship was on and off and on and off and on and off. She really loved this man and everything, and everything was going well for a while. Then it went bad. Then it went good. Then it went bad. There were two or three cycles. Finally, this man came to his senses. He went to her and said, "You're the one. I'm going for it."

I would tell this story more in-depth in a different setting, since some of you might know her, I don't want to embarrass her. Finally, he comes and brings the big bouquet of flowers. He flies on an airplane and surprises her. He gives her these three dozen roses. She's completely freaked out. "I don't want to marry you!" He gets down on his knees in the airport. She says,

"Whoa!" He finally awoke, in my opinion. She's so excited about it that, as they're out eating or going somewhere at some big public place, she's running down the mall telling total strangers, "I'm getting married! I'm getting married! He loves me! I love him! I'm getting married! I'm getting married!"

That's what John was doing right here. He was going wild. "He loves me! I love Him! He loves me!"

These strangers were saying, "I appreciate it. Can I come to the wedding?" She was just telling everyone indiscriminately. She was so overjoyed and made beautiful by love. Love beautifies our hearts. John is so overwhelmed, he just forgets everything. He falls down and begins to worship.

"THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY"

OK, we'll have to do this one really fast because we're over time. It's the last one. I'll just hint at it, and we'll look at it more fully in another setting, but I don't want you to miss it in this context.

Right here, he tells him to worship God. The angel defines prophecy. He takes this occasion of the revelation of the Bride of Christ. He stops. He says, "Let me now tell you, John, what prophecy is about." It's the strangest time for an angel to give him a catechism on prophecy, right in the middle of this—unless it's according to what it really is. The testimony of Jesus is the fresh testimony and the fresh desire in the heart of Jesus. Jesus has a testimony like you do. He has a past, present, and future testimony, just like you. He's looking forward to His bride. He has a story like you have.

What the angel is saying is this: "You've just seen His story in front of your eyes. You've just seen the fresh thing that's pulsating on the heart of the Son of God." This is the thing that's grabbed His heart, right here. This is the highest purpose of prophecy: to pull the people's heart into the revelation of the bride and into bridal love.

THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF THE MOVE OF THE SPIRIT IS TO REVEAL LOVE

We'll spend a session on this, because I have fifteen different reasons from the Scriptures why revealing bridal love, or the love of God, is the highest expression of the move of the Holy Spirit. There are all kinds of ways that God can help us by the prophetic ministry, but let me tell you, when the spirit of prophecy is working at its highest, when it's working at its highest, it's awakening love in the hearts of people for the Son of God. When the spirit of prophecy is working at its highest, God is the focus.

IT'S NOT THE PROPHET OF GOD, BUT THE GOD OF THE PROPHET

We've seen this in the wrong way on a number of occasions. We've seen it in the right way sometimes, too. When the prophetic ministry is functioning rightly, here's what happens. The people talk about the God of the prophet, not the prophet of God. When they leave the meeting, here's what we want people to do. They leave the meeting and they've got this ache in their heart. They've been called out and ministered to, whether in the ministry line or one-on-one. They've got this ache. They say, "Oh, that guy or that gal spoke the words that touched my heart. Oh, God loves me. He loves me. How did he know God loves me? I love You, God."

They're going out to their car and they say, "Oh, did you get a word?"

"Oh, it was wonderful."

"Who gave it?"

"Oh, that one lady, I don't know. He loves me. Thank You, God. Oh, I needed to hear from You. I know You love me."

That's when prophecy is working rightly, right there—when it's awakening love and bringing the heart back to being a worshiper, a lover of God.

The angel stops. He says, "Let me define how prophetic ministry works right now. It works most effectively in the context of the revelation of Jesus' heart, His story, the Bride of Christ, right here."

Again, when the bride is revealed by the angel, John has the same overloaded experience. It's not an accident that the greatest prophet in history, the greatest man ever born of a woman, John the Baptist, was called "the friend of the Bridegroom" (Jn. 3:29, paraphrased). It's not an accident that the apostles whose names are written on the foundations are called the friends of the Bridegroom. The bridal revelation is the most precious revelation that God will give. It's the most intimate, sacred thing He'll give to the heart of His people. That's where prophecy really, really has its real way. When manifestations of the Spirit work, if they woo the heart in love, they're working rightly.

If people look at the angel and say, "Wow! I saw an angel!" the angel himself would say, "You've missed it. I'm only appearing to make you a better worshiper. I'm not appearing to give you a story about an angel; I'm appearing to make you a worshiper."

There are manifestations to make us lovers of God, but lots of folks want manifestations because they're good stories and they get a small amount of attention. I don't mind that, and the Lord doesn't even mind people getting a small amount of attention in all kinds of little ways. We all do it, but my point is that we want to see manifestation of angels and the Holy Spirit and prophets functioning where people are called and wooed as lovers, as worshipers of God.

The angel wanted to make that clear. He defined prophecy, one of the few times of history, in the context of the bridal revelation.

Amen. Let's stand.