

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh

Go and cry

Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord (Jer 2.2)

Get thee up into the high mountain ... lift up thy voice with strength;

lift it up, be not afraid (Isa 40.9)

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet (Isa 58.1)

What shall I cry?

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? (Isa 40.6)

Before the 1st Coming

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord (Isa 40.3)

Before the 2nd Coming

*At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him ...
and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage (Mt 25.6, 10)*

The following notes are not complete.

They are abbreviated outline summaries prepared for pastors' conferences in Uganda. Their aim is to provide as many Bible references as possible to encourage further study.

John L Birkin

www.endtimerestoration.com

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

- *If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself?* (1 Cor 14.8)
- Why is the trumpet blast so loud & urgent before the 2nd Coming?
- Wm Branham vision: A preview of the bride, & a warning

CHOOSING A BRIDE

- Choosing a bride is a serious matter
- What kind of woman for the heavenly Bridegroom?
- Will the end time church meet the Bridegroom's requirements?
- Will there even be an end time bride?

PREPARATION: *His wife hath made herself ready*

- The bride makes herself ready by the Word & by the Spirit
- The Bridegroom also is making preparations

ANTICIPATION: *Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB IS COME

- The Two Cries
- The Bridegroom comes to collect His Bride
- The Marriage Supper
- The Bridegroom
- The Bride
- The Bridegroom's Jubilation
- After the wedding
- To conclude: Two visions of William Branham

THE REWARD TO THE OVERCOMER

- The reward to the overcomer through the ages
- The reward to the overcomer in the final Church Age
- *Look to yourselves ... that we receive a full reward* (2 Jn 8)

***Surely I come quickly.
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
(Rev 22.20)***

INTRODUCTION

1. *If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself?* (1 Cor 14.8)

When God has something important to say, He sends a voice like a trumpet (Isa 58.1).

- Everything must stop at its strident, piercing sound. It demands attention.
- Its loud voice sends a clear message. What? Prepare (1 Cor 14.8)!

Such a voice was sent **just before the 1st Coming**:

- A loud cry to prepare the people & the way (Lk 1.17; Mk 1.2-3).
- A call to come to the wedding. All things are ready (Mt 22.4,8).

Today, **just before the 2nd Coming**, another such loud, clear voice is sounding out:

- A call to be ready to meet the coming bridegroom (Mt 25.6, 10).
- A call to the bride to make herself ready (Rev 19.7; 21.2).

This is the preeminent message of our day.

- For **pastors** to make their people ready for presentation to Him at His Coming.
- For **the people** to make themselves ready for His Coming.

2. Why is the trumpet blast so loud & urgent before the 2nd Coming?

Because not all professing believers will be ready

- In Matthew 24 & 25, when asked about the signs of His 2nd Coming, Jesus put more emphasis on watching, being faithful & being ready for His Coming than on its signs.
- When the midnight cry comes, even some of the 10 virgins were unready.
 - At the last moment they realised they had no oil for their lamps (Mt 25.8).
 - Only those who had prepared & had oil went into the wedding (Mt 25.10).
 - The rest were too late. They found the door shut (Cp Gen 7.16; Lk 13.25).

As the Jews were unready at the 1st Coming, so shall the Church be at the 2nd

At the 1st Coming, for the Jew,

- Some invited to the marriage lacked a wedding garment (Mt 22.11-12).
 - The result? They were cast into outer darkness (Mt 22.13).
- They refused to receive Him, the Word (Jn 1.1, 11; Lk 19.14).
- Both leaders & people were blind, (Mt 15.14; Jn 9.39-41).
 - And also blinded. Blinded by whom? By God Himself (Jn 12.37-40).
- They were lukewarm, without a genuine fervent love (Mt 15.7-8).
 - How was this revealed? In their attitude to the Word (Mt 15.3-6,9).
- They were adulterous (Mt 12.39; 16.4).
 - How is spiritual adultery revealed? By love of the world (Jas 4.4).
- They were rejected/cast out for unbelief (Lk 13.22-30; Mt 8.11-12; 21.43).

Likewise at the 2nd coming, the professing Church:

- Lacks proper garments for the wedding. In fact, she is naked/unclothed & does not even know it!

- She has no white garments (Rev 3.18), i.e. wedding garments (Rev 19.7).
- Like Samson, she is unaware she has lost the mantle of the Spirit (Ju 16.20; 6.34; Lk 24.49; 2 K 2.12-15).
- Worst of all, since the shame of her nakedness is not covered (Rev 3.17-18), her sin is not covered (Cp Gen 3.7, 21). She has no garment of salvation or robe of righteousness (Ps 132.9,16; Isa 61.10).
- Refuses His authority, rebelling against His rule (2 Th 2.3).
 - Christ (the Word) is put out of His own church (Rev 3.20).
- Is blind and not even aware of it (Rev 3.17-18) (cp Gen 19.11; 2 K 6.18-19).
 - And also blinded/deceived by God (Mt 24.24; 2 Th 2.9-11; 2 Tim 4.4).
- Is lukewarm (Rev 3.15-16). To be lukewarm is to lack a fervent love.
 - What is the evidence of true love for God? The attitude to His Word (1 Jn 5.3; 2 Jn 6; Jn 14.15).
 - But the end-time church turns from the Word (2 Th 2.3; 2 Tim 4.3-4; Rev 3.20).
- Is worldly (2 Tim 3.1-5).
 - To love the world is spiritual adultery (Jas 4.4; 1 Jn 2.15).
- Is spiritually poor & not even aware of it (Rev 3.17-18).
 - The nature of her poverty is explained by the Lord's remedy: gold tried in the fire i.e. she lacks true faith (1 P 1.7; cp Jas 2.5).
 - This is confirmed by Jesus' question whether he would find faith (i.e. the true original faith, Jude 3) when He returned (Lk 18.8).

The result? She is rejected/cut off,

- Because of lukewarmness (Rev 3.16).
- Because of unbelief, like the Jew, as Paul warned (Ro 11.18-22).

3. Wm Branham vision: A preview of the bride, & a warning

In 1964 a vision was given to a supernaturally vindicated prophet called to blow the trumpet loud & clear with a message to prepare the bride for her coming Bridegroom.

He was in a stand, awaiting a preview of the bride.

Firstly the true Church

- Passed the preview stand in their different national clothing.
- Modestly dressed, all marching in step to a tune of Christian commitment.

Then the end time professing church

- Very immodestly dressed, dancing to worldly music.
- Marched up to the brink of a hill, but then dropped off out of sight.

Finally the true end time Church again,

- Marching, modestly dressed as before, with eyes towards the preview stand.
- As she marched, she began to ascend into the skies.
- But, as the preview was ending, a couple of the ladies at the end of the line lost their concentration, looking around at the modern church & getting out of step.
- The vision ended with WB screaming out, "Don't do that!! Stay in line! Stay in line! Don't get out of step!"

This is the prophetic clarion call to the end time Church. The last voice of the Spirit to the Church age. Get back to the Word! Bring all things into line with the Word

CHOOSING A BRIDE

1. Choosing a bride is a serious matter

In Bible times, a friend or servant may be involved in choosing & preparing a **natural** bride. Two examples show how seriously the task was taken, & illustrate how to choose & prepare a **spiritual** bride.

Isaac (Gen 24)

- The task must be undertaken faithfully & seriously.
 - The servant is given a solemn charge, bound by oath (v 2-9).
 - He must only choose the right type of woman:
 - Not a Canaanite (v 3).
 - Someone willing to forsake home & family for a man she has never seen (v 8).
- The servant is faithful & fully committed to his commission.
 - He refuses food until he discharges it (v 33).
 - Once fed & rested, he wishes immediately to return to present the espoused wife to the bridegroom (v 54-56).

The king of Persia (Es 2.2-3)

- Officers are appointed to search all parts of the kingdom for suitable candidates.
- A very high official was given full-time responsibility for those selected,
 - To keep them separate from the outside world in the house of women.
 - To provide all things necessary for their purification.
 - To prepare them for presentation to the king (Es 2.3, 9, 12-13).

The ministry of choosing & preparing a spiritual bride for the Lord is even more serious. Let us look at two examples.

John the Baptist

- He was not only a messenger sent to prepare the people & the way for the 1st Coming (Mk 1.2-3; Lk 1.17).
- He was also the friend of the Bridegroom responsible to prepare the children of bridechamber for the coming Bridegroom (Jn 3.29; Mt 9.15).
- John was totally devoted to his ministry, not worldly (Mt 3.4; 11.7-8; Lk 1.80).
- How did he prepare the bride? By the Word & the Spirit.
 - The Word of the Lord came to him (Lk 3.2).
 - He spoke fearlessly before the people, soldiers, religious leaders & king.
 - Its content was simple. Repent! i.e. go back to the original Word (Mt 3.2).
 - His Word was purifying (Mt 3.1-12; 11.7-9).
 - The reason? He ministered in power and in the Spirit (Lk 1.17).
 - He was full of the Spirit from the womb (Lk 1.15).
 - He was also a prophet, a seer.
 - More than a prophet, he was the greatest of the prophets (Mt 11.9-11).
- The Bridegroom was pleased with the bride he prepared (Jn 3.29).

Paul

- Like all true NT ministers, Paul prepared the bride of his day for the 2nd Coming.
- Like John, he was totally dedicated to his task (Acts 20.24).

- He was ever conscious of the day he would present the woman he was preparing to the Bridegroom (Col 1.28; 1 Th 2.19; 2 Cor 4.14; 11.2; 2 Tim 2.15).
- He was full of the jealousy of God Himself about the type of woman and ensuring her single-minded faithfulness (2 Cor 11.2; Ex 34.14).

2. What kind of woman is the heavenly Bridegroom seeking?

What kind of woman is the heavenly Bridegroom looking/coming for?

A pure, holy virgin

Just as it was virgins that were sought for Isaac & the king of Persia (Es 2.2; Gen 24.16), so the heavenly Bridegroom is coming for a bride untouched by any other (Mt 25.1-13).

Paul was seeking a woman who was faithful, not adulterous or a flirt, but:

- A chaste, pure, undefiled virgin, betrothed to one husband only and with eyes for one man only (2 Cor 11.2).

Under the Law of Moses, once betrothed, although not yet one, the couple are deemed married (Lk 2.5).

- The punishment for infidelity after betrothal was the same as for after marriage, death (Dt 22.22-24).
- The penalty for spiritual infidelity is the same.

Separate

The woman He is seeking must not only be separate from other men, but also from the world and from all other loyalties.

- Just as Abraham solemnly instructed his servant not to choose a Canaanite for his son (Gen 24.3), so the heavenly bride must be separate from & not conformed to the world (Ro 12.2; 2 Cor 6.17).
 - To love the world is to not have the love of the Father (1 Jn 2.15).
 - A friend of the world is an enemy of God and an adulterer (Jas 4.4).
 - To be spotted with the world is to be defiled (Jas 1.27).
- Like Rebecca (Gen 24.8, 57-58), she must be willing to forsake all, even home & family, for a Bridegroom she has not yet seen (Ps 45.10; Lk 14.26; 1 P 1.8).

He is coming back for a woman who forsakes all for Him, not for a defiled adulteress.

Loving

The woman He is seeking for will be totally devoted to her Bridegroom. How is her devotion manifested? By her attitude to His Word.

- To love God is to love His Word (1 Jn 5.3; Jn 14.15, 23).

This is illustrated by what happened to the first Church Age, Ephesus. She left her first love (Rev 2.4). How? What does this expression mean?

- Paul feared that the early Church bride would be seduced, like the first bride Eve.
- He strongly exhorted her not to give ear to any other voice than the One she first heard (2 Cor 11.2-3; Col 2.4, 18; Ro 16.18; Gal 1.6-9). Like other NT writers (2 P

3.1-2; 1 Jn 2.24; 2 Jn 6-7; Ju 3), Paul warned her to stay true to the original Word first brought at the beginning.

- But she received a different word into the womb of her mind than the one she first heard. She opened her ear to another voice, another word (Gen 3.1-4; 2 Cor 11.3-4).
- When she left the Word she heard at the beginning, she left her first love (2 Jn 6).

The woman Jesus is coming for will be totally devoted to & submissive to Him. Her eyes will be for Him alone and her ears for His Word only.

Wm Branham story of rich US big business heir seeking a bride:

- The kind of women who presented themselves to him.
- The kind of woman he was looking for.
- His chosen bride's eager anticipation of the day he would return to marry her & take her to the home he had gone to prepare for her.

3. Will the end time church meet the Bridegroom's requirements?

The coming of the Bridegroom is very near. But will the modern church be acceptable? Will she be fit for presentation to Him? Will He find in her what He is seeking?

No.

The Bible says the last days would be dangerous times (2 Tim 3.1). How? The end time professing church would be far from what He is looking for. Instead of being a pure, holy virgin, separate & loving, she will be worldly & adulterous, lukewarm & rebellious.

Worldly & Adulterous

She will be:

- Unseparated, unholy, despising the good, with only an outward appearance of godliness, not the real thing (2 Tim 3.1-5)
- Worldly, loving self, money & pleasure more than God (2 Tim 3.2,4)
 - Riches & pleasures choke the Word in the heart (Lk 8.14).

To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God & an adulterer (Jas 4.4). To love the world is to be unfaithful to the Bridegroom, who is the Word (Jn 1.1).

He is not coming back for an adulteress.

Lukewarm

The church of Laodicea is prophetic of the end time church. Not only is she worldly, she is lukewarm, half-hearted, lacking fervour & passion (Rev 3.15-16).

How is that lukewarmness manifested?

- By her attitude to the Word.
- To love God is to love His Word (Jn 14.15, 23; 1 Jn 5.3; 2 Jn 6).

How can lukewarmness be corrected?

- The answer is the cry of the Spirit to Laodicea. Repent (Rev 3.19), i.e. turn back.
- Turn back to what? To the original Word given at the beginning (2 Jn 6).

Rebellious, Insubordinate

The end time Laodicean church is not only half-hearted towards His Word. She stubbornly resists & wilfully rebels against It.

In the spiritually dangerous last times, professing believers will:

- Not only ***turn their ears from*** the Truth (2 Tim 4.3).
- But also ***resist*** the Truth (i.e. the Word, Jn 17.17) (2 Tim 3.8).

In fact, Paul warned of a major rebellion/mutiny in the church before the day of Christ (2 Th 2.3).

- In a mutiny, the soldiers do not desert. They remain, but refuse their commander's orders.
- Who is the Commander of the Church? Jesus, the Word (Jn 1.1; Rev 19.13).

The rebellion in the church will be very far-reaching:

- Many will turn from the Truth, including many leaders (2 Tim 4.3).
- It will be so bad that Jesus, the Word, will be outside His own church (Rev 3.20).
- In fact Jesus questioned whether He would find faith when He returns (Lk 18.8).
 - Which faith? The original faith (Ju 3), as it was at the beginning.

The consequences of the rebelliousness against the Truth, the Word, are very solemn.

- God Himself sends strong delusion so that they believe a lie (2 Th 2.10-11).
- The rebels shall be turned to believing in fables (2 Tim 4.3-4).
- Turned by whom? By God. This is divine judgement.

This will be the greatest deception in all history.

- There will not only be a flood of seducing spirits, false prophets & false teachers.
- Many great wonders will be done, and done in His Name (Mt 7.22-23; 24.4, 11, 24; 2 Th 2.9; 2 Tim 3.8-9; Rev 13.11-17).

4. Will there even be an end time bride?

What a dismal picture! The end time, final, Laodicean Church Age is,

- Worldly & adulterous, lukewarm, rebellious.
- Naked, blind, spiritually poor (Rev 3.17-18).

No wonder the Bible says perilous times will come in the last times (2 Tim 3.1).

No wonder Jesus,

- Questions whether He will find the faith when He returns (Lk 18.8).
- Spits the Laodicean church out of His mouth (Rev 3.16).

With such a scenario, when He comes, will He find a bride among the end time church? Will anyone overcome such a terrible spiritual atmosphere?

The overcomers

Yes!

Even in perilous end time Laodicea, of which no good thing is spoken, there will still be,

- Those who heed the last call of the Spirit to repent & open the door to Christ (Rev 3.19-20).
- Those who overcome (Rev 3.21).

They overcome,

- **The wicked one** (1 Jn 2.13-14).
- **The world** (1 Jn 5.4-5). Pure & fervently loyal/faithful to the Bridegroom, they are separate from it and not in an adulterous relationship with it.
- **False prophets and the spirit of antichrist** (1 Jn 4.4). Being wholly submissive to His will & His Word, they measure all things by the Word and so overcome the end time flood of deception.

How do they overcome?

How do they overcome in such a spiritually dangerous time? By the Word & the Spirit.

By the Word

The indwelling Word gives the strength & ability to overcome the wicked one (1 Jn 2.14).

The end time bride returns to and holds tight to the original faith/Word, i.e. her first love.

- Just as the early Church was exhorted to do when invaded by seducing spirits (Ju 3; 1 Tim 1.3; 4.16; 6.20-21; 2 Tim 2.2; 3.13-4.2).

She measures all things by the original Word (Gal 1.8-9), not by miracles, signs & wonders (Mt 7.21-23; 24.11, 24; 2 Cor 11.13-15; 2 Tim 3.8; 2 Th 2.9-11).

- Just as her Bridegroom (Mt 4.4, 7, 10; Rev 19.13, 15).
- Just as the early Church (Rev 2.2; 1 Jn 4.1).

Her final authority in all things is, *What saith the Scripture?*

- Just as her Bridegroom (e.g. Mt 4.4,7,10; 12.3; 22.29).
- Just as Paul in the first Church Age (e.g. Ro 4.3; Gal 4.30).

By the Spirit

Where will she gain the power & strength to hold firm to, stand firm for & speak the Word in these perilous last days?

- By the Spirit (Lk 21.15; Acts 6.10; 2 Tim 1.13-14; Eph 6.17; Jer 5.14).
- The same Spirit that inspired & is in the Word (2 Tim 3.16; 2 P 1.21).
- Just as her Bridegroom (Lk 4.1,14; Jn 6.63; 2 Th 2.8; Isa 11.4).

And that same Spirit will guide her & give discernment when she meets the powerful end time deception (1 Jn 2.20, 27; 4.1, 4; 1 Cor 12.10).

***You are of God, little children, and have overcome them,
because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
(1 Jn 4.4)***

PREPARATION

His wife hath made herself ready (Rev 19.7)

Just as the bride **overcomes** in the final Laodicea age by the Word & the Spirit, so she **makes herself ready** before the 2nd Coming by the Word & the Spirit as she heeds the prophetic message of the hour delivered in the power of the Spirit.

1. Made ready by the Word & by the Spirit

Made ready by the prophetic Word in the power of the Spirit

Before the 1st Coming, the bride at the end of the Jewish age was prepared by the prophetic Word proclaimed in the Spirit & power of Elijah (Lk 1.15, 17; 3.2).

- What was its message? Repent! (Lk 3.3) Go back to what you have left.
- How did this make her ready? It restored what had been lost, taking her back to what she had turned away from, the original Word.

Before the 2nd Coming, the bride of the last Church age is also prepared & made ready (Rev 19.7; 21.2). How?

- Exactly as at the 1st Coming, by the prophetic Word, brought in the Spirit of Elijah, calling her back to the original Word (Mal 4.5-6; Mt 17.10-13).

(This falling from the original began in the very first Church age. Even then she was being called by the Spirit back to the original Word as other voices tried to seduce her from it (Gal 1.8; 2 Cor 11.2-4; 2 P 3.1-2; I Jn 2.7, 24; 2 Jn 6; Ju 3).)

Let us look more closely at how the end time bride is made ready.

Purified by the Word & the Spirit

Before presentation to an earthly king, Esther spent much time purifying herself.

- How? By oil of myrrh (Es 2.12).

The heavenly bride awaiting presentation to the King of kings purifies herself (1 Jn 3.3).

- How? By obeying the Word (1 P 1.22).
- What is the secret of the purifying power of the Word? The Spirit (1 P 1.22).
- How well this is symbolised by the oil of myrrh.
 - Oil signifies the Holy Ghost.
 - Myrrh holds back death & decay, & repels insects & snakes.

Washed, cleansed & sanctified by the Word & the Spirit

Before significant OT meetings with God, people washed, cleansed themselves & were sanctified. (E.g. Jacob & his family at Bethel (Gen 35.2); Israel at Sinai (Ex 19.14)).

Likewise, before entering the dwelling place of God to minister, the OT priests washed in the water of the laver (Ex 30.17-21).

- But this was not normal water.
 - It was spiritual water, i.e. supplied by the Spirit (1 Cor 10.4).
 - It was provided supernaturally in a dry, waterless desert (Ex 17.1, 6).

Now the OT priest is a shadow of the NT believer, who is also a priest (1 P 2.5).

- Like the OT priest, before entering His dwelling-place, her future home, the bride also is washed, cleansed & sanctified.
- Like the OT priest, she too is washed in supernatural, spiritual water.

What is this supernatural cleansing & sanctifying water? The Word & the Spirit.

- The **Water of the Word** (Eph 5.26; Jn 15.3; 17.17; Ps 119.9).
- The **Water of the Spirit** (1 Cor 6.11; 2 Th 2.13; 1 P 1.2).

The cleansing & sanctifying power of the Spirit is also called the renewing of the Holy Ghost (Ti 3.5).

- This is a day by day process (2 Cor 4.16; Ro 12.2 Eph 4.23-24).
- Its result? To transform the bride into the image of her Groom (Col 3.10).

So, unlike the professing end time church,

- Instead of *denying* the power of godliness (2 Tim 3.5), she *experiences* it.
- The result? She becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 P 1.3-4; Heb 12.10).

Wrinkles, spots & blemishes removed by the Word & the Spirit

The Word & the Spirit not only wash, cleanse & sanctify the bride ready for presentation to her Bridegroom. They also remove wrinkles, spots & blemishes (Eph 5.27).

- **Wrinkles:** Skin becomes less elastic with age due to reduced production of natural oils. The best natural anti-wrinkle cream is honey mixed with oil.
 - The spiritual equivalent is the honey of the Word (Ps 19.10) together with the oil of the Spirit.
- **Spots & blemishes** are impurities expelled from the body through the pores.
 - In the natural, they may be eradicated by applying honey mixed with oil. This draws out the blemishes from the pores.
 - Likewise the Word & the Spirit remove spiritual spots & blemishes.

2. Filled with the Word & filled with the Spirit

All glorious within (Ps 45.13)

The bride not only prepares herself externally, but internally.

The mouth reveals what is in the heart (Lk 6.45).

- Out of the mouth of some comes very bad spiritual breath (Ro 3.13). They breathe out corruption, decay & death (Pro 18.21; Acts 9.1).
- But the lips of the bride are full of honey & milk (SoS 4.11). Why? She is **full of the Word** (Ps 19.10; 1 P 2.2) & the blessings of the Promised Land (Ex 3.8).

The eyes are the light of the body (Lk 11.34), revealing what is within.

- What some eyes reveal is not pleasant (Pro 28.22; 30.17; 2 P 2.14; 1 Jn 2.16).
- But the eyes of the bride overcome the Bridegroom (SoS 4.9; 6.4-5). Why?
 - They are like the eyes of a dove (SoS 1.15), i.e. gentle & loyal.
 - The dove is the symbol of the Holy Ghost (Mt 3.16). Since the eyes reveal what is within, to have doves' eyes is to be **full of the Spirit**.
 - They are like His own eyes (SoS 4.1; 5.12). He has the Spirit without measure (Jn 3.34).

ANTICIPATION

***Surely I come quickly.
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
(Rev 22.20)***

In earthly weddings, for both bride & groom, the period from agreeing a marriage to marriage itself is a time of deep anticipation & longing to be together.

Sometimes the anticipation is greater because,

- The bride may not have even seen the face of the groom before the marriage (Gen 24.51, 58).
- Nor the groom seen his bride until the marriage (Gen 24.65).

Likewise with the marriage of the heavenly Bridegroom & His bride. Both eagerly anticipate His coming for her.

The bride

Though she has never seen His face, the bride's love for her absent & unseen Beloved is deep (1 P 1.8; SoS 8.14).

She eagerly awaits not just full salvation (Heb 9.28), or a crown (2 Tim 4.8), or to be glorified (1 Jn 3.2) or even to see His glory (Ti 2.13), but her wedding day.

- Her cry (Rev 22.17; SoS 8.14).
- His response (Rev 22.20a).
- Her passionate reply (Rev 22.20b).

The Bridegroom

The Beloved recalls her first love (Jer 2.2; SoS 3.11), & desires to have her with Him (SoS 2.13-14; 4.8-9).

His longings towards her were revealed at the last supper (Mt 26.26-29).

- He looked to a specific day when He would drink with her again (Mt 26.29).
- What day? Another supper, the *marriage* supper (Mt 22.2, 4; Rev 19.9).
- Meanwhile, He told her that every celebration of the last supper was:
 - Not only to be a reminder of His past, final supper with her before dying.
 - But also an anticipation of the coming future marriage supper after He returns for her (1 Cor 11.25-26).

Meanwhile, the Bridegroom also is preparing

In the meantime, it is not only the bride who is getting ready. He also is preparing.

- ***A wedding feast*** is being made ready (Mt 22.4).
- ***A city, a kingdom & a place*** are all being prepared for a future home for His bride (Jn 14.2-3; Heb 11.16; Mt 25.34).
- ***Unspecified other "things"*** are also in preparation (1 Cor 2.9).

Two Wm Branham stories of young women awaiting their wedding day

The US student in Rome

- She disregarded the worldly ways, mocking & enticements of her fellow students.
- She remained faithful to her betrothed preparing a home for her in a far land.

The orphan girl on a US ranch

- The type of woman the son of the owner was looking for.
- She prepared & eagerly awaited the promised return of her groom, despite the mocking of her stepsisters.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB IS COME

At last the day is finally about to dawn!

- The day the Bridegroom has longed for & waited for with long patience (Jas 5.7; SoS 2.13-14; 4.8-9).
- The day the bride also has looked for (Ti 2.13), eagerly awaited (1 Cor 1.7; Heb 9.28; Phil 3.20) & loved (2 Tim 4.8), the day she will be presented to her Groom (Eph 5.27).

1. The Two Cries

As the time draws near, 2 very loud cries are heard, one on earth & one in heaven.

On earth

A call to urgently get ready for the coming Bridegroom.

Just as at the 1st Coming:

- A loud voice cried out,
 - *Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight* (Mk 1.3).
- Messengers announced to those invited to the wedding,
 - *Behold, I have prepared my dinner ... all things are ready* (Mt 22.3-4).

So at the 2nd Coming,

- At midnight, a loud clamour is heard,
 - *Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.* (Mt 25.6)
- But only,
 - *they that were ready went in with him to the wedding* (Mt 25.10).

In heaven

Meanwhile, in heaven, the jubilant voice of a great multitude rings out, like the sound of many waters & mighty thunderings:

- *The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready* (Rev 19.5-7).

2. The Bridegroom comes to collect His Bride

The Lord Himself

The Bridegroom leaves His throne & comes down in person for His bride (1 Th 4.16).

- Not like Elijah, for whom He sent a chariot of fire & a whirlwind (2 K 2.11).
- Nor like others, who are carried up by the angels (Lk 16.22; Mt 24.31).

With the trumpet of God

As when the Lord came down on Sinai (Ex 19.16), the trumpet will sound (1 Th 4.16).

At the sound of the trumpet we shall be changed/transfigured (1 Cor 15.51-54).

- How? Into His likeness (1 Jn 3.1-2; Ps 17.15; 90.17).
- Our body will be like the body of His glory (Phil 3.21).

In the Clouds

As He departed in clouds, so He returns with clouds (Acts 1.9-11; Mt 24.30; 26.64).

- Why? The clouds are His chariot (Ps 104.3; Isa 19.1; Rev 14.14).

As He descends in clouds, so His bride ascends to meet Him in clouds (1 Th 4.17).

- He sent a chariot of fire to collect Elijah (2 K 2.11).
- He sends chariots of clouds to catch up His bride to meet Him (cp Rev 11.12).

3. The Marriage Supper

Earthly marriage feasts were special occasions (Gen 29.22; Jud 14.12; Es 2.18).

- When Jesus attended an **earthly** marriage feast, the end was better than the beginning (Jn 2.10).
- What, then, will the **heavenly** feast/supper be like (Mt 22.1-12; Rev 19.9)?

This supper has been long anticipated by both bride & Groom:

- **The Groom** spoke of His longings for this day at the last supper (Mt 26. 26-29).
 - He referred to a day when He would once again drink with her (Mt 26.29).
 - What day? At another supper, the *marriage* supper.
- **The bride** remembers it at every celebration of the last supper (1 Cor 11.25-26).
 - Not only is this a reminder of His past, final supper with her before dying.
 - It is also an anticipation of the coming future marriage supper after He returns for her.

4. The Bridegroom

At last she sees Her Bridegroom face to face for the first time!

- *thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty* (Lit = shining) (Isa 33.17).
- *we shall see him as He is* (1 Jn 3.2).

What a sight awaits her wondering eyes! What exactly did she see?

His face (Rev 22.4)

It is said of Moses that the Lord spoke to him face to face (Ex 33.11).

- But even he did not have a full view of His face (Ex 33.23).
- No man in an unredeemed body can bear the sight of the glory & light that He lives in (1 Tim 6.16; 1 Jn 1.5).

Hitherto we have never seen the face of our Betrothed.

- Like Rebecca, we have loved our unseen Bridegroom, based on the divinely confirmed testimony of one of His servants (Gen 24; 1 P 1.8).
- But now, at last, we shall see His face (Rev 22.4).

What will it look like?!

His glory

At last the prayer of the Lord will be answered. We shall see His glory (Jn 17.24).

- It will be like the sun (Ps 19.5; Rev 1.16; Mt 17.2).
- In fact, it will be above the brightness of the sun at its highest point (Acts 26.13).

In our present body, we cannot even look upon the brightness of the natural sun.

- But on that day we shall look upon the heavenly Sun of righteousness (Mal 4.2).
- We shall be able to see Him in all His glory (Jn 17.24; Ju 24).

His adorning

That glory is also seen in the Bridegroom's wedding garments.

- In the language in which the Bible was first written, Isa 61.10 says that a bridegroom, "*adorns himself like as a priest with his headdress/turban.*"
- What does this tell us about the wedding clothes of our heavenly Bridegroom? Why are they like those of a priest?
 - Priests wear white linen tunics & turbans for beauty & glory (Ex 28.40).
- What do these garments symbolise?
 - The tunic symbolises the glory which clothes Him (Mt 17.2; Rev 10.1).
 - The turban symbolises His crown of glory (Cp SoS 3.11; Heb 2.10).

His wounds

Why is this the marriage of ***the Lamb*** (Rev 19.7), not of ***the Lion*** (Rev 5.5)?

- Because the Lamb bore the marks of its death: i.e. *as it had been slain* (Rev 5.6).
- The marks of those mortal wounds are a permanent reminder of the depths of His love & the price He paid to win His bride (Cp Isa 49.16).

5. The Bride

I will shew thee the bride ...

prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev 21.9, 2)

Her dress

The prophet asked: *Can a bride forget her attire?* (Jer 2.32). She will certainly never forget this one! She will wear it through all eternity.

Details of the wedding dress are found in Rev 19.8 & Isa 61.10.

Arrayed in fine linen, clean and white (Rev 19.8)

- ***Arrayed***: i.e. *fully* covered. Why? To hide the shame of her nakedness when she lost her original glory (Gen 3.8-10).
 - Not like Laodicea, not even aware of her shame (Rev 3.17-18).
- ***Fine linen***: which repels sweat (Ezk 44.18).
 - Why? Sweat is a result of the curse (Gen 3.19).
 - So, the linen symbolises the overcoming of the effects of the curse.
- ***Clean***: i.e. unspotted by the flesh or the world (Ju 23; Jas 1.27).
- ***White***: not normal white but shining, brilliant, dazzling white; radiating light.
 - How did she get these white garments? From the Bridegroom (Rev 3.18).
 - How are they so white? They are washed in His blood (Rev 7.14; 1.5).
 - Apart from purity, what do white garments signify in the Bible?
 - The garments of an overcomer (Rev 3.4-5).
 - Joyfulness (Eccl 9.7-8).

Clothed with the garments of salvation, covered with the robe of righteousness (Isa 61.10)

Who else is clothed like this?

- The OT priests (Ps 132.9, 16).
- So, since believers are priests (1 P 2.5, 9; Rev 1.6), the OT priests' garments tell us something about those of the bride.

Among other things, they are:

- **linen** (Ex 28.42) (Cp Ezk 44.18 & Gen 3.19)
- **made by Holy Ghost-inspired hands**, not by man's wisdom (Ex 31.3,10)
- **holy** (Ex 28.2; Ezk 42.14)
- **anointed** with the holy anointing oil (Ex 40.15)

But there is something even more significant about these priestly garments.

- Moses describes them as **for beauty & glory** (Ex 28.40).
- Why, then, does David say the priests are clothed with salvation & with righteousness (Ps 132.9, 16)?
- Because they mean the same thing.
 - To be **clothed in beauty** is to be clothed in salvation (Ps 149.4).
 - To be **clothed in glory** is also to be clothed in salvation.
- Full salvation is to recover the lost glory of God (1 Cor 11.7; Ro 3.23; Ro 5.2; Col 1.27; Rev 21.11). Adam was naked because he was no longer clothed in his original glory. Jesus died to restore man's lost garment of beauty & glory.

Clothed by Jesus

How can the bride afford such a beautiful & glorious wedding dress?

- She cannot. It is freely provided by Her Bridegroom (Rev 19.8, "**granted**").
- Just as Rebecca was given clothing from Isaac's inheritance (Gen 24.10, 36, 53).
- But Jesus not only paid for it himself, He paid a very high price, His own Blood (Rev 7.14). The costliest wedding dress ever.

Clothed with Jesus

Finally, & most remarkable of all,

- She is not only **clothed by Jesus** (i.e. freely given & paid for by Him).
 - She is **clothed with Jesus** (Ro 13.14).
- She is, not only **robed in righteousness** (Isa 61.10; Rev 19.8).
 - She is **robed in Jesus**, for He *is* her righteousness (Jer 23.6; 1 Cor 1.30).

So, to sum up, what is her wedding dress? Jesus!

Her headdress

As well as robes, OT priests also wore a *turban/hat* of beauty & glory (Ex 28.40).

As with the robe, the turban/hat of the priests tells us about the headdress of the bride.

- She is not only **robed** in glory, she is also **crowned** with glory (Ps 8.5).

As with the robe,

- It is the Lord who **provides** her crown of beauty (Ezk 16.12).
- It is the Lord Himself who **is** her crown of beauty & glory (Isa 28.5).

Furthermore, she is His crown (Isa 62.3).

Her ornaments

In addition to her dress and headdress, a bride also wears jewels (Isa 61.10c; Jer 2.32).

- Like her garment, as with Rebecca, these too are provided by the Groom (Gen 24.53; Ezk 16.12).

Furthermore, she is not only *adorned* with jewels.

- As with the crown, she *is* herself a jewel, **His** jewel (Mal 3.17).

Her personal beauty, without & within

Truly her dress, her headdress & her ornaments are beautiful. But so also is she herself. And her beauty & glory is *internal*, not merely *external* (1 Tim 2.9; 1 P 3.3-4).

- Not just *upon & around* her, but radiating from *within* her.
- Just like Jesus at the transfiguration (Mt 17.2).

She is:

- **Spotless**, undefiled (SoS 4.7; 5.2; Eph 5.27).
- Not just *fair*, or even *the fairest*, but **all fair** (SoS 1.15; 1.8; 4.7).
- Not just *glorious* (Eph 5.27) but **all glorious** (Ps 45.13); **full of glory** (1 P 1.8).
- **Perfect in beauty** (Ps 50.2; Ezk 16.12).

All glorious, all fair, perfect in beauty! How appropriate that the root meaning of the OT word “bride” is “to make perfect or complete”.

Surely there can be no more. But, amazingly, there is.

6. The Bridegroom’s jubilation

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair (SoS 1.15)

Amazingly, the Bridegroom sees something even better. He sees not only a perfect, spotless, all fair, all glorious bride. He sees Himself.

When He appears, she not only appears with Him in glory (Col 3.4).

- She is perfect *in Him* (Col 1.28).
- She is complete *in Him* (Col 2.10).

She has His likeness (1 Jn 3.2; Ps 17.15), a likeness seen in her every detail:

- **Overall appearance:** dazzling as the sun, like Him (Ps 19.5 + Mt 13.43).
- **Wedding dress:**
 - Not just a robe of glory, but of *His* glory (Jn 17.22; 2 Th 2.14).
 - Not just put on by Him. It is Him put on (Ro 13.14).
- **Beauty:** Not just *from* Him, it *is* Him, *His own* beauty (Ezk 16.14).
- **Eyes:** He is overcome by her eyes (SoS 4.9). Why?
 - Not just because they are like doves’ eyes, gentle & loyal.
 - But because they are like His own eyes (SoS 4.1; 5.12).
- **Aroma/perfume:** Her aroma is the aroma of Himself (2 Cor 2.15).

No wonder that the Groom,

- Greatly desires her beauty (Ps 45.11).
- Is delighted at the fruits of her preparation (SoS 4.8-12,15), the result both of her own labours and of those sent to prepare her.

Doubtless, like an earthly bridegroom, He will leap for joy over her (Is 62.5).

Doubtless also He will rejoice with singing (Cp Zeph 3.17). Whatever will it sound like?

- The shepherds heard a multitude of the heavenly host singing (Lk 2.13-14).
- John heard the incredible sound of over 100 million angels singing (Rev 5.11).
- But surely all heaven must fall silent at the incomparable, awesome sound of God Himself joyfully singing on His wedding day!

7. After the wedding

After the wedding He takes her to His home to be with Him forever (Gen 24.67; 1 Th 4.17; Jn 14.3; 17.24).

That home is the innermost sanctuary of His palace/temple, His dwelling place.

- It was foreshadowed by the Holy of Holies. (Compare Rev 21.16,18,21 & 1 K 6.20,21-22,28,30.)

But the Holy of Holies not only foreshadows His dwelling place. It also foreshadows the Church, His bride.

- She not only *dwells in* the Holy of Holies, she *is* the Holy of Holies. She is the dwelling place of God by the Spirit (1 Cor 3.16; 6.19; 2 Cor 6.16; Eph 2.21).

There she is totally one with Him.

- Joined to Him, she is one Spirit with Him (1 Cor 6.17).
- She is in Him & He in her (Jn 14.20).
- As Eve, the first bride, was in Adam at the beginning (Gen 2.21-23; 5.2), so the bride of the Lamb is bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh (Eph 5.30).

There He is to her *all and in all* (Col 3.11).

- He is not only her hope (1 Tim 1.1); He is her very life (Col 3.4; 2 Tim 1.1).
- Not only is she *His* inheritance (Dt 32.9; Eph 1.18), He is *hers* (Ps 16.5).
- He Himself is her prize (Phil 3.14) & her exceeding great reward (Gen 15.1).

In short, He is everything to her & in her, everywhere & for all time (Eph 1.10).

It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. (Rev 21.6)

8. To conclude: Two experiences of William Branham

Vision of the bride

- He watched the end time bride marching & beginning to rise into the heavens.
- Seeing a few at the rear looking around at other churches & getting out of step, he screamed out, "Don't do that! Stay in step! Don't look around!"

Beyond the curtain of time

- At a time of growing opposition to his ministry, to strengthen & encourage him in the battle, he was taken behind the veil.
- A voice spoke to him,
 - "Press the battle. It will be worth it all."
 - "Press the battle. Keep going. Keep going."
 - "Just keep pressing. If you only knew what is at the end of the road."
 - "Keep pressing on."

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Rev 22.20)

THE REWARD TO THE OVERCOMER

1. The reward to the overcomer through the ages

When the Bridegroom comes,

- All shall be presented before the judgement seat of Christ (Ro 14.10; 2 Cor 5.10).
- All shall give account (Ro 14.12).
- All shall receive for the things done in the body, good or bad (2 Co 5.10).

Judged by the Word

How shall we be judged? By what standard? By the Word.

- It is the judgement seat **of Christ**. All judgement is committed to Him (Jn 5.22, 27; Acts 10.42).
- Christ is the Word (Rev 19.13; Jn 1.1, 14). So, the criterion will be the Word.

Rewarded by the Word

What a time of joy for those who have overcome all things & been faithful to their Groom, the Word, to the end.

- They will receive their rewards/prizes (1 Cor 3.13-15; Phil 3.14).
- From whom? Who will present those rewards? Christ, the Word (Rev 22.12).

Rewarded with the Word

Most beautiful of all is the nature of the reward/prize. Christ not only gives the rewards. He Himself, the Word, is the reward (Gen 15.1; Ps 16.5).

To illustrate, consider the rewards to the overcomers in the churches of Rev 2 & 3. Effectively, they are Jesus Himself. For example,

- **Ephesus:** the tree of life (Rev 2.7). Who is life? Jesus (Jn 14.6; 2 Tim 1.1).
- **Pergamos:** the hidden manna & the new name (Rev 2.17).
 - Who is the manna? Jesus (Jn 6.31-33).
 - What is the new name? His (Rev 3.12).
- **Thyatira:** the morning star (Rev 2.28). Who is that star? Jesus (Rev 22.16).

2. The reward to the overcomer in the final Church Age

What is the reward to the overcomer who heeds the voice of the Spirit in our own final, Laodicea Church Age? Two promises, which both point to the soon coming wedding day.

To sup with Him

What is the promise to he who hears His voice, the last voice of the Spirit to the churches, & opens the door to Him?

- *I will ... sup with him and he with me* (Rev 3.20).

What supper is that?

- The wedding feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19.9).

This supper has been long anticipated by both Bridegroom & bride.

- He said He would not drink of the fruit of the vine until in the kingdom (Mt 26.29).
- The bride looks forward to that coming kingdom whenever she breaks bread (1 Cor 11.26).

To sit with Him

What is the promise to the overcomer?

- *he will sit with me in my throne* (Rev 3.21).

Who sits in the throne with a king?

- The queen! i.e. His bride (Neh 2.6; cp Eph 2.6).

So, as in the other Church Ages, Jesus Himself is the prize & reward (Cp Phil 3.14).

3. Look to yourselves ... that we receive a full reward (2 Jn 8)

With such a glorious hope before us, let us be ever watchful of our:

- **Reward** (Col 2.18; 2 Jn 8; 1 Cor 3.13-15).
- **Crown** (Rev 3.11).
- **Garment** (Rev 3.4; 16.15).

Let us make it our fixed aim to finish our course with joy & to fulfil our ministry.

- Just as did:
 - **John the Baptist** (Acts 13.25).
 - **Jesus** (Jn 4.34; 17.4).
 - **Paul** (Acts 20.24).
- And as were exhorted to do:
 - **Archippus** (Col 4.17).
 - **Timothy** (2 Tim 4.1, 5).

At the end of our days, may we be able to echo Paul's final words (2 Tim 4.7-8):

- ***I have finished my course*** (Phil 3.13-14; 1 Cor 9.24-27).
- ***I have fought the good fight***, i.e. the fight for the original faith (1 Tim 6.12).
- ***I have kept the faith***, i.e. that faith once & for all delivered to the saints (Ju 3).
- ***there is laid up for me a crown... which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.***

May we hear the blessed words, from the mouth of He who flatters no man:

- *Well done, good and faithful servant* (Mt 25.21, 23).

In the meantime,

- *be strong, let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded* (2 Chr 15.7).

***Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them:
because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.
(1 Jn 4.4)***