

## I. Introduction

- a) Luke 1:17 has been a defining Scripture for us since 1997. Speaking of John the Baptist, this verse states, "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
- b) Over a period of 30 years, the Lord has sovereignly established us as a forerunner ministry and church. He has anointed us with the spirit and the power of Elijah to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. We are an end-time ministry and church whose mission is to make the bride of Jesus Christ ready for the Bridegroom.
- c) Habakkuk 2:2 states, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run."
- d) Today's message will focus on our mission—the assignment the Lord has given to us.

## II. Preparing the Bride of Christ

- a) Our mission is to help prepare the bride for Jesus locally, nationally, and internationally.
- b) Revelation 19:7-8 states, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. 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."
- c) Notice a few things from these verses.
  - 1. It says the bride makes herself ready. It doesn't say God makes her ready in His sovereignty.
  - 2. The bride is made ready at the end of the Great Tribulation.
  - 3. Jesus doesn't return in His second coming until the bride has made herself ready.
- d) Most of the church wrongly thinks salvation and being made ready are synonymous. Nothing could be further from the truth. Salvation is only the first step toward the bride being made ready.
- e) We don't get ready to be saved. We get ready because we are saved. We don't get ready to stay saved. We get ready by working out the salvation that has already been secured within our spirits. We get ready from a position of righteousness accomplished by the finished work of the cross and a condition of righteousness that has been accomplished in our born-again spirits. This is what the "righteous acts of the saints" means.
- f) I can testify to you, both from Scripture and experience, that being born again and making yourself ready as the bride of Christ are vastly different.
- g) Jesus is not returning until His bride has made herself ready. No matter how dark it gets, Jesus will remain in heaven until His bride in the earth is glorious, spotless, holy, and blameless.
- h) Ephesians 5:27 states, "That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
- i) The church of Jesus Christ, though a betrothed bride to Him, is far from being ready to marry Him. And the Scripture is clear: We must get ready this side of heaven.
- j) Three phases of the bride being made ready:
  - 1. Forerunners = Make themselves ready before the majority and are used to make others ready.
  - 2. First-Fruits Harvest = Has been underway since Genesis but is soon to be completed. See Revelation 12:1-5; 14:1-5. Triggers the Great Tribulation (last 3.5 years of the age).

3. Final Harvest = During the Great Tribulation (last 3.5 years of the age). The bride made ready by the fires of tribulation, persecution, and suffering.
- k) How is the bride made ready? By overcoming what Jesus listed in Revelation 2-3.
- l) In other words, the book of Revelation unveils what it looks like when the bride has made herself ready. If we piece together Revelation 2-3, Revelation 12:11, and Revelation 14:1-5, we get a clear picture of what it looks like when the bride is made ready.
- m) When we are born-again, we are betrothed as a pure virgin to Jesus Christ the Bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2). However, His wife—the one whom Jesus will marry—is comprised of the ones who have made themselves ready. Therefore, there is a difference between the betrothed bride (all born-again believers) and the overcoming bride who has made herself ready. There is a difference between the betrothed bride and the wife of the Lamb, who will be married to Jesus Christ the Bridegroom for all eternity.

### III. A Picture of the Bride Made Ready

- a) The bride made ready will love Jesus as her first love (Rev. 2:4-5; 12:11).
  - First love is a love so deep that we love Him even more than we love ourselves.
  - This is far more than having a good quiet time. This is making Christ in us the life-source we live by rather than our self-life in our souls. It is what Paul described in Galatians 2:20—I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me.
  - Most of the church loves Jesus. Few love Him as their all-consuming first love.
- b) The bride made ready will be faithful to the Lamb no matter the cost (Rev. 2:10).
  - This is a surrender and devotion to the Lord so deep and thorough that we will be transformed into living martyrs (witnesses) who are willing to die for our faith.
  - We will, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, gladly endure persecution for His sake.
  - Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) is a great example of faithfulness unto death. Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who resisted the antichrist government of his day, speaking the truth despite the personal cost. Ultimately, Bonhoeffer was murdered by a direct command of Hitler for conspiring to assassinate him.
  - On April 9, 1945, Bonhoeffer was hanged at Flossenbug, only days before the American liberation of the POW camp. Here's Bonhoeffer's last words: "This is the end—for me, the beginning of life."<sup>1</sup>
  - Watchman Nee (1903-1972) is another great example of faithfulness unto death. Nee was used powerfully to help establish the Chinese church. Many of Nee's powerful messages have been turned into classic books read by over a million people. Nee was imprisoned for 20 years in a CCP prison for his faith. Ultimately, he died in prison because of his faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Nee's grandniece recounted the time when she went to pick up Nee's ashes:

In June 1972, we got a notice from the labor farm that my granduncle had passed away. My eldest grandaunt and I rushed to the labor farm. But when we got there, we learned that he had already been cremated. We could only see his ashes. . . .

Before his departure, he left a piece of paper under his pillow, which had several lines of big words written in a shaking hand. He wanted to testify to the truth which he had even until his death, with his lifelong experience.

That truth is—“*Christ is the Son of God who died for the redemption of sinners and resurrected after three days. This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ.*”

When the officer of the labor farm showed us this paper, I prayed that the Lord would let me quickly remember it by heart. . . .

My granduncle had passed away. *He was faithful until death.* With a crown stained with blood, he went to be with the Lord. Although Nee did not fulfill his last wish, to come out alive to join his wife, the Lord prepared something even better—they were reunited before the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

- c) The bride made ready will love the truth and be a faithful witness of the truth (Rev. 2:14-15).
- Loving the truth includes both the written Word and the living and active voice of the Lord.
  - Loving the truth wholeheartedly will keep us from deception, compromise, error, sin, and defilement.
  - This will remove all forms of compromise from our hearts and souls, sanctifying us a bride made ready for the Lord.
- d) The bride made ready will not tolerate the ways and works of Jezebel in our sphere of authority (Rev. 2:20).
- The book of Revelation reveals two brides. The false, harlot bride is revealed in Revelation 17-18. This harlot bride will commit adultery with Jezebel. She will be intoxicated by her false religion, defiled by her doctrines of devils, and will be defiled by sexual sins.
  - The pure and spotless bride of the Lamb, on the other hand, will overcome Jezebel’s false one-world religion and will be undefiled by her promotion of sexual immorality.
  - To be a bride made ready, we must resist this demonic spirit’s agenda to defile us with lust, sexual sin, pride, independence, manipulation, control, witchcraft, false teaching and ideologies, and false religion.
  - In whatever sphere of authority the Lord has given us—whether in the home, work, community, or in ministry—we cannot not even tolerate an inch of Jezebel’s influence.
- e) The bride made ready will be wide awake, overcoming all forms of spiritual slumber and apathy (Rev. 3:1-2).
- Jesus told the church of Sardis to wake up. The Greek word for *wake up* means to watch, give strict attention to, be cautious, active, to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtakes one.
  - This Greek word is used 22 times in the New Testament, but 11 occurrences are specifically related to the end times (Matt. 24:42-42; 25:13; Mark 13:34-35,37; Luke 12:37; 1 Thess. 5:6; Rev. 3:2-3; 16:15).
  - Here’s the point: At the end of the age, which are the times in which we live, it will be super easy to fall asleep, grow dull, and be lulled into spiritual apathy. That is why we must wake up. Now is

the time for the foolish virgins to wake up and for the wise virgins to awake from slumber to seek the Bridegroom like never before.

- f) The bride made ready will be empowered by the indwelling Spirit to persevere until the end (Rev. 3:11).
- The Holy Spirit will empower us with grace (unmerited power) to live a disciplined lifestyle, whereby we make our bodies a slave to our spirits, enabling us to fully overcome every sin, stronghold, distraction, and defilement.
  - This will help us maintain our victory until the end, giving us endurance, perseverance, a resolve to stay steady, and to not quit when we are tested.
- g) The bride made ready will have a fiery passion for Jesus (Rev. 3:16-19).
- This fiery passion will be ignited by the fire of God's jealous love His beloved Son and will consume all forms of apathy, complacency, indifference, carelessness, and lukewarmness that presently characterize so much of the Laodicean western church today.
  - This baptism of fire will both incinerate everything that hinders first love in our hearts, souls, and bodies and ignite within us the Father's passionate love for His beloved Son.
  - This fiery love will also leave us with a driving hunger and thirst for God that compels us into a deep, internal, and intimate relationship with the Godhead.
  - The bride made ready will overcome lukewarmness and will dine with the Trinity in rich internal communion and fellowship. She will know the Lord intimately in the secret place.
- h) The bride made ready will have her self-life fully crucified, enabling her to live fully by the indwelling life of Christ and to be possessed fully by the Holy Spirit (Rev. 12:11).
- The cross-life will be restored back to the church before the Lord returns, leading the prepared bride to crucify her self-life entirely and to make the indwelling life of Christ the life-source she lives by.
  - Thus, the bride made ready will be fully possessed by the Spirit of God in her heart and soul, empowering her to overcome Satan and his nature inwardly.
- i) The bride made ready will have the nature of the Lamb fully formed within her (Rev. 12:11).
- Jesus Christ is a Lamb and His wife will also be a lamb. That is, we will have Christ-like humility, meekness, self-sacrifice, obedience, and love formed within our hearts and souls.
  - This lamb-like nature will enable us to overcome the nature of the proud, independent, rebellious, self-serving, and accusatory nature of Satan.
- j) The bride made ready will have clean hands and a pure heart (Rev. 14:4-5).
- This means we will be pure internally and externally.
  - Nothing of the flesh—including sexual impurity, lust, jealousy, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, offense, strife, contention, or unrighteous judgment will defile the bride.
  - She will be pure, holy, and blameless before the throne of God.
  - She will be a glorious bride without spot, stain, or wrinkle.

- k) The bride made ready will live in moment-by-moment reliance and absolute obedience to the indwelling Spirit.
  - The bride of Christ will follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev. 14:4).
  - This means she will only do and speak what the Spirit prompts her to do and speak. And she will only go where the Spirit says to go.
- l) The bride made ready will have lips that only speak the truth (Rev. 14:5).
  - She will have purified lips; her yes will be yes and her no will be no.
  - Like Isaiah, the lips of the prepared bride will be cleansed with fire, removing words of gossip, unrighteous judgment, falsehood, slander, self-promotion, and course joking from her lips.

#### IV. In Summary . . .

1. The bride made ready will love Jesus as her all-consuming first love.
2. The bride made ready will be faithful to the Lamb in the face of persecution and even death.
3. The bride made will wholeheartedly love the truth, seek the truth, obey the truth, and proclaim the truth.
4. The bride made ready will overcome Jezebel and resist her influence in every area of our lives and spheres of authority.
5. The bride made ready will overcome spiritual apathy and slumber and will be wide awake for the coming of the Bridegroom, like a wise virgin whose lamp is filled with oil and whose light is burning brightly.
6. The bride made ready will persevere in the victory of Christ until the end.
7. The bride made ready will burn with the fire of God's jealous love for His beloved Son, as this fire removes all that hinders first love in our hearts, souls, and bodies, including lukewarmness and self-satisfaction. She will enter into a dining-relationship of deep internal intimacy with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
8. The bride made ready will have her self-life fully crucified by the Holy Spirit and will live fully by the indwelling life of Christ, empowering her to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil and to be internally possessed by the Spirit of God.
9. The bride made ready will be an equally-yoked wife, having the Lamb's nature formed deeply within her heart and soul, making her lamb-like in character.
10. The bride made ready will be glorious within, having no spot, stain, or wrinkle internally or externally. She will be pure in heart and holy in action.
11. The bride made ready will follow the Lamb wherever He goes, living in moment-by-moment reliance and absolute obedience to the indwelling Spirit.
12. The bride made ready will have purified lips that only speak the truth in love.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/defiant-theologian-dietrich-bonhoeffer-is-hanged>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watchman\\_Nee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watchman_Nee)