

Progression from Church to Bride

Part One

The Most Beautiful Woman

This year I want to talk about by far the most beautiful woman in the Bible. She is that to Jesus. And the Lord has just really shown me over the last couple of years His heart and the brightness of her in His eyes. Out of all the women in the Bible and all the beautiful pictures we can see in them, this woman is clearly the one that moves Him the most. Turn with me to Revelation 21:9, *“And there came unto me one of the seven angels who had one of the seven bowls full of the last plagues and talked with me saying, ‘Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’”*

That phrase, the Lamb’s wife, is more sacred than we realize. I think it is beyond carnal Christianity. It did not say the bride of Christ. It said it in such a precious way, though in so few words, *“I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”* You realize that this is who she is, this is the one that is closest to Jesus’ heart, regardless of all of those great women and all those great stories of women that come before. This one is as real as real can be to the Lord, every day, and this is not just a committed Christian, this is not all the things that we think would please Jesus; this is the Lamb’s wife. If you say something bad about a man’s wife, you are saying something bad about him, because they are one. And it is more real to Him because He created man and wife and He created marriage and union, but all of that was a shadow of something that was really deep within His heart and, if I may say it like this, what was deep in His heart was a woman. You see that from the very beginning when Adam said, “Everyone has a mate and I don’t have one.” And God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—said, “It is not good.” Everything else had been good. He made that and it was good, He made this and it was good, but before Satan ever showed up, before there was a devil or sin or anything else, there was something that was not good. He said it is not good that man be alone. And He did not just say that because He felt sorry for Adam; He said that because there was something in Jesus’ heart for one that was with Him. And that word *with* is beyond words, because we just think of it as “walk along side” or “a companion.” But the Word says, *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was **with** God...”* It was not separate and it was not doing its own thing or trying to get God to bless it, it was *with* Him, it was God but it was *with* God. And He wanted that, He wanted it in the most real way that reality could ever offer.

The Church And The Bride

I want to start by addressing some teaching that I do not particularly agree with, not that we are going to get into it a whole lot: what people would call the difference between the church and the bride. There are some people who teach that there is a difference between the church and the bride. I have had people actually tell me, “Well I’m part of the bride,” as if they were something different than the church, or something better, more special in the sense of their meaning. So they say, “There is church people and they are just regular people, but then there is the bride.” I went to the Lord when I heard that, because I could find places where it spoke of the church in one way and it spoke of the bride in

another way, and especially in relationship to His heart or the way the relationship was. So I went to the Lord and I said, "Lord how can the church be divided? How can there be some that are something special and some that are not?" He said, "They're not." And the Holy Spirit began to explain to me that it was not a matter of the difference, that the church and the bride are the same. And I'll give you the explanation I got from Him: they are the same, there is no difference, whether you are the temple of God or you are the church or you are the Bride or any of those terms that we use, it is all the same people. But there is a different way that some relate to Jesus because of maturity, because of growth.

Every believer is in the church, we are the church, and the bride is the church. But there is a growth in understanding of Jesus that causes you to relate to Him differently. And all are supposed to be coming into that and they are supposed to be coming into this progression of growth so that we begin to find the Lord in the true heart that He wants. That progression is seen in the book of Revelation; the book of Revelation is about a progression from church to bride and we will see that as we go. It is a progression. The book of Revelation starts with the church and it ends with the bride. And it is not just that. There is this beautiful progression of how the churches progress through until the end where the church is no longer called the church as it were. It is still the church, but with his heart it is called the bride, or His wife, the wife of the Lamb.

The book of Revelation is always an end time book, but in this context the book of Revelation is prophetic of God's dealing with us to bring us from simple salvation to oneness and to union with Him in an intimate way called wife, or bride. And why is this important? Why do we not just go to church and be good Christians? Why would we even care about a progression? If you care about Jesus you care about a progression. If you care about what He cares about—if you see, first of all you have to see what He cares about—but if you care about what He cares about then you will start adjusting your eyes and your heart and your searching and you will no longer just seek to be a good minister, do good things for others, or have a fine ministry. Moreover, "the bride" is more than just a theme we can search out in scripture. It is not a deep teaching. We are talking about the very tenderness of Jesus' heart, and who is adequate for that? None of us, but the Holy Spirit is.

In The Spirit On The Lord's Day

We will go through the progression, but to start out, the progression is this: first, saved (and that is identified in the book of Revelation by seven churches); second, worshippers of the Lamb; third, followers of the Lamb; finally, union with the Lamb, which is wife or bride. All of that is the church, it is just a different progression of heart, and we will see that even the heart changes as we go through this.

So let us start in the book of Revelation, chapter one and verse 9, *"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ ..."* Now I want you to notice the wording here because it is very specific at this stage. John is on the Isle of Patmos. He has been exiled out of Israel, he is there as a prisoner and at this stage he has not been caught up to see anything from above. Right? Anybody know what is going to happen? He is still on the earth and he is still dealing with issues on the earth, he is still dealing with tribulation here on the earth, but he is steadfast in his stand for the Lord. Notice the wording, *"tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ..."* Why is the name Jesus Christ so significant at this stage? I just want you to be thinking about it; I will bring it up a little later when the turn comes. *"...was in the isle that is called Patmos, for*

the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet..." He was in the spirit on the Lord's day; what he is identifying and what he is speaking means everything, and it means everything to the Lord, and the Lord opening his eyes – because this is about John. We always think it is about us and the end times but first it is about John, and John being dealt with by the Spirit of God. So at this stage, it is just John, and he loves Jesus, and he has lived for Him, and he is willing to die for Him, he is exiled for Him, he is going through tribulation for Him, and he says, "I love Jesus Christ."

And now John is saying, "Oh what an experience I'm having in the earth! I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." A particular day, on earth. But this is not the height of spirituality; this is going to be the early movements of God to usher him up and into where God sees and what is real to God. *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book..."* He has not seen anything yet! He is not going to really start seeing until he is caught up. *"What thou seest, write in a book and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia..."* So what he is about to see is some things about the seven churches, but that is not going to be the end of it. They are the ones that need to hear this message of the book of Revelation. You say, "Well, those churches weren't the end times, they were the beginning times! How can this book apply to them?" Because the things that Jesus wants to reveal of His heart are not the things that are going to turn out in the end. It is about how we are going to turn out in the end. That is what is important to Him. Is He going to get the wife that He died for and are we going to acknowledge that?

The Church In The Earth Divided

"...send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter..."

So John is having an encounter with Jesus Christ. His encounter is to view him in a manner that we normally do not think is what Jesus looks like. But the view that he is taking in of Christ is one that is unfamiliar to him and it is putting him in an unusual frame of mind. It is taking him out of the known, bringing him into the unknown, and it is preparing him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, the work of God, to bring us from where we are to where He wants us. And to do that, many times, He has to throw curves at us, He has to challenge our understanding with views of Him that are not familiar. But that view is not going to be the final view; that is only the transitional view from earth to heaven that is going to take place in just a short amount of time.

But first he has to deal with *churches*. Not even His Church. Churches. First He has to deal with the earth and He has to make some things plain, and He has to do this in a certain way, because He is not just teaching and He is not just instructing. This is not about a big lesson from God, this is about bringing us to Him and bringing us to the Him that He *is*, not the Him that we have pictured Him to be. *“I am the First and the Last, I am the Beginning and the End.”* And we just think He is the Messiah for the Jews and He is saying, *“I’m way more than that!”* And He is going to have to do this transition, and we get afraid or we get confused. If we were John, we would say, *“Well, I walked with You and I saw the loaves and the fishes and I understood that and You’re the best prophet and the best healer and You’re the best Savior, You’re the best of the best of all this stuff!”* And He goes, *“That’s what I do. You have not mentioned Me once. You don’t know Me yet in the way that I want to be known – by you that I love.”*

Verse 20, *“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”* We know that seven represents completion. These seven churches represent the complete church, but why did He not just say the church? Why did He say the seven churches? You could just say the church and that would be the complete church. Because the churches are divided. There is this church and that church and this church. This church has that problem and that one has this problem...so He is trying to make a point at this stage. He is describing the church as many that are doing their own thing for God and they have problems because of it. Because there is a shield called oneness that will deal with all of this if you progress and you find the Jesus that He wants to be found as.

So then He begins these letters. Chapter 2, verse 1, *“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write...”* The wording here is different than the wording to the others. I must say, of everything the Spirit showed me, He did not show me how that difference fits in, but He did show me what the others mean. Verse 8, *“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna...”* and all of the rest, except the last one, are going to follow a pattern. Verse 12, *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos...”* Verse 18, *“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira...”* Chapter 3, verse 1, *“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis...”* Verse 7, *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia...”* But now, we come to Laodicea and we have a completely different wording, *“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans...”*

What does Laodicea mean? *“People’s rights.”* Not the Lord’s. *“We have our rights and we want this...”* *“You think your spiritual and you think you’ve got this”* – this is what the Lord says to them. This is as degenerating as it goes. Ephesus might have been good because it was *of* Ephesus. It moved out of being *“of”* and now it is just in a location. This church is just in Pergamum, this church is just in Smyrna, and so on, and it is degenerating until you get to the Laodiceans, and because why? Because they are not progressing. As long as you are remain in the earth and are trying to get the fullness...

You have to understand where you are, who you are joined to, and what that means to Him. We are always trying to figure out what it means to us, but if we can get to His heart, if we can get to Him, we will see in Him what it means, and if our hearts are ready and attuned and if we want to comprehend what it means to be the wife of the Lamb or the bride, we will get it. And if we do not, the progression will still continue because the Lord is never going to give up. But let me point out something: when John initially saw the seven churches, he saw Jesus in the midst of them (the seven candlesticks). But in Revelation 3:20, Jesus is dealing with the church, and He is outside the church knocking to get back in. We have always made that a salvation thing, *“Jesus is knocking on the door of our heart.”* No, He is knocking on the door of the church, trying to get back in. Because there is this progression, but there is no progression in the earth ultimately. I am going to say it like this because this is exactly what the

seven churches did: ultimately, we are going to pervert everything. We are not pure and we are going to change it and pad it and make it more comfortable for us and we are going to mold it into our image, which is going to move farther and farther from Him. But that was never God's intention, so remember He is dealing with John now and He wants him to write this letter to the churches. "There is a progression and you guys need it!" the Lord is saying. "You need to see what is going on here or you are just going to get worse and worse."

A Door Opened In Heaven

So in chapter 4 the change begins. Verse 1, *"After this..."* Notice the wording: after all of this, after all of this relating to the church and all of this dealing with problems, because remember with each church He said, "You've got this problem," and, "You've got this problem." And there are all these issues in the churches. Is it not the same today? There is still all this dividing. Revelation says Pergamum and Smyrna, but we say Baptist and Methodist and so on. There is still all this division because we are still in the earth and trying to make things God without the Lord being the heart of it.

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven..." Praise God! *"...and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking..."* The earlier voice was as a trumpet, but it was not talking. Now God is trying to talk to John. He is opening doors or windows of His reality and He wants to talk to you about it. It is a desire in His heart to communicate what is true in the Eternal One—Himself—as opposed to our concepts of what He wants. *"...talking with me; which said, Come up here..."* Get it? Come up here! I am not going to talk to you from up here and leave you down there. I want you up here with Me and up here you are going to see the real issues.

"Come up here and I will show thee..." Do you remember the words to Abraham? He said, come away from that old relationship that you had unto a land that I will show you. This is the land that He wants to show. This is the reality that He had in His mind from the very beginning and never stopped. *"...and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne."*

Now, remember earlier it says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." So he felt the Spirit on the Lord's day when he was on earth. He felt God. But now, he is in the Spirit and he is caught up to the heavens. It is a completely different thing. I mean, we can say, "Oh man I really felt the Spirit..." Praise God, yes let's do, but let us also listen to the voice that is trying to talk to us and go where He is, instead of trying to get Him to fix our earth.

The Raised Gathering

So now John is seeing from a heavenly view. At the start of chapter 5, we see a raised gathering. Raised, but still a gathering. Not a wife, not a bride, not one, but many. Remember, the bride is *"the many made one."* In I Corinthians 12, there is one body. He sees the church and says, "You are Me, and My life is supposed to be in you and flow in you, but you are making divisions. You are making it something it should not be." I Corinthians 12 is all about the divisions of the gifts and how that causes the divisions in the church, but then Paul says, "I will show you a more excellent way." And what is that? The next chapter: love. Gifts and all that stuff is given of God for the earth, but there is supposed to be a heavenly heart that guides all of it, and that is the Lord Himself and His heart. As long as we keep to the earth and we are of it, not just in it, we are in trouble. But we go, "I'm not of it, I'm born again!" That is

not what He meant. Of it is of it. It would be like, instead of using this tissue to blow my nose, I use it to heal you, and so I think I am not of the earth anymore, but I'm still living as though the tissue and the sickness is where the focus is and where God wants to focus, but that is still of the earth.

The Lamb Of God

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain..." – and the word there is actually slaughtered, not just slain – *"...having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God a kingdom of priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain..."* – not the Lamb that was raised, but the Lamb that was slain – *"...to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."*

Alright, so in this chapter the Lamb comes into focus, and that *is* Jesus! It starts describing Him as a Lamb. Up to this point there has been no mention of the Lamb, but from here on out He will be called the Lamb over 20 times throughout the rest of Revelation. Let us go back to Revelation 1:1, *"The revelation of Jesus Christ..."* Revelation 1:2, *"Who bare record of the...testimony of Jesus Christ..."* Verse 5, *"...and from Jesus Christ..."* Verse 9, *"And I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."* This is just the first chapter and everything in this early part is *all* Jesus Christ. Why? At this stage, everything is still based on what is known in the earth. But once he comes through that door and once he is up there and seeing Jesus the way He is, he starts calling Him the Lamb. Is that significant? Yes! Because from then on pretty much, he starts calling Him the Lamb. Now is that Lamb Jesus Christ? Yes! But does He just want to be known as Jesus Christ or does He want to be known in heart and spirit as a Lamb?

So all of a sudden, they are up there in heaven and there is trouble, even in heaven, and people are crying. "But I thought there would be no more crying in heaven!" Well, we are going to be crying if we do not see that Lamb. And He is still the Savior of the situation – even in heaven! He is the answer! "Who? Who? Where can we find..."—they are all crying—"...somebody to open the book? This is terrible!" And they are all freaking out and somebody says, "Hey, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah." And they all turn and they go, "There is a slaughtered Lamb in the midst of the throne. What is He doing there?" Wake up John! That is Jesus! Wake up, that is your Savior, but He is not just a Savior sitting there. You are starting to see something that He wants you to marry! "I want any of that!" you might say. If He was sitting there with robes and a crown and it was Jesus with a beard and He looked cool and

everything, you would go, “You bet, I’m with You!” But this slaughtered Lamb makes you pause and ask, “What is this about?” This is about your future. This is about everyone’s future. This is about those who are the Church who are going to move from squally, whiny, divided, individual churches, to one Wife, one Bride, the Wife of the Lamb.

Also, notice that in chapter 5, the Lamb became the central point of worship. Remember all of the “Worthy is the Lamb...” and all of that? So there has been a transition from just worshipping Jesus to worshipping the Lamb. When seen from above, you see that people are focused on the Lamb and He is their object of worship.

Redeemed Out

Revelation 5:9, “*And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation...*” Who is around the throne? Here is what we see: people with dark skin and light skin and all different features of all different ethnicities all going, “Jesus! Yeah! We love You, Jesus!” But for one thing, they are not calling Him Jesus. They are saying, “Worthy is the Lamb.” And second of all, they are not people with all different colored skin singing in unison, at least not in the sense of what we think. It says that He has redeemed them *out* from every nation. They are not redeemed from sin here; it does not say they are all redeemed from sin. It says they are redeemed out of every nation, tongue, tribe, and so forth. You have been redeemed out of all that *unto* Me and you need to wake up to that fact that we are all now *just one*. That is what it says! Normally we would say, “Yes, I’ve been redeemed from hell! Yeah! You too, black brother? Awesome, give me five!” But that is not what is happening, that is not what it is about. But we have made it to say something that it is not saying. You have been redeemed *out of* that. Paul says in Colossians that there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, neither Jew nor Greek. He does not say, “Well now there is all this together: there is male and female, there is Jew and Greek.” He says there is none of that! He says, “neither...nor,” meaning it is gone. Well then what is left? Christ is all and in all. That is what you are now.

Jesus is in you and it is no longer about your tribe or this or that. It is not...neither. My background is Jewish, but I am not a Jew. I am born again, I am a new creation in Christ. I do not use that my background to go, “Hey, I’m a Jew, I’m one of God’s special people!” I am better than that, I am born again, Christ is in me! I have had Jewish believers come to me and say, “You are Jewish, you need to capitalize on that!” Jesus brought us all into death and raised us up in Him and now there is not us. There is not you and there is not me. Christ is all and He is in all, and that is what the thing is supposed to be about right here before heaven. They are redeemed *out*. But even then, there is still a problem: it is still a bunch of people. They are not one. It is still a bunch of people. So we still need to go on this progression. We have a ways to go yet!

Closing Prayer

Father, I just thank You for Your word and I just ask that the Spirit will talk to us and will minister to our hearts because, Father, it is not about a teaching. It is about the release of Your Spirit to fall upon us and minister to the hearts that have already been longing for you. Lord, we are not going to focus down on the earth. That is not the deal. We are going to be with You! And we are going to tell You we love You and we want You Jesus, we want You so much and we want to hear from Your heart this progression

and we want to enter in. And we want it to be life in us and not just something that is taught. And so Lord, I just ask You by Your grace and by Your love for Your Bride, that You will do that with us and that You will just keep drawing us to You. I thank You Lord, I thank You for Your love for Your Bride. I thank You that she is what You wanted and these hearts are going to keep going after You Lord. Let this be something eternal that we will never forget because, Lord, I do not want to forget it. I do not want to forget You catching me up, talking to me, breaking my heart. And I do not ever intend on forgetting You, Jesus. I want to keep grabbing hold of every part of You and finding You until I look into the face of the Lamb and say, "I'm married to You. I'm married to You, I'm one with you forever and ever." So thank You Lord, thank You Lord, thank You for this. We give You the glory and we trust You with the rest. In Jesus' name. Amen.

A Prayer Of Agreement

We agree Lord, we agree and ask that even now You start opening Your heart, we want to hear, not teaching Jesus, not teaching. You are sharing Your heart with us. You moved upon Randy because there was something in Your heart for us. Not a teaching...and Lord we want to prepare our hearts to receive and digest what was shared. We are ready to hear Your heart. Forgive me for staying in the earth, Lord. We want Your heart. We want to communicate to You, the treasure You are to us and that we value Your openness to us and that we pant after Your heart. This is Your heart, Your Bride. This is special, it is a treasure. You are opening up Your heart to us. Let it not be a thunder strike. Help us to sensitize more and to perceive the broken bread, the poured out wine, that this is the part of Jesus that John noticed at the Last Supper, saw the little signs; there are little signs right now that this is Your heart open to us. May You not pass us by. May we take hold, like those priests, may we lay hold, may we treasure and handle the crucified hands, that which is Your heart extended to us. Lord, I just pray that Your Holy Spirit would continue to open up the words that have been shared, that we would be very good ground and receive all that is in Your heart, like a Bride should. And Lord we just thank You. We cannot just move forward...thank You Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.