

## Beauty of the Church

*Lord, that is the prayer of our heart, the desire of our heart to be in Your presence. Lord, we do lean on the everlasting arms now. We pray that as we open Your Word that You would reveal it unto us. Lord, we thank You and praise You for Your Holy Scriptures, for what they show us, but Lord, we are so totally dependent upon Your Holy Spirit now to open our eyes. Lord, we bless Your name. Amen.*

I was at a meeting in another place, and the preacher was sharing on Revelation 21:2-3, and he said, “How barren the church is! How much in the wilderness she is, basically how bad off she is! I have been meditating on this Scripture for two or three months, and my heart was kind of broken when he said that. Brothers and sisters, what is your view of the church? How do you view her? Is she a heap of lime stones in a quarry, chips of rubble all laying around? That is your picture of the church? As we read this passage today, see if your view of the church has changed.

Revelation 21:2-3: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.’”

Verse 9: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’”

So, this morning we are asking the Lord to show us the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Verses 10-17: “And He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. (listen to this great description.) Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of

crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The one who spoke to me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as its width; and he measured the city with a rod, fifteen hundred miles, its length and width and height are equal.” Fifteen hundred miles each way.

Verse 18-23: “The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city were adorned with every kind of precious stone.

The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.”

### **The Radiant Beauty of the Lamb**

This morning, we will say a few short points about the radiant beauty of the Lamb of God, of the bride of Christ; the radiant beauty of the bride of Christ. To start off I want to talk about the bride adorned for her husband in verse 2: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” As I was meditating on this, I was asking the Lord, where

should I go just to start off with this adornment of the bride. And there is a book in the Bible that I rarely read, “The Song of Solomon.” This book reveals to us the bride and the Bridegroom.

Song of Solomon 1:15a: “How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! ...” This is the Bridegroom speaking.

Song of Solomon 4:1: “How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful you are!” This is the Bridegroom speaking of the bride.

Verses 9b-10a: “... With a single strand of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! ...”

Song of Solomon 7:6a: “How beautiful and how delightful you are. ...”

Isaiah 61:10: “I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

Isaiah 62:5b “... And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.”

### **The Love Between the Bride and the Bridegroom**

What a love relationship there is between the bride and the bridegroom! I love the fact, and it goes without saying, that our Lord Jesus, as the Bridegroom, wants a beautiful bride. He wants a beautiful bride, and we often do not think of it that way. But there is a great love relationship between the bride and the Bridegroom. And the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus, wants a beautiful pure bride, and He calls us His darling. Don't you find that amazing?

Isaiah says that He rejoices over the bride. So our Lord Jesus rejoices over the bride. He takes great delight in her beauty.

Ephesians 5:29 says, “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,”

Christ delights in us; He cherishes us. He thinks that we are beautiful because we are the bride of Christ. He takes great delight in us. And that love relationship means the bride adorns herself with jewels as it says in Isaiah. The bride decks herself out so that she can be beautiful for her husband, the Lord Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, how do you view the church? We often, and I was so convicted of this, we often speak negatively of the church, the bride of Christ.

Brothers, when you were getting married, and someone came up in a very disrespectful tone and said, “I cannot stand your bride; she is ugly.” Now we are all Christians here, but if somebody said that about your bride later, deck him. Lay him out flat. “How dare you say that about my bride! Don’t say anything about my wife now.” But we often think and speak in terms of the bride of Christ in that way only. Oh, Lord, the church is in such a mess; she is ugly, she is deformed. We are seeing it with the eyes of man and not with the eyes of our beloved Lord who loves His bride, and even now considers her beautiful, and even now He cherishes her in His heart. Isn’t that a wonderful thought? This picture in Revelation has a lot of applications for us today, but I found that to be exceedingly helpful that He loves us and cherishes us. The second thing we see is that this bride has the glory of God.

### **The Church Is to Have the Glory of God**

Revelation 21:10b-11a: “... coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. ...”

Verse 3b: “... Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,”

What a glorious thing that is for the church of the living God to have the glory of God, to have the very presence of the Lord.

Verse 3b: "... they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,"

Brothers and sisters, to me, the primary thing for a church today is to have the glory of God. Our Lord's desire for us is to have the glory of God.

John 17:22-24a: "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me,..."

This is the Lord's heart. It has always been the Lord's heart that His glory would dwell in His people. What a wonderful thing that the glory, the majestic glory of God would dwell in His people. Around the throne the cherubim say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, and His glory fills the earth." You see the Shekinah glory in the Old Testament, and the Lord wants this glory to dwell in His people so that it can be said, "They have the glory of God." The Scriptures say that where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in their midst. And in Isaiah it says, "Where He plants His feet, there His glory is."

Brothers and sisters, we are gathered in His name, and the presence of God is with us. And whenever there is the presence of God, His glory is always there. And it is an amazing thing that we as His people can gather together and be in His presence, even as it was prayed this morning, and there is a promise of the glory of God to dwell in her midst, and even in our midst.

Psalms 26:8: "O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells."

Brothers and sisters, do you have a great longing in your heart to be in the presence of God, to have His glory with you and with us? Can you honestly say before the Lord, "I love Your house, the place where Your

glory dwells?” And I believe that the Lord wants to presence Himself with us. He wants us to have and know His glory, and we are to love that place, we are to love the habitation of His house. So, the first primary thing we see here is that she has the glory of God.

Revelation 21:23: “And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.”

Not only do we have the glory of God, but the glory of God illuminated that city, that bride. That glory has such an illuminance that it shows throughout that huge city, and fills the city with glorious light. And we know from Hebrews that our Lord Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory. So where God’s presence is, there His glory is, and where God’s glory is, there is His glorious light.

### **The Light of the Glory of God**

We have the presence of God with us; we also have His glory with us, and as we do there is a glorious light that shines through us and in us. That glory fills all the walls, the foundation, and the sky streams through the gates. It is the glorious light of the Lamb of God that shines brightly. And this picture we have before us is this city full of light and glory. And we should have a taste of that ourselves, that His glory would fill this place, and the light of His glory would stream out. It even says that the nations will walk by its light; that is the bride of Christ. She has the glory of God, and she has the glory of the life of God as well.

Verse 11a: “having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, ...” That glory of God, that light of God that shine is her brilliance. It is her brilliance. The light of the glory of God is her brilliance, and it shines through each one of these stones. Think of the brilliance of that city.

Verse 11b: “... Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.” The material of the wall was jasper, and the city was

pure gold like glass. So, you have all these wonderful, beautiful foundation stones, and the streets were transparent as glass.

### **The Church Displays the glory of God**

Brothers and sisters, this city, this bride of Christ, her greatest beauty, her only beauty is that she displays the glory of God. That is it! She has no beauty of her own, the city has no beauty other than the glory of Christ. This picture of her is one of having a very costly stone clear as jasper. Where else in Revelation do you see that? In chapter 4:3a, speaking of the Lord Jesus Himself,

“And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance. ...”

It seems to me that the very beauty of the walls and of the streets and of this city is the Lord Jesus Himself. He has the same color, the same precious stone, (which we know Jesus is the corner stone, that precious corner stone), but is the light and the glory of the Lord shining through each one of those stones. It shows us the brilliance and the beauty of the radiant bride of Christ. This is the glory displayed.

Brothers and sisters, this is you and me. This includes you and me, all the thousands of believers that are gathered in His name today, and have for ages and centuries for thousands of years. The glory of God has been in her midst, and there has been a beauty that has shown, and you and I are part of that. We have this beauty of Christ. How can this be? How can it be that you and I can radiate out the beauty of the Lord for the world to see? What an amazing thing!

My heart went to Ephesians chapter 5:27a: “that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, ...”

This verse carries the thought that He will present His church glorious with splendor and with great beauty. She has no spot or wrinkle. He is the One presenting His church in this manner. He is the One who bought her, He is the One that built her, and He is the One that will present her

in this manner, and the Lord is doing the same work in us. He bought us. He is making us full of His glory, and He is presenting us, and will present us in such a manner. What a wonderful thing this is! When the Lord says, “I will build my church,” we do not build it; the Lord builds it. And this is the way He builds it. Words really fail to convey the absolute beauty and perfection of what the Lord has done and what the Lord is doing even now in our midst.

### **All the Preciousness is in Christ**

I have a quote from Brother Stephen out of that wonderful book, “Glory: as seen by Ezekiel.” He says, “Brothers and sisters, all our preciousness is in Him. Remember, if there is any preciousness in anyone of us, it is Christ, and God is working in everyone of us to make every living stone into a precious stone. Some may be a sardius, some may be a sapphire, some may be an emerald, some may be other precious stones, but it is Christ being formed in us with many attributes of Himself.” This is what the church, the bride of Christ looks like. If you are spiritually picturing her, she is a tremendous, absolute perfect city full of the glory of God, full of His radiance. I think it is a wonderful, wonderful picture, don’t you? To think of us this way? May the light of the Lord shine here and in each one of us. May He really display His goodness and His glory in each one of us.

### **We are as the Stones of a Crown Sparkling in His Land**

In closing turn to Zachariah 9:16-17a: “And the LORD their God will save them in that day As the flock of His people; For they are as the stones of a crown, Sparkling in His land. For what comeliness and beauty will be theirs! ...”

When I read this, I was just struck with how this pictures the people of God. They are as stones, as gem stones from the crown. It seems to me that it is akin to the holy city, and the crown jewel that she is. And the Lord is saying, “You are plucked from the crown of God, you are taken



from the crown, and you are scattered out over the land, and you are sparkling and glittering with the glory of that crown. What a wonderful picture of the church, that we are taken from the very presence of God, from His glory and His majesty, and as stones are shed abroad in the land and glittering. As the church we should glitter with the glory of God, like that gemstone that you turn in the light and it just glitters. That is the way we are.

I was looking around Sunday at all the people here, and I was thinking of these things. When you look at it through this lens, all of you are gemstones. God is doing a great work in you whether we see it or not, whether the world sees it or not, He is working in each one of you such a glorious light and the life of the Lord Jesus, that you are a gemstone. So I see each one of you, not as a lump of limestone, but as gemstones with the life of the Lord who has put in such a brilliant quality of the Lord that you are radiating the life of Christ. Let that be an encouragement when you see the church.

In Revelation chapters 2-3, we have problems in the church, and the Lord is addressing them, but this picture is also in Revelation. This picture is of a radiant bride of Christ of which we are a part. And she is presented by the Lord Himself. She has been built by Him; she has been beautified by Him. Her adornment actually is the glory of the Lord. It is His beauty by which the church is adorned.

Let's pray:

*Lord, I want to thank You that You can change our view so much. Lord, I pray that we would see the bride, Your bride, as You see her. Lord, I thank You that You love Your bride, and You consider her beautiful, that You cherish her, Lord that You rejoice over her, and that You are building her to be this glorious city full of the glory of God, illumined by the very light of the Lamb. Lord, I pray that we would love each other, we would love Your bride, that Lord, we would take great encouragement into the great work that You are doing, even in our midst. Lord, may we in the coming*

*weeks and months and years together experience more and more of Your presence, more and more of Your glory, that we would experience more of Your glorious light, the radiant light of our Lord Jesus in our midst, and may we see each other as precious stones valued by You, created by You. Lord, may Your light and Your work be done in our midst, we pray. Amen.*