

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 206

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

(continued)

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the *marriage of the Lamb is come*, and *His wife hath made herself ready*. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the *marriage supper of the Lamb*” (Rev. 19:7-9).

The next thing we need to understand in order to grasp this great mystery of the Lamb and His wife is that the bride of the Lamb is the *virgin church*, and the virgin church is just that — a virgin. I do not mean that every person who makes up this virgin church company is naturally and physically a virgin, one who has never had sexual relations in the flesh. The Spirit is not talking here about natural things, but He is teaching us of *spiritual realities*. Can we not see by this that the beautiful bride of the Lamb is spiritually a virgin, that is, she is virgin in her relationship to the Lord, reserved for Him and for Him alone. We have known what it is to be conformed to the course of **this world**. Then we have known what it is to trust Christ as Saviour and seek to serve Him while being entangled in all the defilement of a corrupt Babylonish religious system. But God is calling forth a glorious body of Christ who, because of the word of the Lord and the quickening of the Holy Spirit, is desiring to be VIRGIN — separated only unto her glorious Bridegroom. How lightly we sometimes take the purposes of God in us! It is one thing to be washed in the blood, freed from all our past sins, and quite another thing to truly be virgin in our desires to keep ourselves only unto the Lord — no other loves. Separation is coming from

everything of the flesh, the world, the devil, and from every vestige of entanglement with the false church systems of man which we have made our Head in place of the living Christ. Though we may have previously been fornicators with this bawdy religious harlot, the Lord is cleansing us, changing us, transforming us, and bringing us forth as an entirely *new creation*, and in this new creation He is causing us to be virgin in our desires toward our Lord.

The next mystery that we need to understand, in order to comprehend what the Holy Spirit is really saying to us, is that not only does this virgin church company keep itself wholly unto the Lord, but while she is truly *espoused* unto the Lord the marriage of the Lamb has not yet been consummated. She has not been joined in marriage union with the Lord, else she would not *be a virgin*. When we speak of the “virgin church” we must understand that we speak of the *bride of Christ* who is espoused to Jesus Christ as His wife. We often entertain very faulty ideas concerning this beautiful truth because many of our Western customs are so different from the Eastern customs. Many people think that the true church is *not yet* the bride or wife of Christ and will only *become* the bride or wife of Christ at the time of the “marriage of the Lamb” as revealed in chapter nineteen of the Revelation. But such is not the case! Let me explain the Eastern custom of betrothal and marriage, the traditions from which the analogy of marriage in scripture is drawn.

The Israelitish marriage customs in Bible times involved three major steps. The first step was *betrothal*, the establishment of the marriage covenant that bound the man and woman together as husband and wife (Mal. 2:14; Mat. 1:18-19). The apostle Paul referred to this great mystery when he wrote, “I *have espoused* you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Cor. 11:2). The meaning put on “espousal” is vital. The Basic Bible reads, “You have been *married* by me to one husband...” Wuest says, “I *gave you in marriage...*” Both show the marriage as a past event. In Bible days, prior to the actual wedding and marriage consummation, there was what was known as *betrothal* or *espousal*. This was somewhat like our modern engagement, except that it was much more binding and obligatory. It was more than a mere promise between two individuals to eventually “get married,” for it *was* in fact *the marriage* — at least the first step of the process. At the time of the espousal the families of the man and woman were involved in the negotiation of a contract between the two parties. It was a notable occasion! The payment of a suitable dowry was usually a feature of the contract. The groom or his father had to pay a price to the girl’s father for the bride. When the contract was signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses, the contract meant that the couple were legally married — they were husband and wife. Matthew makes this plain when he records, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was *espoused* to Joseph, *before they came together*, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her *husband*, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away (divorce her) privately” (Mat. 1:18-19).

This period of engagement or betrothal was taken so seriously that any violation of the engagement was considered adultery and any break-up of the espousal required a legal procedure — a bill of divorcement. This reveals the seriousness of the situation when Joseph learned that Mary was with child. The news did more than stun him! It forced him to make a decision; either to expose Mary publicly or divorce her privately. In either case, Mary would have been dishonored by her family and friends, and degraded by the Jewish community. Even worse, her son would have been born an outcast with no rights of citizenship, and prohibited from worship in the temple. Under these circumstances, Joseph chose to be as gracious and kind as Jewish law

permitted; he decided to put her away privately. But then the angel brought the message to Joseph and he took Mary home as his wife, accepted her child as his own, and became legally the father of Jesus. What explains his change of heart? Just this — his belief in God’s message that Mary’s child was a special creation, conceived of the Holy Spirit, to bring salvation into our world!

Now let us return to the marriage customs. After the espousal, at a later time, usually about a year, the second step in the wedding took place. During the interval, the two were not joined physically in intimacy. The bride remained a virgin. The girl continued to live in her own home, and the man in his. The groom begins to prepare a home for them to live in. This period also gave the bride a chance to “prepare herself” and “make herself ready” for the coming union. She learns many needful things and beautifies herself in every way. She wants to be perfect for her lover. One of the most important parts of her beautification was her gown. The white wedding dress was then chosen and knit together into a beautiful garment for her to wear when the groom comes for her. The wedding dress symbolized her pure and chaste life.

The second step in the marriage was when, on the appointed day, the groom came with his friends to *take* the bride back to his home. This “taking” of the bride was usually done at night approximately one year after the betrothal. This led to the consummation of the marriage through physical union of the bride and groom on the first night at the groom’s house. Since this second step was the essence of the marriage ceremony, it was regarded as the wedding or marriage. Thus the actual “wedding” or “marriage” was not a ceremony at all — it was **union!** We constantly read in scripture of a man *taking* a wife unto himself. We get our attention, in modern marriage customs, fixed on the *ceremony*: forgetting that in the biblical pattern the real *marriage* is “this man *taking unto him* this woman” to *be his wife* in all that it means. The espousal only *announces* it; just as the wedding feast only *celebrates* it! The perfect picture of Christ taking His virgin church as His bride is seen in Genesis chapter twenty-four, where Abraham would “make a marriage for his son.” He sends Eliezar, his steward, to far away Mesopotamia, to find and woo Rebekah by showing her the “things,” that is, a sample of the wealth of Abraham and Isaac (as the Holy Spirit now shows us “the things” of Christ, the firstfruits of the Spirit); and eventually Rebekah says to Eliezar, “I will go.” And then, the journey over, the record states that when upon their camels Eliezar and Rebekah arrive in the land of Canaan, “Isaac *took* Rebekah (into his tent); and she *became his wife*; and he loved her.” The same scenario is repeated a number of times in the Old Testament and this second step corresponds precisely to the expression “marriage of the Lamb” in the book of Revelation. It signifies the ultimate completeness and fullness of UNION WITH OUR LORD!

The third step in the marriage was the “marriage supper,” actually a seven-day *wedding feast* took place to which guests had already been called and assembled. Once the marriage had been consummated by the bride and groom, that same night the wedding guests would begin to feast and make merry! They often celebrated these feasts twice a day during those seven days. The feast was the part of the “marriage” that Jesus attended in Cana of Galilee when He turned water into wine. And this is also the scene at the “marriage of the Lamb” in the Revelation! It is called the “marriage supper” or marriage feast of the Lamb. This is not espousal, but the time of **union**. “*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage (union) of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready (for this union). And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*”

*And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the **marriage supper of the Lamb!***”

If we stand back and get a correct perspective of the sweep of the entire picture I think we will understand it. You go back to the very beginning — marriage was the first institution that God made for man. And it was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (the Word, the Voice of God) that brought the first woman to the first man. He introduced them and performed the marriage for them and made them one. In that far-off beginning, at the dawn of human history, the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). What fathomless and holy truth lies buried in this remarkable statement! While God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone,” I would like to give another rendition and it goes like this: “It is not good that GOD should be alone.” You see, my beloved, God’s creation is the mirror, the reflection, and expression of God’s own personal character and state of being. How can we know this? Because God said, “Let us make man *in our image, after our likeness*” (Gen. 1:26). Would you like to know what God is like? You can see it in man! God did not create just a man! “Male *and* female created He *them*. And God blessed *them*, and said unto *them*, Be fruitful and multiply...” (Gen. 1:27-28). The message is just this: If it was not good for man in the image of God to be in that image *alone*, if the man needed a wife to complement him and reproduce their life in the world, then it was likewise not good for GOD to be alone! That is the mystery! It takes the mind of the Spirit to understand that when God saw Adam in his loneliness and said, “It is not good that the man should be alone,” God was expressing the great mystery of His own Being within Himself. God had need for companionship. God had need for a ***union of love!*** This divine need is expressed by the apostle Paul in these words of revelation and truth: “According as He hath *chosen us in Himself before the foundation of the world, that we should be...before Him in love: having predestinated us...according to the good pleasure of His will*” (Eph. 1:4-6).

God’s ultimate desire and need was for the companionship of beings like unto Himself, of His own kind, with whom He could share His mind and heart, and through whom He could expand Himself, incorporating them into the outworking of His own eternal purposes. As we view from the Father’s heart it becomes obvious that God in His social and paternal nature has “marked out for Himself” a vast family which shares His own life, nature, mind, spirit, purpose, and power. I do not believe that any creature or entity that existed before man either in the heavens above or on the earth beneath, even came close to providing what God needed. This is the condition which prompted God in that long ago beginning to issue the wonderful fiat, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...” (Gen. 1:26).

Little wonder, then, that we read from the literal translation of the Hebrew text these remarkable words: “And Jehovah God saith, Not good for the man to be alone, I do make him an helper — as his COUNTERPART” (Gen. 2:18, Young’s Literal). The Goodspeed translation reads, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I must make a helper for him WHO IS LIKE HIM.” Another interesting translation says, “...and God made for Adam a COMPARABLE helper.” There we have the very first symbolism of the bride of Christ! God made for Adam someone with whom he should have complete and total correspondence and intimacy. This only mirrored the desire within God Himself, so we find that He came in the cool, or *spirit* of the day, as it reads in the original, to fellowship with this man and woman made in His image and likeness. The message is just this — if the Christ is to have a bride then the bride must be COMPARABLE to

Christ! She must be HIS COUNTERPART! She must be one who is in every respect LIKE HIM! And that's awesome, isn't it! But how could Christ become intimate, on all the levels that intimacy implies, with anyone who is not comparable to Him? A human would not marry a monkey, a horse, a dog, or a chicken. There is no correspondence! There are no grounds for union of mind, desire, emotion, knowledge, understanding, body, or love. And even within the same species, not everyone is suited for the marriage union. Would Christ become intimate with a little girl who is not mature and cannot comprehend the ways of love or responsibility? Would He share all that He is and has with a child who is physically and emotionally incapable of returning mature love, relating to His deepest thoughts and heart, or participating in His divine activities and purposes?

God gives us patterns in the Bible. All the patterns point to the central truth that God wants a people for Himself — a special, purified, prepared, developed, matured, loving, and capable people joined in union with Himself. All other revelations and truths are secondary to that — just as all other considerations in life should be secondary to a man's relationship with his wife. God's desire for such a people is the thrust of the entire message of the word of God! Everything must revolve around that truth. It was not good for man to be alone, and it was not good for GOD to be alone! He wanted offspring, and Paul tells us in Acts 17:28-29 that WE are the OFFSPRING OF GOD! Nature itself teaches us that pigs have little pigs and dogs have little dogs. And I do not hesitate to tell you that God has little gods! That is the great mystery of our *sonship*. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the *children* of God" (Jn. 1:12). "Being born again, *not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever*" (I Pet. 1:23). "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I (God) said, ***Ye are gods?*** If He called them *gods* unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, ***I am the Son of God***" (Jn. 10:34-36). Oh, yes! As *children — offspring — of God*, made in His image, after His likeness — we are COMPARABLE! When once we learn this one grand truth we discover our true identity and state of being and all the word of God begins to fall into place. My beloved, it is therefore in keeping that as the very first act of His sonship ministry our Lord should go yonder to a wedding in Cana of Galilee! There He went and put His seal of approval and His blessing upon it. He was there by His very presence and power to proclaim that UNION between God and man is the grand theme and purpose of God in creation and redemption!

Robert Browning poetically tells the story of Andrea del Sarto, a famous painter in Florence, Italy. In his youth, del Sarto married a woman of rare beauty. She was, however, a shallow-minded, superficial creature. She was the woman, who, with a careless swing of her skirt, smeared the noble picture he had painted in hours of great spiritual ecstasy. She filled his life with disappointment. Not because she robbed his hand of its deftness, or his mind of its genius, or his soul of its inspiration — the tragedy was this: she was heart blind; she never understood the moral majesty of his mind; she never genuinely entered into the great spiritual hunger and depth of his heart. Consequently, he could not disclose to her his noblest and best self. In like manner, the yearning of God is able to reveal Himself to us only in proportion to our spiritual development, capacity, and maturity. Methinks that many Christians have not reached the stage of growth and development in Christ which prepares them for being a *bride*. They have little understanding of the majesty of the mind of Christ, or the loftiness of His great and eternal plan and purposes, nor have

they even begun to enter in to the deepest yearnings of His heart. Multitudes are spiritually childish — heaven to them is a vast celestial *playground* where they can frolic and dance and shout throughout eternity without a care or any responsibility beyond strumming a harp and polishing their crown!

Children are children. Children are not *sons* in the scriptural sense, for sons (Greek: *huios*, mature sons, placed ones) are those who have grown up into the nature and authority of the Father. By way of example, if you saw a hardware store with the sign over the door saying BROWN AND SONS, you would not expect to go into the store and find the “sons” playing in a crib. You would understand that these “sons” are mature sons who share with their father the responsibilities of the business. In like manner, a girl, as long as she is a child, is neither prepared for nor capable of fulfilling the role of a *wife*. In order to enter into marriage a young girl must pass through years of physical, mental, and emotional development. Finally, upon becoming mature in all these areas, she is fitted for marriage and her role as a wife. And so it is in God’s family! Both *sonship* and *bridship* are MATURE RELATIONSHIPS — not the prerogative of children! The term “child” describes the believer in his walk of immaturity in God. But as one begins to grow up into *spiritual maturity* it is then that the truly feminine and masculine aspects of his or her relationship with God begin to form and become manifest. “Vive la difference!” someone once said. And starting from early childhood we all begin to notice that there is indeed a difference. We become increasingly aware of it as we grow up. But it is only as fully developed adults that the true power, potential, and purpose of the feminine and masculine attributes find their function and fulfillment.

Any man can know something of the acts and ways of God, but only those born from above, who also *follow on* to *know* the Lord, can ever come to know Him in the most wonderfully personal and intimate manner. The depth of “knowing” Him is like the intimate relationship of a man with his beloved wife, in which love he seeks to reproduce after his own kind. In fact, this is precisely the way in which the scriptures in a number of cases make use of the word “know” — to describe the giving and receiving of seed in the act of love. For example, we read in Genesis 4:1, “And Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain.” This statement does not mean that Adam was able to recognize his wife as he walked about the house! “Knowing,” in the sense of recognition, does not beget children! When Adam *knew* his wife he explored her emotional and physical being beyond any external observation, and she *knew* him in return in a personal and intimate way that words could never communicate. Only by the experience of intense love and sexual union does man *know* woman in this sense, and she him.

May the blessed spirit of truth from God enable all who read these lines to understand that it is only in that exquisite relationship where the believing heart completely yields itself to the spirit, the presence, the mind, and the will of God, where the believer proves by his wholehearted response that he truly and totally loves the Lord, that he *knows* and is *known* by God. This is the basis for Israel as a people under the Old Covenant being given the name “wife of Yahweh,” and the chosen ones of this age under the New Covenant the intimate title “the bride of Christ.” As husband and wife, by means of the act of “knowing” become *one flesh*, so Christ and the believer, by the spiritual act of “knowing” become *one spirit*. “He that is joined (in union) unto the Lord IS ONE SPIRIT” (I Cor. 6:17). The intimate relation and ecstasy here portrayed, are not found in any but those who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth!

There is no higher, no holier, no more blessed and joyous relation that can obtain between a man and a woman than true marriage. The marriage relation means more than the common possession of each other, more than the sharing on a basis of equality all that either may possess, more than the mutual exchange of admiration for personal charms, or of confidence and trust in the integrity each of the other. True marriage means all of these things, but in addition to all of these things, and above them, and more than all else it means the *union of hearts* on a level which results in profoundest love and unselfish devotion, such as will cause each to live for the other, promote the welfare, comfort, and happiness of the other rather than of SELF (I Cor. 13:4-8).

One who thinks chiefly of self, who talks for the most part about those things that promote his own self-interests, who takes opportunity to act with downright selfishness, and therefore one who is self-centered, self-opinionated, and self-willed, is incapable of entering into a true marriage relationship with anyone. In the marriage relation, to whatever degree SELF is made first and exalted, to that extent the relation is doomed to failure. The love of self will destroy true love and engender strife, bitterness, indifference, and even hatred. Ah, Christ Himself, our Bridegroom, has given us the example! Let us dwell on the words, "Christ also loved the church and *gave Himself up* for it." He values His bride as Himself. And upon her, He lavishes His personal affection, without limit, without reservation, constantly, and forevermore! He loved the church with an infinite and eternal love and gave Himself up to the death of the cross for her. He nourishes and cherishes the church that He might sanctify it, and present it to Himself glorious in beauty, holiness, and power, without blemish in the presence of His glory. All that is required of the bride is simply to *love Him in the same way and measure as He has first loved us!*

The late George Wylie shared some penetrating and instructive words of admonition in this connection. He wrote, "I have never known two people who were deeply in love with each other who did not want to spend a lot of time *alone* by themselves. When a young man and woman are truly in love, you may see them walking hand in hand down the street, sitting in a restaurant having a piece of pie and a cup of coffee, or strolling through a department store looking at things together. They love to be together and they get together as often as they can. But why is it that being together on the street, or in the restaurant, or window shopping, still does not satisfy the longing of their hearts? Why is it that after being together around town they will get in the car and drive out to Lover's Lane or Sunset Point, or to some deserted beach at night, where there is no one else around and they can sit and talk, watch the sunset, or stroll together under the light of the moon? What difference is this from walking hand in hand down the street or sitting together in a restaurant? They are *alone* — *that's* the difference! It is being by themselves in the solitude of their love.

"A man and his wife who are much in love with each other, may work together all day in their business, go shopping together, or greatly enjoy going on a picnic with the children. They may spend a lot of time together during their busy daily lives. But even then they are looking forward to the evenings when the children are asleep in bed and they can spend a few quiet hours alone, sitting on the couch or retiring to their bedroom and closing the door so they can be by themselves in the intimacy of their love. Their togetherness during the day cannot take the place of being alone and sharing the tenderness of their love. In their aloneness they are able to communicate with each other and share together things they could never share in the company of others or in the course of their busy lives. *This* reveals the wonderful mystery of the bridegroom and the bride! When we love the Lord with all of our heart, when we truly are deeply and

passionately in love with the Lover of our soul, we cannot be content to just have His company and think of Him, talk to Him, and sing to Him during our busy times, or even in the congregation in our times of gathering together unto Him. We will most assuredly have an intense desire to BE ALONE WITH HIM! The more we love Him the greater the desire and the more time we will want to spend alone with Him in intimate fellowship and communion. Those who say they deeply love the Lord, but who rarely get alone with Him to spend quality time *in the solitude of His presence*, cannot possibly be material for the company of the bride of Christ! The yearning of the bride is expressed in the words of the beautiful chorus:

Shut in with God, *in the secret place*,
There in the spirit beholding His face;
Gaining new power to run in the race,
I love to be *shut in with God!*

“The truth is, many a man has lost the love of his wife and his marriage relationship has been broken up because he was so busy attending to his business and making money, that he didn’t have time to be with his wife. I have known wives of many of these workaholics who, suffering from lack of their husband’s love, looked in other places for the attention and love the husband was too busy to give. They would find another man to love them and who would supply the human need that the busy husband didn’t give. Some of these wives turned to drink and became alcoholics, and many of these marriages ended in divorce. The business may be important, and making a living is necessary, but neither of these are *as important* as the marriage relationship! When the husband and wife get so busy that they do not have quality time to spend *alone* with each other, their relationship suffers; they draw apart and there is not that *oneness* that should be there. How true this is also in our relationship with our Lord! When we are so busy, and our time is taken up with other things, perhaps even *good things* including our work ‘for’ God, so that we haven’t time to be alone with Christ, our relationship with Him suffers, and we draw apart. There isn’t that *oneness with Christ* that we should have! Oh yes, we may talk to Him for a few minutes a couple times a day, maybe address Him a few times during the day, or perhaps even speak of Him to someone as we try to share Him with others, but our spiritual life and our union with Him suffers when we fail to find the time to get alone with Christ in seasons of intimate fellowship, communion, and love” — end quote.

When we come to the Lamb and His wife, however, *here* is a marital love, a tenderness, an appreciation, and a delight, *that will grow forever and ever*. Oh, wonder of wonders, that such a record can be written! *Christ will never change* in His affections! What must the ages hold for the wife of the Lamb! And the love of the bride, the wife of the Lamb, will correspond to that of her husband — *unceasing, increasing into infinity!* Have you known a husband and wife whose love deepened as the years went by, whose satisfaction with and delight in each other was such as to keep them together constantly, of their own *mutual will*; whom neither “society” nor “business” nor “outside pleasures,” nor any “calamity” could separate? Let such a happy marital existence be a whisper to you of what Christ and His bride will enjoy more and more throughout unending ages! The bliss of the marriage of the Lamb is without limit. And this is not something to transpire some glad day after while or in some far-off heaven somewhere! This bespeaks the

union of soul and spirit, a union within ourselves, in which we are MADE ONE IN HIM. Oh, yes! It is the personal delight of THE INDWELLING CHRIST, not of a Christ far away. It is the personal delight of our very own soul — of our mind, will, emotions, and desires, finding union with His glorious mind, His holy emotions, His wonderful will, and His divine desires. It is an internal union of love. Parents love their children because they are children. Brothers and sisters alike have a love of natural relationship. Friendships are based on common interests. But the love of bridegroom and bride is a delight each in the person of the other. That is why marital love is so wholly unexplainable! We say, “What did he see in her?” or, “Why did she choose him?” There is no answer but one — LOVE!

While we write much in these pages of the glorious truth of sonship to God, we want to contemplate in our meditations at this time what it means to be the bride of the Lamb. If you have never really fallen in love with the Christ of God — and made HIM YOUR HEAD and ABSOLUTE LORD — don’t ever expect to be a member of the bride company. If you are not truly VIRGIN in your desires toward the Lord; if you are not walking in His spirit, putting on His mind, learning to know His heart; if you are not keeping yourself unto Him and Him alone; if you have not utterly forsaken the company of the wanton harlot of Babylon, the carnal church systems of man; if you have not renounced the many schemes and plans and ambitions of your own carnal mind nor abandoned your love of the world and the desires of the flesh — don’t expect to stand in that glorious company which has made itself “ready” for the marriage of the Lamb! If you have any other love before Him, any other master that rules your life, any other lord that dictates your actions, any “reserved” areas of your life you are not ready to relinquish, then you have not yet learned HOW TO BE A BRIDE TO CHRIST!

Only the wonderful spirit of truth can teach us how to truly **be** a bride. As I have pointed out, the key to being a wife is love and submission. We are prone to think of submission in such a carnal way. The term conjures up images of the husband ruling, bossing, lording it over, barking commands to his wife while the little woman, intimidated, coweringly complies with his every demand. But true, godly submission is the *love* of a woman that is so pure and intense that she wants to yield herself to the high desires of her husband — a woman so in love with her man that it transcends infatuation — her submission becomes a willing and loving laying down of her own life until she no longer has a life because HER LIFE IS SURRENDERED AND JOINED IN UNION WITH ANOTHER! Her cry becomes, “I don’t want my life...I want to SHARE YOURS.” Oh! how few of us truly know HOW TO BE A BRIDE!

“For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a *chaste virgin* to Christ” (II Cor. 11:2). To be a virgin means to be pure, undefiled, and separated unto our Lord. God is creating the desire in a called and separated people in this hour to be truly *virgin* in their desires toward Him. We have known what it is to be conformed to *this world*. Then we have known what it is to come into fellowship with Christ while remaining entangled in all the defilement of a carnal and corrupt Babylonish church system. But God is laying His mighty hand of dealing upon a people and calling forth a glorious body of Christ who, in response to the quickening of the Holy Spirit, is desiring to be *virgin* — separated only unto her Bridegroom, unto intimate and vital union with Him! How lightly we sometimes take the purposes of God in us! In this hour separation is coming from everything of the flesh, the world, the devil, and from every vestige of entanglement with the carnal church systems of man which we have made our HEAD in place of the mighty indwelling Christ of God.

Let us suppose — Rhonda has a new boyfriend. He’s funny, charming, and handsome. Her pulse races when he calls, her temperature rises when they touch. It feels wonderful to be with him. She gushes, “It’s like we’ve known each other all our lives.” People who don’t know her are charmed by her infatuation. Her friends are not. They’ve heard all this before. Rhonda always has a new boyfriend. One goes, another comes in an endless parade. Each is the true love of her life. And then they disappear.

Multitudes of Christians are like that! They are looking for the perfect love, the ultimate union, and again and again they think they have found it as they flit about from church to church, from preacher to preacher, from revival to revival, from teaching to teaching, and from movement to movement. Oh, how “turned on” they are with each one at first — they have found the most exciting, fulfilling, loving, caring, *perfect church!* And they gush all over everyone who will listen about how *wonderful* it is! But then before long they begin to see flaws, hear the gossip, catch the undercurrents, discern the problems, and it soon wears off and they start looking for another. The problem is just this — they have not found HIM! They are spiritual adolescents, juvenile, immature, undeveloped, inexperienced — not ready yet to ***become a bride***. They desire true love, but like the girls that get picked up in bars, they are looking in all the wrong places. Their eyes are on the boys — on *men*, and *ministries*, and *movements* — and not yet have they truly SEEN THE LORD! Some day, hopefully, they will hear the call, “Come out of her, my people,” and will cease the spiritual “bar-hopping” and come apart to meet the one and only lover of their soul!

I will close this article by quoting from a message delivered some years ago by the late brother Stacy Wood. This message contains some profound truths that I believe will be an edification and blessing to all who read.

“I was in New Mexico a few years ago and while ministering to a group I made a statement that I was corrected on. The statement I made was simply this. I said, ‘There are some things in the earth, and also things in God, that are certain, immutable, unchangeable, ever the same. For instance — $1 + 1 = 2$. If you have an apple plus an apple, you have two apples — and no matter how you calculate it, how you count it, one plus one always equals two.’ After the service a young man came to me, a young man that has a doctorate degree, a young man that speaks numerous languages, a young man that is in my opinion is a genius, and he said, ‘Stacy, I want to share something with you — one plus one does not *always* equal two.’ Well, he took me back. I just stood there and looked at him as if to say, ‘Hey, wait a minute! I’ve been taught all my life that one plus one equals two — what are you trying to tell me?’ He sat down and with a formula and a series of pages he expressed to me what he meant. The man is an astrophysicist. Of course I didn’t understand the formulas too well — but he convinced me after four pages that he had a valid point which I wasn’t able fully to grasp — that one plus one doesn’t always equal two! So I considered this and then in the scriptures I began to see the pattern and the reality that one plus one, even in God’s economy, does not always equal two.

“Paul says it very plainly in his first letter to the Corinthians. ‘*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is **one body?** for two, saith He, shall be **one flesh**. But he that is joined unto the Lord **is one spirit***’ (I Cor. 6:15-17).

“Here Paul tells us that one man joined to one harlot equals *one flesh*. Therefore Paul says that $1 + 1 = 1$. So when two things are joined, fused, knit together, they are no longer two things, but become one thing. Another example of this is found in the book of Ephesians. ‘*For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*’ (Eph. 5:30-32). This is indeed a great mystery, but what Paul is declaring is the divine formula — $1 + 1 = 1$. He shows that we (Christ and us) are *made one* in the body of Christ. We must lose that vision of our uniqueness, particularness, and individuality and grasp hold of the concept that ***we are one***, not many.

“I was looking at this principle here in Ephesians chapter five and it is the principle of marriage. A man leaves his father and mother and he cleaves to his wife, and joined to his wife, one man and one woman become *one flesh*. Most of us that are married look at that verse and try to make it so mystical — that we are one *somewhere*, but we don’t understand the disagreements! We do our best to get beyond the disagreements and dissatisfactions to truly become one so that we always think alike, desire alike, enjoy alike, and act alike. But that is not what Paul is saying. The reality is that God took one individual, me, and one individual, my wife, and has made an expression of one. I can tell you exactly where and when it happened — it happened when our daughter was born, and again when our son was born. For Jana and Stacy are simply Sheri and Stacy ***as one***. When God joined Sheri and me He put us together in such a way that we can never be separated. He took all of the structure of my life and all of the structure of my wife’s life and He joined them together between a sperm and an ovum and brought forth *one new creation* that is neither Sheri nor Stacy — it is the perfect joining of the complete whole of both of us into one new whole.

“When we traveled with our children years ago we made note of people’s reactions when they would see our children. Often people would look at our son and say, ‘He’s the spitting image of your wife — and your daughter, man, she’s so much like you!’ Then we would go to the next group and someone would say, ‘Your son looks so much like you, he doesn’t look like your wife at all, and your daughter looks just like your wife, she doesn’t look anything like you!’ By the time several years passed I was somewhat puzzled and thought and meditated on the incongruity of this. Why is it, I wondered, that some people think Jana looks like Sheri, whereas others think she looks like me? Then it dawned on me — they are bound to look like Mama and they are bound to look like Daddy because all that we are, all of our genetics are brought together and combined in one new form. Both of us are so *joined, so fused together* within them that you really can’t distinguish or divide between what is Stacy and what is Sheri. Different people with different perceptions pick up on either the Sheri or the Stacy characteristics that shine through, so that in the final analysis Jana and Stacy are each a new creation, ***one flesh of us two!***

“Can you see the mystery that is great in that? Christ and the church are also JOINED! HE who is spirit, Christ, and SHE who is soulical, the church, when they corporately are joined become ***one spirit***. The spiritual essence of humanity is the soul — the soulical life. The soul is simply spirit that is at a lower vibration, at a lower frequency, or on a lower dimension than the Spirit of God. That is, the mind, will, emotions, and desires of the natural man are not flesh in a tangible way. The soul pertains to a *spiritual dimension*. Few understand the truth of this, but when God breathed into man’s flesh the *breath or spirit of life*, man ***became a living soul***. The Lord, on the other hand, ***is spirit***, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in

reality. When you take God who is spirit on the highest plane, and then you take soul which is spirit on a lower plane, and join them together you get a BRAND NEW SPIRITUAL DIMENSION that has not yet been and that dimension is called '*the Christ.*' As I meditated on this I saw that in the marriage of Christ and the church, of the Lamb and His wife, there is a joining of one plus one that would equal ONE!" — end quote.

To be continued ...

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