***The Bridegroom and the Bride  
  
Colossians 1:15-20  
  
COL-143***

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Galatians 5:13-15: "For you were called to freedom, brethren. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh. But through love, serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. But I say: walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh."

Romans 12:17-21: "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written: 'Vengeance is Mine. I will repay,' says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. And if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will keep burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the Man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

We continue this morning in our study of Colossians 1:15-20. Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," number 33.

We have learned that the church is a special body of believers, raised up by God from the coming of the Holy Spirit to this earth on the day of Pentecost to the future day of the rapture, when the church is taken into heaven. The special relationships between each church-age believer and the Lord Jesus Christ is illustrated by seven figures or analogies. These were never true of Old Testament saints. These include: Jesus as the Shepherd, and church-age believers as His sheep; Jesus as the Vine, and church-age believers as the branches; Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone, and the church-age believers as the building blocks; Jesus Christ as the High Priest, and church-age believers as His priests; and Jesus as the Head, and the church-age believers as the parts of His body. These analogies make it very clear that the church is totally distinct from Israel. We've never had such special relationships with God in the Old Testament under Judaism.

**A New Creation**

Now, there are two more figures which we have not yet touched upon. Figure number 6 is that Christ is the Head of a new creation, and Christians are members of that creation. This is such a marvelous area of truth that I must confess that I feel rather frustrated on how even to proceed to deal with it. It is one of the most enormous things that God has ever done for human beings in the history of the world, and yet one which the devil has perverted consistently. Christ is the head of a new creation – a new species of human beings; and, we Christians are that new species.

This is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5:17, where the apostle Paul says, "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (or a new creation): the old things passed away; behold, new things have come:" "If anyone is in Christ" means: "If you are a Christian." That's the only way you can be in Christ: is that you are a believer. And you are placed in Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That person who is a believer now is a new creation. He's a new species of human being; that is, the church: "Old things are passed away: the place of death in Adam; the corruption; and, the helplessness in the face of the sin nature. Behold, new things have come – a new position in Christ, a relationship to God that is so intimate that it is almost beyond human comprehension."

This is also referred to in Galatians 6:15: "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." The Jews thought that if they kept their rituals: circumcision; and, all the other religious rituals, they would have a relationship with God. Paul says, "Rituals mean nothing. What is significant is that you're part of the new creation.

Colossians 3 also has reference to this. Colossians 3:1-4: "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." What Paul is describing here is the new creation. This is the relationship we have to Christ. We are in Him, and everything that he possesses, we now possess. Everything that He is in the sight of God, we are now in the sight of God. We are co-heirs with Jesus Christ. He is our life. And when He shows up on this earth scene, we are going to be revealed with the glory that He has. We will share His glory. And it will shine from us for all the world to see.

Can you even grasp such a thing? This is the problem today in the Christian community. People do not understand the doctrine of the church. It's gotten all twisted up, and all balled up. Not the least of this is this tremendous realization that we are not the same old crummy lot of human beings that infest this world. We are a brand new species of human beings with enormous capacities, limited only by our old sin natures.

Ephesians 4:20 also has a reference to this: Christ as a new creation, and we believers as part of that creation: "But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him, and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus: that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self (the 'in-Adam' life of your unsaved days), which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit (the lust patterns of the sin nature within us), and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind with doctrine, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God, has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." You put on a whole new lifestyle. That old life is to be set aside (the deceitful lust patterns of the sin nature), and your mind is switched from human viewpoint thinking to divine viewpoint thinking, because someone has taught you the Word of doctrine, so that you possess the mind of Christ, you put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God, and is, in righteousness and holiness, the truth. Without the truth, you will not have righteousness. You have not have the absolute righteousness of salvation, and you will not have the righteousness for daily conduct. Without truth, you will not have holiness, because you do not become holy by deciding to be nice. You do not become holy by deciding to be obedient to God. That's the difference between Judaism and Christianity. You become holy because somebody else does it for you. And that someone else is God the Holy Spirit. Without Him, you can never act righteously. Without Him, you can never live a holy life. When you grasp that, then you will understand what a powerhouse you are as an individual believer.

Suddenly, all of the disgusting, corrupt things of the world – the shallow, trivial things of religion, will turn your stomach, because you look at yourself in the mirror, and you see yourself as a member of the royal family of God. You see yourself as a species of human beings which have never existed on the face of the earth before. And anything in your life that undermines that, and detracts from your ability to live that new creation life, is something you better get rid of. It is not of God – it is of yourself. Why all the breakdown? Why all the deterioration? Why all of the incapacity on the part of Christians? It's all because they forget that they are a new creation in Jesus Christ.

In contrast to Israel, Israel was part of the old creation – that creation that Adam contaminated with his sin. And all of the covenants to the Jews are earth-centered. They are not heaven-centered. They are earth-centered. Christ is the Head now of a new creation in contrast to that old one. And that new creation is called the church. It is related to heaven, and it is based upon the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is an oddity that many times in books of theology, you will find only small sections that deal with the resurrection of Christ. They just want to tell you He's alive. But the significance of the resurrection of Christ is that He is the first in line of a new creation (of a new species) of human beings – a human being totally glorified by the power of God. This is a new human being totally under the capacity of God's power to live God's life. So, suddenly, you're not just trying to be another Jew, keeping rules and regulations to do good. You find that, from within your deepest soul, there rises up the natural inclination to do right, as per the standards of the Word of God. Who's doing that? The Spirit of God. You have to be in temporal fellowship. You have to have known sins confessed. You have to be on track with the principles of Scripture, or the whole thing comes apart.

However, this is why some of you have discovered that you're able to do things that you thought were beyond you. Some of you can carry burdens that you never thought you could carry. Some of you find yourself being driven to serve God in ways that you never thought you ever would be interested in. You wonder why your burden is so great. It's because your new creation life is bursting out all over within you.

Israel was the old creation, contaminated by sin. The church is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's more than the fact that He came alive. He came alive now to be the first of what he was going to make out of all of us who are the special species of the church age. He is our federal Head. He is the federal Head of the new creation, and He is the representative of everything that we are in Him, and that we will actually be in experience someday in heaven.

The Christian standard of power for living and for service is the divine power of God – the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, whenever God wanted to speak to Israel about God's power in dealing with this nation, God always pointed back to the Red Sea. He would say, "Do you remember what happened to you there: how you stood blocked in on both sides, with the Egyptian army barreling down on you from the rear, and this great body of water before you? You were trapped, and all of a sudden: the water opened; you went over dry shod; I took you safely across; and, when the Egyptians went charging in, the waters closed in over them." And every Jew would think about that. And their children would remember back – how they were taught that. What great power. But in the New Testament, you know what the base of power is, when God wants to try to make it clear what it means to be part of the new creation, and the power that is yours on a daily basis? He uses the resurrection – what it took to take a dead body, and bring it back to life. But more than that – what it took to take that dead body of Jesus Christ, and bring it back to a glorified, never-again-to-die life, totally empowered by the Spirit of God.

Now that is power infinitely greater than the Red Sea incident. That is power beyond our fondest dreams. The power of God is the power by which I can live. Or I can go ahead and keep groveling around, and walking through life, and doing this and doing that, and never focusing on the fact that I can make an impact on eternity through service that I never dreamed was even possible.

The resurrected Christ represented, indeed, the firstfruits of the new creation of humans, who are forever free from sin and death, and who will be raised with glorified bodies. That means a body minus the old sin nature. Philippians 3:20-21 say, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has, even to subject all things to Himself." We are citizens of heaven. We're not citizens of this society. That's why political activism is not justified in Scripture for Christians. Christians can serve in political capacities, but political activism is not justified in Scripture. It was never done by the Lord, and never done by the apostle Paul. It is not the pattern. We are citizens of a different realm. And what we are is ambassadors to this old creation. We are the new creation. We're ambassadors to the old creation. While we eagerly wait for the rapture deity, the return of the Lord, Who, at that moment, is going to transform our bodies, and take away all the ills and all the problems of every kind, and conform us into the body of the glorified Jesus. The exertion of the power that he has to subject all things is omnipotence.

**The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

The Christian has been removed from the position in Adam of the old creation to a position in Christ in the new creation. This is done through what the Bible calls the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place immediately in the life of every believer at the point of his salvation. When you have seen water baptism, this is what we are demonstrating. We take a person and put them down under the water, we are saying, "We're putting you into the grave, and with it, we're putting all that sin nature dead life of the old creation." When we bring him back up out of the water, we're saying to him, "You have now been brought to walk in newness of life. We have transformed you into a new creature in Christ."

Well, Paul, in the book of Romans says, "If we are not in Christ, we are none of Him, we are not saved. So, here is this marvelous act – the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It does not happen after salvation. It happens at the point of salvation. Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you're on your way to hell. And the only way you get the baptism of the Holy Spirit is by believing the gospel; accepting Christ as Savior; and, trusting in Him to take you to heaven.

This is pointed out to us in 2 Corinthians 5:17-18: "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things pass away. Behold, new things have come."

Now, all these things are from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In the next verse here, in Colossians 1:19, the apostle refers to this doctrine of reconciliation. And we'll be getting into that. It's a marvelous consequence of the fact that we've been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ. And because we are in Christ, our destiny is forever secured to heaven.

When you understand that salvation is entirely an act of God, you will never insult God by saying that you can lose your salvation. Even if it were dependent upon your water baptism, you could lose it. That's a human work that you've done. But when God the Holy Spirit baptizes you into Christ, you can bet your bippy that it's going to stick.

Ephesians 4:21-24, which we read earlier (I just want to refer to that again), is also dealing with this new life as a result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, all relationship to the first Adam of the old creation is dissolve by our new union with the last Adam, Jesus Christ, in the new creation.

Romans 6:1-4: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin, that grace may increase? May it never be. How shall we who have died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him, through baptism, into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Now that's what I just told you. We have been buried with Him in baptism. Is that water baptism? Of course not. You can't bury anybody into Christ through water baptism. That's a human ritual. That's a work. And Ephesians 2:8-9 make it clear that salvation is not of works.

So, we've been baptized with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, into His death, which means that when He hung on the cross, and paid the price, you were there with Him. Therefore, when He was put in the grave, you were there with Him. And when He rose from the dead, you rose with Him. That's your position. It's not your reality yet, but it will be someday. This is your position in Christ. You are now to walk in newness of life.

So, I've repeatedly told you in this study that you can go ahead and live like a pig, or you can live like a prince. It's up to you. Go ahead and try the human-stress effort on your own, doing what you think is right, and you'll be a pig. Live by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who has placed you in Christ, learning the Word of God, and positive volition to doctrine, and you will marvel at the kind of a life you will live. You will automatically recoil, and you will have spiritual regurgitation, when you are confronted with a temptation to sin. You will just back away from it with loathing.

In the future, the believer in the new creation will be released from the sin nature. He will enter his heavenly citizenship. He will possess a transformed body, like into Christ's resurrection body, free of the sin nature.

Now, this new creation, in contrast to the Israel (the old creation) – I want to keep stressing that because these figures are to show you that Israel and the church are not the same thing. So, anytime you see anything brought over from Judaism into Christianity, get rid of it. And don't have anything to do with it. Because this new creation is so special that we, as believers, are part of, we have a new day of worship. That's why we're here on Sunday. We didn't get here yesterday, in contrast to Saturday, the Sabbath day of the old creation, Saturday Sabbath had to do with the old creation. Can you imagine the Jews (these faithful apostles, like the apostle Paul) – can you imagine them violating one of the Ten Commandments, if Saturday Sabbath day was still to be enforced?

I heard of a group of Christians recently who, as some Christians like to do sometimes, because they're in a place where they cannot find an expository teaching church, they gather in a little group of their own. So, they try to run a little church operation, and teach one another, or maybe listen to tapes. But that always has a problem in it. That always leads to some kind of deviation, because there is no pastor-teacher authority in charge. And when you don't have an authoritative hand that God has placed over the congregation (over the sheep), the sheep will start doing dumb things.

This particular group of believers are very genuine and very sincere. But they decided that they're going to meet on Saturday, so they had their church service on Saturday, then they can be free to go to the lake on Sunday. They can be free to take in the evening movies on Sunday. They can be free to go out on all kinds of recreational things on Sunday. What they have not realized is the violation of this relationship to Christ as part of the new creation. The new creation is not symbolized by Saturday. That's the death-dealing, no-win, loser situation of Judaism. But the new creation is associated with Sunday.

Now, that puts a whole new aspect on the Lord's Day. There are a lot of Christians who are going to have a lot to answer to before the Judgment Seat of Christ because of what they did with the Lord's Day, and what they allowed their children to do on the Lord's Day, and what they permitted themselves to do on the Lord's Day. More and more Christians find gathering for the study of the Word of God irritating on Sunday. It interrupts all the things that they could do.

So, I want you to give careful thought to that the next time that temptation comes up to you – to realize that because you are part of the new creation, you do have a special relationship to Christ symbolized by Sunday. Therefore, it is, as the Scripture says, a very great violation of the will of God for people to be at home when they should be in church. And you can have whatever excuse you want. Just remember that when you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, they've got that excuse recorded, and you will find the loss consequent to that.

Colossians 2:16-17: "Therefore, let no one act as your judge in regard to food, or drink, or in respect to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day – things which are a mere shadow of what is to come. But the substance belongs to Christ." So, the Seventh Day Adventists have missed the boat completely. The Lord says, through Paul: "Don't let anybody intimidate you about keeping holy days, and doing certain rituals, and festivals, and Sabbath days. Those are all pictures of spiritual things. But now, Christ, the reality, is come. You Christians, you're not part of that old creation anymore. You're part of the new creation in Christ.

Then there's Galatians 4:9-10: "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years." We have Christians who think that Easter is a holy day. We have Christians who think that Christmas is a holy day. We have Christians who think they have to eat certain foods. On holy days, you eat holy mackerel, or something like that. You don't just eat anything. And you shake your head and say, "Where have they been? This is not of God. This is a delusion of Satan, because some preacher never told people: "Guess what? You are a powerhouse of the glory of God, because, unlike the Jews of the Old Testament, you're free of all those things, and you're now in Christ."

God bless the children who have parents who understand that, and who live that life. Sunday is the day to be honored. It is the Lord's Day, and we do not hold it in contemptuous indifference.

**The Bridegroom and the Bride**

Finally, we have figure number seven to illustrate the distinctiveness between Israel and the church. Here is the most intimate of them all, where Christ is viewed as the bridegroom, and the church is viewed as His bride. Now, how much more tender a relationship could Almighty God come up with than that one? Ephesians 5:25-33. Let's read an extended passage here: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for her." The word "love" in that verse is "agape," which is mental attitude love, not emotional love. Husbands, do not be bitter toward your wives, as Christ was not bitter toward the church, in spite of all her defects. He loves her and He cares for her, and He holds her up. And, in fact, He gave His life so that she could come into existence: "That He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water of the Word."

This is what we're doing right now. We are washing our souls with the knowledge of the Word of God. That's how you get clean spiritually: "That he might present to Himself the church in all her glory (as the new creation glory), having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and blameless. So, husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself." Christ loves the church because we are his body. As our as the bridegroom, He loves the body of His bride: "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this cause, man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" – loyalty to the limit.

Now, we understand this on the human level – loyalty to your own life. But how about applying this now where Christ is the bridegroom and you are the bride? How loyal are you to Him? It is such a travesty when a Christian says, "I'll go with the temptation to sin?" What a crushing blow to the heart of the bridegroom when his wife treats him like that.

"This mystery (secret) is great;" that is, the secret that God the Son becomes the bridegroom to the church-age believer: "This secret is great, but I'm speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let each individual among you also love his own life even as himself. And let the wife see to it that she respect your husband." The Bible never tells the wife to love her husband. The Bible is very explicit that the husband is to love his wife with mental attitude love. What the wife is to do is to respect her husband, and to view him as the one who has to be responsible for the family and for the wife, for the care should be given to her. And how should he learn it? He learns that, by the way Christ takes care of us. And she is to respect her husband as we respect Christ, our bridegroom, because of His care for us.

It's a great tragedy when the wife has a husband who is not oriented to the mind of God, and he doesn't take care of his wife, and he doesn't take care of his family. He lives on a totally different plane – the plane of the world. And the impact on the children is there as the years go by. And it's a great disgrace for that to be true of a Christian when we are related to Christ in this particular, intimate way, and which is to be our guide.

Isaiah 54:5 described Israel as the repudiated wife of Jehovah. Israel was viewed as the wife of Jehovah. She was not viewed as the bride. The church is the espoused bride of Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2: "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy," Paul says to the Corinthians Christians. "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I may present you as a pure virgin." We come to Christ in that special relationship that a virgin comes to her future husband.

After the church is removed from the earth in the rapture, there will be a marriage which will take place in heaven, and the body of Christ will then become the bride of Christ. We are now the body of Christ. That will phase out into becoming the bride of Christ, so that the body relationship will have a deeper meaning, even as two people who get married – suddenly, their body relationships have a totally different facet.

Revelation 19:7-8: "Let us rejoice and be glad, and give glory to Him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Needless to say, any woman who is getting ready for her wedding day is very much preoccupied with the garments she will wear. And here is a very significant point for all of us to remember. When we stand up there in heaven, to be joined in the intimacy of marriage to Jesus Christ, where we as His body now become more to Him than that – we are His bride, we are going to wear a garment that's made up of our divine good service works. The divine good service works are what we're going to stand there. Some believers will stand there in great, magnificent garments that would blow you out of the water. Others are going to be very shabbily dressed – mostly those poor people who attend churches which do not have expository preaching – somebody who explains, verse-by-verse, through a book of the Bible, what God has taught us, and brings together (collates in a category of truth from all parts of the Bible) some particular doctrine.

Without that, you'll never be able to serve God, because you won't understand this important principle. Repeatedly in the Scripture, we are told how we should live, and then we are told that the only way you can do that is through the power of the Holy Spirit. And you cannot separate those. You cannot be telling people: "Here's what the Bible says for you to live." You go reading the moral code in the Bible and say, "Yep, that's how I'm going to live," so you decide to live that way. That's nothing but legalism. That's Old Testament Judaism. You wonder why your kids go astray? You have to understand that the principles are there to guide us. But no Jew, who had those same principles, could never keep them. And that's what Paul said: "The Law was holy, good, and righteous, but it was weak through the flesh (through the sin nature of man), and he couldn't execute." God says, "Now I am going to let the Holy Spirit cause you to do right. You stay in that inner circle of temporal fellowship by your sins being confessed, and the Spirit of God is going to lead you to do right." And if you stumble, and step out of line, He's going to jerk you up short, and He will let you know immediately that you're out of line. And if you say, "Yes, Lord, I was wrong" (you confess), you're right back into that temporal fellowship circle, and you go on. That is the life of the new creation. And that is the life befitting the bride of Christ – to be treating her husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, with proper respect.

This marriage will take place in heaven during the seven-year tribulation period on this earth. After the tribulation period is ended, and the Millennial Kingdom begins, the millennial celebration, the marriage supper of the Lamb will begin on day one of the start of the millennium, and that party is going to go on for 1,000 years. It will be a constant celebration. And who is going to be the focus of attention? Well, when you go to a wedding, who's the focus? The bride. The party is for the bride. This is what God has in store for each of you.

So, why do you want to live like somebody in the world? Why do you want to spend your time mulling around with the things of this life as the focus of your attention? Never giving a thought as to what goes down at Berean Church? What goes down at the Lord's service? What needs to be done here? And when this takes hold, that's when, all of a sudden, we see these people, even in our own association. They're walking around. Nobody's telling them what to do. They know what needs to be done. They know where their skills are. And they're just carrying it through. But those who are not living in the realm of that power system that God has provided, and who are not conscious of honoring their bridegroom, Christ, with their lives, they're off in other things. And we have to throw a lasso out there and try to jerk them back in, and say, "Can you help us do this?" And they say, "Well, yeah, as soon as I get through out here. I have some very important things to do. Tell my Wife to wait." You're telling your Wife, Christ, to wait? Men do that on the human realm.

In that Millennial Kingdom, the church bride is going to be the co-ruler with her husband, Christ. The bride, the church, will be ruling with Him. She'll not be one of the governed.

Furthermore, Christ is preparing a special dwelling place in heaven, suitable for His bride, which reflects her exalted position. John 14:1-4: "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again (that's the rapture), and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." This is the great promise that Christ is preparing a special place in the new Jerusalem for us to live in: "In My Father's house are many dwelling places.

In verse 23, we read, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word (if he knows it), and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." "Dwelling places" in verse 2, and "abode" in verse 23 are the same word in the Greek language, and those are the only two places this word is used. That is one of those special Holy Spirit words. And what it means is "to make your home." God the Father and God the Son say, "We're going to make our home" with whom? "With the one who keeps My Word of doctrine."

Now, that should send a chill through you, to say, "My God, I go to church every Sunday. The preacher never explains the Bible. He gets us jumpin' and jivin', and we have a very emotional experience, we think. And the devil has a real free hand with us. But, boy, when I walk out, there's nothing in me for which Christ would want to come and visit me. He would not want to come and abide with me. There's no reason He would want to have His home with me." That's a significant combination. That one word is used twice right here in this context. God has many dwelling places – places for our home with Him, in heaven. And the bride will share that exalted position.

The church will share her Bridegroom's glory in eternity too. That is, to me, one of the most staggering things – that I will bear the glory of God? Hebrews 2:9-10: "But we do see Him Who has been made for a little while lower than the angels (Christ – because He was in His humanity. Humanity is under angels: "Namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, and by the grace of God, He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through suffering. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered. He knows what suffering is. He knows what your suffering is, and it's part of bringing you into a glorified position.

John 17:24: "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may be hold My glory which You have given Me. For You did love Me before the foundation of the world." We are going to see the glory of Christ, our Savior. And we will be part of that glory.

Romans 8:17: "And if children, heir's, also heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ." That's what we pointed out a little while ago. If, indeed, we suffer with Him, in order that we may also be glorified with Him."

Then, in Colossians 3:4: "When Christ, Who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

So, the relationship of bridegroom to bride means that you will reflect the glory of your husband, Christ. This figure reveals the infinite love of Christ for His church; the intimate unity between the church and the bridegroom; and, the authority and position of glory, which is to be held by the church through all eternity.

All of these relationships are made possible by the grace of God. And they are the realities that should be the frame of reference for your daily living. You cannot deal with God in emotional, experiential ways. Have you ever realized that in the Scriptures, we have pointed out to us, the primary work of God the Holy Spirit, upon Whom all of this is dependent? Do you know what the primary work of the Holy Spirit is? It's to glorify Christ. That's why the Holy Spirit is never in the forefront. The Holy Spirit is not there in action. In Scripture, it's Jesus Christ who's out there in the action. He's the visible One. He's the active One. The Holy Spirit – how do we know what He's doing? Only through the victory in your life. Only through the accomplishments of your divine good works. But the Holy Spirit never makes Himself present. He never speaks. He never appears. He is never seen. He is never involved. It's only through what Christians are doing that God can bless, because when that happens, Christ is exalted.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ created a new species of human beings. And the one who makes that species work is God the Holy Spirit. But he's always in the background. So, if you find yourself thinking that you're seeing the Holy Spirit in action, you're wrong. What you're seeing is Someone Who is very much in the background, Who is exalting Christ. That's the action. But when you find yourself in a spiritual victory, whether over sin, or an accomplishment of spiritual service, that's the Holy Spirit very quietly in the background. That's why I've told you that He deals with a soft, quiet hand. And I always regret, when I get that intuitive signal from Him, and I do not follow that direction. There are not going to be any visions. There are not going to be any voices. There's only going to be the Spirit of God letting you know what to do through the Word of God. And He will let you know, and then you may respond.

So, we, who are the bride of Christ, have a power system beyond anything human beings have ever had. And where does the devil work? Right there, distorting that power system into some human activity, so that it is no longer the power of God. Thank God for these seven figures that make us something really special.

Our father, we thank You for this, Your Word, and we pray that You will help us to relate to it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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