THE WIFE OF THE LAMB

God's Plan, Passion, and Purpose
for The Overcomer in Christ

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Introduction

The Word of God is vast yet singular, complex yet simple, focused yet manifold. There are patterns, types and shadows that delight the enlightened eyes of our understanding as we affix our gaze upon Jesus. Out from among the multi-colored threads that make up the holy writ, a wondrous tapestry appears. It is an intricate and intimate weaving that is our most personal life with Jesus. It is the tapestry of The Lamb and his wife.

Jesus is described in many ways in the Bible: as a door, an anchor, the bread of life, the rock, our high priest, and the prince of peace, to mention a few. He is also known as The Lamb – not just any lamb, but *The Lamb* that shed his most holy blood to redeem mankind from the grip of sin forever.

The first mention of a lamb as a type of Jesus is in Genesis chapter 22 in the story of God asking Abraham to offer up the life of his only son, Isaac. Father and son prepare and go up to a mountain. When they arrive at their destination and have piled the wood to burn the offering, Isaac asks his father, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham replies, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." This is a foreshadow of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb God would require to atone for sin. In Genesis 22 God did not require the death of Abraham's son. He was testing Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son.

A lamb was also the sacrificial animal during the Passover. At the Passover, each household took in a lamb. On the fourteenth day they killed it and spread its blood on the posts and lintel of the door of the home. The blood of the slain lamb spared that home from a plague the Lord sent to smite the first-born in the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:1-13). This is another foreshadow of the atoning work of the blood of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb.

When Jesus died on the cross and rose the third day, he became the permanent sacrificial lamb. Hebrews 10:4 tells us clearly, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Hebrews 10:9-10 reveals "He taketh away the first (Old Testament/covenant) that he may establish the second (New Testament/covenant). By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." His shed blood cleanses us from sin and keeps us from the judgment of eternal death.

John the Baptist recognized Jesus as he approached him just before John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. John said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Many asked John the Baptist if he was the Christ, to which he vehemently replied that he was not. His role was to prepare the way for the Lamb, to tell people to repent of their sins. But he was not the Savior.

Jesus is noted most frequently as a lamb in the book of Revelation where the word lamb occurs nine times. We can be certain that is no coincidence as nine is the number of completion. The book of Revelation is sub-titled 'the revelation of Jesus Christ.' What is contained in Revelation is what is to come, and shows Jesus ruling and reigning with His wife. He is not complete until she is with him.

The wife of Jesus is specifically called *the Lamb's Wife* in Revelation 21:9 as John writes of one of the seven angels who talked with him saying, 'Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.'

It is fitting that the wife of Jesus is called the *Lamb's Wife* because in the lamb we have the shedding of blood, the sacrifice of a human life so that we can have eternal life. No other description of Jesus is so

personal and so real. Jesus as a door, a shepherd, a high priest, or a branch doesn't contain the shedding of blood. But as a lamb he does.

The Wife of the Lamb appears from Genesis chapter 2 to Revelation chapter 22. She can be seen in Eve, the first wife of man; in the willing Rebekah, in Ruth who won the hand of Boaz by gleaning in the field of grace, and in Esther, the orphan girl who became queen. She is the Virtuous Woman in Proverbs 31 and the Shulamite in the Song of Solomon. She can be found in the cherubims of glory over the mercy seat, in the four living ones in Ezekiel chapters one and ten and in Revelation chapter four. She is the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending from God and having the glory of God in Revelation chapter 22. She is evident throughout the Word of God for all to see.

GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE AND PASSION FOR THE OVERCOMER

The Wife of the Lamb is an overcomer. To be an overcomer, there must be things to overcome. The need for overcoming started in the Garden of Eden. Once sin and its sentence of death entered in, it had to be overcome for there to be eternal life. That Adam and Eve sinned did not take God by surprise. It did put in motion the need for a Savior, Jesus.

But that is just the beginning. Throughout our lives here on earth, we have many trials and tribulations to overcome. Thankfully we have a precious promise in Romans 8:28 that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. The love of God is stronger, bigger, and far vaster than our human minds and hearts can take in. But it is real, and it is what takes us on and takes us up. We overcome all by the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of God's saving grace.

GOD'S PLAN

The PLAN God has for us in sending us His Son Jesus was not just to save us, but for us to have the kind of knowledge of Jesus described in 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen." The word 'knowledge' is not common or mere knowledge. It is knowledge that is complete, intimate, and transparent. It is knowledge that only occurs between a husband and a wife. The Holy Ghost was sent by God to grow us up in all truth. He enlightens the eyes of our understanding. Every provision has been made for us to grow up into the full stature of Christ. This is an intimate proposal that is moment by moment. This is how we can know the hope of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus to win him as bridegroom.

GODS' PURPOSE

God's PURPOSE is for us to attain to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus that the apostle Paul wrote of in Philippians chapter 3. God wants us to be part of the out-resurrection rank that will be caught away to meet our bridegroom in the air. He wants us to be vessels only for the Master's use, vessels to the praise of the glory of His grace. His calling is not only to salvation, but to *salvation with eternal glory*.

GOD'S PASSION

God's PASSION is for us to be for His good pleasure. How do we give God pleasure? By loving His Son like a wife loves her husband: purely and passionately with utmost devotion. The power of God's grace is His passion and love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. God will perform the good work that He began in us. He will give all the knowledge of the hope of our calling in all the riches of eternity. This

is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. It is the same power that can raise us to rule and reign with Jesus as his wife.

The love story of Jesus and his wife has been in the mind and heart of the Godhead since before a star was set in heaven. The Old Testament prophets desired to look into the glorious bridal truth, but it was not meant for them at the time they lived. God sealed the revelation of the mystery of Christ and the church until the days immediately preceding Christ's return. But those prophets wrote these precious testimonies of real people for us in this present church age when the Wife of the Lamb is being called out and called forth. The day draws ever nearer when the trumpet will blast and the call to arise and come away will be upon us.

Let us join the apostle John in drawing near in full assurance of faith and see the types of the bride, the Lamb's Wife in the holy scriptures.

CHAPTER ONE

EVE

The Rib Portion

"And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone;
I will make him a help meet for him.'"
~ Genesis 2:18

Eve, which means *life* and *living*, was her name. She initially appears in Genesis 2:18, but her name is not mentioned until Genesis 3:20. She is first described in Genesis 2:18 in terms of who she was to Adam: a 'help meet.' Then in Genesis 2:22 she is noted as a 'woman' and shortly after in Genesis 2:24 as Adam's 'wife.' From the beginning, we see how God prioritized and emphasized the *relationship* between the first two humans.

God created man and woman on the sixth of the seven days of creation. At the conclusion of the sixth day, God saw everything He had made and pronounced all His creation "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Yet God determined in His heart of hearts that there was one thing that was not good: the man was alone:

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him."

Some have assumed that the "aloneness" God was referring to was simply a reference to Adam being the only human on earth. Adam did, in fact, live for some time as the only person on earth, fulfilling his duty as the caretaker of the Garden of Eden as well as naming all the animals.

But God was saying much more than that.

God's solution to man's aloneness was not to make another man – or a group of men, or a brother, or even a sister – but to make a 'help meet' for him.

The Hebrew word translated 'help meet' in Genesis 2:18 is beautiful and insightful in light of who Eve was to Adam relationally. 'Help meet' comes from a root verb meaning *to surround, protect or give aid to.* Eve was a helper who encircled Adam. She was like him, but she enhanced him and made him more than he was without her.

Genesis 2:21-22 tells of the making of Eve:

> [21]"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;
> [22] And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."

A closer look at this act of God making Eve out of one of Adam's ribs reveals something profound. The Hebrew word translated 'rib' in these verses is *tsela`* which means 'side' or 'rib.' It is a feminine noun. Of the 41 times *tsela`* is used in the Old Testament, it is translated as 'rib' only in this verse.

This passage makes it clear that Eve was a rib God *took out* from Adam to make his wife. Once God removed the rib, there were two humans – a man and a woman. Certainly God could have made Eve the

same way he made Adam, from the dust of the earth. If God had chosen to do so, Eve could still have been a companion and friend to Adam, thereby putting an end to His aloneness in a very real – although much shallower – sense.

But when God took a rib from Adam, He created someone to come alongside Adam, someone to support him and help him. Someone who was made *from him* – and thus much more like him than the animals God created and instructed Adam to name. God had something more in mind than just another person for Adam to talk to so he wouldn't get lonely. God wanted Adam to have a *counterpart* – someone that would complete, complement, and fit him perfectly. Eve was not merely a companion to Adam. She completed him.

In making Eve from something He had taken *from* Adam God created a need in both man and woman to seek each other out at a level far deeper than companionship. In a very visceral way, they would both long to be whole again – something they could only accomplish by being reunited. Adam would not be complete again until he was re-joined with that part which had been taken from him. And likewise, Eve would never be complete without being rejoined to the one *from* whom she was taken.

The word 'took' in Genesis 2:21 has bridal overtones as it means *seized, captured, snatched away for marriage, out of man to be a wife.* This is God's plan, purpose, and passion for those who truly love Jesus – to snatch them away and deliver them to the throne to rule and reign with Jesus forever as the Lamb's Wife. Once we are saved, our life is a continual process of growing on and falling more in love with Jesus. And not just as our Savior, but as our bridegroom and husband. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:17-19 was for the saints being rooted and grounded in love to be able to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; to know the love of Christ and be filled with all the fulness of God. In the Greek, the word for 'know' is *ginōskō* and means an exact and intimate knowing such as is between a husband and a wife.

'One' in Genesis 2:21 means *a certain one*. This 'one' is known as the pearl of great price in Mark chapter 13 in the parable of a merchant man (Jesus in type) who was seeking goodly pearls. The merchant man searched high and low, but when he found the pearl of great price (the bride in type) he sold all he had to purchase her. She is a certain one, and of inestimable value to him.

Not only is there a difference in what Adam and Eve were made from, but also in how they were created. Genesis 2:7 describes Adam as one that was 'formed' i.e. *fashioned, framed*. Genesis 2:22 notes that Eve was 'made' which means *to build.* The first woman was built for someone particular: her Husband. How she was built is shown in Acts 20:32 as Paul spoke to the elders at the church of Ephesus, "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified." Christ is our inheritance, and we are His. Everything between a husband and a wife is mutually shared and reciprocal.

Genesis 2:22 continues with the woman being brought unto the man. 'Brought' indicates *a harvest brought to the house of the husband.* In Song of Solomon 4:12 there is one who is called a *sister spouse*. The bride is a *sister* (saved believer) and she is also a *spouse* (wife). What a double portion harvest she is to the Bridegroom!

In Genesis 2:23, Adam pronounces that the woman is now "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Eve was presented to Adam as a fully mature woman, not as a baby. Adam continues, "she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 'Taken out' traces back to the same Hebrew word as 'took' in verse 21 which means *seized, captured, snatched away for marriage, out of man to be a wife.*

Eve was taken out from man – or more correctly rendered, *out from the body* of man. Just as there are many members in a human body, there are many members (individual believers) in the Body of Christ. The bride is a rib taken out from the whole Body. She is one taken out from among many.

In Genesis 2:24 Eve is first called a 'wife':

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Adam and Eve were the first husband and wife pair. Eve was the first human woman, the first type of the wife of the Lamb. Adam was the first human man, the first type of The Man, Jesus Christ. The name Adam means *man* or *mankind.* It comes from a root word that means *red, ruddy.* We see a glimpse of Jesus in this 'red man' in the red blood Jesus shed to atone for the sin of mankind.

1 Corinthians 15:45-47 tells us of two Adams: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Verse 47 explains clearly, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." Adam in the Garden of Eden was the first Adam; Jesus Christ as a man is the last Adam. Christ's essence as the last Adam is that of "a quickening spirit" – the very spirit that has the power to raise us from death to life everlasting. The first man Adam was not given dominion over the earth without his wife Eve. And the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, will not sit upon the throne and rule without his wife by His side.

When a man takes a wife and when a woman takes a husband, they leave their family and all that is familiar. But as they leave their family, they also are called to cleave – to be *intimately joined* – to their spouse.

Adam was formed from the dust of the ground, but Eve was made from Adam. She was not made from a hand or a foot or an arm. She was made from a rib. A rib is a special bone because it is close to the heart. Ribs surround the heart and inner organs and protect them.

As noted earlier, in the scriptures, 'rib' is often translated 'side.' When Jesus was crucified at Calvary, a Roman soldier's spear pierced Jesus' *side*. That is no coincidence. The soldier's spear could have pierced Jesus anywhere. But the spear pierced his *side.* Although Jesus' mortal body was sleeping in death, blood and water poured forth from that hole in his side (John 19:34).

This rib/wife is the true worshipper who worships God in Spirit and in Truth. Jesus' side – the place of the rib and the place where the soldier's spear pierced him – was the same place from which God took the rib from the first Adam to make him a wife who would complete him. Jesus, the last Adam, was pierced in his side. Only his wife can fill that gaping hole and complete him.

Although Adam entered into spiritual death with Eve when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam physically died after being alive for close to a thousand years.

Eve's death is never mentioned.

In like fashion, Christ entered into sin for all with his death at Calvary and all who believe in him will live eternally and will never die spiritually. And some – the ones who know they will not be complete until they are wed to him – will heed the matrimonial call to rule and reign jointly with him forever in the midst of the throne. And like Eve as the first wife, that bridal company will not experience physical death.

Unlike Adam, God did not make a pronouncement of anything that was ‘not good’ concerning Eve. She was never alone – only Adam experienced that. The Wife of the Lamb is never alone either, for she has her Beloved even now. And she will have him even more in the ages to come.

CHAPTER TWO

REBEKAH

The Willing Wife

"And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, 'Wilt thou go with this man?'
And she said, 'I will go.'"

~ Genesis 24:58

The 24th chapter of Genesis depicts the bringing forth of a wife named Rebekah for Abraham's son Isaac. As a bridal pattern, this chapter is one of the most intricate and encouraging accounts in light of the fact that God is seeking a wife for His Son. Every detail about the bridal process is in this chapter.

Genesis 24 contains 67 verses. Of those 67 verses, 66 and one-half focus on the bride and groom and details about the marriage proposal. Only one-half of one verse speaks of the hardships on Rebekah's journey to meet her future husband Isaac. This story is our story. It is all about Jesus' love and how that love changes and transforms us into the Wife of the Lamb if we will let it. This is a love story of the ages, a wonderful journey of being captivated by the love of the bridegroom.

The cast of characters includes: Abraham, Isaac's father (God our Father in type); Isaac, the bridegroom (type of Jesus), Rebekah, Isaac's wife (type of the wife of the Lamb); and the servant (type of the Holy Spirit) who was sent by Abraham to seek out a wife for Isaac.

A WIFE IS SOUGHT FOR ISAAC

This story begins soon after the death of Isaac's mother Sarah, Abraham's wife. When Sarah passed, Abraham sought to find a wife for Isaac. The plan and power of grace is evident as the aged Abraham sends his eldest servant to find a wife for his son.

In Genesis 24:3-4 Abraham makes it clear to his servant that the wife for his son is not to be taken from among the Canaanites (type of the world), but rather from Abraham's own country and kindred (type of the family of God). Abraham was from Haran, and that is where the wife for Isaac was to come from. Haran means 'burning' and 'mountaineer' – words that aptly describe those who willingly declare, "I will go." These are the ones with enlightened eyes of understanding who have a burning desire and passion to go swiftly to the bridegroom. Like mountaineers, they have spiritual hind's feet that enable them to scale mountains and navigate the narrow, steep passages of the bridal proposal life. Each step they take follows the step before it in perfect line. There is no fear and no hesitation as they follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Just as Abraham sent his servant to seek out a wife for Isaac, God sent His servant, the Holy Spirit, to find a wife for Jesus from among the family of God in this church age. The wife for Isaac will follow the same pattern found in the formation of Eve: She will be taken out from the family/body of believers.

Genesis 24:10 reveals a very important detail to this bridal story: "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed." Biblically speaking, ten is the number of responsibility according to ability. This is akin to "To whom much is given, much is required." We have a responsibility to hear the Word of God in Paul's full gospel truth according to the ability with which we are graced from God.

We catch a glimpse of the perfection God wants to perform in the wife of His Son with these ten camels. 'Camel' means *beautiful* in the Arabic language. Camels are magnificent and beautiful animals, ideally made for enduring desert travels.

- They are the only mammal that has an oval red blood cell instead of a round one, which allows them to hold more water in each cell.
- Their coat insulates them against extreme hot and cold temperatures.
- Camels can go up to 17 days without water.
- Camel's feet are webbed so they can walk steadily upon the sand.
- They have two sets of eyelids to keep the blowing sand out of their eyes and they have flaps of skin on their nostrils that keep them from inhaling blowing sand.

But camels also have a few less-desirable qualities. Most camels have a serious stubborn streak. They will spit at you and kick you if annoyed. They are smelly and are known to lie down at their leisure and refuse to get up for quite some time. Spiritually speaking, camels represent our flesh. Until we lay our all on the altar and give our flesh over to God, we will be stuck in destructive patterns of behavior. We must trust God that we are in the perfectly weak package needed to let the grace of God do its work in our lives. If it were any other way, it would fall short of the mark of perfection God desires for us.

Verse 10 also notes that all the master's goods were in the hand of the servant. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and makes them ours. He leads us into all truth and into all God has for us. It is breathtaking to realize that the Father sees His Son when He looks at us. He sees all the glory and grace that is being worked in our lives because of Jesus.

The servant arises and journeys to the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia.

The names of cities and people are always significant in the Word of God. Nahor means *to pant*. If we are truly pursuing God's best, our hearts will pant for Jesus and for the living water that only he can supply.

Mesopotamia means *exalted place*. The exalted place for the overcomer in Christ is the place of ruling and reigning together with Jesus. Those who love his appearing now and desire him above all else will wear the exalted crown of righteousness that Paul writes of in 2 Timothy 4:8.

Once in Nahor, the servant made his camels kneel down at a well of water at evening time when the women came out to draw water. Our camel – our flesh – must kneel down when confronted with the truth of God's Word. No matter how unruly and stubborn we may be, everything changes when we submit to God's Word at the well. That it was evening indicates the cool part of the day when the hot sun had begun its descent on the horizon. This was the time the women of the city came out to draw water for their homes.

At the well the servant prayed, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master" (Genesis 24:12-14).

The Holy Spirit stands at the well. He is the spirit of truth – and that spirit in truth is always searching for a wife for the master's son. He always speaks the truth in love, for it is truth in love that grows us up into Christ in all things (Ephesians 4:15).

There was a specific requirement the servant needed to see to know that Rebekah was the one the master had appointed for Isaac. The requirement begins with the word LET. That the servant desired that the one for Isaac would respond to his request for drink not only in giving him drink but also his camels showed her willingness to go beyond the obvious request and to see that the beasts that provided transport were taken care of also. She is drawn to the well. She loves its cool, refreshing water and is willing to share it. She sees not only the need for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, but also the need to be full of the Holy Spirit. She is one that will let the grace of God work effectually in her. She's a vessel that willingly wills to do of the master's good pleasure.

Before the servant was even finished speaking, Rebekah came out with her pitcher on her shoulder, ready to be filled at the deep well of love. The call to marriage brought her out quickly from among the other women who also came to draw at the well. A potential wife is an excited wife.

Rebekah is noted as a daughter of Bethuel, which means *house of God.* She was the granddaughter of Nahor, one who *pants after God.* And her grandmother's name Milcah means *queen.* She was a queen from the house of God who panted after her king. What a lineage of grace!

She is mentioned by name for the first time in verse 15. 'Rebekah' means *bound, fettered by beauty, as if in a noose.* She is a special and protected one, held captive by love and tied up to it, bound to the solid Rock. She is a stall-fed calf that is nourished with the best food.

One life-changing night at a well was all it took for this fair damsel to receive a marriage proposal and begin the journey to her bridegroom.

Three important details about Rebekah come to light at this point: she was very fair to look upon; she was a virgin; and no man had known her. That she was very fair to look upon speaks to how a bridegroom will always magnify the beauty of his bride, the one he lovingly cherishes and who is beautiful in every way to him.

Rebekah was a virgin who had never been intimate with a man. The apostle Paul wrote of the espousal of a spiritually chaste virgin in 2 Corinthians 11:2: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." A chaste person is one that is blameless and holy. Christ has cleansed and sanctified us by his blood. He did this so he could present to himself a *glorious* church. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is our summons in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This is our proposal to marry Jesus and this is what this story – and the entire Word of God – is all about.

Just as there are three descriptors of Rebekah as a bride there are three actions the grace of God performed in her.

First, she *went down* to the well. She surrendered, submitted and knelt down to receive the Word of God. God met her there and extended His grace. He does the same for us.

Then she *filled her pitcher*. There is every reason to believe she filled it full. God is a gracious and generous giver. He wants all His people to be full of the living water.

And finally, Rebekah *came up* by God's strength. We only go in the strength of God. We reign with Christ when we suffer together with him and allow him to strengthen us by his divine power and love. Until we go down to the well, fill up with the living water, and come up, we will never be ready for the journey to the bridegroom.

Verse 17 marks the beginning of the actual courtship between Isaac and Rebekah. Up to this point the servant has been given instructions to heed in finding a wife for Isaac. Now he is face to face with her.

The servant runs to meet her. The first words he says to her are "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." He didn't want to seem greedy, but he was intent on getting some of that water. He saw and desired the overflowing fullness in her life. What the servant had asked of God to be sure she was the one for Isaac included her letting him drink the water from her pitcher as well as providing water for his camels.

This story has a theme of haste from here to the end. Rebekah was quick to let down her pitcher for the servant to drink. And when she finished giving him drink, she "hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels" (Genesis 24:20).

That Rebekah began immediately to draw water for all the servant's camels shows her willingness to do whatever it took. This was no small feat. Camels are large mammals and can drink upwards of 50 gallons of water. Since there were ten camels with the servant, to provide water for ten camels at 50 gallons each would be 500 gallons. It would have taken several hours for Rebekah to get the camels that much water. It wasn't a quick process, but she went above and beyond. She gladly filled the water trough over and over again. She didn't stop until all the camels had water to drink.

Spiritually speaking, camels represent our unruly flesh. The only way we can tame our flesh is to get water from the well and feast upon the Lord. We tend to focus on ourselves and our problems when we don't drink from the well of salvation. We need that living water to revive us and set our feet back on the path to the throne.

Rebekah had a willingness to linger at the well and provide water for the servant and for his ten camels. Back and forth, back and forth, to and from the well she ran. This is in contrast to those who see salvation as enough. Sadly, most people don't want to be expanded to receive the fullness of Jesus, to stay in his presence and let the Word fill them. Five minutes at the well is enough for most.

All the glory in Rebekah's quick and willing heart was a rejoicing to the servant. Her unwavering attention to watering the beasts that would make the trek to take her to the Bridegroom thrilled his heart. So far this damsel was fulfilling every bit of his request of God.

THE PROPOSAL

After the camels had done drinking, the servant took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold. The significance of the golden earring and the two bracelets lie in that they are gifts that signal an upcoming marriage, much like an engagement ring. The one who accepted them was accepting a proposal to marry.

We have again the number ten, responsibility according to ability. The ten shekels are described as a "weight of gold." Gold indicates deity. There is a weight of responsibility upon a wife. The wife of Jesus will have many responsibilities. She will rule and reign over the world with her husband, sharing

everything jointly with him. She will operate fully in the ability grace affords. She will take joy and rejoice in it all.
The earring specifically speaks of belonging to someone. We who belong to Jesus have been bought with the price of his precious blood. We are no longer our own; we belong to him. We are the sheep of his pasture, and his sheep hear his voice. We are tuned to it and we heed it.

The bracelets were golden loops put around the wrist where they were very evident to see. To receive the bracelets, Rebekah would have held out her arms willingly in surrender to the greatest privilege, the proposal to marry Isaac.

The servant had two questions of Rebekah once she had accepted the items of engagement: *whose are you?* and *is there room in your father's house for us to lodge?* She affirmed that she was the daughter of Bethuel (house of God), son of Nahor (one who pants) and Milcah (queen). She had the lineage of all the spiritual blessings in Christ.

The servant's second question *Do you have room for us?* is the most vital. The servant not only sought lodging for himself but also needed a place to lodge his ten camels. She confirmed that there were **"**both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in" (Genesis 24:25). We see yet another example of her willingness to share what she had. She was a giver from her heart and her capacity had no limits.

The straw was for the camels to lie down on and the provender was their food. Straw indicates a threshing floor. In the story of Ruth there is a threshing floor where two stones that fit perfectly together were used to grind the grain. The threshing floor was the place where Ruth went to lie down at Boaz's feet. In type, the threshing floor is the place of suffering together with Christ. It's where we draw comfort from him and where he draws comfort from us.

Upon hearing Rebekah's confirmation of lodging for himself and his camels, the servant bowed his head and worshipped the Lord. He thanked God and said, "Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren" (Genesis 24: 27).

Along with the theme of haste, there is a lot of running in this story. First, the servant ran to meet Rebekah at the well. Then Rebekah ran to get water for the servant's camels. Next she ran to tell her family of the good news of her engagement and to show them what he gave her. Notice she runs to a particular people: those of her mother's house, the house of grace.

There is a theme of running and a race course set for the overcomer in Christ. This is a crucial aspect of Paul's gospel. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." He wrote to the church at Philippi of "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain" (Philippians 2:16).

In Hebrews 12:1-2 we read, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Rebekah was excited, delirious with joy. Everything she did was because of the love and joy in her heart for her bridegroom. She wasn't after the admiration of crowds. She wasn't focused on whether people

were looking upon her. All she could think was, “The master’s son is going to have a wife and he wants it to be me!”

After Rebekah showed her brother Laban the earring and the bracelets and told him the story of the encounter with the servant at the well and of her excitement at his master’s proposal for marriage, Laban ran to meet the servant at the well.

The name Laban means *white*. Laban was Rebekah’s brother and represents all brethren saved by the Lord Jesus, clean and white. Laban was quick to believe his sister in all she told him and her family. He ran to the well because he wanted the servant/Holy Spirit to minister to him, just as he had ministered to his sister.

Laban’s testimony is in the potential for all believers to run to the well and drink of the living water. But will we meet ‘the man’ – the servant/Holy Spirit? Will we run to the well, drink deeply and let him take the things of Christ and make them ours personally?

Laban *saw* the tokens of engagement upon his sister’s hands. He *heard* the words she spoke to him. He *believed* those words and was captivated by them. Just the same, when we hear the witness of the mature sons of God we should mark them as examples to follow. We need to listen to the words of the Holy Spirit and share them with our brothers and sisters.

Laban’s response to the servant of “Come in, thou blessed of the LORD” has to be on our lips if we are to go on with God. First, we ask Jesus to come into our hearts to save us. But then we need to invite the Holy Spirit to come in to our lives, to dwell in us. Not just with us, but *in* us. This is how we become vessels capable of receiving the full counsel of God the apostle Paul wrote of. Partaking of fellowship with the Holy Spirit is a lifetime of allowing him to take the things of Christ and make them ours.

Laban had prepared everything for the servant and his camels. He immediately invited the servant to lodge in his home. After Laban had given the camels food, he set meat before the servant. But the servant insisted, “I will not eat, until I have told mine errand” (Genesis 24:33). The servant/ Holy Spirit is intent on one thing: to search out a wife for Jesus. This Holy Spirit servant was focused on delivering the proposal message. He was not going to let anything pre-empt his mission.

Laban knew the servant was serious, and said, “Speak on.” The servant spoke first of who his master was, and then recounted all the details of how Abraham had sent him to seek a wife for his son from among his family. When he finished speaking, Laban and his father Bethuel answered, “The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her and go, and let her be thy master’s son’s wife, as the LORD hath spoken” (Genesis 24:50-51).

Father and son both acknowledged that the Lord had spoken. God our Father has spoken for us too. Our bridegroom has come for our words. This is the reply of the enlightened eyes of understanding unfolding before us in our lives because of the gospel of Christ the apostle Paul wrote of in his letters to various churches and people. These men were encouraged by the servant and had no hesitation as they said “take her and go.”

Laban and Bethuel only knew the bridegroom as the Master’s son. But when the journey is complete Rebekah will know him by his name, Isaac. Rebekah’s family members did not know his name. In like fashion, only the Lamb’s Wife will know her Beloved’s name, for she will share it. In addressing the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:12 John writes of those who will attain a new name: “Him that

overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God: and he shall go no more out: and will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."
When the servant heard the words of Laban and Bethuel, he worshipped the Lord, and bowed himself to the earth. At that time he gave "precious things" to Rebekah's brother and mother. But Rebekah got the best gifts: silver and gold and raiment. Colossians 3:12-18 tells us what to put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved. Rebekah gets the bridegroom, the best gift of all. And we will get Jesus as our husband.

After the servant told Rebekah's family of his mission, he and his men ate and drank and spent the night with Rebekah's family. Early the next morning the servant rose up, ready to be about his Master's business. But some members of Rebekah's family – her brother and her mother – balked at the servant's haste and pleaded for the servant to let Rebekah stay with them for at least ten more days.

There was some resistance from Rebekah's family in letting her go with the servant right away. We can understand that Rebekah's family loved her and didn't want her to leave on her journey to her bridegroom so soon. But this family did not see the urgency of the love message of the servant that there could be no waiting in this high calling summons to the bridegroom. This is an example of the "good and acceptable" as opposed to the perfect will of God in Romans 12:2. Good, acceptable, and perfect are each different words and show a progression in our walk with the Lord. "Redeem the time" was the encouragement then, and it is the same for us today.

There is precious strength in family ties between parents and their children and between siblings. There is much love in a family. It is hard to let children go. But when it comes to falling in love with Jesus fully, we must be willing to let go – or go with the one pursuing Jesus.

REBEKAH'S RESPONSE

The servant insisted again, "Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master" (Genesis 24:56). This is the Holy Spirit through the servant telling Rebekah's family to immediately let him take her to the Master.

Their response to the servant's request was to ask Rebekah what she wanted to do. Rebekah's brother and mother called her and asked her, "Wilt thou go with this man?"

Rebekah said, "I will go."

This decision was personal to Rebekah. She had to confess that this was her calling. Every person who is serious about marrying Jesus must confess it too. Just as Rebekah was willing to go with the servant/Holy Spirit to her bridegroom and future husband, we must also be ready and willing to go to with the Holy Spirit, for he is the one who will lead us to our bridegroom Jesus.

This is the YES to the proposal of the ages. It is the most beautiful symphony to the Lord's ears.
It is sweet when the words of our mouth are in harmony with the will of God. How intimate our words can be with Jesus, the Lover of our soul. Our lips are so personal to him and with him. The Song of Solomon 4:3 speaks of this sweetness as the Bridegroom gushes over his lovely bride: "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely."

The phrase "I will go" has two meanings. The first is *to depart, to go unto something or someone.* We must be willing to go out from the camp and unto Jesus – even if it means leaving our natural family if they are not willing to go with us. The love of God transforms us and causes us to love others even more. Departing will lead us to the exceeding riches and wealth of Jesus' love.

The second meaning is *to die.* Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:31 "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." This is a daily death of self and awakening to the reality that it is now Christ's life that lives in us in the flesh (Galatians 2:20). We are dead to sin and to this world. We live by the faith of the Son of God. Living a life of faith is the only way to please God. And faith worketh by love. We are drawn to Jesus because of his love commended toward us.

Sadly, Rebekah's family did not go on this journey with her. They could have had their own journey to the bridegroom, but they did not choose to go to him. A few went with her, specifically her nurse, a few damsels, the servant, and his men. Rebekah's nurse would have been a female companion. The word 'nurse' means *mothering.* This is one is mother grace in type. This journey is grace upon grace, every step of the way. Grace gave us the enlightened eyes of understanding to see the glorious bridal high calling. We grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Rebekah's family has some parting words for Rebekah: "Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them" (Genesis 24:60). These words were prophetic, for she is a sister (believer) and when she unites with her husband, she becomes a mother of truth in love to millions.

God's intention for mankind is for every human ever born to be filled with all the fullness of God – and that is only found in Jesus. The seed of "Christ in you the hope of glory" will possess the gate of all those that hate those who do not like nor apprehend grace. We love Jesus and apprehend grace, or we don't. When it comes to the things of Christ, neutral we cannot be.

In Revelation 15:8 when the angels departed after the seven plagues were fulfilled, all that was left was Christ and his glory, his wife. She is a fountain of grace, just like him. Fruit abounds *in* her and *from* her, all because of grace. Grace always comes before glory. She is his glory all because of grace.

"And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way" (Genesis 24:61).

Rebekah had to apprehend three vital graces before she went on her journey. First she arose. 'Arose' means *to stand.* We will never go to the bridegroom without a stand. We learn to stand on the solid Rock. We are no longer tossed about with every wind of doctrine. We believe the Word of God and take God at His Word. At the conclusion of the description of the armor of God in Ephesians 6:13 we are encouraged to take unto ourselves the whole armor of God, "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." We stand in grace – and in glory. We have been blessed and the battle has already been won.

After Rebekah arose, she commenced to ride her camel – that wonderfully and fearfully-made beast equipped with every appointed down-setting and uprising necessary for the journey to the bridegroom. A few went with Rebekah, also riding upon camels. These are ones who encourage, supply, and enrich us in the Lord.

The third grace is that Rebekah "followed the man." This man is the servant/Holy Spirit whose purpose is to get the wife to the bridegroom expediently. All Rebekah needed was the willingness to go, to accept the Word, and to apprehend grace. The journey is completed in the power of the strength of love.

All the beautiful truth and fellowship in this marriage proposal has been lengthy, yet after 60 verses Rebekah has barely said goodbye to her family.

Verse 61 is the only verse – and only half of it – that touches on the camel ride, the journey of sufferings. Paul wrote in Romans 8:18 of the work of the sufferings we are called to endure on this journey to the bridegroom: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." In light of Jesus' coming to catch us away, it's all a light affliction. There is no reason to dwell on the journey and sufferings in light of the face of Christ as bridegroom. Consider Jacob, who was so in love with Rachel that he worked seven years for her. And then he worked another seven years. Yet he said that it was as if no time passed because of his love for her. He had his eyes fixed on the prize, not on the labor for the prize.

The servant then "went his way." Not our way or some theologian's way, but *his* way – the straight way, the only way. Jeremiah 10:23 tells us, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We must cease of ourselves and submit to the love of God and to the call of the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 3:5-6 admonishes us, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

This is the journey that leads us right into the midst of the throne to rule and reign with Jesus. The apprehending is accomplished in the confidence we have in trusting God to perform the perfect work in us, knowing that it is His desire to take us all the way to the throne.

MEETING ISAAC

"And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country." After 61 verses, we finally have mention of Isaac, the bridegroom and husband-to-be. The name Isaac means *laughter*. His name was given to him by his mother Sarah who laughed in unbelief that God could do what He said He would do in bringing forth a son to her and Abraham at such an advanced age. Yet God is faithful to His Word. He is faithful even we do not abide faithful. These are the times when great grace pours forth. God showed Sarah great grace, even in her unbelief. He shows it to us too. The promise came through grace alone and Sarah's unbelieving laughter changed to complete joy.

Lahairoi means *the living one who sees me.* Rebekah sat and listened to the servant/Holy Spirit at a well. Her future husband comes the way of this particular well too. At the well God shows us the eternal vision He has for us in the high calling. As we drink at the well we get a clearer vision of Jesus. We start to become like him when we see him as our bridegroom and begin to love him fully.

Verse 63 is poignant in this story. "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming."

Isaac journeyed from the well and then he went to a field – not just any field, but a fertile and cultivated field. Eventide is a time of quiet; it is the place in Proverbs 31:11 where it is noted that the heart of the virtuous woman's husband safely trusts in her.

When Isaac lifted up his eyes, he first saw the camels carrying his bride and her damsels. It is interesting that the first thing Isaac saw were the camels – those unruly temperamental beasts. Our bridegroom Jesus sees our sufferings. After all, Jesus was a man who suffered greatly. Our sufferings are not unknown to him. He savors them. He wants them to be profitable to us by bringing us close to his great heart. He uses them to draw us to his Word where we can saturate our hearts and minds in the things above and find rest for our earth-weary souls. By grace Rebekah had watered all the camels adequately and they delivered her to her bridegroom.

But Jesus also sees the beauty in us – we who are often uncomfortable, prone to behave badly, and not the most graceful. His desire is toward us, his beloved vessels of mercy. There was no physical beauty in our precious Lord while he dwelt on earth. There was no reason for anyone to have any desire for him unless they saw him with enlightened eyes of agape love. Those are the eyes he sees us with, and there is none more beautiful than the veiled ones for him.

When she saw Isaac, Rebekah lifted up her eyes and lighted off her camel. Her gaze was not horizontal, but vertical, upward toward the one she loved. She cherished the appearing of the one she had been longing for and looking for as she made her way across a hot, dry desert. Every moment of the journey she fervently desired to see him and meet him.

Upon seeing Isaac afar off, Rebekah had asked the servant "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" She didn't ask the servant how she looked, if her hair was unkept or her clothes a bit disheveled from her long, hot desert journey. She didn't dwell on the weariness of the journey. She wanted to know the identity of the one walking in the field to meet her and the servant. She may have had a sense it was her bridegroom, but she still inquired.

Once the servant answered her, "It is my master," she immediately took a veil and covered herself. She instantly became a vessel shut up for Isaac only. At the point it was revealed to her who Isaac was, she literally disappeared.

The servant then recounted to Isaac all the things that he had done. He did not speak of anything Rebekah had done. But Isaac knew she had obediently ridden her camel. He was fascinated, captivated, and ravished with her. He took her into his mother Sarah's tent – the tent of mother grace – and she became his wife.

It is noted that Isaac loved Rebekah and that she provided comfort to him after his mother's death. This is the final chord in this beautifully intimate song. Someday soon all will know how much Jesus loves and cherishes his wife. She will be a comfort to him and he will show her openly to all and all will know the inheritance in her exclusively for him.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11). The Wife of the Lamb is his only pleasure forever more and she will rule and reign with him throughout eternity.

CHAPTER THREE

ABISHAG

The One of Double Rest

"Why does thou ask Abishag for Adonijah?
Ask for him the kingdom also."
~ 1 Kings 2:22

The short but sweet story of Abishag as a bridal type is found in 1Kings chapters 1 and 2 near the close of King David's life when he was old and stricken in years. He was cold, so his servants tried to warm him by covering him with clothes, but he drew no heat from the garments. His servants then sought throughout all the coasts of Israel for a fair damsel. They found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king to give him heat.

The fact that Abishag was sought out and brought before the king might indicate that she came from some type of pedigree. After all, not just anyone was allowed to be near the king.

But nothing about Abishag indicates any pedigree. She was from Shunnem – a tract of land that belonged to the tribe of Issachar on the south border of Israel. It was a place of no particular reputation or distinction on the back side of nowhere. It shared a border with Canaan where the Canaanites lived. The Canaanites were descendants of Ham, one of Noah's three sons. Ham was the one who looked upon the nakedness of his drunken father, while Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japeth, graciously covered their father and did not look upon him (Genesis 9:20-23). But God didn't forget Ham's line. In fact, He exalted it through Abishag. It is likely that Abishag was a Canaanite who converted to a Gentile.

Even her name, which means 'my father erred' doesn't indicate anyone beautiful or worthy to come before a king.

While some might wonder how a name with a meaning like that could be anything good or worthwhile, it's the name of someone just ripe for the grace of God. Not one of those who portray the Wife of the Lamb in the Bible had a pedigree. None came from a royal line. Their behavior was always the way of *if by any means* – meaning whatever it takes to get what was desired.

An examination of the lives of the four women that are noted in the lineage of Jesus in Matthew chapter 1 reveals women who were not the most likely to attain a crown:

Tamar dressed as a harlot and caused her father-in-law to lie with her.

Rahab was a harlot.

Ruth was a widow from Moab, a descendant of Lot's incest with his eldest daughter.

Bathsheba caught David's eye when bathing on a rooftop. David fell in love with her and ordered her husband to the front line in battle where he was killed.

Consider also that Esther was a little orphan girl and that Mary the mother of Jesus was an unwed teenager when she gave birth to the Messiah.

But these women were the chosen ones. That's just how God does it. If every aspect of our lives aren't what might appear appealing to the world, take heart. Rejoice that there are not many mighty, not many wise – but there are always a few who are chosen.

In the story of Abishag, the king's servants had three criteria concerning her purpose with the king. In 1 Kings 2:2 it was first, "Let her stand before the king." She was so beautiful that just looking at her delighted and warmed King David's heart. In the same way, our first place is to stand in the grace of God. When we stand in grace, we ravish the heart of our bridegroom. He is mesmerized, captivated by his vessels of mercy. The beauty and passion Jesus has for us is because of his life in us. We are called personally to Christ himself according to the good pleasure of his will. We are to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:5-6). He cannot deny himself the good pleasure of his will, the very ecstasy in his heart for us.

The next command from the servants was, "Let her cherish him." Cherish means to benefit and minister to. This is the next step of the vessel that adds to the usefulness of the husband. Abishag was meant to encourage the king. Her beauty and her kindness was a great benefit to him.

And finally it is, "And let her lie in thy bosom." This is a place of closeness and intimacy. The bosom is the chest area, near the heart. Spiritually it is a hollow, a place that longs to be filled. Abishag was the one at this time in King David's life that filled that hollow. What she did for King David is what Paul's gospel encourages the Wife of the Lamb to do – complete and fulfill the Word of God.

Abishag loved and cherished King David. She was beautiful and comforting, and she ministered to him. Although it is clear that Abishag did not have intimate relations with King David ("he knew her not") her presence before him ushered in a very endearing love, much like the love the apostle John had for Jesus when he laid his head upon Jesus' breast. Her standing, her cherishing, and her lying in the king's bosom were all to the end "that my lord the king may get heat."

Think of this in light of who she is to God the Father, and in light of who King David is in relation to Solomon. As we draw near to our Lord we deeply appreciate God our Father. Christ in us, the hope of glory, performs the obedience to our Father's will for our lives. It assures the working of grace and magnifies His Son in all things.

Abishag was a Shunnamite. 'Shunnamite' means double resting place. During King David's reign, Israel was at war. God told David there would be no rest in his kingdom. The purpose of David's reign was to put down all rule and authority challenging the kingdom so that when Solomon inherited the kingdom from his father he would have a time of peace and rest. That tracks exactly with how God is setting things up for the reign of His Son Jesus.

Today, there are continuous wars and rumors of wars. But during the Millennium, Jesus will have his wife and they will reign in peace for one thousand years. This is the unfolding and the infolding and the folding out that goes on with the bride of Christ. We are a comfort to God the Father as we run the race to win His Son.

But this is just the back story of Abishag, King David and Solomon. The crux of Abishag's importance comes into focus later in 1 Kings chapter 2 as Abishag becomes the point of great contention in the entire kingdom as Solomon takes the throne.

Solomon had a brother, Adonijah, who wanted to be king and who tried to usurp the throne that was rightfully Solomon's. Adonijah finally conceded that the throne was Solomon's. But Adonijah had a seemingly innocent request – a request he did not ask Solomon directly. Instead, he went to their mother, Bathsheba, who he knew would have a difficult time saying no to him.

Adonijah's request of Bathsheba was for her to ask if Solomon would give him Abishag to be his wife. When Bathsheba went to Solomon and asked what Adonijah had requested, Solomon replied, "Why do you ask Abishag for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also."

Basically Solomon told his mother, "You might as well give Adonijah the kingdom if you give him Abishag as his wife." Abishag had won Solomon's heart. This was his fair one, his virtuous woman who excelled all others. He loved her and he wanted her for his wife. She was the value of the kingdom to him. She was so important to him that he did not consider there would be a kingdom without her.

Such is the coming kingdom and rulership of Jesus Christ. Just like Solomon did not consider that he had a kingdom without his wife, Jesus will not take the throne or have a kingdom until he has his wife, the one who took everything he gave her, including a crown. She is his glory, and she will descend from heaven having the glory of God. She is the light of him and he is the light of her.

CHAPTER FOUR

RUTH

The Gleaner in the Field of Grace

"And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid,
and turned himself: and behold, a woman lay at his feet.
And he said, 'Who art thou?'

And she answered, 'I am Ruth thine handmaid:
spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid;
for thou art a near kinsman.'"
~ Ruth 3:8-9

The book of Ruth lies between the books of Judges and 1 Samuel in the Bible, significant in place and in timing. Ruth came to Israel during the time when the judges ruled and immediately before the time of Samuel and the kings. Naturally speaking, in this current church age, earthly judges rule over us. Yet it is the time just before the coming of King Jesus, who will rule jointly with his wife during the Millennium and ever after.

The story of Ruth has a great testimony for Israel. But there is another layer of glory for us in this day and age – a testimony of the glory revealed in us as the Wife of the Lamb. Ruth was redeemed, but she also became the redeemer's *wife*. There was an extra portion for her – and there is an extra portion for those who truly love Jesus not just as Savior, but as husband.

The name Ruth means *beauty, friend, companion*. Her name is a striking contrast to where she was from: Moab. The Moabites were the result of incest between Lot and his eldest daughter which produced a son named Moab whose name means 'who is your father?' The Moabites were a people who left the faith, were discouraged and rebellious, and lived in spiritual darkness. But God had His sights on fair Ruth as the one He would show great grace through a strong and wealthy man named Boaz. He would bring her out of darkness and into marvelous light.

"I WILL GO"

Ruth's story begins with a famine in Israel. Elimelech (my God is king) moved his wife Naomi (my delight) and their two sons Mahlon (sickly) and Chilion (pining) from Israel to Moab where there was food.

During their time in Moab, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi a widow. Naomi had her two sons take wives of two sisters from Moab, Orpah and Ruth. Naomi and her sons and their wives continued to dwell in Moab for about ten years.

Then Mahlon and Chilion both died, leaving Naomi without her husband or her sons and leaving her daughters-in-law without husbands. This was devastating to these three women.

Elimelech was of the tribe of Judah, as were his sons. By marrying Chilion, Ruth had married into the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

After the deaths of her husband and sons, Naomi encouraged her two widowed daughters-in-law to return to their home as she had heard how the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. Naomi wanted her daughters-in-law be in a place where they would have sustenance.

Orpah kissed Naomi goodbye, but Ruth clung to Naomi and expressed her heart to her, pleading with her "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

This was her way of saying the bridal phrase "I will go." She was willing to go wherever the God of Israel was, to dwell where He was and be where His people were. Ruth had a devotion to God and to His people that her sister Orpah did not. Ruth cleaved to her mother-in-law even though Naomi encouraged her and Orpah to go back to their own people.

So Ruth went with Naomi to Bethlehem, to the 'house of bread.' They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Most likely Ruth had no idea of how her life would turn out in Bethlehem. But she knew she wanted to stay with Naomi. In this story, Naomi typifies the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one of the trinity that takes us to the house of bread, feeds us truth, and brings us to the hand of the kinsman-redeemer in marriage.

GLEANING IN THE FIELD OF GRACE

The introduction to Boaz (type of the bridegroom/husband) begins in chapter 2. The name Boaz means *strength*. He was the son of the union between Rahab the harlot and Salmon. He was also a kinsman of Naomi's deceased husband Elimelech. He was a mighty man who had much wealth.

Ruth does not waste any time making herself useful to Naomi. She asks of her, "Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace" (Ruth 2:2). And Naomi said unto her, "Go, my daughter."

Ruth wanted to find a particular field: the field of grace. She knew she needed it – and she knew she would find it. The field of grace is the field of the wealthy man – the field of the kinsman-redeemer. Ruth specifically wanted to glean corn, the fruit of the field. She wanted to taste and see the goodness of God. The primary goal of the Word of God is to grow us up into full maturity. Consider how the Shulamite sat in the cool shade of the apple tree of her Beloved with great delight as she savored his sweet fruit that grew her up (Song 2:3).

This fruit is the fruit of grace shown forth in God's vessels of mercy. It takes time and patience to produce. Ruth didn't go to the field to do deeds or work her way into Boaz's favor. She went to find grace, to glean in his fruitful field. This fruitful field is *Christ in you the hope of glory*. We change from glory to glory by apprehending grace. James 5:7 encourages us, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

As Ruth gleaned in the field after the reapers, "her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz" (Ruth 2:3). There were many in the field, but she went out with the reapers. She desired to reap grace in the strong man's field.

The word ‘hap’ is wonderful as it means *to encounter an appointment with fortune*. It was *her* appointment – *her* fortune indeed – to light on Boaz’s field. This encounter was personal to her – and it is personal to us. Our lives are a divine appointment to glean in the field of grace and to go on unto the bridegroom. He provides the rich field but it is up to us to take of his goodness.

Boaz was not only a wealthy man; he was a mighty man, a strong man. His field was a field of strength sown with the seeds of grace. Gleaning in the field of grace strengthens us. We go in Christ’s strength. He has strength for when we’re hurting and when we’ve made a complete mess of everything. This is the field that will make Ruth the Moabitess the wife of Boaz, and it is the field that will make us the Wife of Jesus. Ephesians 3:16 tells us of the riches of Christ’s glory that strengthen us by his spirit in the inner man. How exceeding are the riches of our Redeemer!

Boaz makes his appearance as he comes out to his field from Bethlehem. He greets his reapers with a blessing on his lips, “The Lord be with you.” Most likely he had a very large field as he was wealthy. One woman in this large field who had nothing of herself to command his attention except her helplessness and need caught his eye.

Boaz saw Ruth and asked the reapers, “Whose damsel is this?”

The servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, “It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab.” There may have been a hint of sarcasm in the head servant’s voice in mentioning the detail that Ruth was from Moab, considering the Moabites were not favored among the Israelites. He was being honest, but perhaps not kind.

But the servant’s worldly response did not deter Boaz. When he approached her, Ruth said to him, “I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves” (Ruth 2:7). She was not demanding; her posture and words were humble. She asked only that she be allowed to come behind the reapers to gather some of what was left over.

Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens” (Ruth 2:8). Boaz saw something special in Ruth. He had already heard how she continued in the field from the morning until evening, taking little time to tarry in the house. She was intent on gleaning that precious fruit and she wasted no time. He admired her consistency and her desire to glean without ceasing. This caused him to want her to stay in his field with his maidens.

This is the beginning of Boaz revealing how beautiful she is to him. God wants us to glean in Paul’s gospel field, the fruitful field that will prepare us for the marriage of the Lamb.

Boaz encouraged Ruth to keep her eyes on the field where his maidens reaped. He wanted her gaze steadfastly stayed on the field where his maidens (saints of like-precious faith) were reaping. He charged his young men not to touch her, to let her focus on the field. She was already the apple of his eye.

Ruth was encouraged by Boaz further when she was thirsty to seek water from those who draw from the deep well of salvation with eternal glory. If we keep drinking from that well, God will be faithful to perform the good work He began in us all the way to the throne to rule and reign with Jesus forever.

Ruth was overcome with thanks for Boaz's generosity and protection. Her response was to fall on her face and bow herself to the ground. She was amazed that this wealthy man would take notice of her and want her to glean in his field with his maidens. She didn't understand how she could find grace in his eyes, or why he would notice her, a mere stranger.

Boaz responded, "It has fully been showed to me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and are come unto a people which thou did not know before" (Ruth 2:11).

The answer is always grace. Grace was Ruth's answer, and it is our answer. We should be thankful just as Ruth was for God's generous love for us – the ones who don't belong and who have done absolutely nothing to merit the grace of God.

Grace had already revealed everything about Ruth to Boaz. He already knew about her past, who she was and what situation she had come from. He knew she had left everyone and everything familiar to go with – and stay with – Naomi.

Boaz admired Ruth. He told her, "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Boaz knew Ruth had put her trust in God. At this point in the story, she doesn't realize yet that her full reward will be to marry Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer. It doesn't take a lot of time for Jesus to propose to us or for us to accept his proposal. But once we accept, it takes a lifetime to come to the full reward.

Ruth replied, "Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and has spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens."

She speaks as though her being different is something Boaz will not like or approve of. She doesn't yet understand he already loves her *because* she's not like all the others. She just wants to glean grace. That is what he loves about her. She's headed for glory because she is asking for favor, asking for more. 'Favor' means *elegance and grace*. We already have God's favor if we are children of God and born again. But He loves for us to ask for more favor, to ask for elegance and grace that He so desires to bestow upon us and in us. A life of elegance and grace is the life more abundant we read of in John 10:10 that is ours for the taking in and with Jesus.

Ruth acknowledges Boaz as lord, as one in authority. It's all about what he sees in her – not what she sees in herself or how others see her. It should be the same with us. We need to be intent only on what Christ sees in us. His grace is His favor. Grace will allow us to start seeing ourselves as He sees us: *highly favored*.

She acknowledges that he already has been a comfort to her. This comfort means specifically to be comforted of grief. Ruth had lost her husband. She might have had shame about her past and where she was from. But Boaz's love moved her from guilt and regret to understanding the glory of grace that he had for her. The power of God's riches in mercy and grace comforts us like nothing else. It inspires confidence in our hearts to fully believe the Word of God.

Boaz then invites Ruth to dine with him and his reapers. He wants to feed her and he wants her to partake of the rich fare his at his table in fellowship. He specifically wants her to eat of the bread, and dip her morsel in vinegar. Bread always speaks of the Bread of Life, our Redeemer, Jesus. Vinegar is used to

quench thirst and to purify. So Ruth went in to eat with Boaz and sat beside the reapers at his table and ate until she was satisfied.

When Ruth returned the next day to glean in his field, Boaz commanded his young men to let her glean among the sheaves. When barley was harvested, sheaves were bundled together after the grain was cut and ready to be brought into the threshing floor. Boaz put Ruth where everything was ready for her to take of his goodness.

He strictly commanded his young men "Do not reproach her." This literally means "do not make her blush." They were to give respect to the one he cared for. He singled her out in great kindness and put her in the place of gleaning among the sheaves. He wanted her to have something that was her own; not anything her diligence could secure, but that which his love had freely given.

Boaz continued with instructions to his young men to "let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her" (Ruth 2:16). The words 'fall' and 'purpose' are the same Hebrew word and mean *to draw out, to take spoil.* 'Handfuls' means *to grip bundles of grain.* God daily loads us with His numerous benefits, but will we take hold of them and see them for what they are: handfuls of purpose? Spoils are what victors take after a battle. The spoils that we have are the exceeding riches of God's grace forever because of the victory we have in Jesus. In Ephesians 2:4-7 Paul writes, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." These 'handfuls of purpose' are exquisite bundles of spoil and riches. The kinsman-redeemer pours out a double portion time and time again.

Ruth loves the field of grace and goes back to it to glean as much as possible. She is there from sun up to sun down. She's wasn't working to show herself off. She knew every bit she gleaned was for her good.

Once she had beaten out the chaff and everything undesirable from the barley, she gathered up the grain. She carried away nothing but the grain, the meat and the fruit. She took it into the city and gave Naomi what she had gleaned.

Naomi asked her, "Where have you gleaned today? Blessed be he that took knowledge of thee." Ruth told her, "The man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz" (Ruth 2:19).

Naomi was prompted to ask Ruth these questions because of the fruit she brought from the field. Naomi could tell that someone important had noticed her daughter-in-law. She recognized the blessing in that. As our kinsman-redeemer, Jesus takes knowledge of us as we glean in his field of grace. He has made every provision for us and he rejoices when we take of him, when we declare his name and His kindness.

Ruth told Naomi how Boaz had told her to keep fast near his young men until the harvest was finished. To "keep fast" means *to cleave, pursue, and join together.* Those are matrimonial words that encourage to us to press for the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and pursue him in the heights of his love. He wants to be joined together with us as a husband and wife are joined together. He wants us to take our place at his side!

To know our Savior and bridegroom is attracted to us and that he wants us all the way to the end of the harvest should encourage us. He chose us and put us in his field of grace. He wooed us through Paul's gospel and caused us to understand about first love. First love is love that endures to the end of the

harvest. It is paramount to stay in first love, to linger with the kinsman-redeemer and love him fully. By faith in grace he will take us all the way.

Naomi told Ruth that it was good for her to go out with Boaz's maidens and stay with them in the field of grace, the most fruitful field. She was to stay with them for one reason only: to be prepared for marriage. Ruth adhered to Naomi's instructions and kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to the end of the barley and wheat harvests. She didn't leave the leading of the Holy Spirit.

RESTING ON THE THRESHING FLOOR

Chapter 3 opens with Naomi asking Ruth, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" All Ruth had to do was take the grace to receive Naomi's offer of rest. This is what the Holy Spirit does – he takes the grace-full things of Christ and makes them ours. And then we have rest. Grace affords us rest that nothing else can provide.

Naomi reminded Ruth that Boaz was of their family. She added an important and life-changing detail: "Behold, he winnows barley tonight in the threshing floor" (Ruth 3:2). The Holy Spirit will keep building the riches of grace and truth in our lives. It's line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little. It's putting one foot in front of the other in grace and watching the love story of the ages unfold in our lives.

Winnowing is part of the overall process of threshing. The nutritious seeds of grains such as wheat and barley are encased within a hull, which is often referred to as 'chaff.' In type, chaff is symbolic of our old nature and of our flesh. In order to get to the nutritious seed, the chaff must first be loosened. This is done through a process of beating and pulverizing the grain called *threshing*.

But loosening the chaff is only the first part of the threshing process. There is another step, called *winnowing*, which must be done to separate the loose chaff from the seed. Winnowing involves throwing the grain and loosened chaff mixture into the air. The wind blows away the lighter chaff, while the heavier grains fall back down for recovery. Threshing and winnowing provide an insightful analogy of the process of how God removes the chaff, our old nature, from us. First the chaff is *loosened* from the grain/fruit by treading it out. Then the chaff is *separated* by the wind (type of the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit sanctifies and separates. He causes us to go out from the camp and unto Jesus personally.

Spiritually speaking, the threshing floor is where the north winds blow, where the threshing and winnowing occur. These are the joint sufferings we experience with Christ. Jesus endured many sufferings as a man, including the ultimate suffering of having his Father turn away from him as he hung on the cross on Calvary bearing all our sin. As we grow in faith and believing, we begin to experience a beauty as we are joined together with Jesus in our sufferings and separations.

Ruth needed to be willing to enter in to the joint sufferings with Boaz. These joint-sufferings are at night and require getting down on the floor to a lowly place. This was not convenient, or even acceptable in man's opinion. But love will draw us to the low places in the night seasons, to the place where the lovers discuss the things of forever together face to face. In the Song of Solomon 1:13 the Shulamite spoke of her Beloved as a bundle of myrrh that lay all night between her breasts. In the Word of God, myrrh is indicative of suffering. The Shulamite cherished the suffering with her Beloved. She held it near her heart. Jesus knows it is necessary for us to suffer in order to rule and reign with him. He loves it when we cherish the joint-sufferings with him.

Hebrews 4:15 tells us how Jesus is well acquainted with our trials and sufferings: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There is not a suffering our precious Lord is not familiar with.

Naomi has four-fold instructions for Ruth to prepare her for her visit to Boaz in the threshing floor. She first tells Ruth to *wash* herself. This first step is critical but it is only the beginning. We are clean through reading and studying the Word of God. The washing of water by the word cleanses us (Ephesians 5:26). Jesus is the Word and we are clean through him.

Next, Ruth was to *anoint* herself. We need the oil of the Holy Spirit upon us and in us. There is knowledge, but then there is truth in love that comes with anointing.

Next Ruth was to *get dressed*. Ruth was getting ready to meet her future husband, Boaz, under the cover of night. In the Jewish wedding tradition, the bridegroom would come to get his bride during the night. A potential bride slept with her clothes on so she would be instantly ready to meet her bridegroom when he came for her.

Finally, Ruth had to make the move to *get down* to the threshing floor where Boaz was. This was in act of intimacy. It was to be done discreetly, as Naomi cautioned Ruth to not make herself known to Boaz until he was done eating and drinking and had retired for the night.

So Ruth washed herself, anointed herself, got dressed, and went down to the floor – all in humility and lowliness. She didn't tell anyone that she was going to Boaz in the threshing floor at night. This was a private affair of the heart between Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi. That she was to wait until he was finished eating and drinking speaks to letting patience have her perfect work. Even now as we are preparing to see our lover Jesus, we are excited. But there is a perfecting in the exercise of patience.

Naomi continues, "And it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall mark the place where he shall lie, and shall go in, and uncover his feet, and lay down; and he will tell you what you shall do" (Ruth 3:4).

The word for 'lie down' is *shakab* in Hebrew. It means to lie with someone, to enter in to the most intimate place between a man and a woman. *Shakab* appears in many places in the next few verses. Ruth has come to the point where she takes the boldness of Boaz's favor and goes in to him.

She must *mark* this place – the place where he lies down in intimate love and rest. This is the place of the knowledge between a husband and his wife that Paul wrote of throughout his letters. Not all in the family of God will take the grace to take this place. Later in the story, as the kinsman-redeemer, Boaz redeemed Ruth's whole family. But only Ruth became his wife.

To 'go in' means *to seize and attack*. Those in love take heaven by force. If we are lovers of Jesus, we are fighters and warriors. We are good soldiers that endure hardness. Love is worth fighting for. That is always the bridal pattern.

Ruth was to uncover Boaz's feet. To uncover the feet of someone is to completely know them, to know their walk and their ways. Through the Holy Spirit, God reveals Christ's passionate love for us moment by moment. His desire is toward us. Believe the Word of God and have confidence that God will finish the work, the masterpiece that is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Ruth obediently replied to Naomi, "All that you said to me I will do." Ruth fully consented to all Naomi told her. Do we see the Word of God through enlightened eyes of understanding? Are we willing to fully yield to it?

True to her word, Ruth went down to the threshing floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law had told her. Ruth moved in full confidence in the Holy Spirit's instructions. We need to take all truth and move with the Spirit's instruction in confidence, too. That place of rightly divided truth – the place of the proposals – is on the threshing floor at midnight. That's where we hear our bridegroom's voice wooing us. We respond with full assurance, telling him we know we are our Beloved's and that his desire is toward us.

This is our life in Christ through Paul's gospel. When we're with our lover it doesn't matter where we are. Everything else fades. He will prove our love for him in us. He does this through suffering. This is the place of the depth of knowledge – the perfect, precise, exact knowledge that only exists between a husband and wife.

When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn. He went out of the way of others. This is the place of complete rest and contentment for the bridegroom.

It was at night when Ruth slipped onto the threshing floor to where Boaz was lying, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Night can be a time of sorrow, but it is a time when we learn more of our lover's love to us in a few short hours than in many bright days. The songs he gives in the night are songs of the deepest, truest, and sweetest love.

Naomi had instructed Ruth about exactly where to go to find Boaz and how to approach him. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit tells us where to go to find our bridegroom. This is the place of mutual ecstasy, where all is fulfilled. In Ephesians 1:9 Paul wrote of the ecstatic good pleasure of God, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

That Ruth came to Boaz "softly" is to say she *entered a mystery*. This is the mystery of Christ and the glorious church, the reality of Christ and his wife. Ruth didn't just view this mystery. She went in and took it. She uncovered her bridegroom and took her place with him.

Sometime after midnight, Boaz was afraid – perhaps startled – to find a woman lying at his feet. 'Afraid' in this passage means *to quake, quiver; to tremble in love*. He turns to see a woman at his feet. 'Woman' in this instance means *a wife*. The wife of the Lamb is the fruit that Paul's gospel can produce in our lives. We are encouraged to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). To 'work out' our salvation means to let the work of grace abound. All our life is a work of grace. We must have full assurance in faith to fully believe that God is well able in every regard concerning our perfecting.

Boaz asked Ruth, "Who are you?" He knew who it was at his feet, but what he was really asking Ruth was, "Tell me your heart." God is always most interested in our heart. He knows us, but he wants us to confess who we are in Christ. If we see Christ as our bridegroom and Husband, we respond in kind, as a wife would respond.

Ruth answered him, “I am Ruth thine handmaid.” By revealing her name and her position as his handmaid, she not only told him her heart, she told him his heart: “You desire me and you know me like no one else.”

She then pleaded, “Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid.” This is one of the most significant verses in this story, for it is the verse where Boaz takes her as a wife. Men in biblical times were accustomed at night when they lay down to sleep to wrap themselves in their mantle, or outer cloak (i.e. skirt). Their mantle served as a covering. For a man to “spread his skirt” over a woman is the very act of the man taking the woman to be his wife. The word ‘skirt’ also indicates a wing, which covers and affords protection. This a husband will gladly do for his wife.

Ruth let Boaz know she knew he was a near kinsman. According to custom, a near kinsman was one who qualified to marry a widow to redeem her and her family and to raise up the name of the deceased as noted in Leviticus 25:25 and Deuteronomy 25:5-12. It was a bold act by Ruth to claim this great man as her kinsman, but she had not been gleaning in the field of grace for nothing. She had learned of Boaz’s kindness and grace toward her, and she appropriated that sufficiency. A great inheritance was at stake, and great issues call for instant and aggressive action. What did her shame amount to when weighed against the blessings she would inherit? Just like Paul when he wrote “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” in 1 Corinthians 4:17, Ruth’s enlightened eyes saw beyond the present to her glorious end. And like Jesus, she endured the shame for the joy that was set before her, her bridegroom and husband.

Boaz responded by complimenting Ruth for her kindness to Naomi. He referred to her as his ‘daughter,’ meaning that she was of his family. He tells her she is blessed and adored of God. The wife of the Lamb has a double portion as she is adored by the bridegroom and by God the Father.

He continues, “You have shown more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, as you did not follow the young men, whether poor or rich” (Ruth 3:10). This indicates a furthering in her growth and maturity, specifically in kindness. He has no doubt she loves him entirely and no one else. He loves that about her. Jesus loves that we love him solely and wholeheartedly. Our kindness increases as the love in our hearts for Jesus increases. We don’t follow after young immature ones. We follow Paul as he followed Christ. This is how we grow up to the full stature of Christ.

Boaz told Ruth to bring him her vail and to hold it. It was the mark of a married woman to hold her vail. This is similar in type to what was written to the overcoming church of Philadelphia, “hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11). Ruth held her vail out to Boaz and he filled it with six measures of barley, the fruit of the first harvest of the marriageable virgins in the field of grace. She then went into the city to testify of Boaz’s love for her.

RECEIVING THE REWARD

This has all taken place in a short span of time. Boaz was quick to tell Ruth that he was willing to do all she required. He was aware of her reputation among the people as a virtuous woman. He had seen her faithfully gleaning in his field. That gleaning produced fruit in her life and the time had come that he wanted to partake of that fruit. Someday Jesus will make known to all how much he loves his wife, too. He will partake of her fruit as a Husband.

So Ruth lay at Boaz's feet all night, until early morning. She trusted in him completely. This is what it is to intimately know the love of Christ in all its heights and depths, lengths and breadths. We trust Jesus completely, just as Ruth trusted Boaz.

Before anyone else knew she was there, she rose up and left the threshing floor.

When Ruth returned to Naomi and told her everything Boaz and shared with her, Naomi asked Ruth "Who are you, my daughter?" More precisely, Naomi was asking Ruth to confess *whose* she was. Naomi knew Ruth was not the same woman who went to lie at Boaz's feet. Ruth's night-time experience with Boaz had changed her. She went in a fair maiden and she came out a wife. This conversation between Naomi and Ruth is a conversation between the Holy Spirit and the true worshipper, the Lamb's wife.

Naomi responded, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he has finished the thing this day" (Ruth 3:18). 'Finished' means *to accomplish and perform.* Our savior and bridegroom accomplishes and performs everything in our lives. Isaiah 55:11 assures us, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Nothing God sends returns to Him void. He sent His only begotten Son to die on a cross and rise from the dead on the third day. God didn't send His Son to a horrible death for nothing. He did it to redeem us so we could share with His Son the exceeding riches of eternity as his glory as his wife.

As the story concludes, Boaz wastes no time in publicly proclaiming before the elders and other witnesses at the gate of the city what exactly he had purchased: "Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren" (Ruth 4:9-10). To purchase someone means to redeem them. That's why Boaz is known as the kinsman-redeemer.

Ruth's humble appeal to Boaz had deeply touched him. She had won his heart by surrendering her pride and self-sufficiency. She sought his aid and protection. He would not disappoint her in any respect.

The people responded favorably and said, "The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman" (Ruth 4:11-12).

These people knew Boaz's heritage and their own history. They acknowledged the double portion bestowed upon Ruth to be like Rachel and Leah. They knew the worth of fruitful Ephratah and the value of Bethlehem as the house of bread.

The union of Boaz and Ruth was indeed fruitful. Their son's name was Obed (serving). He was the father of Jesse (wealthy possessor), the father of king David (beloved), through whom Jesus the Messiah came.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE SHULAMITE IN THE SONG OF SOLOMON

"I am my beloved's, and his desire
is toward me."

~ Song of Solomon 7:10

The Song of Solomon portrays in richest detail the story the marriage between King Solomon and a particular woman known as the Shulamite. She was likely Abishag, who is written of in chapters 1and 2 of 1 Kings. Shulamite means *perfect, peaceful one*.

True to the pattern we always see in the Wife of the Lamb, this story will once again bring out one from among many. Solomon wrote over a thousand songs and had many, many wives and concubines. But only one song was recorded in the Word of God about the one wife that excelled all others. This one song is his song personally to her.

Although the Song of Solomon is a love story between two people written many years ago, it is prophetic of the heavenly courtship of Jesus Christ and his marriage to the one he adores, his wife. She is his song of songs, his most precious jewel, the apple of his eye. The love of our King has stepped out of eternity and this is our song with Jesus. It is our journey; it is about here and now. This is the heart and revelation of Paul's gospel of the mystery of Christ and the church. It is the height of the heights, the actual encouraging words of Jesus to his readied wife. We will find no angry words and no exasperation at failure in these pages. Jesus doesn't shame us into intimacy; he loves us into the fulness of our destiny of having a crown and ruling and reigning together with him forever.

This is a personal love story with the Lord Jesus, the one who is altogether lovely, the one who is all in all. In this story we see Jesus as our heavenly husband as the refiner and his love as the flame. We will see and experience the greatest pleasure of all is walking hand in hand with our him in tender intimacy. Within the pages of this story lies the heartbeat of Jesus for his wife.

It is important to understand that the Song of Solomon begins *after the acceptance of marriage*. In the Jewish wedding tradition when the father brought out the son and a woman accepted him, the Marriage Contract (ketubah) was signed. The groom would then go away to prepare a place for he and his wife to dwell before they actually lived together. This is noted in John (verse). When the home was prepared, he would come during the night for her with his friends and whisk her away that they would dwell together forever.

CHAPTER ONE: LET TRUE LOVE BEGIN

This courtship begins with the Shulamite desiring the kisses of the king in Song 1:2. His kisses were a token of his affection and she longed for them. They were a very expressive and positive sign of his love for her that satisfied her as nothing else could.

Her first words are, "Let him kiss me…"

The word 'kiss' means *to equip as with weapons.* This Shulamite woman encountered many battles of faith in her journey to fully apprehend her king. His kisses armed her and prepared her for battle. They

supplied and strengthened her with the strength of love. The kisses of our Lord – His Word – do the same for us.

She says this after the marriage contract has been signed. This is where divine intimacy talk resides, where she receives all the love from her Beloved. These kisses are with his mouth and how sweet to consider the word 'mouth' means *the well.* Wells hold life-saving, life-preserving water. There are precious accounts in the Word of God about Jesus meeting people at a well and of all the deep sweet fellowship he had with ones there. Just like Rebekah who told the servant she would go with him immediately, letting the Lord kiss us is the beginning of our "I will go" journey. He has heard us and he is coming for our words.

She notes how the virgins (ones of marrying age) love him. There's something about the aroma of him. The sweet savor he pours forth is healing and joy through the anointing that is his name. She wants to be close to him. She encourages him as she tells him, "Draw me."

She and the others will run after him and follow him. But not all will fully pursue him and not all will allow him to bring them into the deepest intimacy of his heart. It is in this innermost place where we start to know our Lord as a wife knows her husband. Although there are several references to 'we' in this chapter, the Shulamite is starting to come away from the others and go unto her Beloved.

As she pursues him, she becomes aware of her own failures under the law. She blames her siblings for her shortcomings and becomes entangled in shame and guilt over working in the wrong vineyards and losing close communion with the one she loves. And so it is with us. It is dangerous and foolish to neglect our own vineyard (fellowship with Jesus) and start tending the vineyards of others.

But despite her condemnation of herself, the king's first words to the Shulamite in verse 8 speak of her as the "fairest among women." He does not dwell for one second on the guilt she spoke of, nor does he berate her or shame her. He simply calls her who she is to him: his fairest among all. No matter where we go or why we leave that tender place by his side, Jesus continually draws us and assures us with his love. He always identifies us according to who we are in him.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SHULAMITE'S FIRST DESCRIPTION OF HER KING

In chapter 2 the Shulamite's love increases for her Beloved as she expresses words of appreciation for what he has done for her and who he is to her. A vital turning point in our walk is when we see what Jesus sees in us and we begin to truly know his love for us. This is brought out in every dimension in Paul's gospel. The love of Christ is transformative as we lay hold of it by faith.

We see her first description of him in this chapter as she extols the testimony of her king. In verse 3 she compares him among all the trees of the wood and finds he is best. Jesus is the Son of God. He is fairer than the children of men. He is a particular tree – a fruitful apple tree. The apple tree speaks of peace. When we enter in to this blessed place of faith, our life becomes a life of the perfect peace that passes all understanding. Our Lord and Savior bled and died upon a tree. The fruit that came forth from that death and subsequent resurrection is the bringing of many sons to glory and a wife to rule and reign with Him.

Sitting under his shade the Shulamite found delight in his provision of shelter, joy, sustenance, and rest as she ate of his delicious fruit. She had already developed an appetite for him, and no other satisfied her. The Word of God is our sustenance and our strength. As we feast upon it daily, we come to know the

strength we have in him. And as she found all these treasures in her Beloved, so we can find a rich feast in Jesus by trusting the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of his love to our hearts. Where we sit down to eat now will determine where we will be with our Lord later.

In verse 9 she wraps us her description of her Beloved. She is beginning to apprehend him and discern him and settle down in their love. She speaks of him being like a roe or a young hart. He is youthful – not in an immature sense, but in the sense of vigor and vitality. He has the strength to overcome the hills and mountains of trial. He leaps upon them, victorious, for truly he has overcome. This is a testimony to her heart as she sees and apprehends this dimension of his conquering love.

Our Lord's approaches are modest. He is seen standing behind our wall and looking forth at the windows. He shows Himself through the lattice, here a little, there a little, line upon line and precept upon precept. This wall is the innermost wall, the Holy of Holies. Our Bridegroom is waiting there and his call to us is to meet him there.

CHAPTER THREE: THE NIGHT SEASONS

Chapter 3 finds the Shulamite in a night season, looking for her Beloved. Night seasons are typical of separation. This night season for the Shulamite is due to her decision to approach her Beloved on her terms. She tried to find intimacy with him in the broad streets, but true love is worship that is hidden away with him. She will not find her lover in any common street. The only place we will find Jesus is in the inner chambers of the heart, through the walk of faith that takes us through prisons and furnaces and deserts. This is the way of Paul's gospel that boils down to one question: *Do we love our husband more than anything?*

There is a necessary lesson for us in these night seasons of separation. They teach us how utterly dependent we are on the Lord Jesus as our husband. When we are separated from him we learn our deepest need of his abiding presence and fellowship. He lets us have our way, that we may learn by bitter experience to not want to have things our way. We learn that our deepest yearning is to be always in his presence and to have our Bridegroom's constant companionship.

In a short while the Shulamite finds her Beloved. She takes him all the way into her mother's chamber, the innermost room of grace. In Acts 20:32 Paul wrote, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." The bride is complete in her husband because she's taken all the Word of His grace. The Holy Spirit ministers only of Christ and gives us all things that pertain to him. We are blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavens in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Jesus was always there, for our Lord never leaves us. We may miss the sense of his presence when we shift our focus off him or try to do things our way, but He is never far from us. He never forsakes us, even in a fitful bed of our own making. Even when we are not faithful, he abides faithful. It is in him that we live and move and have our being. For a little while the Shulamite went on her own strength out among those who did not know him like she did. They could not tell her where he was. But he reappears, and all is well. In verse 7 as she comes out of the wilderness, it is *his* bed that is magnified. She is the masterpiece of his grace and she rests with him where he is magnified.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE KING'S FIRST DESCRIPTION OF THE SHULMITE

After she returned to fellowship, King Solomon gives his first description of her in chapter four. He begins in verse 1 by noting "Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair." He looks upon his work of grace and finds her beautiful, comely and pleasant. He has seen her like this from the beginning. Now it is time to tell her.

In the first five verses King Solomon brings forth an eight-fold eulogy of what has made this relationship with her so satisfying to him. These qualities, even though they are described in the physical, are all characteristics of her heart. He begins in verse 1 with her eyes, which he likens to doves' eyes. Doves speak of the Holy Spirit. To have doves' eyes is to see as the Holy Spirit sees. To have that discernment, one must have the Holy Spirit indwelling. Once Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, he was led of the Spirit and his ministry was in the power of the Holy Ghost. These Spirit-filled dove's eyes are enlightened with the eternal vision God has for us in the high calling to be the Wife of the Lamb.

Next he speaks of her hair, which is full and long. In the natural, "if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (1 Corinthians 11:15). This covering of the hair indicates humble submission to her husband, who is her head (1 Corinthians 11:3). It is given to her to magnify his glory and strength.

Her hair is likened to a flock of goats in Mount Gilead. The goats of Mount Gilead were particular long-haired climbers. They could jump from crag to crag because they had swift and sure feet. As noted in Psalm 18:33, "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet and setteth me upon my high places." By grace she has gone to the place of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. She will appear on a mountain someday as the Holy City, New Jerusalem descending from heaven and having the glory of God.

In verse 2 the Beloved describes her teeth that allow her to chew the strong meat of the Word. They are likened to a flock of sheep. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and his sheep hear his voice. God the Father encourages us in Mark 9:7 and Luke 9:35, "This is my beloved Son, hear him."

Teeth are used to grind food, to bring out flavor, to begin to break the food down so it can be digested. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Cor. 3:2). Our spiritual teeth rightly divide the Word of God and make each nugget precious. Strong teeth are needed to chew strong meat, which belongs to them that are of full age (Heb. 5:14). These teeth are clean and white, evenly trimmed and fully developed. Every tooth is in its proper place in the mouth and fully serviceable.

Her teeth have come up from the washing, fully cleansed. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-27 of the love of a husband for his wife and of the washing of water by the Word. Every single tooth bears twins and not a single one is barren. They are fruitful in the double portion of grace. This is what happens when we eat strong meat and allow the Word to grow us up.

In verse 3 his thoughts of love toward her continue. Her lips are likened unto a thread of scarlet which speaks of the shed blood of Christ and of the atoning work of Calvary. The wonderful truth of salvation is exemplified in the life of Rahab the harlot who let down a scarlet thread through a window and thus allowed the grace of God to save some spies and her family in Joshua chapter 2. The union of Rahab and Salmon yielded a rich harvest, as Boaz was the fruit of that union. He was the kinsman/redeemer, the husband of Ruth. The grace of God brought Rahab from a prostitute to a fruit-bearing vessel of the royalty of the ages.

Lips refer to speech, and it is noted that her speech is comely, which magnifies the fruit of her heart. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. This Song started with "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." His kisses are most fruitful, and we respond with praise, the fruit of our lips giving glory to him (Hebrews 13:15). Her speech is always comely, seasoned with grace. It edifies others and builds them up.

Next he notes her temples, which speak of the cheeks and also the seat of the mind. Her cheeks are happy and blooming with the flush of vibrant health. Her mind is settled on him; it is his mind, that mind that knows that in all things he has the pre-eminence. It is not a mind tossed to and fro. It is a mind that meditates on the things of Christ. She has ceased from her own works and rests in every thought taken captive by her lover.

It is above all a fruitful mind, as it is compared to a piece of pomegranate within the locks. Locks are like a veil, a covered place. Because Christ is her head, within her locks her mind is a fruitful garden. Hers is the mind of Christ and filled with every seed of possibility in him. It is worth noting that it is a *piece* of pomegranate, indicating *to cleave open, or slice, to plow a furrow.* God plows deep to bring forth the most precious fruitful ones. Our minds become fruitful when we take in the Word of God.

Verse 4 is full of battle language, for the Wife of the Lamb is a lover but she is also a warrior. Her neck is noted as like unto the tower David built for an armory. Armory towers are look-out towers and also storehouses of weapons. The Word is the sharp two-edged sword that is never dull. It is the weapon we use to do battle with Satan.

On her neck hang a thousand bucklers, all mighty men. A buckler is a type of shield. Often shields were hung for ornaments on walls (Ezekiel 27:11). This speaks of victory and its spoils. The tower of David with a thousand shields and mighty warriors is a testimony to the battles fought and the victories won. What a decoration upon the halls of the victors' castles are the weapons of warfare! We are well-equipped with the Word of God to fight any battle that comes our way.

In verse 5 he speaks of her breasts. They represent a double portion in that she has been fed and has grown up on grace and truth and she can now feed others. Mature saints provide nourishment to babes in Christ as they are able to teach and instruct them; as such the roes feeding among the lilies indicate the growing condition of believers. In Acts 20:28 Paul wrote of taking heed for ourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made us overseers, to feed the church of God.

In verse 10 Solomon again calls her the double-portion names of sister and spouse. He speaks to the her as his spouse – and King Jesus speaks to us as his spouse now. We are married. He tells us what we know, and he expresses how we love him. Revelation 4:9 shows the four living ones, the bride. The twenty-four elders exclaim that he (Jesus) is worthy to receive her, his glory. "All things are created for thy pleasure" – for his *intimate* pleasure. Nothing is more intoxicating to Jesus than his wife. He magnifies her love; not her works or her looks, but her love. She has gone with him into complete grace and he is ravished with the glory she has become to him. The love she has for him is radiant to him as it flows from her heart in joy.

The same eulogy she gave of her Beloved in Song of Solomon 1:2-3 is now given to her by him. It shows the transformation that has been wrought in her through her fellowship with the one who is altogether lovely. The Christ-life in her is a sweet-smelling savor unto God.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE SHULAMTE'S SECOND DESCRIPTION OF HER KING

At the outset of this chapter the Shulamite had another brief departure from the king as she became caught up in her appearance and self-righteousness. Solomon asked her to open to him but she became preoccupied with how she could fix herself up for him. By the time she opened to him he had withdrawn himself. He wanted fellowship with her, not an accounting of her works. This is a real relationship and he wanted her affection. We are admonished in Philippians 3:14 to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We can press heavy weights to try to get spiritual muscle or we can press our Beloved close to our heart and cherish and love him in intimate fellowship.

The latter part of chapter five contains the Shulamite's description of her Beloved in response to the daughters of Jerusalem pressing her to describe how and why her Beloved is more than any other man. In verse nine the daughters of Jerusalem acknowledge her beauty, but wonder what she sees in the king. Their question is only because they don't know the king intimately as she does. She has a personal relationship with her Beloved; they only know him as a man among many men. Many Christians know little or nothing of the intimate relationship they can have with Jesus. The saints represented by the daughters of Jerusalem will be guests at the wedding in the air. God has chosen and called us, but we have a choice to make of whether we will endure the sufferings and jointly rule and reign with Jesus as his wife.

In verses 10-16 the Shulamite extols the testimony of the faithfulness of her Beloved as she pours forth her heart of love for him by describing him in vivid detail with a nine-fold description. Throughout this song the king and the Shulamite describe each other. When they do it is like looking into a mirror. They each mention the same parts of their bodies. We can also describe our Beloved. The word of his grace has built us up to his full stature. We know how he sees us, and we see him – our spouse – the same way

She begins in verse 10 by describing him in totality: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." The white noted in this verse is *dazzling, glowing, bright; to be clear as if shone on by the sun.* White speaks of holiness, which is Christ's beauty and his chief charm. It radiates from him and captivates those who truly love him. He is also ruddy, or red, the color of blood and of vibrant health. We love with the blood and are enamored of the Lamb and the power in his blood to save us all the way to salvation with eternal glory. In the blood is the grace of God that He gave His Son to become sin for mankind to die, be resurrected, and ascend to the right hand of God. And then the Holy Ghost was sent to lead us into all truth. The ultimate purpose in God giving His Son is to raise up a wife for him. Just like the cherubim who see only the blood on the mercy seat as their wings stretch over it and touch each other, we are mesmerized with the blood of the Lamb.

In verse 11 she speaks of his head as the most-fine gold – gold that is hidden away in treasuries; precious; pure gold that has been refined. Gold speaks of deity in the Word of God. The head speaks of intelligence and of authority. Christ is the head of the Body, the church. He is a divine head for in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). Everything the body needs flows from his precious head. His thoughts are always for us, and his thoughts are backed by his authority.

She next notes that his locks are bushy, black as a raven. The black hair speaks of the thick hair of the Nazarites and of dedication and submission to the Lord as well as to vigorous manhood. Jesus submitted to his Father's will completely when he laid down his life for the redemption of mankind. He did this not while he was at a tender age; nor was he wearied with years of toil. In the prime of his life Jesus put away sin and brought forth a new creation from the grave. He will never change from that youthful, vigorous state.

She describes his most lovely eyes as “the eyes of doves” in verse 12. Dove’s eyes always speak of the tender and gentle eyes of Holy Spirit. He always sees us in perfection, never with condemnation, but with praise. These are all-seeing and all-knowing eyes, eyes that know all about us, what we are, what we need, what is good for us.

These eyes of doves are by the rivers of waters which symbolizes the abundance of the anointing of the Spirit that Jesus received, “for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (John 3:34). Jesus searched and saw by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. He saw nothing with a fleshly eye; he beheld as his Father beheld. He looked at every object and providence in the light of scripture. He did not judge by the seeing of his human eyes but by the Holy Spirit. His wife does the same.

These eyes are washed with the pure milk of the Word. They are clean and clear and sparkling, refreshed in knowing the full counsel of God. Through the Word, all the counsel of God was revealed to Christ by the Holy Spirit. And that same Holy Spirit reveals the full counsel of the Word of God to us today through Paul’s gospel.

That his eyes were set in fullness means that Christ possessed a full vision of every object and a full understanding of all things. Even as a man, he could see the end from the beginning because he saw by the Holy Spirit. These eyes are heart-eyes that look not upon the outward appearance but upon the heart.

The Shulamite has so far described her Beloved’s head, his hair and his eyes. Now she comes to his cheeks and lips, the last two of five characteristics having to do with his head. To the Shulamite there is nothing more beautiful than his glorious face. This is her first love. As she beholds his glory, she is transformed into his very image.

The cheeks represent health and vitality and also indicate a person’s character. The cheeks of the Beloved speak of beauty and a sweet-smelling face. The very glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). These cheeks burst with life and health; they are vibrant and rosy like flowers in full bloom in a lush garden. They are noted as “towers of perfume” and “banks of sweet herbs.” Spices were often crushed before they emitted a sweet smell. Jesus willingly gave his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair of his beard during his crucifixion. The fragrance of his suffering pours out life to her. She finds a flavorful and abundant life in him. In his presence is fullness of joy.

Next are his lips, which she describes as like unto lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. There is a particular richness, softness, and sweetness to a lily that makes it charmingly beautiful. The myrrh-like scent is exquisitely sweet; the very appearance of lily-like lips must therefore be exceedingly attractive and expressive. They are the outward expression of intense inward affection.

This Song began with the kisses of his mouth, the Word of God imputed to us. She is most familiar with these kisses. His words drop as dew in her heart, like gentle rain upon the grass. “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deuteronomy 32:1-3). His lips drop purpose and doctrine for her and satisfy her every need.

Our Beloved has come for our words, and only his kisses will bring forth lips like lilies. The Word of his grace is all glorious. It drops myrrh (sufferings) but the sufferings become the very things to pant after. Paul gloried in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him (2 Corinthians 12:9).

By verse 14 the Shulamite has forgotten about her own myrrh-dripping hands. Her gaze now falls upon her Beloved's golden hands of strength and beauty. These hands have the power to work – and to war. These hands were nailed to a cross for her. They are strong to save and keep her. They are expansive hands that stretched out the heavens, yet now they tenderly encircle her.

His hands are particularly described as "gold rings set with the beryl." Gold is royalty, and these rings indicate wide bands that speak to his all-sufficient power and declare the eternity of that power, for a ring has no beginning and no end. The word rings comes from a root word meaning *folding, turning; a circuit.* They also are indicative of a rod or an axle of a wheel. His love turns us toward him. In these golden hands she sees his leading and his desire for her to rule and to reign with Him.

The beryl announces the flinty endurance of Christ's service and the unfailing care and comfort for his own. Naturally speaking, it is a stone of great durability and transparently beautiful, usually of a yellow hue. It was the hardest stone for cutting known to the ancients. Its root meaning is *breaking and subjection*. What great subjection to the will of his Father Jesus displayed upon Calvary as his hands were nailed to a cross!

Then she gives the description of his belly – that place of his deepest affections and the seat of most fervent love. Ivory is bright, literally a *smooth, shining, gleaming workmanship*. Beautifully scented garments come from the ivory palaces (Psalm 45:8). Solomon built himself a throne of ivory (1 Kings 10:18-20).

His ivory belly is overlaid with sapphires. The meaning of a sapphire is *to number, to take account of.* It comes from a root word that means *to inscribe or write; to scratch, scrape; polish.* How deeply are we engraved upon our Savior's most inward affections! How great the grace of God to inscribe us upon our Bridegroom's heart!

In verse 15 she speaks of his legs, those members of the body that walk and run. She notes them as pillars of marble, which speak of Christ's firm, perfect and eternal standing. These legs are strong and immovable; they support and strengthen. They are set in sockets of "fine gold," which she has mentioned three times in reference to his head, his hands, and now his legs. Christ as God is the socket that makes a divine standing perfect and secure. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

She continues in her description to note his countenance "as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." The mountains of Lebanon were most picturesque, the highest and grandest of any for miles. Their perpetual snow-covered peaks speak of his eternal existence and the incomparable purity of glory.

The way he looks at us with loving approval is white as Lebanon. His look of love to us is as excellent as magnificent, tall, fragrant cedar trees. His love gives us confidence and builds us up. The tall cedars which graced the mountains of Lebanon declare the excellence of the effulgent face of our Lord as the Son of Man, our coming Bridegroom.

Verse 16 is the last stroke of the artist's brush of this wonderful nine-fold picture of the Beloved. It is the way a wife sees her husband. She speaks once again of his mouth. Everything he has to say is precious to her. Everything that proceeds out of his mouth is for her wellbeing and nourishes her to the full stature of Christ. As the lips are the expression of affection and the confirmation thereof by its utterances, so she was not content with only the touch of love. She must hear him speak.

The Shulamite began her description with her king's head and moved down through his whole body with its different members and returned from where she started. It is the same with us and our Lord. We first admire his spiritual understanding. We are stilled by the discernment of his lovely but piercing eyes. Then we are carried away with his kind comfort and strong ministries, the greatness and sublimity of his Person and the steadiness of his eternal standing. We are awed by his countenance of glory and splendor. Finally, his mouth conquers us completely as he speaks tender, soothing words of warmest comfort. He is enough for he is altogether lovely. There is no imperfection in him. He is perfect from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet.

She has surrendered to him fully and her answer to the daughters of Jerusalem is complete: "This is my Beloved, and this is my friend." She has vividly described how he alone satisfies her completely. She has found him to be wonderful company. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother and she can share her dreams and hopes and desires with him.

Our husband Jesus desires the same of us – to behold his excellence and to be swallowed up with his perfection and beauty. He needs our undivided love. A longing for his personal presence is far sweeter than any other charm and our fervent love to him is far more than our most strenuous labor.

CHAPTER SIX: LOVE FULFILLED

After the Shulamite's glowing report of her Beloved in chapter five, chapter six opens with the daughters of Jerusalem wanting to seek the king with her. They ask where he has gone. They want to know him the way she knows him. The testimony we have is who our Lord is to us personally. It's not just about the knowledge of him, but what the heart knows and reveals about him.

She tells the daughters her Beloved has gone down into his garden – the garden that is the heart of the Wife of the Lamb. It is the garden of their fruitful life together, mutually shared and enjoyed.

He once again describes her hair, her teeth, and her temples. He has noted these characteristics before, but he can never tire of describing her beauty. In verse 5 he says "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." He is completely ravished with a single glance from her. The Lord Jesus is the same toward his wife who has counted the excellent knowledge of him worthy of losing all else. The love in her is intensely captivating. She has taken of his glory fully and she radiantly glows. Her value is beyond compare to him. He is very much man – the slain man, the man who gave his life for her.

At the close of the chapter, the daughters cry out, "Return, return, O Shulamite**;** return, return, that we may look upon thee." They are looking for her on the earth, but she is not to be found for she has been raptured away with the Lord. She is now with her Beloved in the bridal chamber.

This is a foreshadowing of what will happen once bridal saints have been taken up with the Lord. Saints still here on earth will bemoan the loss of fellowship with those who are no longer here. Once in heaven, there will be a tear wiped from the eyes of those that utter this. They will know they missed the bridal rapture.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE KING'S DESCRIPTION OF THE SHULAMITE AFTER THE CONSUMMATION

Chapter seven begins the time of the honeymoon, where faith is made sight and all is face-to-face with our husband.

The relationship between a husband and wife is intimate. We are fruitful *now* because we know our Beloved as a husband and wife know each other. Our marriage to Jesus has not yet been consummated but we live it in complete intimacy with him now. We partake and we rule and reign now.

The king describes the Shulamite as a palace in the next six verses. The bride is a city, New Jerusalem. Without her there is no kingdom. His description of her is heavenly now.

He has already described her but now she is alone with him and his words are only for her ears. These are the first words he speaks after the consummation with him in the heavens. They will spend the rest of their lives together telling and showing each other over and over again how much they love each other.

The king speaks and the first five verses of chapter seven are a ten-fold revealing of the intimate details of everything she is to him. The number ten is the number of responsibility according to ability. She took all he gave her and now she is grown up in his fullness. She is only found in his righteousness; she is a work of grace alone. He loves that her confidence is only in him.

Every other time he has described her it's been from her head to her feet. Grace first comes down to us, but then the call to us is to rise in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This time he begins his description of her at her feet and works his way up to her head.

The king first notes her beautiful feet. Her walk of faith with him is beautiful to him. She has allowed the truth to be her everything and she walks in the truth. She carries his good news with her wherever she goes. Indeed, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7) How fitting that her feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15) as her name means *the perfect peaceful one.*

He then moves to the joints of her thighs. How rich the supplying of every joint as Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:16. These joints are likened to jewels, polished ornaments of faith tried in the fire. The perfect walk depends upon perfection in the joints of the thighs. These joints keep the body moving together. They must be well-oiled to function. The Holy Ghost is the oil that makes the body move together in complete harmony. Her jewel-like thighs allow a perfect, firm, calm, steady walk.

Verse 2 details her navel and her belly. Her navel is filled with the Spirit as a well-rounded bowl, perfect in circumference with no mixture or impurity. She refuses the intoxication of the fleshly vine that produces fleshly wine. Her entire body has been emptied of self and filled with him. She has drank deeply of the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit. The joy of her Beloved is full in her. She operates in full strength of pure wine, that effervescent Holy Spirit that bubbles up in her life.

Her belly as "a heap of wheat set about with lilies" is beautiful picture of a stack of grain in an open field studded with shining lilies. This speaks to her productive fruitfulness and is indicative of the abundant harvest her life produces. Her life is fruitful because she fed on the strong meat of the Word. She has fed

from him, and now he will drink and feed of her. She is his personal cup and he delights to drink of her. She is full and overflowing with love, and she fills him. The ecstasy he drinks of her is endless.

The Beloved continues his praise of her spiritual maturity and fruitfulness as shown in her breasts in verse 3. These breasts are still noted as young twin roes, indicative of love that is always young and passionate with the joy of the Holy Ghost, full of grace and truth.

In verse 4 he first speaks of her neck, that place of tender strength that supports the head and connects it to the rest of the body. The neck holds up Christ as the Head of the body with refinement, purity, and gentle grace. This neck was known before as a battle lookout – but it is no longer spoken of in battle terms because the good fight of faith has been won. The neck is now described as a tower of ivory which speaks of strength, majestic beauty, and polished strength.

His description of her eyes "like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim" is detailed and rich. The word fishpools comes from a root word in the Hebrew that means *to bend or kneel down; to bless.* In the Hebrew, Heshbon means *reasoning, understanding, a stronghold.* In the city's wall was a gate named Bathrabbim, or *daughter of a multitude.* Near the gate were two renowned fish pools whose clear water sparkled perpetually. The eyes of the Shulamite are likened to these clear sparkling pools, especially when gazing upon her Beloved. She has taken the place of humble obedience and now her Beloved exalts her. Previously her eyes were behind the locks, behind her hair. Now they are wide open because the vail has been taken away and the lovers are face to face. These eyes are dove's eyes, enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

As the two fish pools were at the entrance into Heshbon, so the eyes are in the head - the seat of reason and the stronghold of the old creation. But fish pool-like eyes suggest a spiritual grasp of divine things that make Heshbon productive. They are focused on "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Her nose is likened to a tower of Lebanon. The nose speaks of discernment, the seventh of nine spiritual gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Spiritual ones look into the secrets of the Lord by having their noses in the Word and by searching the scriptures in dependence on the Holy Spirit. The tower speaks of elevation. Her eyes have the vision of strength that does not perish. As the Holy City she is the gate to a multitude for when she is taken up then can come the rest of the church. She is why heaven is opened in the first place.

Lebanon means purity, the glorious whiteness that grace works in a life. There is grace for forgiveness, grace to bear the thorns, grace for the down-settings and infirmities in our lives. Grace is what draws a heart to hear Paul's gospel and rejoice in the Beloved's precious proposal. A mind stayed upon grace is a mind that doesn't even think about the thorn or infirmity anymore. The peace that passes all understanding floods the mind that dwells on the power of grace as it realizes that thorns are to be respected in the divine work of humbling.

In verse 5 we come to the description of her head, which is likened unto Carmel. Carmel means *a park, a place of order and beauty; the most choice; chief; a fruitful field.* Her head is a fruitful field filled with the knowledge of the Beloved and with his loveliness and worth. She has yoked her mind with the mind of her Beloved, which has brought oneness and intimacy between them. By the power of the Holy Spirit she has grasped his strength, humility, knowledge, truth and wisdom – all attributes of one who reigns. For us to even begin to go after the things of God, He has to give us His mind – the understanding of His plan,

purpose, power, provision and passion. Without that understanding, we won't ever have the vision, and without the vision we won't feed. And without feeding we won't grow and become fruitful.

Hers is a prolific mind that is quick to perceive, to understand, and to see things in their right perspective. Order and symmetry enable her to have a rich store of thoughts and facts. As bridal saints, we have this mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). We accept God's ways and we are able to rightly divide the truth because our minds are storehouses full of God's precious Word.

He next speaks of her hair, which is a glory and a covering, an ornament upon her head that illustrates royalty. A wealth of flowing hair on a woman's head is her beauty, her glory. In chapter 4 her hair was like a flock of goats. But now her hair is purple, the color of royalty showing her queenly fitness. Her covering is now her crown as she jointly rules and reigns.

The King is elated by her excellence and fruitfulness to the point that he is held in the galleries – captivated in the charming ringlets and curls of her glory. He is held prisoner to her beauty, the finished work she now is as she stands clothed in his righteousness.

As he beheld her ten entrancing features, he was moved in verse 6 to exclaim, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" He was carried away with the object of his affection as he saw her in her entirety. Every member and function of her body was perfect. There was no blemish in her.

The Beloved then sums up all the sweet titles he has given her previously in two words: "O love." This love is a very specific love – the love that is only found between a husband and his wife. We are the Lamb's wife and our union is with Christ the man, the slain Lamb. The ultimate reason Jesus became a man was so that he could have a wife.

The Beloved now notes her stature as like to a palm tree in verse 7. In the Word of God the palm tree is *stately, erect, and upright.* The palm in this passage is the fruit-bearing date palm that grows in the arid mid-East desert. Date palms can be so heavy with fruit that they bend almost to the point of breaking. Those who are running to win Christ are beautifully laden with the precious fruit that comes from suffering together with Him.

He continues on in, speaking of her fruitfulness as he likens her breasts to clusters of grapes. Her breasts previously have been described as two young roes. But now they are described as grapes, something he feasts upon and possesses. Here her breasts speak of full maturity, and the grapes of wine, the joy of the Spirit. This precious life is full of the joy of the Lord. And it's not just grapes, but *clusters* of grapes. Her breasts are abundant and overflowing with refreshment. She is able to nurture and feed others as the fruit in her is his life fully matured in her.

She has apprehended him and her stature and maturity give him pleasure. She has substance. She has fully apprehended grace, humbled herself and he has exalted her to the point that he must ascend and go up to her. Ephesians 1:19-23 speaks of this height of exalting.

He is engulfed in the shadow of her stature and her strength as he moves closer to her. He takes her into his possession, seizing her. She returns his embrace and in doing so brings him great delight. She is a double portion, full of his fruitfulness. His reward is her purity and dedication.

He is captivated by the smell of the fruit that she has acquired from dwelling with him. She has his mind of complete obedience to the Father, the mind that rejoices in the will of God, the mind that is joyful in all

things. She diffuses the perfume of his knowledge everywhere, a fragrance that results from knowing him. She has apprehended the overcoming grace to press on and grow. She is the full manifestation of Christ, the very fragrance of his life.

Verse nine is the culmination of his description of her. The best wine is the fullness of the Sprit – the joy, the love, the strength, and the passion – that has been hers from the very beginning.
Her tastes are only for the best, for him and all that concerns him. He is the one who has revived and refreshed her life. She has seen and tasted of His goodness as she has drunk deeply of his sweet wine kisses.

In this final eulogy of his wife, Solomon expresses what she is to him to others. The Holy Spirit has caused her mouth to speak his words and to agree with what he says about her in his betrothal. It has caused an awakening in others who will also proclaim his glory. These are the Old Testament overcoming saints who have passed before us. This is the time of the exalting of the Lamb's Wife. Without her, the full overcomers in the Old Testament cannot be made perfect (Heb. 11:4). Their full resurrection cannot come until after the wedding in the air.

Verse 10 is a highlight, a pinnacle and fulfillment of this most intimate love story as she exclaims, "I am my beloved's, and His desire is toward me."

Previously the Shulamite made two other statements about her relationship to the king:

"My Beloved is mine and I am His; he feedeth among the lilies" (Song 2:16).

"I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lilies" (Song 6:3).

In those statements her thoughts were still consumed with herself and where he fed. But in 7:10 she arrives at a new revelation as she has lost sight of all but him. She can speak only of her Husband. She gave him not only priority, but the entire ownership of love. He completely possesses her and he is her prize possession. She has come to the complete, exact and perfect knowledge of how fully he is for her as his desire and his longing and craving for her is ultimately realized. It ascends, lifting and leading her up and away. It causes her to be exalted, to be offered, just as he was.

We say this as we take our place in what we have believed. Now in sight we rule and reign with Jesus because his first love is our first desire. It's not just what he thinks of us, but what he *desires* of us. We bring him glory and power. We are confident in what the grace of God has completed in us.

Verse 11 ushers in the honeymoon. The wife of the Lamb will call him to go with her into the field and lodge in the villages as they walk in unity with a divine purpose to fulfill the restoration of the nation of Israel. The field represents the world (Matthew 13:38) and the vineyards represent Israel (Song 7:12). This is the time of Revelation chapter 6 when the vials and seals will be poured out by Jesus and his wife. This is during the tribulation and specifically toward Israel during the time that the devil has been unleashed and will try to destroy the Jews. The time of Israel's restoration draws near when Christ will reveal himself to the nation. The judgment of the world and the restoration of Israel will magnify King Jesus. As his wife, we help bring this glory to him.

CHAPTER EIGHT: LOVE IN THE HEIGHTS

This chapter is about Israel as the wife of God the Father. She is redeemed and brought back as the faithful wife. She was not faithful to God, but He always stayed faithful to her. Now she returns to Him. The view we have is from the point of what has been done. The grapes of chapter seven are now ready.

The first seven verses concern those who will be translated in a subsequent rank after the bride is taken. They address Jesus as their brother for that is how they will know him – as a sibling, not as a spouse. These saints cry out for milk because they did not take in the strong meat of the Word that would grow them up and mature them. They did not experience the kiss of the lovers and they did not enter fully in to all the abundance of instruction Paul gave for the perfecting of the saints. This group wishes they had listened to the Shulamite and pursued the Lord like she did. They have tremendous regret now that she is gone; they want those kisses of his Word that they not be despised.

In verse eight the attention of the King and his wife turns to their "little sister" – these ones who were immature and who were not ready for marriage. This little sister is typified by the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:4 who left their first love. This is the innumerable multitude, those that will wave palm and sing "salvation to our God." Their undeveloped condition and the cause of it are rooted in the fact that this group prioritized other things above Christ. Their heart was not wholly toward him. They were distracted, caught in snares and sleeping when they should have been awake and alert, watching for his coming.

Verse nine describes a group referred to as a "little sister." These saints are not the first rank full overcomers. They are saved people who love the Lord and theirs is a wall of silver, which always speaks of redemption. The boards of cedar speak of the fragrant humanity of Christ. These saints were from a tree that was cut down, the man Christ Jesus who was cut down for us. Redemption and salvation have come by Christ – as a man – to all men who will accept him as Savior.

The closing verses of this most wondrous Song are forward-looking. The 'companions' in verse 13 are God's first-chosen of Israel. They are attentive to His voice now; they give heed and listen to Him. Verse 14 speaks of making haste to the mountains of spices. The vineyard of Jesus and his wife is full of the spices that they have produced together, including the restoration of the nation of Israel to God the Father. All has been won by grace in the heights of the mountains of the joint sufferings of Jesus and his wife where all the spices flow out richly.

God's interests and His dominion are heaven-wide and world-wide. The fullness of redemption includes both the Wife of the Lamb (heavenly bride) and the nation of Israel as the Wife of God the Father (earthly bride). The Wife of the Lamb will have an inheritance distinct from the earth-dwelling Wife of God, as well as from other companies of believers. She will have her own vineyard and share in all the interests and honors of her husband.

CHAPTER SIX

ESTHER
The Orphan Girl Who Became Queen

"And the king loved Esther above all the women,
and she obtained grace and favor
in his sight more than all the virgins;
so that he set the royal crown upon her head…"

~ Esther 2:17

By the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we catch another glimpse of the Wife of the Lamb in the story of Esther. Unlike the other bride/wife characters in the Bible, Esther was a Jew, not a Gentile. What a wonderful encouragement in how limitless our God is. He is not a respecter of persons; His will is that all be saved and come to a complete and exact knowledge of His Son Jesus. His ultimate will is for all of His children to take the throne and rule and reign with His Son forever.

Esther's story is another facet of the marvelous unfolding of bridal truth and riches. The setting is following the release of the Israelites from 70 years of captivity in Babylon. Surprisingly, not all the Israelites returned to Jerusalem. Only a small company of those in captivity availed themselves to the privilege and opportunity of returning to their homeland. Esther was one of those few.

The first two chapters of the book of Esther focus on the journey of the Wife of the Lamb. The main characters include: Esther, King Ahasuerus, Hegai, Queen Vashti, and Mordecai. Esther represents the Wife of the Lamb and King Ahasuerus portrays Jesus. Vashti represents those who had a place of reigning, but didn't prioritize Jesus as their pre-eminent love, much as the church of Ephesus in Revelation chapter 3. Mordecai was Esther's cousin and is a type of the apostle Paul. Hegai was one of the king's chamberlains and "the keeper of the women." He is a type of the Holy Spirit who, along with her cousin Mordecai, prepared Esther to go before the king.

Esther was an orphan who lost both her parents at a young age. Close to the end of the second chapter it is noted that she was "the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter." Like so many of the ones who prefigure the bride for Jesus, Esther didn't attain the throne because of some royal lineage. She attained it by grace and grace alone. Her mother's name is never mentioned, but her father's name means *father of endurance.* This tells us she came from the spiritual lineage of those who endure hardness as good soldiers. She was a lover, but she was also a fighter who fought for her people.

THE DE-THRONING OF QUEEN VASHTI

The story opens in the third year of the reign of King Ahasuerus who ruled a vast empire that included 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom in Shushan the palace. Shushan is translated *lily,* a flower of rare and delicate white purity. It is also translated as *Shoshannim,* which is the subtitle of the 45th Psalm that sings the praises of the queen who was all glorious within and who stood resplendent upon the king's right hand in gold of Ophir, the rarest gold. Shushan the palace was a special place, fit for special celebrations.

Three feasts are mentioned in the first two chapters of this story. The first two are noted in the opening verses of chapter one while the third feast is mentioned toward the close of chapter two. Feasts were times of celebration and happiness. In Biblical times they often lasted for days or weeks. The three feasts mentioned in Esther's story are very possibly the three feasts held in Jerusalem that male Jews journeyed to each year as noted in Deuteronomy 16:16: "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles." Each of these feasts has progressive dispensational significance.

The first feast the king made lasted for 180 days, or six months. The purpose of this feast was to show the king's princes, nobles, and servants the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty. It was a feast that involved many, many people and lasted for a long time. This feast may have been the Feast of Passover which is a spring feast along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Firstfruits – all types of redemption and resurrection. This feast possibly speaks to salvation, which has been provided for by the death of Christ and his subsequent resurrection.

After that feast ended, at some point in time King Ahasuerus made another feast. This second feast only lasted for seven days and was only for those who were in the court of the garden of the king's palace. It is described in much more detail. There is a shift between the first and second feasts from generalization to specifics and from large crowds to a more intimate gathering in the palace courtyard.

This second feast could be likened to the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) as at this feast there was "royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king" (Esther1:7). After 33 years of living among men, Jesus explained to his disciples before his earthly departure how He had to die in order to send/give the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is like a joyous, gushing fountain of the best wine. How perfect that King Ahasuerus (type of Jesus) gave his people wine – joy in the Holy Spirit – in abundance at this feast. This royal wine was served "in vessels of gold [the vessels being diverse one from another]" (Esther 1:7). Every soul is individual and precious. 1 Corinthians 15:41-42 speaks of our resurrection as unique individuals: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory." This feast represents the age we live in now – the church age, the age of grace and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

On the seventh day of the second feast "when the king's heart was merry with wine" he commanded his seven chamberlains that served in his presence to bring Queen Vashti before him so everyone could admire her.

But Vashti had made her own feast for the women in the royal house and refused to come at the kind's command (Esther 1:9).

Vashti was a Queen, and as such she was the king's wife. Sadly, she was a wife who refused her husband's command to come forth. This cost her greatly.

Vashti is a type of the apostate church that for the most part has closed its ears to the Word of God. She is like those Paul wrote of in 2 Timothy 3:5 who refuse sound doctrine, who "profess a form of godliness but deny the power thereof." Vashti and the women in the royal house are a type of those who put their own interests above those of the Lord Jesus and their relationship with the lover of their souls. The time has come "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Queen Vashti's refusal to come forth greatly angered King Ahasuerus. It was a dishonor to a king for his Queen to not come forth when called. He called for his seven princes (wise men) to give him counsel as to how to handle the matter. One of the princes, Memucan, answered the king that not only had Vashti done wrong to the king, but also to all the people throughout the king's provinces. As a Queen, Vashti set an example for others throughout the kingdom. Memucan knew this and further noted that her behavior would serve to defile the other women that they would despise their own husbands. Our own behavior is seen and known by others. If we are to rule and reign with Jesus in the days to come, we are called to be examples in our living today. Paul wrote of how our lives are epistles known and read of all (2 Corinthians 3:2).

Memucan continued, suggesting that a royal commandment go forth from the king to all in the kingdom advising that Vashti was no longer welcome in the king's presence. He then suggested that her estate be given to another who was better (more fit to rule) than she. This course of action pleased the king and the other princes, and letters were sent out to all the king's provinces (Esther 1:16-22).These actions amounted to the de-throning of Queen Vashti.

THE PROCESS OF PURIFICATION

Chapter two opens with the wrath of the king appeased, his servants ministering to him, and suggesting that a number of fair young maidens be sought for him so he could choose a new Queen. Immediately the selected young maidens were to be in the custody of Hegai, the king's chamberlain and "the keeper of the women." A keeper guards and watches over others. Hegai is a type of the Holy Spirit who watches over us - and as we will see in the case of Esther, brings us speedily those things we require to make us the readied wife of Jesus.

In chapter two the theme of purification is not only prominent, it is personal. There a physical progression in the gathering of the fair young virgins from Shushan the palace (the whole place) to the house of the women (more intimate place) to the custody of Hegai the King's chamberlain (one-on-one relationship). The things they took for their purification were personal to each maiden as each went through a process of purifying before she could even approach the king.

The word 'purification' in the Hebrew literally means *a scouring soap or perfumery for the bath, to cleanse; a (thing for) purifying.* It comes from a root word that means *to polish, by implication to sharpen; to rinse; to be bright*. Naturally speaking these 'things for purification' would have included perfumed soaps and cleansers used in bathing. In Esther's time the tradition of the mikveh would have been in place. The mikveh was a ceremonial cleansing bath Jewish brides did four days before their wedding. The mikveh required full immersion in water. Its purpose was to cleanse completely. It was a part of the transition and separation of a young woman from the status of single to married. Some Jewish brides-to-be perform the mikveh today. But the true reality for Christians (whether Jew or not) is beyond ceremonial. It is deeply spiritually significant.

In Esther 2:9 this becomes personal to Esther, as Hegai "speedily gave her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her." We must understand that the things Hegai gave Esther for purification *already belonged to her*. She just had to yield to grace and apprehend them. This is true for us today also. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that God our Father has already blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. God is a complete supplier and furnisher. We already have every blessing we need to win Christ. We just need to apprehend them.

These "things for purification" had to do with two important themes: *cleansing* and *sanctification*, or setting apart.

Naturally speaking, we bathe to clean our bodies. When we bathe we are immersed in water; it covers us. Similarly, spiritually the washing of water by the Word cleanses us. We are clean through the Word that completely covers us. The blood of Jesus took all our dirty sin and washed it away. Our encouragement in the Word is to grow up into the Wife for Jesus. Paul wrote of the sanctifying and cleansing in the husband/wife relationship with Christ in Ephesians 5:25-27 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Jesus, the Word, is the one who sanctifies and cleanses us that we might be presented to Him a glorious church without spot or wrinkle.

Cleansing notes a *purity of heart*, as well as *brightness and majesty*. The result of cleansing is that we are clear to the Light, bright and shining. Peter, the apostle to the Jews, wrote of the spiritual reality of cleansing, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, [see that ye] love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1Peter 1:22-23).

The second part of purification is sanctification, when a believer is separated from sin and to righteousness by Christ Jesus. Sanctification is accomplished by the Word of God (John 17:6-8) and by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:3-4). Jesus himself was sanctified by the Father (John 10:36). Paul prayed, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Sanctification results in holiness and in purification from the guilt and power of sin.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 spells out clearly "…God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." The glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is his wife. As God seeks a Wife for His Son, He calls us to "come out and be ye separate." He calls us to moral purity and to have no spot or wrinkle. This is only possible because of Jesus' atoning blood and through allowing the Holy Spirit through the Word of God to work effectually in our lives.

Enter now Mordecai (type of the Apostle Paul) into our story. He is the one who brings forth Esther, or as she is first called, Hadassah (v 7). The name Hadassah means *myrtle*. The myrtle tree is known for quick growth. The name Esther means *star*. How quickly the maiden Esther grew up into sun-star glory as she took all that Hegai had for her!

In Esther 2:7 she is noted as "fair and beautiful" – and not only in appearance, but also in grace as verse 9 reveals that she not only pleased Hegai but also obtained kindness of him. His attention to her was of an urgent nature. He saw her heart that desired the king. We show our desire for our king Jesus when we take the grace to run to win him, when we gladly accept what the Holy Spirit gives us to prepare us for our wedding day.

Hegai not only gave Esther everything necessary for her purification, he also gave her seven maidens from the king's house. That there were seven maidens is significant as seven indicates spiritual perfection. But even more noteworthy – add Esther to the group and there were eight young maidens in total. Eight is the number of new creation and the bride. This is the place Esther took beside her king. What exactly these maidens did is not stated, but they would have been close companions. God will often place a few

close to you too, ones that are seeking the hand of the king in marriage just like you are. Hegai placed Esther and her maidens in "the best place of the house of the women" (Esther 2:9). This small group of maidens was given preferential treatment as they prepared to go before the king. As compared to the vast entirety of Christendom, we are given the best place too as we heed the call of the bridegroom "Come away my love, my dove, my fair one."

Every maiden went before the king, but only after twelve months of preparation, which are detailed in Esther 2:12: "Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, [for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors, and with other things for the purifying of the women]."

'Purifications' in verse 12 is the only time this word appears in the Word of God. It means *a scraping; a rubbing; of the year of preparation for girls for the harem; bodily rubbing.* It comes from the root word for 'purification' used previously. The purifications (plural) are the actual actions of scraping and rubbing while the purification is the thing used to purify, i.e. soap. These actions of scraping and rubbing are likened to the trials and sufferings we are called to partake in with our Lord. They are deep works and often painful. But like gold tried in the fire, they are necessary to bring out the impurities – the works and tendencies of the flesh – so that we can allow God to remove them. Consider what great contradiction of sinners Christ endured against himself when he took all sin for all mankind for all time – past, present, and future.

These maidens were given six months with oil of myrrh and six months of sweet odors for a total of twelve months. Twelve is the number of divine rule – God's absolute rule in the heart. The oil of myrrh comes first. In the Bible, myrrh symbolizes suffering, which is a necessity for ruling and reigning with Christ. Paul wrote in Romans 8:17 "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Myrrh is bitter to the taste, but also has medicinal qualities similar to an astringent. Oil indicates *fatness, abundance,* and *fruitfulness*. Oil mixed together with spices such as myrrh were known as ointments. Ointments were rubbed into the skin in healing of wounds and/or as a perfume. The love of our bridegroom is this wonderful ointment to us. He is the balm in Gilead; our complete Healer. The Shulamite exclaimed in Song 1:3 "Because of the savor of thy good ointments, they name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

Next are the sweet odors, wonderful fragrance of spices. There is a cost to attain the lovely aroma, for the spices only emit their lovely scent when burned. Fiery trials are hot and our flesh tries at all costs to avoid them. Yet fire purges and cleanses. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13). We are called to draw near to God in full assurance of faith and to lay our all on the altar. That is a sweet aroma to God, the one who has ordered our steps to purify and refine us. The result of the fiery trials that try our faith is sweetness to he who loves us. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:13 that "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

Just like Esther, we are called to come before our king. Our 'work' is to simply allow grace to have her way, to let God finish the masterpiece He began. All is beautiful in Christ, our loving Savior and soon coming bridegroom. Fully yielded to him, our lives are a beautiful aroma that ascends to God the Father, who will someday soon give Jesus and his wife the throne. What a privilege is ours that we can breathe of

his scent, the sacrifice of our Beloved's very life that he gave freely for us. As we give our lives – our living bodies – as a sacrifice, he breathes of us also, and it is sweet to our Lord.

Verse 14 tells us that the maidens went in to the king's house in the evening and returned the following day. As this story is told from a Jewish perspective, it speaks of time and of Jewish traditions. For Jews, evening signals the beginning of the day. This would mean that the maidens went to the king's house at dawn. But for us, evening is the beginning of night. That the maidens were with the king during the dark night speaks to the comfort we have with Jesus during the night seasons of our lives. It is a time of cherishing and adoring the one our souls love, of drawing closer to him and allowing him to build up our most holy faith.

Verse 14 speaks of the women returning to a 'second house', to the custody of someone named Shaashgaz, who was another of the king's chamberlains. The name Shaashgaz means *servant of the beautiful.* This chamberlain served the women, but also served the king. The number two indicates sufficient witness and a double portion. This was yet another house, another separating in the process of preparation of the maidens. Just as there are many layers of purification and separation in this story there are many things God orders for our lives line upon line as we seek to win our bridegroom.

The final words of verse 14 note that the young maidens came in to the king no more except if he delighted in them called them by name. This delight was mutual between the maiden and the king, and it must be so in our lives as well. The Godhead delights in the mature Sons as they delight in Jesus and desire to marry him.

At this point the king knew the names of the ones who delighted in him. To know someone by name is personal. Consider that Mary Magdalene stood despairing at the entrance of the tomb of Jesus after he had risen from the grave. Upon seeing Jesus she initially thought him to be a gardener – until he called her by name. Then she realized who he was – her risen Lord and Savior. And for those who heed the high calling he is also bridegroom of our heart.

THE CORONATION OF QUEEN ESTHER

The pinnacle of these first two chapters is Esther's presentation before King Ahasuerus. Verse 15 tells us an important detail: she "required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed." There are things appointed to us if our lives are in Christ. God speaks through His Word and tells us in His Word what is appointed for us. It is up to us to take it.

Esther was completely focused on the things Hegai had given her throughout her own personal time of purification. She cared not for things from any other. Hegai knew exactly what would please the king and he encouraged Esther in every detail. Her willing mind and her tender heart were captivated and affixed only upon what was necessary to win the king's heart. By doing this, Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. They knew she would be the choice one. In like fashion, when we yield to the Holy Spirit and allow grace to reign, others will take notice.

Esther's progress continues in verse 16 as she was "taken unto King Ahasuerus into his house royal, in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign." The word 'royal' is a feminine noun and indicates *a kingdom or an estate*. This signifies the beginning of the joint ruling and reigning of the King and his Queen. She has won his heart!

The numbers in this verse yield an incredible abundance of spiritual truth. Ten is the number of responsibility according to ability; Tebeth means *goodness;* and seven is the number of spiritual perfection and completion. We are responsible for what we know in the Lord, according to the ability he performs in us. His goodness is what draws us to him all the way into the inner chamber of his most tender love and mercy where we settle down in marriage fellowship with him. There is perfection and completion in the king as Esther joins him in ruling and reigning.

Verse 17 is the finishing touch on this part of Esther's story that highlights her rise to the throne: "And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti." Esther's obedience and submission to Hegai (the Holy Spirit) made her fit to not only go before the King, but to ravish his heart and to obtain both his grace and his favor. The heart yielded to grace is the heart that wins the ultimate favor of the bridegroom/king.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST

King Ahasuerus then made the third feast that is noted in these first two chapters – a great feast unto all his princes and his servants referred to specifically as "Esther's feast." This third feast is like the Feast of Tabernacles, known also as the Feast of the Ingathering. The Feast of Tabernacles is the last of three fall feasts and occurs during the time of harvest. This is the feast to glorify the Lamb and his wife and foreshadows the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7-9 when the saints will be glad and rejoice "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." It is the marriage of the *Lamb*, because it honors Jesus and his selfless sacrifice of himself. He was – and is – the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. It is the blood of the Lamb that saves us, redeems us, and takes us to the heights of glory.

The apostle John recorded the victorious scene in heaven where he heard "the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' And the four beasts said, 'Amen.' And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that lives for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:11-14).

At this feast in Esther's honor the king "made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts." Once Jesus has his wife, they will rule and reign from the midst of the throne of glory. He will show his love for his wife and give gifts of unimaginable beauty to all.

A 'release' is *a day of rest, a holiday.* At this present time in this age of grace, all creation is groaning for the manifestation of the mature Sons of God. Naturally speaking, there is no rest for man. The Word of God assures us there is a rest to the people of God by faith. But man still toils in the natural. Once Jesus has his wife, the Millennium will be ushered in and there will be one thousand years of rest in every way. In God's time, a thousand years is as one day (2 Peter 3:8). Oh glorious Millennial Day to come!

CHAPTER SEVEN
The Proverbs 31 Virtuous Woman

"Many daughters have done virtuously,
but thou excellest them all."

"Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
but a woman that fears the LORD shall be praised."
~ Proverbs 31:29-30

The book of Proverbs is ascribed to Solomon, who also wrote Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. A description of him is found in 1Kings 4:29-30 "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceedingly much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." Solomon also "spoke three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five" (1 Kings 4:32). That he was prolific in his speaking and writing is a testimony to the love of God through Solomon in wanting His people to know wisdom and understand His ways.

Fittingly, Proverbs is a book primarily about wisdom and instruction, as set forth in Proverbs 1:2. Wisdom is defined in *Strong's Concordance* as *the skill of an artificer.* An artificer is one who creates finely crafted things. Wisdom comes from God who is first described as Creator in Genesis 1:1. Through Jesus, God first created the heaven and the earth, then the atmosphere, then plants and animals. On the sixth day he created humans – first Adam, and then Eve. Eve was the pinnacle of creation and the first wife for a man.

As our Creator, God is always at work creating finely crafted things – namely, us. He is the potter. We are just little lumps of clay on the wheel until He lays his hands upon us and begins to mold and shape us into His masterpiece, even into a wife for His Son.

This molding and shaping God does is a life-long process. Proverbs 1:4 speaks of the receiving the instruction of wisdom and of the giving of discretion to young ones. The journey of the Wife of the Lamb is a life-long process that can begin at a young age. Parents are encouraged in Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

How appropriate that the book written by the wisest man (besides Jesus) to walk the earth would conclude with a description of a wife who maintains and distributes all things for a home with wisdom. As the bridal pattern goes, out from among many comes a stellar one, a joint-heir who is just like her husband. In Proverbs 31, she is called the Virtuous Woman. The last 22 verses of Proverbs 31 extol her virtues and sing her praises.

There are 40 qualities of this virtuous woman in these 22 verses, qualities God wants to develop in our lives. 40 is the number of perfect testing, and our lives as overcomers in Christ will be perfectly tested in every way. Taking the grace to let God test us will bring about the transformation that will make us a readied wife for Jesus as well as equip us to be the spouse we are to be in the natural.

The Virtuous Woman reveals the domestic aspect of the Wife of the Lamb. Her primary attention is focused on tending to the affairs of her household. She readily prepares everything for her children to grow up into mature sons and daughters and she tends to her husband's every need. The apostle Paul is sometimes referred to as the 'domestic' to the church in this age. His letters contain wisdom, instruction,

and encouragement for saints to grow up in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and be the readied wife for him.

Solomon's description of this special lady begins in Proverbs 31:10 first with a question and then a statement that speaks of her value: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." This one must be sought out, just like the pearl of great price. Not only is she sought, but she is a cherished possession for her husband to have and to hold in an eternal embrace. His desire is toward her; he wants her for his own.

She is described as a *virtuous* woman – a woman who has strength, value, and wealth. Though the weaker vessel compared to man, wisdom and grace strengthen her. She is her husband's prize possession, cherished above all others. He freely shares all his wealth with her; what is his is hers.

She also is a valiant warrior, for she has allowed the kisses of his mouth (his Word) to arm her with his never-failing strong love. Those same kisses equip us for the battles we face. We war equipped with the all-powerful love of God, the love that lifts our minds and hearts completely from here on earth to abide in the heavens with Jesus.

Rubies are the rarest of stones, yet her price is far above them. The price the Lord Jesus paid to attain her when he shed his precious blood for her far exceeds the price of the rarest stone. Proverbs 3:15 speaks of wisdom in the feminine, noting that wisdom is more precious than rubies and that all the things that could be desired are not to be compared to her. This virtuous woman has the very wisdom of he who loved her enough to die for her. They are one in every way.

And so her husband's heart safely trusts in her (v.11). She gives him the glory always. Her heart is full of love, thanks, and appreciation for all he does for her. He saw the desire in her heart in ages past and he set his most intimate affection upon her. Nothing is hidden from him; this allows him to rest in her love for him, for he has confidence in her to super-abound in every way. She has taken everything he willingly gave her, and allowed it to work effectually in her life. She is to him everything he is to her. He has no need of spoil or prey taken in battle. She is his all in all, just as he is hers. Everything is mutual between these two; there is nothing between them but pure, sweet love.

He has no reason to doubt her, for he knows she will "do him good and not evil all the days of her life." (v.12) She does him good by doing his will, which satisfies him. Her love is better than wine to him. She is a willing vessel that adds to the usefulness of her husband – a vessel unto honor, prepared unto every good work. This is how Jesus sees and knows the mature saint who has embraced grace at every turn. This is the Wife in whom he can safely trust and rest in, the one who is a spring of affection and praise to him.

She does not eat the bread of idleness; she seeks wool and flax, and works willingly with her hands (v. 13). She seeks to be clothed in all the Lamb's righteousness and to be conformed to his very image. Flax is used to make linen, which is a beautiful and very durable fabric. Linen was used extensively in various garments the priests wore; as such it is apparel for those who are set apart. *Fine* linen, which is noted as "the righteousness of saints" was granted to the bride to be arrayed (Revelation 19:8). The work of her hands is the manifestation of that which comes from a willing heart, a heart that pants after his goodness and desires her Beloved's every likeness.

She is like the merchants' ships; she brings her food from afar (v. 14). She is willing to go however far she needs to go to get the best and most nutritious food for her family. The food she brings is heavenly food, the very Word of God. It is the bread of life, a most precious cargo.

Effort is required to obtain the best, but the effort needed to acquire this food is simply a willingness to apprehend. The grace of God enables us to do what needs to be done to win Christ as our bridegroom. The virtuous woman is ready and willing to give out of what she has taken in. She received the Word of his grace with all readiness of mind and she heeds the instruction of the Holy Spirit in sharing it with her family. God is building a spiritual house with His people. He has particular "pillar people" that require to be nourished with the best fare, with grace and mercy.

She rises while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens (v.15). She is in tune with his call and she rises in grace and grace alone, during the night time of adversity and trial. She is alert, sober, vigilant, and ready to give an answer to those who might ask of the hope that lies within her. She has put on the armor of light. She is fully awake and preparing.

Her 'household'– her family – is mentioned four times in this portion of Proverbs 31 describing the virtuous woman. This can apply as well to the household, or family of God. She gives the Lord first place in her home and readily proclaims, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). She proclaims him at all times. She stands and withstands and having done all, she stands. She gives out the word in boldness and in love.

The 'meat' she gives her household is the Word of God. She does the preparing in her heart well before dawn. She is raising mature sons that need the strong meat noted in Hebrews 5:14 that "belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

But she also gives a portion to her handmaids. Handmaids are not yet mature; they range in age from small children to adolescents. She has discernment of what to give each one in the household of faith. She doesn't give the youngest ones strong meat yet. But she still feeds them their portion, even if it is milk.

She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms (v. 17). Paul wrote of this "girding of the loins" in Ephesians 6:14 in the armor of God when he wrote, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." She believes the truth, walks in the truth, and speaks the truth, for she is filled with the Spirit of truth that enables her to rightly divide the word of truth. She speaks with boldness and she stands in defense of the gospel. She believes His word that the very strength and power of God is in her. She doesn't just speak the Word; she lives it by faith every day.

The loins are the place of fruitfulness, and she binds and surrounds them with strength that only her Beloved can provide. He is the way, the truth, and the life and he protects his fruitful wife.

Her arms are strengthened – fortified and increased to prevail – to carry out every work necessary to prepare for her household. He lifts her arms when they grow weary; they are not hanging down in discouragement or in defeat. She raises her arms to him as she submits to his will. Hers are open, loving arms that embrace, lift, and comfort others. They are arms that are stretched out to God's precious children as well as to sinners.

She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night (v. 18). To 'perceive' means *to taste.* She has tasted the sweetness of her Beloved's words of love. She echoes the Shulamite, "His

mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend" (Song 5:16). Her 'merchandise' is her Beloved and she knows without a doubt from experience how good he is. She is rich beyond measure. What wealth to intimately know the very Word of God, Jesus.

Her candle, or light, will not go out during the night seasons, for her Beloved is her light. His light in her is a testimony to others. She doesn't hide it under a bushel - she lets her Beloved shine in her and through her. She allows the Holy Spirit to enlighten her eyes to minister the truth to those that are in darkness. She knows that "the entrance of his words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130). She lets her light shine before others that they may see her good works – the works of grace – and glorify God. She is the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21:33 as having "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Her life is a divine tapestry, woven by God. Each thread is carefully crafted as her life is built line upon line and precept upon precept. She is an active participant in how the fine threads are woven. She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff (v. 19). The distaff is the part of a spinning wheel to which a bunch of flax or wool is tied, and from which the thread is drawn out and twisted by the spindle. These threads were then woven into garments. This woman is created in righteousness and true holiness. It's Christ in her, the hope of glory. The Holy Spirit directs and guides her as she weaves these garments that are her life in brilliant display of the glory of her Beloved to all.

She is like the women in Exodus 35:25 who were "wise hearted [and] did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen." These women brought beautiful fabric they made using the colors of heaven (blue), royalty (purple), and the blood of Jesus (scarlet). These fabrics were made for the curtains of the tabernacle that hung at the entrance to the outer court, at the entrance to the Holy Place, and the entrance to the Holy of Holies. In the Old Testament the tabernacle was God's home, where He communed with His people from over the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. The virtuous woman's yielding to God's divine plan for her life shows in the intricacy of the pattern and in the colors displayed.

She thinks of others before herself. She is kindly affectioned and prefers others with honor. She stretches out her hand to the poor and reaches forth her hands to the needy (v. 20). This applies to looking to both the physical and spiritual needs of others. She helps the poor and needy, not in material need only, but also the poor in spirit. She reaches forth and gives out God's Word that builds up and edifies to those that have fallen down. She remembers when her Beloved stretched his hand out to her and lifted her out of the mire; how he picked her up when she fell and held her and cradled her in his everlasting arms. There were times when she was discouraged and in despair and received comfort of the Lord through others. She is now able to comfort those with the comfort by which she was comforted. She is a spiritual one who seeks to restore.

She realizes the great mercy and grace God has extended to her in calling her forth to wed His Son. She wants others to see how good her Beloved is and how for them he is. Her joy is multiplied as she encourages her brothers and sisters in the faith to run their race and apprehend the one who has already apprehended them too. She is willing to go the extra mile and extend to those who have not yet fully grasped the wondrous truth she knows.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet (v. 21). Perfect love casts out fear, and she has no fear because she has allowed his love to be perfected in her. Snow and winter signify trials and tribulations – even death. But she is not concerned as her whole household is covered by the blood of the Savior/Lamb. Her life and theirs are safely kept in him. "The

LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

She knows and has experienced that the great snow storms provide an abundance of water that cause the roots of faith to go deeper in his Word. She is a fruitful garden, a flourishing garden, because her roots in the Word are deep. Every storm and every adversity is an opportunity for her Beloved to show himself strong and faithful on her behalf.

She makes herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple (v. 22). After she has seen to the needs of others, she creates things for herself. These 'coverings' of tapestry refer to coverings, or bed coverlets. A tapestry is made up of many colors woven together to create a beautiful picture. This is her life yielded to the Master Weaver. She shares his bed; it is the place they rest together in quiet intimacy.

She then makes clothing of the richest and purest silk. Purple is royalty, appropriate clothing for a Queen to wear. This clothing is not only outward apparel for she is all glorious within. She stands a Queen in gold of Ophir at her husband's right hand (Psalm 45:9, 13). She is the wife who has made herself ready, the one who is brought unto the king in raiment of needlework. This is not her doing; she is his workmanship. As she lets the Holy Spirit work in and through her, she produces the most exquisite and costly coverings and garments, made of the best and finest material.

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. (v. 23) Her husband is Jesus and he is well known. He is not only known in the gates; he *is* the gate (Matthew 7:13). There is no greater name than Jesus in heaven or on earth. It is at the name of Jesus that "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). She joyfully proclaims to all who he is to her**.**

She makes fine linen, and sells it; and delivers girdles to the merchant (v. 24). She is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. This 'fine linen' is the righteous acts displayed throughout her life. Whatever was required of her to do, God supplied the grace for it.

Her life is completely surrendered to Jesus for she is espoused to him. She displays Christ and his righteousness only and nothing of herself. She has surrendered all and her life manifests the glory of the Lord. She is an example to others in thought, word, and deed as she yields her life to her Lord. Her profiting in him appears to all.

Her words are his words and they are life-giving. They edify others and build them up. Her conversation becomes the gospel of Christ as she stands fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27-28). The Lord has worked in her a great desire to win souls. She is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.

Her life is a testimony of being surrounded by the truth at all times. She gladly distributes and pours out the truth to others. She is able to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort others just as Paul admonished Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2. She desires to proclaim the high calling of God in Christ Jesus to others. Her desire is his desire and she wants her family to grow up to the full stature of Christ, to be a readied wife for him too.

Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come (v. 25). She is clothed in her husband's strength and honor – what is his is hers for she is a joint heir. She has encountered many

battles, but he has been her strength every time. He has enabled her to stand victorious because he has won the victory for her. Clothing is an apparent covering, and the threads of strength and honor are evident for all to see.

This strength has an aspect of prevailing to it. One who prevails is one that overcomes, one that does not let obstacles distract them away from their course. Because of Jesus' triumphant victory over death, we are now the Sons of God and able to overcome the devil. Truly, greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world! Jesus told his disciples in John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

His strength is made perfect in her weakness. She can rejoice in the darkest times and raise her hands in praise to him. He has enabled her to rejoice in tribulations, to take pleasure in her infirmities just as Paul did. Day by day she apprehends the grace to endure and to finish with a full joy.

Without trials and tribulation there would be nothing to overcome. Trials are painful but they are absolutely necessary for our perfecting. Paul gives us encouragement about the effectual work of trials in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." To see things that are not seen calls for faith, and faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

Honor is also translated as *glory, majesty, and beauty*. The honor she has is not because of what she has done, but because of whose she is. The woman is the glory of the man (1 Corinthians 11:7). The Wife of the Lamb is his glory, his glorious one-and-only. She equally shares the honor of her husband, for they are one. Proverbs 11:16 tells us "A gracious woman retaineth honor." Her honor is her crown and she holds it fast that no man take it. This honor is an adorning, an unparalleled beautifying that began to unfold the moment she said 'I will go.'

As she began to accept all the gifts he gave her, to put on the garments of righteousness and glory, she transformed into the one he prized above all others.

She greatly anticipates the rejoicing to come when she will be in her Beloved's arms in heaven forever. She knows she is just a pilgrim passing through. Her citizenship is in heaven; earth is not her true home. The ones who will be the Wife of the Lamb also long for the Eternal Day when they will be in the arms of their Savior and Husband Jesus who will exalt them in due time.

She opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness (v. 26). Wisdom and kindness flow from her mouth, because she has asked of God who gives liberally and does not condemn (James 1:5). She speaks pleasing words that edify others in kindness, divine grace and love. Her speech is comely, seasoned with grace. It ministers grace to those who hear. Her love is longsuffering, patient and tender.

Hers is a mouth yielded to his every word and every inclination. The Lord God promised the children of Israel in Psalm 81:10 "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." He is the same today and will fill every hungry mouth that desires his Word.

She looks well to the ways of her household, and eats not the bread of idleness (v. 27). She has eyes of discernment and she knows the ways of her family. Her fruitful mind is quick to know her household and

what is needed. She possesses a readiness to apprehend everything provided for her. Her hands are proficient and expedient to tend to the needs of those in her home. She instructs them with love in the Lord that they may walk pleasing unto him. This pertains to her personal home as well as to the household of faith.

She redeems the time and is not slothful. She feeds on the True Bread constantly and is intent upon doing God's will in her life every moment. She has sat at the feet of Jesus and learned of him. Her heart is occupied with the righteous acts he has foreordained for her. She is an example in word and in deed. She gives attendance to reading and to doctrine, giving herself wholly to them, that her profiting may appear to all.

The final verses of Proverbs 31 sing the praises and rewards of this rare beautiful one.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also praises her (v. 28). For children to rise up and call their mother blessed is a distinct blessing to her. She has taught them well and brought them up in the admonishment of the Lord. They are appreciative of her love and care for them – and also thankful for the correction that has come at her hand.

In a parent role, our Father God also loves us, cares for us, and chastens (corrects) us. His correction is always rooted in love. He does His correcting in cooperation and coordination with Mother Grace. Parents want the best for their children. They desire for them to learn right from wrong and to grow up to be fully mature Sons of God, the men and women God wants them to be.

As noted in Hebrews 12:5-6, as Sons of God we are not to despise the Lord's chastening: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son he receives."

Even though love is God's motivation in correcting His sons, receiving correction is not easy – or joyous for the moment. Hebrews 12:11 encourages us: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." There is a reward for receiving instruction for the Sons of God. Consider that it pleased the Father to bruise His own Son, to make his soul an offering for sin. This was to the end that "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isaiah 53:10). This woman has taken his correction herself, and now she receives the reward in her children.

The virtuous woman also receives praises of her husband for the work of grace in her life that she has yielded to fully and completely. She has captivated his heart and he finds her love to him better than wine. Her love fully abounds more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. She is filled with the peaceable fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God. He is ravished with just one glance from her. He greatly desires her beauty and she satisfies him to the full. She is his glory and his help-meet.

She is the pattern wife Peter wrote about in 1 Peter 3:3-4 whose adorning is not in any outward temporal appearance in the plaiting of hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. Her beauty is found in "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

“Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all” (v. 29). ‘Daughters’ are believers, and many have done admirably. Many saints have knowledge of the scriptures and some even know Christ will have a bride. But there is one that excels them all and that stands out from among many. She is the one who is intimately in love with Jesus. This one doesn’t only know about him, but she has taken the grace to enter in to the most intimate chamber with him. She is his dove, his undefiled; the only one of her mother, the choice one of she who bare her (Song 6:9).

She excels each day as she is lifted above the rest by his love. She also will rise up before others in full-glory resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:41 tells us “there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory.” She is one glory – *sun glory* – for she has taken the grace to rise up and come away, to receive all her Husband has provided for her.

Many are witness to her as the ‘choice one.’ They have the opportunity to be that one too but they don’t lay hold of grace and accept all the provision his love affords. They are focused on self or others instead of him, comparing themselves among themselves. They are preoccupied with their sufferings.

In the story of Esther, Queen Vashti refused to heed the call of her husband, King Ahasuerus to come forth and stand beside him because she deemed it inconvenient. That act of defiance cost her the crown and she was dethroned. Esther, on the other hand, heeded the call of the king, speedily took everything the keeper of the women (Holy Spirit type) had for her, and won the king’s heart.

The gaze of the virtuous woman is always cast toward heaven. Her eyes are steadfastly fixed on her bridegroom, not on the world or its temporal, fleeting attachments. Her husband knows by her testimony that truly “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that fears the LORD shall be praised” (v. 30). She is his glory and he praises her. Proverbs 9:10 tells us “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” She has reverence for her husband. His praise is upon her lips and in her heart continually; therefore she shall be praised. She is to the praise of the glory of his grace.

The last verse of Proverbs 31 is her crowning reward: “Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates” (v. 31). The fruit of her hands is the manifestation of the work of grace she has allowed to flourish in her home. She accepted the gifts God gave her, and she now receives the reward that letting grace rule her heart and her household brings. This allowing of grace produced children that love and worship the Lord. It garnered the godly admiration of her husband and of those who were witness to her yielded life.

She has presented her body a living sacrifice. She’s filled and overflowing with the Holy Spirit – she allows that filling to happen in her over and over again. She has an insatiable appetite for her husband’s goodness. She is a garden inclosed; a spring shut up; a fountain sealed to him (Song 4:12).

This virtuous woman is noted “in the gates” – in the same position, or rank, as her husband. Even her own works – the allowing of grace – praise her there. Her heart was attentive to the details of her home in providing nourishment for her family, in clothing them with garments of royalty, in speaking words of wisdom and kindness to them and over them every day. Her every thought and action was directed by love and carried out in love.

She took of the abundance of grace. Her work was tried by fire and came forth more precious than gold. She knew all her afflictions were working for her good and for their glory together. She trusted that he

that tarried would come for her, for she heard his call to her ‘Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away!’

The life of the Virtuous Woman is God’s will for our lives.

We live in the time where it is manifestly apparent that all creation is groaning for the manifestation of the mature Sons of God. What an encouragement we find in this virtuous woman as we look for and long for the crowning moment when we will be one with Jesus as the Wife of the Lamb.

A day is coming when Jesus will set his Virtuous Woman wife on display and show all creation how much he loves her. There are other daughters that will have done virtuously, but there is only one woman, only one Wife of the Lamb, that excels all others.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FOUR LIVING ONES IN EZEKIEL AND REVELATION

"And this was their appearance;
they had the likeness of a man.
And every one had four faces,
and every one had four wings."

~ Ezekiel 1:5-6

"And they rest not day and night, saying,
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,
which was, and is, and is to come."

~ Revelation 4:8

We come to a marvelous revelation of the Wife of the Lamb in those who are known as the four living creatures in Ezekiel chapter one and as the four beasts in Revelation chapter four. These four living creatures and beasts testify to the likeness between the Lamb and his Wife. John wrote of this likeness in 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The Readied Wife is looking for her Husband's appearing today. Grace is changing her from glory to glory to be just like him.

The number four is prevalent in these descriptions of the Lamb's Wife. Four is an earthly number and speaks of things having to do with this present world. We run the race to win Christ as our bridegroom now. The wife has made herself ready in the acceptance of marriage, the contract signed through the first love of Paul's gospel. What waits us is the consummation between the Husband and Wife, and then the marriage feast that follows.

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

We have a glorious glimpse at the Wife of the Lamb in Ezekiel chapter one. She appears as what are described as "four living creatures" as the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel. Ezekiel 1:1 begins with the heavens opened and Ezekiel seeing visions of God. The visions God gave Ezekiel are in the future, during the time when Jesus and his wife will be ruling and reigning during the tribulation when God's wrath will be poured out on the earth.

When something is opened there is a revealing of what is inside. The Holy Spirit will open the eyes of our hearts to see all God wants us to see in the intricate and intimate details of His love to us. A way has been made for us to enter in to the heights of God's Word, to dwell in the Holy of Holies as those cherubims that overshadowed the mercy seat and gazed at the blood.

The time when God revealed these visions to Ezekiel was during the second Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel describes being among the captives by the river Chebar. The word Chebar is incredibly prophetic as it means *to shine as a beam; burn; to be radiant; to flow together*. It also carries the notion of *a coming together of people; a crowd or throng, an assembly.* What a bright and shining gathering there will someday be when Jesus takes his bride away!

The numbers in Ezekiel 1:1-2 are specific. In verse one, we have the thirtieth year. The number thirty indicates the blood. Thirty is the age at which David and Joseph began their rule and Ezekiel was called to be a prophet. Thirty was also the age at which Christ began his ministry. The fourth month speaks of earthly things and the fifth day of the month speaks of grace.

Verse two gives us a double portion of grace as we also have the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity. The name Jehoiachin means *Jehovah has established.* God establishes us in and by grace and grace alone.

As the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, the vision begins to unroll in verse four. Ezekiel writes, "And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire." This is a ruling and reigning vision as there is a throne. The throne of God specifically is in the north (Isaiah 14:13).

The word whirlwind indicates a storm or tempest, and also the very breath of God and of the Holy Spirit. Infolding is marvelous as it means *to take (away, up) a wife; to marry; to win.* The brightness is the shekinah glory that radiates from the throne, a clear and brilliant radiance. The Wife of the Lamb is that glory as she descends from heaven having the glory of God. She will come forth from the fire, purified. Her finished life will be as polished bronze, bright and shining, just like him.

Verse five tells us it was from out of the midst of the fire that the likeness of the four living creatures came. The emphasis is on the word 'living,' for these living ones are humans that have been made completely alive through the Word of God. They are also in Ezekiel chapter 10 as the four living ones. Isaiah sees them at a later period of time as seraphim, or fiery, burning ones. Their appearance is first described "as the likeness of a man." This is no ordinary man; this is the Lord Jesus!

The description of the four living creatures continues in verse six with the detail of four faces and four wings.

Verse seven tells us about the feet of these four living creatures. They were straight feet with soles like the sole of a calf's foot, sparkling like the color of burnished brass. These are feet shod with the preparation of the gospel. The gospel keeps these feet from wavering or slipping. The young calf speaks of the nature of one who is feeding and growing, yet these feet are sparkling and bright. Suffering can do its work even in a young life.

Verse eight reveals that these living creatures had the hands of a man under their wings. As a vessel fit for the usefulness of her husband, with her hands the Wife of the Lamb serves others. She doesn't do this for an open show or for any credit to herself. Love for her Husband and for others is her only motivation. She loves to share the gospel and worship her Husband.

We have a precious detail in verse nine as we see the wings of these four living creatures joined one to another. This joining is that of the tightly fit and compacted bridal company Paul wrote about in Ephesians chapter four. The unity of the spirit in the bond of perfectness is evident. There are no schisms or divisions. Once again we have the reality in these living creatures of how like him she is.

Verse 10 shows more detail about their faces: "They four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle." Four creatures with four faces each is a total of sixteen, which is the number of love. Love conquers all

and love is what will win the day. These four faces also mirror the gospel accounts which will be explained in detail in the account of the four beasts in Revelation chapter four shortly.

The face of a man and the face of a lion were on the right side – the side of strength, power and royalty. The face of a man speaks of the perfect – yet human – side of Christ and the face of a lion speaks to the kingly aspect of Christ. We are made priests and kings unto God and we reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)

On the left side, the weak side, we see Christ as the burden-bearing ox. He came to serve mankind, making of himself no reputation. He bore the heavy burden of our sins on Calvary. Because of that, we now have ultimate freedom in Him.

Then He is seen as the soaring eagle – the last of the four faces mentioned.

A beautiful detail in verse 11 is that their wings stretched upward. Stretching can be strenuous, but it's the only way we fly, the only way we ascend to the throne of glory. Two wings of each creature were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. The beauty in joining and covering is manifest in the Wife of the Lamb. She is one with her Husband, joined to him in every way. His blood completely covers her in richest red. She is clothed upon with garments of grace, wrapped securely in his love.

Verse 12 continues with this most lovely description of the four living creatures, noting that each one went straight forward as the spirit led them. The life of the Wife of the Lamb will be led and inspired by the Holy Spirit. She will go straight forward, never turning to the left or right. Her gaze is affixed on her husband and the affairs they attend to together. Matthew 7:13-14 tells of a wide gate and a broad way that leads to destruction. But there is also a strait gate and a narrow way that leads to life: the way of grace, way of the fully abundant life of the overcomer in Christ.

The description of the four living creatures continues in verse 13 as they are described in manifold glory, just like Jesus: "Their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning."

Daniel 10:5-6 gives us a glimpse of Christ: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude."

We can see the parallels between the man Daniel described and the four living creatures in Ezekiel 1:13-14: "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning." The man Daniel saw and the four living creatures are fiery, alive with passion and zeal. From the clear, brilliant beryl to the eyes as lamps of fire and faces as the appearance of lightning, they are one. He is her light and she is his.

THE FOUR BEASTS IN REVELATION CHAPTER FOUR

In the last book of the Bible, God reveals a vision of the Lamb's Wife to the apostle John. In Revelation chapter four she is known as the four beasts. The word 'beast' means *to be fully alive and quickened.* The Lamb's Wife is fully alive with his life. She has been conformed through her glorious journey on earth with him to look exactly like him as portrayed in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He is muti-faceted, and she is just like him.

Similar to what Ezekiel experienced, heaven was opened to John: "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, 'Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.' And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald" (Revelation 4:1-3).

1 Thessalonians 4:16 tells us of the time when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." That John heard a voice "as it were of a trumpet" is the call of the bridegroom to come up and see from above. It was the *first* voice he heard, and how appropriate as the call the bride will hear will be the call of her First Love.

Immediately John was in the spirit and saw a throne set in heaven. The one sitting on a throne that looked like a jasper and sardine stone in Revelation 4:3 is the Lord Jesus. The jasper is a clear stone, much like a diamond. In Revelation 21:9 we see the bride as Holy Jerusalem coming down from heaven and having the glory of God. Her light is likened unto a jasper stone, clear and brilliant. Besides Christ, she is the only one described as a jasper stone.

In verse 5, lightnings and thundering and voices proceeded from out of the throne. The word lightnings means lamps thundering as instruments of tongues. This is the place assigned for kings.

Verses 6-8 show us richer and revealing details of these four beasts as the Wife of the Lamb: "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

She is in the midst and around the throne, ruling and reigning. The first detail about these four beasts is that they are "full of eyes before and behind." The Wife of the Lamb is full of Holy Spirit eyes before and behind that he gave her so she could clearly see her future with him as well as all that has gone before. Her eyes within are the eyes of her heart, the eyes that see her Beloved the way he really is, the way he loves her, and the beauty of the journey they have had together. The eyes of her heart understand the great depths he went to for her and all he accomplished for her. She is the one he came for and the fulfillment of all he desires.

Next we have the likeness of all four beasts, each one representing one of the gospels – the lion, the ox, the man, and the eagle. This is another example of how the Wife of Jesus is just like him. She is Christ-like, being found only in his righteousness.

The Face of a Lion – The Gospel of Matthew
The predominant theme of the book of Matthew is that of Jesus as a Lion and a King. Matthew's account refers to Jesus as the "son of (King) David" more than the other three gospels combined. Matthew opens by tracing Jesus' genealogy from Abraham through David to Joseph. This shows that Jesus was of the royal lineage of David. The mysteries of the kingdom are recorded in this book. Jesus was known as the king of the Jews but his own rejected him. Despite their rejection, he reigned in life by the power of the Holy Spirit over all the circumstances that came his way, even the death of the cross. He imparts these ruling qualities to his wife and she gladly receives them.

It is not surprising that the first beast is likened to a lion, the king of beasts. Those with lion's teeth are boldly set for the defense of the gospel. They chew the strong meat of the Word and are strengthened by it. Overcomers in Christ go in the strength of the Lord, not in their own strength. By the spirit of the Lord they stand and withstand and having done all, they stand.

Dwelling in Hebron was the secret to King David's life. Hebron means *communion* and David dwelt in close communion with the Lord. He sought the Lord and waited on his counsel. He worshipped him in the good times and in the bad times. The Lord was David's stronghold and he depended upon him for everything.

2 Peter 1:3-4 tells us, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The Lord has made every provision for us that we can reign in life. If we want to reign in heaven, we must take our place in royalty and reign now while still on earth.

The Face of an Ox – The Gospel of Mark
Mark portrays Jesus in his role as a servant in a brief but action-packed letter. His account does not begin with a family tree or an account of Christ's birth, rather, it forges right into Jesus calling his disciples, proclaiming his message, and casting out demons – all in the first chapter.

Mark 10:45 is the heart of Mark's gospel as it shows us the servant heart of Jesus: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Just as the ox obeyed its master, Jesus always did his Father's will. Philippians 2:7-8 tells us of Jesus' life as the servant of man: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Jesus served people by saving them, then healing and restoring them. He lived his life heartily unto God. He changed every situation he was in – and he still does today.

Jesus delights to meet our needs. We should expect the impossible with him because with God nothing is hard. His wife is just like him and ministers just like he does. In the story of Mary and Martha, Mary ministered to Jesus when she brought the spikenard and anointed his feet. She worshipped him and he praised her for it. She served the Servant of Man and Jesus adored her for her sacrifice. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavens and it is a privilege to offer service to others. Jesus served man by dying so that man could be free from sin, free to live in the fullness of grace. We are to continue in love and in serving.

The Face of a Man – The Gospel of Luke
Luke's gospel is the longest of the four gospels, written by Luke who was a physician and likely accustomed to examining things in great detail. Luke's account is a picture of the Lord Jesus as a man and as a son of man who lived in a body like ours with all its weaknesses. Jesus had a human family. He had friends and earthly relationships. He ate and walked and talked with all types of people and loved them. He came to identify with us and to reveal God the Father to us.

Luke recorded a family tree, but it differs from Matthew's account in several ways. First, instead of recording Jesus' lineage through Joseph, Luke records it through Jesus' mother, Mary. Second, Luke traces the genealogy backward from Mary instead of forward through Abraham. Third, he traces it all the way back to not just Abraham, but to Adam, emphasizing that Jesus was a Son of man.

Jesus became a man that we might know him and the fellowship of his sufferings. The nail prints were in his hands and the hole was in his side for Thomas to see and thrust his hand into. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that we do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. Jesus was in all points tempted but without sin. He lived as a man – a perfect, sinless man – and he died as a man. By the shedding of his blood he entered in once and obtained redemption for mankind for all time.

Our Savior knows our frame. He knows we are but dust. And yet he loves us. Paul was weak but he gloried in his infirmities. (2 Corinthians 12:9) The Lord Jesus went a long way to reach us to become every bit like us in human form.

The Face of an Eagle – The Gospel of John
This last face of the four beasts portrays Jesus as the heavenly eagle. Eagles have wings and so do overcomers in Christ. This life is our flight training school. Each trial makes us stronger. Someday soon we will fly to join our bridegroom in heaven.

Eagles live in the high rocky places where they can see from a high vantage point. They take pleasure in flying directly into storms because that's where the updrafts carry them even higher. In like fashion, the Wife of Jesus joins her husband in soaring ever higher. She is more than a conqueror. His love lifts her as she flies in the face of storms.

These four beasts each had six wings. Wings speak of a life of intimate fellowship with Jesus and all the wondrous things life with him brings. Six is the number of man, and her life with him begins on earth, as mankind. But through her experiences on earth he teaches her how to fly and how to abide in the heavens with him moment by moment.

There is an intimate communion between the Lamb and his wife that is rare and to be cherished above all else. His love wooed her every step of the way. She put all her affections upon him, the one who died and gave himself completely for her. Her eyes discerned him and found him most lovely. Paul wrote of the excellency of the knowledge of intimately knowing Christ Jesus in Philippians 3:8.

In Revelation 4:8 the four overcoming beasts cry "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." They acknowledge God as eternal and ever-existing. He always has been, and he always will be. In Revelation 4:9-12 the beasts give glory and honor to he who sits on the throne. The four and twenty elders fall down and cast their crowns before the throne, crying "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" as they observe, rejoice and are overwhelmed seeing Christ receive his glory, honor, and power.

The Wife of the Lamb always leads the praise and worship. She is the company of true worshippers who worship God in spirit and in truth. She doesn't give her Beloved works – she gives him thanks and honor and glory. She knows that it is for his pleasure, for his ecstasy and complete joy, that all things were created. All through her journey together with Jesus while on earth God patiently developed the four faces of His Son in His Son's Wife, taking her from glory to glory as she beheld him in glory. She has fulfilled the Word and now she will take the throne together with her Husband.

CHAPTER NINE
THE CHERUBIMS OF GLORY

"And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high,
covering the mercy seat with their wings,
and their faces shall look one to another;
toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be."

~ Exodus 25:20

One of the most fascinating and intriguing portrayals of the Wife of the Lamb is found in creatures called cherubim. They have an early appearance in Genesis chapter 3 and hold a prominent position throughout the Word of God. They are upon the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant and in various places in the tabernacles of Moses and David, in Solomon's temple, and in the temple Ezekiel saw. Exactly where they appear in these structures reveals more of God's love for His people in the high calling.

Cherubim are defined as beings of celestial nature. Celestial refers to the heavenly realm. That they are of celestial nature indicates they are near to God – and more specifically near to His heart. They foreshadow the Wife of the Lamb, for they take hold of the full provision of God in Christ Jesus and apprehend him as bridegroom. Her desire is and always will be toward him alone. She will lay hold of him and hold him tight. The love of her bridegroom has apprehended her. It has changed her, transformed her from death to eternal abundant life. That love gripped the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus and changed who he was from that moment forward. The life of Christ was immediately in Paul; he just had to grow up in the fulness of that life. Those who are looking for and loving Jesus' coming will follow Paul as he followed Christ. They will seek to fully apprehend the love and grace of God and grow up in the high calling marriage proposal.

THE CHERUBIM IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The cherubim first appear in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24 immediately after Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – the one tree of all the trees in the garden God commanded them not to eat from. Once Adam and Eve ate of that tree, the knowledge of sin came. God had to drive them out of the garden so they would not be trapped in the state of sin forever. Some might think their disobedience to God was something God did not see coming. But that is simply not true. Their rebellion set in motion God's plan for sending His Son Jesus as a Savior to redeem mankind – and to have a wife out from among the redeemed.

The cherubim are noted at the east end of the garden, the direction from which the sun rises. The Wife of the Lamb will be sun glory because she will be glorified together with the man Christ Jesus. She heeds his call to rise up and come away with him. The cherubims are noted with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep (guard) the way of the tree of life. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. It is a flaming, fiery sword that pierces through to the deepest part of man, knowing and discerning the thoughts and intents of his heart.

The tree of life is a particular tree. In Genesis 2:9 it is first noted in the midst of the garden. Jesus and His wife will rule and reign in the midst of the throne of glory in a garden yet to come described in Revelation chapter 22. The tree of life appears twelve times in the Word of God. In Revelation 22:2 we see that the

tree of life "bare twelve [manner of] fruits, and yielded her fruit every month." Twelve is the number of divine rule. The fully and consistently fruitful Wife of the Lamb will rule and reign with her King.

In Revelation there are references to the tree of life in connection with the church of Ephesus and those who overcome (Revelation 2:7); in the midst and on the sides of the pure river of water of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1-2); and in conjunction with those who do God's commandments and who are granted the right to the tree of life in the Holy City, New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:14).

The word tree also indicates *a gallows or a cross*. How perfect the Word of God! Jesus, the one man who made atonement for fallen man completely and forever, died on a tree at Calvary. Through his death on that tree and his subsequent resurrection, we have life eternal. We have the opportunity for salvation with eternal glory, to be the Wife of the Lamb.

THE CHERUBIM IN MOSES' TABERNACLE

The Cherubim Upon the Mercy Seat

We move from the cherubim in the Garden of Eden to their next appearance – on the mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies in Moses' tabernacle. They are also seen with the ark in David's tabernacle in 2 Samuel 6:17 and in Solomon's temple in 1 and 2 Kings.

The Holy of Holies was the most intimate inner chamber in the tabernacle and temple. It was the place only the high priest went once per year to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat upon the ark to atone for sin. Under the law, no other could enter the Holy of Holies or they would be struck dead. Since Christ Jesus our High Priest has made atonement for sin once for all, we can go boldly into the Holy of Holies. We have his precious, saving blood upon that mercy seat forever.

The ark was the first item made and described in Moses' tabernacle. It consisted of a gold-covered wood box with a lid called the mercy seat. God instructed Moses in Exodus 25:10 to "make it of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof." The wood was covered in gold. We can see Jesus is the ark by this description. Wood speaks of humanity, and shittim comes from a root word shittah which means *to scourge, beat, whip, punish, and afflict pain*. This was the suffering Christ took for us as a man to atone for sin. The wood was covered in gold, noting deity. The gold was what was seen. The sufferings were but for a moment, but glory is forever.

The two cherubim were of gold, of beaten work, in the two ends of the mercy seat. (Exodus 25:18-20) They were one with the mercy seat, there was no division or separation. The mercy seat was of pure gold through and through. Its dimensions were exactly the same as the box so it covered the box perfectly. The cherubim were made of 'beaten work' – hammered work that is upright and rounded. This is the work of God in our lives, to mold us and make us conformable to His Son. Christ suffered much to make atonement for us and redeem mankind all the way to salvation with eternal glory. There is a joyous joint suffering with Christ for those who desire to marry him.

Exodus 25:20 reveals more about the cherubim upon the ark: "And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be." The wings of the two cherubim extended above the

mercy seat, raised as if to take flight. How glorious that we wait in anticipation to take flight to be with Jesus when he comes to catch away his Bride! Their wings also covered the mercy seat, shadowing it.

Their faces looked one to another in perfect harmony and love. The phrase 'to another' refers to a reciprocal relationship – the height of which is marriage. Their faces also looked toward the mercy seat, toward the place of their innermost affection. The mercy seat is where the high priest Aaron sprinkled the blood of a sacrificial animal. But we have a far more precious thing than the blood of bulls and goats. We have the precious blood of Jesus poured out to save mankind, the blood that is the gateway to salvation with eternal glory.

Exodus 25:21 tells us specifically that it was "from above the mercy seat" and "from between the two cherubim" where most holy God would meet with and commune with man. Those who are looking for Christ to come and catch them away are looking to meet and commune with Christ in marriage fellowship, that place described in Psalm 85:10 where "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

The Cherubim Upon the Curtains

The cherubim were woven into the curtains in Moses' tabernacle referenced in Exodus 26:1-3 and Exodus 36:8-10. The word curtain carries the notion of a tremulous motion. We see how curtains sway in a breeze and how they flutter with the slightest movement of air. The heart of the Wife of the Lamb trembles within at the slightest breath of her Beloved's love for her. Are we not moved with the slightest breeze of our Beloved's tender devotion toward us?

Wise-hearted men wrought the work of the curtains that displayed the cherubim. Wise-hearted means *to be skillful, intelligent, artful in the inner man.* The inner man speaks to the heart, the innermost part of man. A wise heart's motivation is always love. These wise-hearted men were motivated by love to build and create the furnishings for the tabernacle.

There were ten curtains, all of the same size. Ten is the number of responsibility according to ability. Our every ability is only in the strength of the blood of the Lamb. The length of each curtain was eight cubits, eight being the number of the bride and New Creation and the breadth of each curtain was four cubits, four being the number of all things earthly, terrestrial.

The curtains were made of fine twined linen which is an exquisite, finely woven material of fibers twisted tightly together. The trio of colors used in the curtains of blue, purple, and scarlet indicates heaven, royalty, and blood. Two (sufficient witness, double portion) groups of five (grace) curtains were coupled together. To be coupled together is *to be joined together, to unite with one, to make an ally.* These curtains were joined together by brass rings. Brass is a metal that indicates judgment in the Word of God. The age we live in now is the time of judgment unto reward. Jesus is walking among the churches and God is proving his love and grace in us.

The cherubim are noted specifically as 'of cunning work.' The phrase cunning work is noted in several places throughout the Word of God. It means *to highly esteem and value; to thoughtfully and artfully braid or interpenetrate, i.e. to weave or fabricate.* The cherubim are the first ones mentioned in the Word of God to be of cunning work. They were woven into these luxurious multi-colored curtains that moved at the slightest breath of wind. The curtains were at the entrance to the tabernacle and thus the cherubim were visible to all who entered the tabernacle, evident images of the crowning adornment of the slain Lamb, sent from God in heaven, to be crowned in royalty with his wife.

The Cherubim Upon the Veil

Cherubim appeared on the vail in Moses' tabernacle and in Solomon's temple (Exodus 26:31-33 & 36:35-36; 2 Chronicles 3:14). The veil was a sacred screen that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the tabernacle and temple. Only the High Priest could enter once per year into the Holy of Holies to atone for the sins of the people. But now Jesus is our High Priest. His shed blood covers all sin for all who believe on him as Savior. He is called the forerunner – one who comes in advance to a place the rest are to follow. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection we have access with full assurance of faith to enter into the Holy of Holies, to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain help in time of need.

The vail was made of the same fine twined linen and had the same colors as the curtains. It was, as the curtains, made of cunning work. It was hung upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:32). As noted before, four is an earthly number, indicative of things terrestrial. We are living out the grace of God as pilgrims, just passing through here on earth. Yet God has given us enlightened eyes of understanding and faith to see things we can't see with our natural eyes.

Pillars speak of God's upright, mature Sons. In Revelation 3:12 it is said of the overcoming church of Philadelphia, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." This Philadelphia church represents the Wife of the Lamb who takes a new name once she is married.

Shittim wood and gold are the same materials used in the ark. Shittim wood was durable and resistant to decay, in type incorruptible just as we are in Christ. The gold coating was what was seen, the deity of God incarnate in His Son Jesus.

The vail is noted as having hooks (pegs or nails) of gold. Strong's Concordance has a note that the word 'hooks' is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which is VAV and means *to add to, to secure.* The shape of the Hebrew letter VAV is like a hook or tent peg.

Love is what secured Christ to the cross and what secures the believer to Jesus. Love for his Wife is what gave Jesus joy when enduring the suffering and shame of death at Calvary. When we count it all joy when suffering for Christ's sake we experience the joint sufferings with Christ that make us worthy of ruling and reigning with him as his wife.

The fastening hooks were upon four sockets of silver. We have again four, the earthly number and silver indicating redemption. Sockets were foundations upon which the pillars stood. Christ is our sure foundation, the chief cornerstone. To his wife, he is all in all, her all-sufficiency in grace.

THE CHERUBIM IN SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

The Wife of the Lamb continues to emerge as the cherubim in Solomon's temple where they appear in several places: carved upon the doors to the Holy of Holies, on the walls of the temple, and on the borders of the ten lavers for washing. They are still seen upon the mercy seat atop the ark of the covenant. But in Solomon's temple there were two more cherubim of olive wood that towered above and over the ark in the Holy of Holies.

The Cherubim Upon the Doors to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies

1 Kings 6:31-35 speaks of two sets of doors. One set led into the Oracle (Holy of Holies), the other led into the temple proper (Holy Place). The doors of the innermost Oracle are noted first, as though looking from the inside out.

The doors to the Holy Place provided access to those of the family of God while the doors to the Holy of Holies gave access to the High Priest only. God's will is that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of Jesus. The word knowledge means *a complete, exact, precise and intimate knowledge* – the kind of knowledge that is shared between a husband and wife. The heart of the Wife of the Lamb has a desire to fully enter in to the most intimate place of her Beloved's heart. She does this because she knows it makes her bridegroom happy and because she knows it is where she belongs. Her appearance as the cherubims on the entry to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies stands as a witness to others of the place they can have with the Lord Jesus too.

These doors that provided access to the Holy Place and to the Holy of Holies were made of the olive tree, which represents fatness and anointing of the Holy Spirit. There is an anointing in the entering in to God's presence. These doors were very ornate, having cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers carved upon both sides of them. It is of particular significance that the cherubim were with palm trees and open flowers.

Naturally speaking, the palm is an amazing tree. There are hundreds of species of palm tree, but the palm tree referenced in the Word of God is specifically the date palm. Palm trees can attain a height of eighty feet, but more commonly grow to a height of forty to fifty feet. Their branches are feathery green fronds from six to 20 feet long. The trunk is straight, tall and unbroken, terminating in a crown of emerald-green plumes. In principle of growth the palm tree is an endogen, and grows from within. Palms begin to bear fruit after six or eight years, and they continue to be productive for up to a century. A palm bears its best fruit in old age.

Not only are palms beautiful trees – they are most useful trees, just like the beautiful vessel that contributes to the usefulness of the Husband. A palm's fruit is the daily food of millions; its sap furnishes an agreeable wine; the fibers of the base of its leaves are woven into ropes and rigging; its tall stem supplies a valuable timber and its leaves are manufactured into brushes, mats, bags, and baskets.

In Song of Solomon 7:7 the Beloved describes his lovely wife, noting that her stature is like that of a palm tree. Her stature is her height, which takes into account her entire being from head to toe. The word stature comes from a root word meaning *to rise up*, and that is exactly what grace has done in her life: it has raised her to the full height and stature of Christ.

Open flowers are beautiful and have a lovely aroma. An open flower has already budded and burst forth. It is at the stage in its life where its color and fragrance are most prominent. Often flowers are mentioned in the Word of God in connection with the frailty of man and the temporal nature of life of earth. Yet God is merciful and He has made the life of *Christ in you the hope of glory* to blossom forever. Open flowers represent those in whom the beauty and fragrance of Christ is manifest for all to see and smell. Between the cherubim, the palms trees, and the open flowers we have a picture of the life cycle of the believer from blossom to maturity.

The Cherubim Upon the Walls

In 1 Kings 6:29 and 2 Chronicles 3:7, the cherubim were carved on all the walls of Solomon's temple, both inside and out. They appear once again with the palm trees and open flowers, as they did on the doors. Their witness and testimony was everywhere, for all to see.

Walls speak of safety, protection, enclosure and security. The walls of Solomon's temple were made of stones that were covered with boards of fragrant and enduring cedar. They were then overlaid with silver and gold. 1 Kings 6:7 tells us the stones used in Solomon's temple were prepared before they were brought to the building site so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was being constructed. The stones had already been prepared – cut, shaped, chiseled and polished – before they arrived at the temple building site. Such is our life in Christ. The Wife of the Lamb is a readied wife. She is a restful wife who has ceased from her own works and allowed God to build His masterpiece. We are His workmanship and we are complete in Christ, the chief corner stone.

The cherubim are described upon the walls of the temple as carved figures. No doubt they were carved with great care and skill by the cunning workmen. This is exactly how God works in our lives, making and molding us, conforming us to the very image of His Son. He painstakingly works on the finest details of our lives, line up on line and precept upon precept. The Wife of the Lamb will take all God's careful cuts and allow Him to form her. She will gladly suffer to rule and reign with her King.

The Cherubim Upon the Borders of the Bases of the Ten Lavers

The next place we see the cherubim in Solomon's temple are upon the borders of the bases of the ten lavers in 1 Kings chapter 7. The bases were rolling square carts that held and transported the lavers of water. In the temple there was a huge molten sea, or bath, for washing and then there were ten smaller lavers for the priests to wash their hands. The bases of the ten lavers include an incredible amount of detail as eleven verses are dedicated to their description.

1 Kings 7:28-29 "And the work of the bases was on this manner: they had borders, and the borders were between the ledges: And on the borders between the ledges were lions, oxen, and cherubim: and upon the ledges there was a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen were certain additions made of thin work." Here the cherubim appear with lions and oxen – animals that represent two of the four aspects of our Savior and Bridegroom as king and servant. Jesus came as a servant, but he will be exalted someday as King. And true to the pattern, his wife will take the place of humble submission and serve before she is exalted. The cherubim as a type of the Wife of the Lamb are always with him.

The borders were enclosed places and the ledges of the bases of the lavers are noted like joints. The lions, oxen, and cherubims dwelt on the borders and between the ledges. The Wife of the Lamb is a joint that richly supplies and she is in a divinely protected enclosed place that only lovers occupy.

The word 'additions' is precious as it denotes *a wreath or garland; an ornament.* It comes from a root word that means *to join or adhere closely.* Wreaths or garlands were worn by ones victorious in battle. Christ is victor over the world, the devil, and the flesh. Through faith in him, his victory is our victory. We are more than conquerors! Because of Jesus we have a crown of grace on our head, for he is the Head of all. We are joined most closely to him when we suffer with him, for suffering is the condition for jointly ruling and reigning with him.

The Two Great Olive Cherubim

The ark and its mercy seat with the two cherubim were placed in Solomon's temple, just as they were in the tabernacles of Moses and David. But in Solomon's temple two more cherubim appear for a total of four cherubim. Two speaks to sufficient witness and a double portion, the true expression of love between a husband and wife. There are four faces of Christ in the gospels, the manifestation of Christ in you the hope of glory, the fulness in the mature Sons of God shown in Solomon's temple.

1 Kings 6:23 tells us that these two additional cherubim were made of olive wood overlaid with gold. They were ten cubits (about 15 feet) tall and overshadowed the ark with its mercy seat and cherubim in the Oracle, or Holy of Holies.

There is a beautiful consideration worth noting with the order of things mentioned between Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple. The ark was the first thing mentioned in the account of the building of the tabernacle in Exodus chapter 25. But in Solomon's temple, the ark was brought in after everything else had been built. Considering that the ark and its covering mercy seat is a picture of the throne and of Jesus and His wife, what an evident display of fullness of God in Christ Jesus and the marriage of the Lamb. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega – the beginning and the end. He was, and is, and ever will be. And his wife was, and is and always will be with him. She has always been his pearl of great price. He has displayed her as his prize, jointly ruling and reigning with him from the very beginning. He is preparing a place for her and patiently waiting for his Father to say, "Son, it's time to go get your bride."

1 Kings 6:24 reveals that these two giant olive cherubim had wings that were each five cubits in length. Considering that each of the cherubim had two wings of five cubits would mean each had a wingspan of ten cubits for the total of a twenty-cubit span between both of the cherubim's wings. The numbers in this are astounding. We begin with five, the number of grace. Everything begins with grace. Without it, there would be no stirring in our hearts to apprehend Jesus as our bridegroom. Then we proceed to ten, the number of responsibility according to ability. By grace we have the ability to begin to lay hold of the responsibility we have in the calling God has for us to marry His Son. Then we come to twenty, the number of redemption and deliverance. This redemption is beyond simple salvation. It is salvation with eternal glory, the complete and finished work of the masterpiece, the vessel that contributes to the usefulness of the Husband, the Wife of the Lamb.

Verse 25 notes that these towering cherubim were of one measure and one size. The Wife of the Lamb will be just like her Husband in every dimension. The bridal gown she will wear at her wedding is one size. It will not be altered, for it is the perfect fit of the plan, passion, and purpose of God in the high calling.

In 2 Chronicles 3:11-12 we see the intricacy and beauty of the wings of the cherubim as it is noted that one wing of one cherubim reached to the wall of the house and then reached to the wing of the other cherubim. And then the other cherubim mirrored the actions of the first, reaching to the opposite wall and then joining itself to the other. The two actions of reaching and joining noted in these two verses are significant in portraying how like Jesus his wife is. The wings of these two great cherubim reach to the walls, but they join to each other. To reach means *to touch, to extend or lay the hand upon.* To join means *to cleave; to adhere, to stick close(r) to.* The Wife of the Lamb extends herself with grace, yet she is tightly knit and closely compacted to her Husband and with him.

2 Chronicles 3:13 continues the description of these two towering cherubim, noting that their wings "spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward."

Wings, feet, and faces are noted in this verse, each with respective actions:

Their wings were spread forth, stretched out and extended. God in His mercy stretches forth His love to us. It covers and protects us; it shields us from the fiery darts of the enemy. We are completely safe in Jesus, fully redeemed by his precious blood.

They stood on their feet**,** erect and stable, not wavering. The walk of a mature Son of God is stable and is not easily moved. By walking with God in fellowship we learn of His ways and we learn to trust Him. This enables us to stand upright and to fully believe Him.

Their faces were inward – looking toward the affairs of the other. We of the household of faith are encouraged in the Word of God to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are to look toward others with kind affection, seeing souls and willing to distribute to the brethren.

THE CHERUBIM IN THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE

We now come to the cherubim in the temple Ezekiel saw in his visions in Ezekiel chapter 41. This temple is the Millennial temple, a temple that has yet to be built. This vision is for the time when Jesus and his wife will be ruling and reigning.

The Cherubim Upon the Walls

In Ezekiel 41:18-19, the cherubim are first mentioned as an ornament upon the wall of the temple:

"And [the wall] was made with cherubim and palm trees, so that a palm was between a cherub and a cherub, and [every] cherub had two faces; so that the face of a man was toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side: it was made through all the house round about."

This is an incredibly intricate description of the wall of this temple. The cherubim here have the face of a man and the face of a young lion with each face looking toward palm trees in between them. The face of the man represents our humanity and weakness while the face of the young lion is Christ in us, the hope of glory, affixed on the high calling. The crown typed in the stately palm is the focus and desire of the cherubim. He is in the midst of her, and she is in the midst of him. She loves to gaze at her king with the crown they both share.

The Cherubim Upon the Doors

Ezekiel 41:23-25 shows us that cherubim and palm trees were also on the doors of the sanctuary in the millennial temple:

"And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. And the doors had two leaves [apiece], two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door. And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubim and palm trees, like as were made upon the walls…"

The 'leaves' on these doors were panels that swung open. The word doors in the Hebrew is from a root word that means *to draw or lift up; to let down (as a bucket in a well to draw water); to deliver.* Wells are places of refreshment and also symbolic of the fountain of living water that flows freely for us. When Rebekah went to the well to draw water for the servant's camels in Genesis 24 it was a sign that she was

the chosen one, the bride for Isaac. Similarly, bridal saints will linger at the well of the Savior's love and drink deeply of the cup of salvation with eternal glory.

These leaves (panels) of the doors are noted as turning, a word in the Hebrew that indicates *being changed, enclosed, set, surrounded.* The wonders of God's love are tucked in the numerous folds of His manifold grace. This is the place of turning to Him for all our needs, relying fully on all the provision in His love to us. There are a few examples of God changing a person's name at a turning point in their lives: Abram became Abraham, Sarai became Sarah, Jacob became Israel, Saul became Paul. How wonderful to consider the turning point in our lives for eternity when we take our new name, that name that God will write upon those in the Philadelphia church in Revelation 3:12!

The cherubims' appearance throughout the Word of God in various places shows God's plan, passion, and purpose for the Wife of Jesus from ages past. The prophets wrote these scriptures for us in such detail. Even the priests who carried out all the duties called for by God didn't have the slightest notion about the Wife of the Lamb and her type in the cherubim they looked upon. The fulfillment of the mystery Paul wrote of wasn't for them during their time on earth. But all is being revealed in this church age, this age of grace. The Wife of the Lamb will come forth soon, victorious to rule and reign with Jesus.