

Bridal theology in the Old Testament

1. Why an understanding of bridal theology is important when studying the End Times

- a. The years leading up to Jesus' return will see unique dynamics and unprecedented pressures (shaking, sin, darkness) and an unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit and revival. As the light gets brighter, so the darkness will get darker. Satan will rage against the human race and God's most severe judgments will be released against the Antichrist's empire.

Isaiah 60:2 ²For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.

- b. We need to grow in our understanding of Jesus' heart so that we can respond rightly and are able to **agree** with what He is doing instead of **resisting** it. If we don't grow in this understanding we are more vulnerable to fear, offense, and deception.
- c. The Word and the Spirit both emphasise Jesus as **Bridegroom, King, and Judge** at the end of the age.
 - i **Passionate Bridegroom:** Jesus is revealed as One who **delights in relating** to and **partnering** with His people. The Spirit will use the revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom to establish the first commandment in first place in the Church worldwide before Jesus returns.
 - (1) The essence of the message of the Bride of Christ is the revelation of Jesus' beauty, His emotions for us, and commitments to us (to share His heart, throne, secrets, and beauty with us) as our Bridegroom God, and our response of wholehearted love and obedience.
 - (2) Jesus is responsive to our love. Foundational to the Bridegroom message is the truth about our impact on Jesus' heart and His impact on ours. Jesus desires the beauty of His people as they respond to Him with wholeheartedness
 - ii **Sovereign King:** Jesus is revealed as the One who **possesses all power** and anoints His people with power. As King, He will heal and restore individual lives, every sphere of society in every nation, and even the earth itself (i.e. atmosphere, agriculture, and animals).
 - iii **Righteous Judge:** Jesus is revealed as the One who **removes everything that hinders love**.
 - (1) He intervenes with zeal to confront the Antichrist's empire and its evil and oppression.
 - (2) Those who misunderstand His judgments will be more vulnerable to yield to fear and offense (anger) at His leadership.
 - (3) As God's judgments unfold, many will lose perspective and will question God's love and wisdom. They will need biblical understanding to rightly interpret the events as expressions of God's love and wisdom.
- d. There is no contradiction in Jesus as Bridegroom, King, and Judge. It is one reality. The King uses His great power and intense judgments to express His love and bring great blessing to His people.
- e. Some ministries either refuse or emphasise one of these three truths over the other two.
 - i To understand Jesus as the **Bridegroom** without seeing Him as the King and Judge may lead to sentimentality without obedience and misunderstanding of His end-time plans.

- ii To understand Jesus as the **King** without seeing Him as the Bridegroom and Judge may lead to an authoritarian view of God or to a misunderstanding of why God releases power through His people. This leads some to be overly focused on growing in power for “their ministry.” He releases His power to reveal love and to establish the first commandment in the Church.
- iii To understand Jesus as the **Judge** without seeing Him as the Bridegroom King may lead to a harsh view of God or to a misunderstanding of why God releases His judgments. If we proclaim God’s judgments without encountering Him as the Bridegroom King, then we will be more likely to operate in a wrong spirit.
- f. The Lord is calling some to embrace a season of rigorous preparation to equip them to more effectively experience and proclaim the forerunner message in the midst of the coming pressures. Because of love, they prepare themselves to prepare others for the greatest transition in history.
- g. Jesus emphasised this 3-fold message in the week leading to the cross. In His final public message to Israel, He revealed the *nature of the kingdom* as a wedding that His Father planned. (Matt.22:2-10)
- h. In Jesus’ final message to the apostles before the last supper in the upper room He revealed Himself as Bridegroom (Matthew 25)
- i. Jesus’ last message to the Church is found in His message given to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3). He started with a call to wholehearted love (Rev. 2:4), warned them of His judgments if they continued in immorality, and then promised overcomers that they would rule with Him and ended with a promise that they would both dine and rule “with Him”
- j. The final revelation in the Word reveals Jesus as Bridegroom, King, and Judge (Rev. 19-22).

Rev. 19:2-16²*True and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth...and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her...*⁷*Give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready...*¹¹*In righteousness He judges and makes war...*¹⁵*He should strike the nations...He Himself treads the winepress of ...the wrath of Almighty God...*¹⁶*on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS...*

- k. We see the New Jerusalem is the very place that Jesus prepared for His Bride

Rev. 21:9, 10 *Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*¹⁰ *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven*

John. 14:3³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

- l. This City was designed for the Bride—the beauty, the light, the glory, the songs, the fragrances, the food, the water, and more—everything in the city energises His people with love.
- m. The nature of God is love. Love, by definition, is relational. We can only properly understand God’s eternal purposes and how He views us in the context of a “relational paradigm of God.” The nature of God’s kingdom is love—being in deep relationship and partnership with Jesus.
- n. God dwells forever in a deeply satisfying relationship of love in the fellowship of the Trinity. The Son loves the Father, and the Father loves the Son. They deeply delight in using their authority to serve and honour each other freely. Each is equally yoked in mutual love and wholehearted commitment. They are each fully involved, fully focused, and fully committed to one another.

John. 5:20 *The Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does...*

John. 14:31 *I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do.*

- o. Some only see the message of the Bridegroom as a New Testament revelation believing that the Bride is the new covenant Church. However, the Old Testament is full of references to betrothal between God and Israel. As we will see, the relationship of betrothal is at the very centre of the biblical storyline.
- p. The message of the Bridegroom God and His Bride is established throughout the Old Testament (Gen. 2:24; Ps. 45:1-2, 10-15; Song 4:9-5:1; 6:4-5; 7:10; 8:6-8; Isa. 54:4-6; 62:2-5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; 31:32; Ezek. 16:13-15, 32; 23:1-45; Hos. 1:2; 2:7, 14-23; 3:1-5).

2. Genesis 1-2

- a. The Scriptures and human history begin with a bridegroom (Adam) and his bride (Eve) in the Garden of Eden and end with a Bridegroom and His Bride in a garden paradise (New Jerusalem).
- b. God created Adam and Eve in His very image and likeness, with a capacity to relate to Him in a deep way. The design of humans in God's image, with this capacity to relate to Him, was a statement of His desire for intimate partnership with human beings. We were created in God's likeness for the purpose of relating to God. He designed the human spirit for partnership with Himself because He had plans to share so much with us forever.

²⁶*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."* ²⁷*In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* (Gen. 1:26-27)

- c. We were created in God's image to be loved and to love. The capacity to love deeply is unique to the human spirit because only we are created in the image of the God who is love. The reason we enjoy being loved and loving is because we were made in God's image.
- d. God created the human spirit with a longing for the assurance that God enjoys us as well as for deep partnership with God. These cravings were strategically given to us by God. They will never leave.

[See: "7 Longings of the Human Heart" by M. Bickle & D. Hiebert. Available as free pdf <https://mikebickle.org/books/pdfs/Book - The Seven Longings of the Human Heart - Mike Bickle.pdf>]

- e. The human spirit has the unique capacity to receive God's Spirit and become one with Him by the indwelling of His life.

1 Cor. 6:17¹⁷*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

- f. The human soul has personality capacities and abilities like God so that we can relate to Him.
 - i **Mind**: We have the capacity for reason, revelation, and creative thinking.
 - ii **Emotions**: We have the capacity for intense affection, joy, gladness, zeal, holy anger, etc.
 - iii **Will**: We have a free will with the capacity for dignified actions by making decisions that have eternal consequences of being remembered, valued, and rewarded by God forever.
- g. Redeemed humans will have a resurrected body that reflects Jesus' glory.

Phil. 3:21 ...will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...

3. Betrothal - Jeremiah 31 and Exodus 19

- a. At the heart of the Jewish wedding (which we will look at later) is a covenant which sets out the terms of the marriage between the bridegroom and the bride. The marriage covenant, *Katubah*, states the bridal price, the promise to support and care for her and the terms of the marriage should she accept. This covenant can only be broken by divorce and the purpose of the *katubah* was to make sure the bride was cared for and treated well. It is presented to the bride and it is her choice whether to accept it and enter into the covenant of betrothal and marriage.
- b. Why is this important? Because, as Mike showed us last time, we are a people in covenant with God. I believe that both the Old and New Covenants are marriage covenants that God made with both Israel and the church. They are the terms of our betrothal to God.
- c. This is not just some figurative way of looking at our partnership in covenant with God. Bridal Theology sits at the heart of the Bible – it is how God has established our relationship. Jeremiah understood that the covenant that God had made with Israel at Mt. Sinai was the Lord's betrothal to Israel. In the ancient world, a couple were legally married on the day they were betrothed. Each one made binding covenant commitments to give their all to each other.

Jer. 2:2 Cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, "...I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness."

Jer. 31:32 "...the covenant that I made...I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them," says the LORD.

- d. Moses described the time when God made this marriage covenant with Israel (Ex. 19:1-20). Israel's first meeting with God was a prophetic picture of the glory of Jesus' second coming.

Ex. 19:5, 16-19 ⁵If you will...keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people...¹⁶...there were thunders and lightnings...and the sound of the trumpet was very loud...¹⁷Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God...¹⁸Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire...the whole mountain quaked greatly.¹⁹And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long...God answered him by voice.

- e. Jeremiah began his ministry with a bridal perspective of God's kingdom (Jer. 2-3). He trumpeted this message in 626 BC, about five years before Josiah's reform of Judah in 621 BC (2 Chr. 34).

¹⁴"Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD, "for I am married to you." (Jer. 3:14)

- f. What is evident from these scriptures is that in God's own words Israel was married to Him. We have got so used to using the word "covenant" but I think we need to understand that it is a marriage covenant, a *katubah*. Why is that so important? Because a marriage implies emotional as well as contractual commitment. God was not just making some sort of legal agreement with His people, he was binding himself to them in love and commitment and when they behave in a way that walks away from that commitment it has an impact on Him – He sees it as adultery.

4. The Bridegroom King who judges His people - Hosea 2

- a. The Lord commanded Hosea to take a wife of harlotry at the beginning of his prophetic ministry because Israel (the northern kingdom) was engaged in harlotry by departing from the Lord.

Hos. 1:2-3²When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.”³So he went and took Gomer...and she conceived and bore him a son.

- b. God compared Hosea’s unfaithful wife, Gomer, to unfaithful Israel in her rebellion (Hos. 2:2-13). The Lord wanted Hosea’s pain-filled marriage to be a prophetic picture of how the Lord feels about His relationship to His people when they are unfaithful to Him. Hosea’s story is told in Hosea 1-3.
- c. This equipped him to be the first prophet to reveal the Bridegroom God (Hos. 2:16-20). This passage is very relevant in the generation Jesus returns when the Spirit will emphasise Him as the Bridegroom God (in context to judging the Antichrist’s empire) and the spiritual identity of the body of Christ as His Bride.

Rev. 22:17, 20¹⁷And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”...²⁰“Surely I [Jesus] am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

- d. The “Bride of Christ” message in Hosea was given in context to God disciplining His people. Jesus spoke of disciplining His people with “severe mercy” if they refused to repent of immorality.

Rev. 2:18-27¹⁸“And to...the church in Thyatira write...”¹⁹“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience...”²⁰Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality...²¹And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.²²Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.²³I will kill her children with death...I will give to each one of you according to your works...²⁶And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations...²⁷he shall rule them...

- e. Only by understanding Jesus’ heart as a loving Bridegroom can we rightly interpret His judgments. He loves His people so much that He will release His judgments **to remove all that hinders love**. Many do not have a grid for the “severe mercy” that the Bridegroom God will release to discipline His people to wake them up to love. One of the greatest miracles in history is the transformation of the end-time church from a lukewarm spirit (Rev. 3:16) to being a fully prepared Bride (Rev. 19:7).
- f. James connected some of the conflicts in the body of Christ to refusing to repent of lustful desires.

⁴Adulterers and adulteresses!...Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God...⁹Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (Jas. 4:4-9)

5. Judgment on Israel as a harlot (Hos. 2:2-13)

- a. The Lord instructed Hosea and the faithful remnant to contend with unfaithful Israel who was like an unfaithful wife to the Lord (Hos. 2:1-2). The Lord explained why the remnant must speak up—because the unique bond between Himself and their “mother” Israel had been put on hold.

Hos. 2:2 “Bring charges against your mother [Israel]...for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight...”

- b. Hosea was warning Israel that they should not count on the Lord to intervene to protect them against the coming Assyrian invasion (in 721 BC) for their “marriage bond” had been temporally broken because the vast majority of the nation was living in spiritual harlotry.
- c. Ezekiel also described Israel as an adulterous wife (Ezek. 16:13-15, 32; 23:1-45).

Ezek. 16:13-15, 32 ¹³*"You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. ¹⁴Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendour..."* says the Lord God. ¹⁵*"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry..."* ³²*You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband."*

- d. The Israelites wrongly believed that they were God's people and He would protect them simply because they were born to a Jewish family and had a religious heritage.
- e. There are parallels to this in the body of Christ. Many people who confess Christ embrace the distorted grace message: they appeal to Jesus's death and God's free grace even as they intentionally live in compromise and cast off His leadership in their lives, trusting in the fact that they grew up in a Christian family, prayed the "sinner's prayer," and were baptised.
- f. The Lord warned that He would strip Israel naked and block her from her lovers. He will frustrate her plans to continue in sin by setting a hedge of thorns and a stone wall around her.

Hos. 2:3-7 ³*"Lest I strip her naked and expose her..."* ⁵*"For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread...'* ⁶*Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. ⁷She will chase her lovers...but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now.'"*

- g. **I will return to my husband:** She will "come to her senses" like the prodigal son (Lk. 15:17).
- h. Jesus will show His great mercy and generosity to any believer who repents of lukewarmness.

Rev. 3:14-21 ¹⁴*"And to the...church of the Laodiceans write..."* ¹⁵*'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot...'* ¹⁶*because you are lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, "I am rich...and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich ...¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent... ²⁰I stand at the door and knock. If anyone...opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him... ²¹To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne..."*

6. The end-time revelation of the Bridegroom God (Hos. 2:14-20)

- a. The Lord will remain faithful to His promises even after His people are unfaithful.

Hos. 2:14-16 ¹⁴*"...I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her.¹⁵I will give her vineyards...and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there..."* ¹⁶*It shall be, in that day, that you will call Me 'My Husband' and no longer call Me 'My Master'"*

- i. **My husband:** Israel will accept Jesus as they see Him as their Husband and see God's severe mercy was to awaken them to love Him as a Bridegroom. They will no longer call Him "My taskmaster." When our view of God changes, we gain new confidence and love in our relationship with Him.
- ii. **Allure:** God uses kindness and beauty to motivate His people to repent from their sin. The Lord will graciously wow and woo Israel after a season of severe mercy.

Rom. 2:4 ⁴*Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

- iii. **Speak comfort:** God's messengers are to speak God's comfort to Jerusalem.

Isa. 40:1-2 ¹*"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"* Says your God. ²*"Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned..."*

- iv **The wilderness:** Ezekiel described Israel's restoration in the wilderness. In the wilderness, He will plead His case with them, bringing them into the bond of covenant.

Ezek. 20:35-37³⁵And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. ³⁶Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt...³⁷I will bring you into the bond of the covenant..”

- v **She shall sing there:** God awakens her with new songs, even in her wilderness struggles.
- vi **Valley of Achor:** The valley of Achor was the place of Achan's sin and judgment (Josh. 7:24-26). Achor literally means “trouble.” Israel marked the place where Achan was stoned to death in the Valley of Achor. That valley reminded Israel of the seriousness of rejecting the Lord's leadership. The Valley of Achor will be a “door” where Israel will experience great blessing.

Isa. 65:10 Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me.

- b. The Lord will make a covenant for them with the beasts and birds and cause war to cease. The Garden of Eden conditions will be restored, affecting the beasts and birds. Jesus' “bridal gift” to His people includes supernaturally restoring the atmosphere, agriculture, and animals, etc. in the Millennial Kingdom.

Hos. 2:18¹⁸“In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air ...Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth...”

- c. The Lord defines His relationship with His people as a marriage.

Hos. 2:19-20¹⁹I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; ²⁰I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness..

- d. He wants to marry His people, not just forgive them and use them. Weak and broken people with the spirit of harlotry will be betrothed to the Lord. This includes freedom from the tyranny of sin and empowering God's people to enjoy emotional transformation with godly character and a radiant heart.
- e. The Lord will establish a society where everyone is safe and treated with honour. He has many good plans to express His affection for His people. He is so gracious with the failures of His people who sincerely repent and responds with mercy. He is faithful and true to everything He says about Himself and to us.

Rev. 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

7. The Bridegroom God will restore the land (Hos. 2:21-23)

- a. The Lord promises to answer His people by blessing the agriculture and restoring it to the conditions of the Garden of Eden.

Hos. 2:21-23²¹“It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,” says the LORD; “I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. ²²The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. ²³Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her...then I will say...‘You are My people!’”

- b. The heavens are personified and described as crying to Him to send rain. God will answer the prayers of His people for rain (Zech. 10:1).
- c. **Jezreel:** Jezreel means “God sows”—it has a double meaning in Hosea’s book. Initially, the name Jezreel pointed to God’s judgment when He “sowed” Israel into captivity (Hos. 1:4-5), but here it speaks of salvation—when the Lord “sows” or “plants” Israel back in her land in the end times.
- d. **You are My people:** He will show mercy and establish Israel in covenant with Him.

Hos. 3:5 ⁵Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD...and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

- e. The Lord deeply desires to restore Israel.

Hos. 11:8 ⁸How can I give you up...How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred.

- f. Admah and Zeboiim were two cities totally destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 10:19; 14:2, 8; Deut. 29:23). The Lord cannot “give up” or “hand over” Israel to permanent destruction like He did with Admah and Zeboiim.
- g. The Lord promised that He would respond to their repentance with love and mercy.

Hos. 14:4-6 ⁴I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him. ⁵I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. ⁶His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree and his fragrance like Lebanon.

8. Isaiah – revelation of the Bridegroom God

Isa. 54:4-5 ⁴Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed... ⁵For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name...He is called the God of the whole earth.

- a. Walking free from fear and shame is rooted in seeing the Bridegroom God. The term *Bride* points to our calling to relate to Him in deep partnership sharing all in love.
- b. As the Lord of Hosts, He is a “warrior God,” and as God of the earth, He is transcendent. To see the transcendent God of power as the Bridegroom God, who has deep desire for relationship with His people was a startling, new insight for Israel.
- c. *Bridegroom* describes the essence of who Jesus is and what His personality is like. In nature and personality, He is a Bridegroom; by position and function, He is a King.

Isa. 62:4-7 ⁴You shall no longer be termed Forsaken...you shall be called Hephzibah... for the LORD delights in you... ⁵For as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. ⁶I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, ⁷and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

- d. The redeemed shall receive a new name from the Lord, who “delights in His people”. It is this revelation of being loved as a bride who is desired by her bridegroom that will sustain us to endure and to continue in night and day prayer until our Bridegroom returns for His bride. Hence, the revelation of the Bridegroom in 62:4-5 is essential to sustaining night-and-day prayer in 62:6-7
- e. Isaiah 62-63 is the clearest Old Testament description of the ministry of the Spirit in the generation the Lord returns as He reveals Jesus, the messianic redeemer, as Bridegroom, King, and Judge.

*Isa. 63:1-3*¹Who is this who comes from Edom...this One [Jesus] who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? ...²Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? ³...I have trodden them [nations] in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.

- f. Only as we are able to relate to Jesus in these three facets of His personality will we be able to partner with Him at the end of the age.

9. Psalms

- a. In Psalm 45, the great song of love, we see the Messiah as the Bridegroom, King, and Judge.

*Ps. 45:1-11*¹My heart is overflowing with a good theme...concerning the King...²You are fairer than the sons of men...³Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One [the Judge], with Your glory and Your majesty. ⁵Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the peoples fall under You...⁹At Your right hand stands the queen [the Bride]...¹⁰Listen, O daughter...forget your...father's house; ¹¹so the King will greatly desire your beauty..

- b. David identified three responses that Jesus wants from those who are His eternal inheritance.

*Ps. 2:8-12*⁸I will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance...⁹You shall dash them to pieces...¹⁰Be wise, O kings...¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹²Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way...

- i *Kissing*: the response of extravagant devotion and loving obedience to our *Bridegroom God*
- ii *Rejoicing*: the response of joy in seeing His manifestation of power as our *sovereign King*
- iii *Trembling*: the response of awe in seeing the fierce judgments of our *righteous Judge*

10. Song of Songs

- a. To grow in revelation and understanding of our relationship to Jesus as our Bridegroom there is no better book in the Bible than the Song of Solomon. One of the greatest needs for all of us in the Church today is to understand Jesus' love more fully and more deeply than we did before. We need to experience the heart of God in a deeper way because this progressive experience draws us nearer to God, focuses and transforms our hearts and minds and trains us to live in true partnership with Jesus which will be fully revealed when He returns.
- b. Even in our immaturity and weakness God sees the fullness of who he has created us to be and calls us to go with him – to grow in maturity and fulfil our destiny as his partner for all eternity. It is as His Bride that we will rule and reign in the Messianic Kingdom.
- c. The Song tells the story of how the young maiden grew until she became a Bride filled with the fire of God. By the end of the journey she knows who she is. In chapter 8 we see her interceding for the church (8:8–9) and for Jesus' presence (8:14). In verse 10, we see her threefold confidence as a wall (selfless motives), as a tower (supernatural ability to nurture), and as one with peace (all emotional hindrances in her are removed).
- d. The Bride experiences the power and enjoyment of living before His eyes instead of before the eyes of men. Her sense of importance is rooted in eternity as she has revelation of giving account before God (8:11). The Bride has a revelation of her spiritual maturity before God (8:12).

- e. The King gives His final commission to the Bride. Her urgency is expressed in prayer. His last words to her commend her faithfulness in serving the Church. She continued to dwell in His gardens serving God's people. She did not quit or retreat into selfish isolation.

Song 8:13-14¹³*You who dwell in the gardens [the Bride], the companions listen for your voice—Let Me [Jesus] hear it!*
¹⁴*Make haste, my Beloved [Jesus], and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.*

- f. The Bride responds to the King's request to hear her voice as she intercedes for Him to come. She prays that the presence of the King would come quickly to her and the others.
- g. She calls to Him to come in His victorious strength and power, like a gazelle or a young stag. The Bride is calling upon Him to return at the end of the age to bring an end to every opposition, and establish His Kingdom. The whole earth will become the dwelling place of God, brought to fullness by the presence of the King. This cry of intercession is the chief role of the Bride as we await the return of Jesus as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

11. Affection-based obedience

- a. **"Affection-based obedience"** is obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus' affection for us and then giving it back to Him. It is the strongest and most consistent kind of obedience.
- b. **"Duty-based obedience"** is our commitment to obedience even if we do not feel God's presence. God's Word requires that we obey God even when we do not feel inspired to do so. We obey because God is our creator and redeemer; thus He has the right to require our obedience.
- c. **"Fear-based obedience"** is obedience motivated by the fear of negative consequences. This, too, is biblical. If we are not motivated to obey God by His Word speaking to our heart, then God will use His rod because He loves us too much to leave us in compromise (Heb. 12:5-11).

Heb. 12:6 *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."* *It is for discipline that you have to endure.*

- d. However, fear-based obedience is not sufficient to motivate us to resist the pleasures of sin consistently over time.
 - i Many use shame and fear as the primary way to motivate people to obey God. Holiness is often presented in a negative way, with many warnings of the consequences of sin.
 - ii God's Word has clear prohibitions, but they were not designed to transform the heart. Yes, we do present the consequences of sin, yet we realise this alone is not sufficient. The fear of consequences does not overpower the tendency to sin—it merely causes people to sin in secret.

12. Experiencing God love leads us to 2-fold rest

- a. **The Rest of forgiveness:** We experience this in the assurance that we are forgiven as a free gift in Jesus. We rest in receiving forgiveness because of the finished work of the cross (2 Cor. 5:17).
- b. **The Rest of intimacy:** We experience this as we pursue intimacy with God. Our hearts come to rest as we conclude our highest life purpose is to be abandoned to God and love Him with all our heart.

"You made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You." **Augustine** (AD 354-430).

- c. Many believers who rest in the assurance of being forgiven are still striving to find purpose for their life. There is a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts that can only be fulfilled in the "rest of intimacy."

In this place we can be prepared and prepare others for all that is and is to come and partner with Jesus to hasten His return.

2 Peter 3:11-13 ¹¹Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

13. The ancient Jewish wedding ceremony

- a. God's ultimate purpose for His creation is to provide a family for Himself and a Bride for His Son as His eternal companion to reign with Him forever (Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 19:7-9). The guiding principle of the Father's activity throughout history has been to raise up a prepared Bride for His worthy Son. He has been training the Bride to rule the earth with Jesus (Rev. 3:21; 5:10).
- b. Jewish tradition teaches in a striking way that the joining of a man and woman in the covenant of marriage is a re-enactment or replica of God's eternal covenant relationship with His chosen Bride. Each stage of the Jewish wedding ceremony is a fascinating enactment of our betrothal to our Bridegroom King. It should cause us to marvel at God's plan which He has been working out since the beginning of time. To quote a song "*It's all about a wedding to come; it's all about a lover*"
- c. Jewish marriages were usually arranged by the parents of the bride and groom but mainly by the father of the groom. Once the prospective bride was chosen, the bridegroom to be would go to her parents' home where she lived, taking four important things with him.
 - i A skin of wine
 - ii A sum of money called a *mohar* or brideprice
 - iii Gifts for the bride should she agree
 - iv A marriage contract called a *ketubah*
- d. The parents of the bride would be summoned and their permission would be sought. If they agreed, the bride was brought out and the hopeful bridegroom would pour a cup of wine known as *the cup of betrothal*. If she accepted the proposal she would say yes by drinking the cup of wine. This made the betrothal (engagement) official and the contractual phase of the wedding was initiated.
- e. A *mohar* or bride price was paid to the girl's parents and the *ketubah* or contract, with the pledge of the groom to care for her, was signed. Now they were legally married and would have to go through a divorce to dissolve the marriage. (e.g. Mary and Joseph were legally married but the marriage had not yet been consummated)
- f. The bridegroom then leaves gifts for the bride as a pledge he will return for her in the future.
- g. He then leaves her to go and build a bridal chamber on his father's house to bring her to for the second part of the wedding known as the consummation. When would he be back? No one knew but his father who had to inspect the chamber and once it met his specifications, he would release his son to go get his bride. The common saying was, "no one knows the day or the hour, only the father". This was the idiom that Jewish people in Jesus' day would understand to be talking about the time when the bridegroom would go to kidnap his bride.

- h. While the bridegroom was away, the bride spent the time sewing her wedding garments and preparing to be a wife. From the day of her betrothal she was set apart and was veiled when she went out in public, because she was known as, *no longer her own, she was bought with a price* (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
- i. When the groom's father was satisfied that all was in order, usually within a year, the friends of the bridegroom would blow a shofar (trumpet) and proclaim in the streets, "the bridegroom is coming" and the bridegroom would head out with a procession to the bride's house, usually at midnight, and "abduct the bride".
- j. That was why he was called *the thief in the night* – because he came suddenly at an hour unknown to the bride and she had to be watching and living with the expectation that he was coming any minute.
- k. Four men would carry the palanquin or carriage on their shoulders to take the bride back to the groom's house. This was known as the *nissuin* - the taking or *catching up* of the bride. Ten virgins carrying tall torches accompanied the bride to the bridal chamber.
- l. It was here that the second part of the wedding called the consummation was performed and it was sealed with another cup of wine appropriately called *the cup of consummation*. The bride and groom would then enter the bridal chamber or *chuppah* for seven days to consummate the wedding.
- m. The friends of the bridegroom stand at the door and announce their coming out from the chuppah to family and guests that are waiting for the wedding feast to begin.

14. Who is the bride of Jesus?

- a. From the passage in Hosea (2:19-20) it is clear that Israel is the Bride of God. Yet the New Covenant Scriptures tell us that the "church" is the bride of Messiah. Does God have two brides? Is He a polygamist? No!
- b. Or, is it possible as some have suggested, God divorced one bride - Israel, to marry another - the church? That cannot be - for God has told us He hates divorce (Mal 2:16) and Jeremiah affirms God's everlasting covenant with the physical people Israel (Jer 31:35-37). This too is affirmed by Paul in Rom 9-11.
- c. God has always had one bride - His chosen people Israel. This has been enlarged to include those grafted in to Israel (Rom 11:17) the gentile believers. At the last supper Jesus reaffirms this bridal relationship by declaring that the cup after supper is the blood of the covenant (*betrothal*) and stating that he would not drink a cup again until he returned when he would drink the cup of *consummation*.

Matt. 26:27-29 ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the^[c] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."