

The Holy Passion of the Bride

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The body of Christ, in the days ahead, will have a fierce and determined spirituality. Yet we will have little or no tolerance for traditional "religion." Passion for Jesus with extravagant obedience to him will be the heartbeat of the church in this coming generation.

Where will this passion come from? I believe it will be imparted to us as we come to understand what I call the "bridal paradigm" of the kingdom of God—the important truths that emanate from our relationship to our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants us to experience the "superior pleasures" of the Gospel. He knows that we are best equipped to resist the "lesser pleasures" of sin as we experience satisfaction in intimacy with him. In the days ahead, I believe we will increasingly experience these "superior pleasures," empowering us to extravagantly follow our Bridegroom wherever he goes.

For some, that will be to martyrdom. The Great Commission will not be fulfilled without martyrs. The apostle John related a vision that reveals the role of martyrs in the last days: "I saw...those who had been slain for the word of God...saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"

"Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed" (Revelation 6:9-11, NKJV, emphasis added).

The fact is, there have been more martyrs in the 20th century than at any other time in history. The Western church, however, has been mostly exempt. This will soon change. Many ministries in the coming hour will be sufficiently anointed to equip "joyful martyrs," even in the Western church.

How will these martyrs be empowered to face even death with joy? They will experience a deep spiritual intimacy with Jesus—an intimacy that results

from feasting on the knowledge of the beauty and majesty of our Bridegroom.

Longings of the Heart

Into every human heart God has built seven specific longings that can be satisfied only through our identity as the bride of Christ. As we come to an increased understanding of the bridal paradigm and allow Jesus as our Bridegroom to meet these desires, I believe the Holy Spirit will cause us to overflow in emotional wholeness, with gladness.

It's important that God supernaturally strengthen our emotions. I believe an unprecedented emotional crisis will confront all who live on the earth in the generation in which the Lord returns. Sinful perversions, occult activity, divine judgments and martyrdom will reach the highest intensity ever witnessed in history. Supernatural emotional strength will be vital in light of the coming global crisis of social, spiritual, economic, political and emotional disruption.

Only a satisfied people who are happy in God will be equipped to stand in that hour. God intends to empower us and give us all the emotional resources we need by answering the longings of our hearts.

1. The longing for assurance that we are loved. This is where we begin our introduction to the romance of the Gospel. In every heart God has placed a craving to be pursued, delighted in and enjoyed—first by God, then by our families and friends. It is so integral to our identity that we become emotionally crippled when we feel rejection and shame from God or from others.

This most fundamental longing to be enjoyed and loved is initially satisfied by the revelation of the finished work of the cross. However, God wants to touch this vital area in an ever deeper and abiding way. He has chosen to do this through the revelation of his emotional capacities as both a Father and a Bridegroom. We will be satisfied only by experiencing a revelation of the affections of God. It is not so difficult to believe that God enjoys and loves mature believers who've learned to walk closely with the Holy Spirit. But the fact is, God enjoys and delights in young believers as well, even in the midst of spiritual immaturity (see Luke 15:4-5, 8-10, 20). He wants to marry us—yes, even us! The

Word of God declares, "I am my [Beloved's], and [His] desire is toward me" (Song 7:10). The Lord enjoys us even now, as we are.

When our hearts are assured through the revelation of the Spirit that we are deeply loved and enjoyed, something powerful is awakened within us. This is truly the beginning of our experience of the divine romance. Eventually even our emotional chemistry is changed, and our hearts are set afire.

2. The longing for enjoyment. There is a second craving in every human heart— a longing to marvel and to be fascinated, awestruck and filled with endless wonder. The secular entertainment industry has identified this human longing for enjoyment and has exploited it commercially—to their own profit and to our ruin. So many of us search endlessly through worldly entertainment and recreation to fulfill this God-given craving.

We really do need to experience a sense of wonderment in the very core of our beings. Without having a sense of awe, we live aimlessly and become spiritually bored. This makes us vulnerable to Satan's tactics.

A spiritually bored church is a weak and vulnerable church. But a satisfied believer is a spiritually strong believer who lives protected from Satan's schemes.

The Lord wants to answer this longing by an unprecedented unveiling of the beauty of Christ. In Isaiah 4:2, God declares that in the last days the Branch of the Lord will be manifested as "beautiful." The Branch of the Lord is none other than Jesus, our Messiah. God will fascinate his people beyond anything they have ever known by the unveiling of the beauty of Jesus in the last days.

This is divine entertainment at its highest as God the Father reveals God the Son to us through the Holy Spirit!

Throughout church history most believers have not been deeply fascinated by the Lord; they have simply gritted their teeth and tried to avoid evil. But a new anointing is going to be released on the church worldwide.

Think

about it: We worship one who possesses transcendent beauty! The seraphim gaze on him and cry out, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" as they are stunned by the beauty of God. Within the bridal paradigm the Lord will answer our craving for awe and wonder by revealing to us the beauty of the Bridegroom.

3.

The longing to be beautiful. Every one of us longs to possess beauty and to feel beautiful. No wonder: A beautiful God created us in such a way that we long to possess and feel his imparted beauty. Unfortunately, our culture has an obsession with physical appearance and vanity because it seeks to answer this legitimate longing in a wrong way. Most of us pursue carnal beauty because we feel so unsettled and unhappy when we feel ugly.

The glorious

news is that the beauty of God is not just something he possesses—it is something he imparts through redemption to his bride. In Psalm 90:17, Moses prayed that "the beauty of the Lord" would be released upon the redeemed. Similarly, David prayed that God would "beautify the humble with salvation" (Psalm 149:4). This is a staggering concept. God transfers his spiritual beauty through redemption to formerly demonized, hopeless, sin-ridden people! His beauty is transferable to human beings through Jesus!

4.

The longing to be great. In the core of our being, we long to be successful and noble. Our great God created us with the pursuit of greatness programmed deep within our emotional genetics. Sometimes we misunderstand this longing and assume that we must repent of it, but this isn't true. We cannot repent of the God-given longing to be great—only of pursuing it in a wrong way.

We were

made for greatness and honor. The Lord meets this longing by granting his bride a position of authority that surpasses even the highest-ranking angels. Jesus declares that his people will one day be exalted to his very right hand, sitting with him on his throne (see Rev. 3:21). In the embrace of our Bridegroom King, we co-rule with Him. Believers are at the very pinnacle of power in the created order. We are a part of the aristocracy of eternity, a part of the ruling class. In Jesus we have married into indescribable wealth and power. As the church takes hold of the truth of who we really are as honored and esteemed heirs of God's throne, then our lives will portray a divine inner strength and a fierce determination to be wholly his.

5.

The longing for intimacy without shame. We long to know and be

known before the Lord. God put this longing in us because he wants us to find its deepest satisfaction in experiencing intimacy with him. This spiritual intimacy is available to the redeemed.

Jesus

wants to entrust to his bride the unique secrets of his transcendent beauty and divine strategies. He has many secrets that he will reveal to his bride, ones that even the principalities and powers do not know (see Eph. 3:10). Because of our value to him we are invited into this mysterious realm of divine knowledge.

That

intimacy is reciprocal. While we will have knowledge of his secrets, he also has knowledge of our secrets. He understands aspects of our lives that are unknown and misunderstood by others.

Jesus

feels our pain and struggles. He knows our sin and shame. Yet he treats us with honor as he walks with us through every season of life.

He is

intimate with us in our victory and prosperity. He rejoices and celebrates with us as He shares our triumphs. He knows our true greatness, and he sees the heights of our nobility in redemption.

He is

also intimate with us in our heart passions. He knows the depths of our longings, dreams and intentions to love him. Even our failed intentions to love him are seen in his love. To be fully known without shame and to have no fear of being left to experience the mysteries of life alone is exhilarating!

6.

The longing to be wholehearted and passionate. In our hearts we long to possess the power to abandon ourselves completely to God. We long to avoid the spiritual boredom, disloyalty and compromise that leave us broken and discontent. We desire the ability to give the deepest affection of our hearts back to the Lord (see Matt. 22:37).

We cannot

function properly until we have passionately given our hearts to a Person and purpose beyond ourselves. If we don't have something to die for, then we don't have anything to live for.

The passive

heart is vulnerable to every lust of the flesh. In order to be emotionally whole we must reach for wholeheartedness as the Lord graciously imparts it to our weak hearts. He will give us the power to be passionate because He is a passionate God.

7.

The longing to make a deep and lasting impact. As human beings we are desperate for a life of meaning, relevance and significance. We long to make a contribution to the lives of those we care about. We experience great enjoyment when we bring pleasure to others.

This,

too, is a legitimate longing placed in our hearts by a God of meaning and purpose. It is fulfilled by anointed service in his kingdom, resulting in rewards that literally last forever.

God designed

his people to make a relevant impact in the lives of others. In fact, Jesus wants us yoked together with him in the holy mandate that the Father has given him to disciple the nations (see Matt. 28:19). As we reject our tendency toward self-centered isolationism and walk out the second commandment at our Bridegroom's side, we will satisfy the longings of our hearts.

Holy

Lovesickness

The perversion

of the human heart has reached intense proportions in this present day, and it will only get worse. Jesus described the people in the last generation as being filled with bitterness, offense and betrayal, with hearts continually growing cold in love.

I believe

there is going to be an unholy explosion of pornography in the coming years through the fast-growing technology industry; the same measure of increase will occur in the realm of the occult. Yet God has a plan to bring his people through in victory.

The bridal

paradigm has been reserved by God to empower the church to overcome the coldest and the most lawless, fearful, demonic and sexually perverted generation in history. As the days grow near for his Son's return, the Holy Spirit will increasingly unfold the revelation of Jesus as

our Bridegroom and our corresponding spiritual identity as his bride.

Already

the Holy Spirit is beginning to awaken a "holy lovesickness" that will not be denied. An intervention by God of radical proportions is coming. Through this bridal paradigm, he will change the way we view him—and the way we view ourselves.

He will

fulfill the deepest longings of our hearts. And in that final hour the Spirit and the bride will say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17).