

Message Six

The Joy Set before Christ and the Joy Set before Us

Scripture Reading: Heb. 12:2; Col. 2:15; Rev. 19:7-9; Neh. 8:10c

I. For the joy set before Him, Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, “endured the cross, despising the shame”—Heb. 12:2:

- A. The Lord loved the church and gave Himself up for her—Eph. 5:25.
- B. On the cross the Lord offered Himself as the sacrifice for sins, bearing the sins of many, being made sin for the believers, casting out the ruler of this world and judging this world, and as a grain of wheat, falling into death for the release of the divine life—Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 12:24, 31.
- C. Colossians 2:15 portrays the warfare that took place at the time of Christ’s crucifixion:
 - 1. In His crucifixion Christ was working to accomplish redemption, and God the Father was working to judge sin.
 - 2. At the same time the rulers and authorities were busy in the attempt to frustrate the work of God and Christ—v. 15.
 - 3. The rulers and authorities are evil angels, fallen angels that are subordinates of Satan working for him—Eph. 2:2.
 - 4. While God was judging sin, the evil rulers and authorities were present and were very active, swarming around the crucified Christ, pressing in very closely—Col. 2:15:
 - a. If they had not pressed in closely, God could not have stripped them off.
 - b. The words *stripping off* indicate that the rulers and authorities were very close, as close as our garments are to our body.
 - 5. In stripping off the rulers and authorities, God made a display of them openly, putting them to shame and triumphing over them in the cross—v. 15.

II. The joy set before us is the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, coming for His bride, who has made herself ready—Rev. 19:7-9:

- A. The maturity of the bride—vv. 7-9; Eph. 4:13-15:
 - 1. The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers—Rev. 19:7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.
 - 2. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life, whereas to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Heb. 6:1.
- B. The building of the bride—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16:
 - 1. God’s building is the desire of God’s heart and the goal of God’s salvation—1:5; Exo. 25:8; cf. 1:11; 40:2-3, 34-35.
 - 2. The goal of the Lord’s recovery is to recover Christ as life and everything to us so that we may be built up—Eph. 3:8; 4:16.
 - 3. God’s building is the corporate expression of the Triune God—1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 17:22; Eph. 3:19b, 21.
- C. The righteousness of the bride—Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 22:11-13:
 - 1. As our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God—5:6, 20.

2. The living that is right with both God and man must be God as our expression in our daily living—2 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.
 3. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8.
 4. The wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-13 signifies the Christ whom we live out and who is expressed through us in our daily living as our surpassing righteousness—5:20; Rev. 3:4-5, 18.
- D. The beauty of the bride—Eph. 5:25-27:
1. As the bride, the church needs beauty; the beauty in Ephesians 5 is for the presentation of the bride.
 2. The beauty of the bride comes from the Christ who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church—3:17a:
 - a. Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us.
 - b. What Christ appreciates in us is the expression of Himself.
- E. Ephesians 6 and Revelation 19 reveal that the church as the bride must also be a warrior to defeat God’s enemy:
1. Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body; we are a corporate army fighting the battle for God’s interest on earth—17:14; 19:14; cf. 2 Tim. 2:4.
 2. In Ephesians 5 the word is for nourishment that leads to the beautifying of the bride, but in Ephesians 6 the word is for killing that enables the church as the corporate warrior to engage in spiritual warfare—vv. 17-18.
 3. Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21.
 4. The wedding garment—Christ lived out of us as our daily righteousness—qualifies us not only to attend the wedding but also to join the army to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon—Matt. 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8, 14.

III. “The joy of Jehovah is your strength”—Neh. 8:10c:

- A. According to Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of our Lord is our strength:
1. It is not a matter of our having strength; His joy upholds us—1 Thes. 5:16.
 2. The Lord’s joy has nothing to do with circumstances; He rejoiced in God’s will; there was joy in knowing and doing God’s will.
 3. We should not try to copy the Lord but receive the joy of the Lord:
 - a. We can have something of the Lord imparted to us.
 - b. We can have the joy of the Lord; His joy will be our strength.
- B. At the end of his life Watchman Nee said, in the midst of his sufferings, “I maintain my joy”—*Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 182.
- C. *I maintain my joy* indicates that he was practicing the word of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always.”
- D. Through the mercy and grace of God, may we all be able to maintain our joy by the joy of the Lord as our strength.