

The Bride Made Ready

One of the most encouraging prophecies from the Book of Revelation is found in **Revelation 19:6-8**:

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (NKJV).

A "great multitude" declares that the Lord reigns. (See Is. 24:14-16a)

1. The gospel of the kingdom is not the same as the gospel of salvation. The gospel of salvation makes Him known as Savior, but the gospel of the kingdom reveals Him as King.

Habakkuk 2:14 *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*

2. He came the first time to be the Lamb, but He is coming back as King.
3. The immediate and first great event of the kingdom is the marriage of the Lord to His bride, the church. (See Is. 25:6-9)
4. One of the signs of the approaching Kingdom that we can look for is the bride becoming focused on preparing for her King. As we are told in our text, the Bride has "made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7-8).
5. Of course, the bride is the whole church, not just the church in any one country or period of history. But looking at the Bride today we see she looks in pretty bad shape.
 - a. But we must never underestimate the Lord's love and power.
 - i. As Gabriel said to Mary when she questioned the possibility of her having a baby, *"Nothing is impossible with God."*

Romans 9:28 (NIV) *28 For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.*

6. Even though the Lord may surprise his Bride with a couple of miracles, I don't think it is all miracle. As the Scripture above stated, she *"makes herself ready."* Clearly human responsibility is in play.

2 Peter 3:11-12 (NASB) *11what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,*

7. We must also consider passages like **Ephesians 4:11-13**:

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Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV) *11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

- a. Divine Dimensions: Christlikeness
- b. Divine Purpose: unity, intimacy, and maturity
- c. Divine Quantum: "all" — this is an unknown quantum
- d. Divine Principle: Representation

THE KINGDOM, THE CROSS, AND THE CHURCH

1. When we consider the task of the church - the *missional call and assignment* that we have as members of God's kingdom, we must begin with the end in mind.
 - a. The end is **the new creation**.
 - b. We are a new creation already. "*If a man is in Christ, he is a new creation*" (2 Cor. 5:17).
 - c. The Kingdom has been *inaugurated*. But it has not yet been *consummated*.
 - d. When Jesus returns, he brings with him our full inheritance including our resurrection bodies: **1 Jn 3:2; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Heb 9:28**.
2. **So what are we to be doing in the meantime?** In the broadest of terms, we must live out the mission of the church by **beginning with the end in mind**.

RENEWING OUR MINDS

Rom 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1. A fundamental task of the church is *to work toward the renewing of the mind of all believers*. This means the renewing of our minds as:
 - a. **Image-bearers**
 - b. **Cross-carriers**
 - c. **Kingdom-bringers**
2. The renewing of your mind is made evident *as we begin to think like kingdom people*.
 - a. We must see *the big picture*.
 - b. Unless we are renewed in the spirit of mind we will continue living and thinking from the *old creation*.
 - c. The renewing of the mind is critical, that we may prove what the will of God is because that is how the kingdom begins to be established.

TRANSFORMING OUR CHARACTER

1. One of the ways we can observe the human mind being renewed is through the establishment of the Christian character. *As our mind is renewed, our character is transformed.* The way to know our mind is being renewed is to *observe* in our lives:
 - a. Is *virtue* being established?
 - b. Are *faith, hope and love* becoming core values?
 - c. Are *the fruit of the Spirit* becoming evident in our lives?

CULTIVATING OUR SKILLS...

1. If we are going to be those that *anticipate the coming* of the kingdom, then we must pursue the *renewing of our minds*, the *transforming of our character*, and the *cultivating of our skills*.
2. *Character or virtue is a practiced skill that slowly becomes a developed second nature.* As we do that, we become those who are enabled to *bear the image*, to *embrace the cross*, and to *bring the kingdom*.
3. This doesn't mean we have to be *completely renewed* in our mind and *totally established* in our character before we can do any kingdom work that matters at all. They both progress simultaneously.

GROWING IN AUTHORITY

1. In the prayer Jesus taught us to pray, the Lord's Prayer, he starts with, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" **It's a prayer for us to submit to the authority of God.**
 - a. It has to start *there where you are* and extend outward.
 - b. All of *the other kingdom blessings* for which we pray, flow out of our submission to the authority of God.
 - c. **When we are not under the authority of God—then there are no grounds on which we can receive those other blessings.**
 - d. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:33**, "*Seek ye **first** the kingdom of God and all these other things,*" (*daily bread, care for your life, protection from evil, forgiveness of sin*) "*they will be added to you.*"
 - e. Jesus then illustrates this at the end of the prayer in verses 14-15:

Matt 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.
 - f. There is a direct correlation between *our response* to God's authority and *our reception* of God's provisions.
2. In **Ephesians 6**, we see God make a *promise*. "*Children if you will obey your parents, it will go well with you and you will live long upon the earth.*" It is important that we teach our children submission to authority.

CONCLUSION: What God did for Jesus at Easter he promises to do for the whole of creation through the second coming of Jesus and his millennial reign. It is time to take our

place in the power of the Spirit as agents, heralds, and stewards of God's coming Kingdom and the renewal of all creation!

Season of Essential Transition

Isa 60:1-3 *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

1. We live in changing times and the pace of that change is accelerating. I believe we are living in a "kairos" moment of time

As we are serious about obeying God's word, as we embrace the call to "**arise**," and to "**shine**," we will find "**the glory of the Lord**" arising on us.

A. The process of "**arising**" requires intentionality and effort.

B. Grace is opposed to *earning*, not to *effort*.

a. It is by the power of God's grace that we "*arise*."

C. "**Shining**" requires a reflective ability, an untarnished self that accurately reflects God's character, love, and power.

D. Being reflective, able to shine, requires God's refining process.

Mal 3:2-3 (NKJV) *But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.*

E. God has not only provided the **command** and the **promise**, he has provided the **means**. "**He will purify the sons of Levi....**" (See Ps. 66:10; Job 23:10; Zec. 13:9; Dan. 11:35)

F. God's *prophetic commands* have a **powerful promise** attached.

Isaiah 60:1 "**Arise, shine**, for your light has come, **and** the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

Transition is an intentional pursuit of God's emerging requirements: "**arise** and **shine**!"

Ephesians 4:13 *This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

Transition requires tempered zeal and wise enthusiasm.

A. The call and command of God is clear: "**Arise and shine**."

B. The promise of God is certain: "**the glory of the Lord will rise upon you**."

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II. The result is astounding: ***"Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising."***

III. Massive change awaits our ministry in the last days:

Isaiah 60:3 *Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

IV. The deeper God's prophetic word impacts our lives and faith communities, the greater the impact upon our world.

A. The power of this prophecy is meant to redefine the structure of our spirits and to reshape our faith communities.

B. This prophecy is meant to open our spirits to a fresh revelation from God.

C. This prophecy has power to enhance our ability to carry and complete Divine Purpose. (See 1 Tim. 1:18)

D. This prophecy is meant to increase spiritual strength, deepen our spiritual authority, and transform our God-imaged humanity.

V. Note the context of the command to "arise and shine":

Isaiah 60:2 *See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you...*

VI. Darkness is increasing. It will continue to increase. Where is the world going to find any light? Jesus tells us, speaking to his followers:

Matt. 5:14 *You alone are the light of the world....*

VII. Darkness will continue deepen, the world will continue to devolve. Jesus only has one plan: *you and me!*

A. We are being called upon in this hour by God's prophetic word and by the power of the Spirit to offer to God a wineskin capable of receiving new wine.

Mark 2:22 *No one puts new wine into an old wineskin or else the new wine skin burst...*