

Scripture-reading

Your Maker and Heavenly Father deeply wants to know you ... To protect and save you ... To love you like a husband in a mutual relationship. He comes to know you when you answer His call "*Come – I will be yours if you will be mine!*"

For those who answer and follow in righteousness, eternal life and the Spirit.

Wrath awaits the disobedient or unresponsive.

Today is the day of decision!

Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has **done**. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Blessed are those who **wash their robes**, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

I, Jesus, have sent My [messenger] to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.

The Spirit and the bride say, "**Come.**" And let the one who hears say, "**Come.**" And let the one who is thirsty **come**; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

These are words of our Christ as recorded in Revelation Chapter 22 verses 11-17.

Covenant, Communion, and the Christian Bride

- God doesn't need or want our affirmation – He *knows* He's God. Instead, He desires **partnership** and **obedience** to a two-way covenant with Him.
- A **covenant** ties these things together: Being known by God; Kingdom of God; Christ as Lord and King; Bride of Christ; True love & Obedience in Christ; Communion; Salvation.
- God is calling; we **must answer** and love in obedience to be **KNOWN**.
- The **covenant** in which we agree binds us to God as a **community** of followers.
- The **covenant** and the binding to God is as close as **marriage** is meant to be . . . Therefore Israel was God's 'bride,' and we are His bride through and by Jesus' resurrection.
- We remember Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection that enable the **New Covenant** when taking communion as a proclaimed **faithful bride**.
- **Covenant Defined:** Voluntary agreement with terms and conditions and vows.
- **God's covenant with Israel** through Abram:
 - Suzerain/Vassal: Lord and King; Conditions; Shema
 - Berith (cutting of flesh/spilling of blood to confirm a covenant): Annual sacrifices from the time of Moses; Circumcision to confirm the covenant individually; *Ultimate* sacrifice by Jesus
 - Bride [**Exodus 19:5; Isaiah 54:5**]
 - Now, Public Confession, Baptism, and obedience now confirm our vow to follow and serve [Romans 2:28-29]. Our heart – mind – has been dedicated to our covenant with God; we vow to be pure and devoted to the King
- Our **western thinking** about our relationship with God: Abusive and one-sided; Consumer-based, entitlement-focused and self-centered; Non-community; Disobedient; Uncommitted.
- But, here's how it is **SUPPOSED** to be:
 - **Answer God's call** to covenant . . . [**John 10:27-28**]
 - **Love, honor, and obey** . . . Sound familiar? [**Matthew 22:37-40; John 14:21**]
 - **Control** our bodies in *true* worship and obedience – love [**Romans 12:1-2**]
 - **Known by God** [**1 Corinthians 8:3; Galatians 4:9**]
 - **Persevere** while we await the Groom [**Matthew 24:13; 2 Peter 1:5-7**]
- The Jewish Bridal Story **fulfilled** by our Christ and us in the *New Covenant*:
 - **Selected** as the 'bride' for Jesus [**2Corinthians 11:2**]
 - Confirm the betrothal with the '**Cup of the Covenant**' [**Matthew 26:27-29**]
 - Giving of **gifts: Righteousness & the Spirit** [**Acts 2:38; Romans 5:17**] . . . *Our* body and mind in purity and holiness (1Corinthians 6:20 & 7:23)
 - Separation and the **building of a home** [**John 14:2-3**]
 - We remain faithful . . . **White garments** for 'blowing the trumpet
 - **Marriage** and second cup (timed by the groom's father) [**Matthew 26:28-29**]
[**Revelation 19:7-9**] . . . Must be known by God to be invited to the marriage supper!

Covenant, Communion, and the Christian Bride

- Last week, Pastor Chris taught about **true worship** that manifests itself in lovable action at home, in the workplace, etc. – everywhere you spend your waking moments. And, he drove home the need for you to be **trained** and to **disciple** others.

But, **why** should you do this? After all, our Christian culture encourages us just to say we ‘believe’ in Jesus and that God loves us no matter what we’ve done and where we are. And there we live – in a **perpetual ‘rinse and repeat sin cycle.**’

SLIDE TWO: CARTOON & AFFIRMATION

- We’re **taught** to just say ‘in our heart’ and **silence** that we believe in Jesus. But Christianity is meant to be a very **public religion** and ...

... God doesn’t need or want our **affirmation** – He *knows* He’s God. Instead, He desires **partnership** and **obedience** to a two-way **covenant** with Him – not legalism, but worshipful action born of a pure heart!

We often **mistake emotion** for the Spirit and believe that just saying we believe in a **celestial sugar daddy** buys us a ticket to heaven. But is that true?

There must be **more!** **Emotion must lead to action!** God said that He desires **obedience over sacrifice** and Jesus said that if we **love Him actionably, then we’ll obey**. **James**, the brother of Jesus, said that belief alone is worthless. So, what is the difference between someone heaven-bound and another who’s hell-bound but believes they *know* Jesus?

You’ll learn that it’s a conscious **response** to **God’s call** to the covenant.

- **TODAY** I’m going to:
 - **Teach** you about the **covenant** in which you must enter with God
 - **Tell** you *your* story as God’s **bride** through the Christ
 - We’ll then **invite** you to join God’s community ... Be the **Bride** ...
 - Then we’ll hold **an intimate sharing** of the elements that remind us of Jesus’ **sacrifice** and the **New Covenant** only possible through His resurrection

Let’s now talk about the **covenant** that brings life and rescue.

SLIDE THREE: COVENANT PREVIEW

- A **covenant** ties these things together:
 - **Being known** by God ... as opposed to just knowing who He is.
 - **Kingdom of God** – the **power** in which we walk by Spirit today and where we'll dwell in the future! **THIS IS THE GOSPEL!**
 - **Christ as Lord and King** – as we **serve**.
 - **Bride of Christ** – “closer than a brother.”
 - **True love & Obedience** in Christ ... This is what **God desires**.
 - **Communion** – remembrance of the **sacrifice** done for forgiveness and the **resurrection** that gives us life.
 - **Salvation**: that **rescue** for followers from God's wrath to come.
- The **covenant**:
 - Allows **access to the kingdom** of God
 - Makes us the **Bride of God** through Christ
 - Enabled on **God's part** by Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection by the Spirit
 - We remember through **communion**
 - Enabled on **our part through commitment** of all we are and have and obedience through **actionable love** (agape)

SLIDE FOUR: KEY POINTS

Here's what I want you to **take away** from today's teaching: **X2**

- God is calling; we **must answer** and love in obedience to be **KNOWN**.
 - **You** may know and follow your favorite sports figure, but **do they know you?**
 - **Jesus** said that many would prophesy in His name, but He said **He didn't know** them!
- The **covenant** in which we agree ... Binds us to God as a **community** of followers. Again, **not a private, silent religion!**
- The **covenant** and the binding to God is as close as **marriage** is meant to be
 - ... **Israel** was God's 'bride'
 - **We** are His bride through and by Jesus' resurrection
- We remember Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection that enable the **New Covenant** when taking communion as a proclaimed **faithful bride**.

SLIDE FIVE: COVENANT DETAILS

- **Covenant Defined:** Voluntary agreement with terms and conditions and vows.
 - I will be yours *if* you will be mine ... Sound familiar?
 - I will be your God *if* you will be my people ...
- **Why** was a covenant necessary? Why is it **still** necessary? Marriage? True love ...
 - **God communicates** in **terms and ways we understand**. After all, this is the approach of an effective communicator. **Jesus** did this ... Fishing ... Farming ...
 - An **oath with consequences** was, and is, necessary to bind man with God in His desire to **reconcile** creation. We're to help with the **Ministry of Reconciliation!**
 - **Amen?**
- Let's talk about the **first covenants with Israel** that provide the **foundation** for our New Covenant:
 - **Abram, Moses, and Aaron**
 - **Suzerain/Vassal: Tell the story of King and servant; Protection and devotion**
 - Lord and King; Conditions; **Shema** ... **God's possession**
 - The Greatest Commandment **Jesus quoted (CAPS = OT)**
 - **Confirmed by Berith** (sacrifice /Circumcision / Devotion)
 - Walking through the sacrifice
 - Annual **sacrifices** from the time of Moses
 - **Circumcision** to confirm the covenant individually
 - Ultimate sacrifice by Jesus
 - God's wife (Exodus 19:5; Isaiah 54:5)

SLIDE SIX: Exodus 19:5 & Isaiah 54:5

Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the people ... —Exodus 19:5.

For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth. —Isaiah 54:5.

SLIDE SEVEN: NEW COVENANT

- **Now**, Public **Confession**, **Baptism**, and **obedience** now **confirm** our vow to follow and serve [Romans 2:28-29].
- Our heart – **mind** – has been **dedicated** to our covenant with God; we vow to be pure and devoted to the King

*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the **heart**, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. —Romans 2:28-29.*

SLIDE EIGHT: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... OUR BEHAVIOR

- Our **western thinking** about our relationship with God:
 - Abusive and **one-sided**. Perhaps you know of marriages like this: One gives; the other just **takes**.
 - **Consumer-based, entitlement-focused** and **self-centered**. We expect, but don't give.
 - **Prosperity Gospel & Name-it-claim-it**
 - **Non-community**. We're not a community, which requires intimate relationships and commitment.
 - We're a **collective of individuals** with a common interest once or twice a week.
 - But **God** is about **community**, not individuals
 - His desire is one of **reconciliation**
 - **Disobedient**. We are supposed to love, act, do, care no matter how we feel: agape.
 - But, we **rationalize** that **legalism** isn't part of our relationship with a loving God.
 - We 'throw the baby out with the bathwater' by **avoiding obedience** born of a pure heart and proper motives – all in defiance of action
 - **Uncommitted**. How many of us have said something like, "I'm saved because I believe in Jesus!?"
 - **Instead**, we must **commit to a covenant** by giving all to the King in mind, body, and Spirit
 - **We give, God protects and saves ... Suzeraine / Vassal ...**

SLIDE NINE: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **HOW WE'RE MEANT TO BE**

- But, here's how it is **SUPPOSED** to be: We answer God's **call**, **love-honor-obey**, **control** our bodies in purity and service, and **persevere**. Then, we will be **known** by God!
- **Answer God's call** to covenant ... [John 10:27-28]

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. —John 10:27-28.

SLIDE TEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **LOVE, HONOR, & OBEY**

- **Love, honor, and obey** ... Sound **familiar**? [Matthew 22:37-40; John 14:21]

And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." ... 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'" —Matthew 22:37-40.

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. —John 14:21.

SLIDE ELEVEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **SELF CONTROL**

- **Control** our bodies in **true worship** and obedience – love [Romans 12:1-2]

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your **bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual service of worship**. And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind, so that you may **prove** what the will of God is, that which is good and **acceptable and perfect**. —Romans 12:1-2.*

- Praise is, well, praise ... But **worship** is assigning **worth** to the God we value through **action!** This was true in the Old Covenant and should be true today.

SLIDE TWELVE: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **KNOWN BY GOD**

- **Known by God** [1 Corinthians 8:3; Galatians 4:9]

but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. —1Corinthians 8:3.

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, ... —Galatians 4:9.

- Remember that we love – act – seek – pursue – obey – to be known by God
- Use Joanne’s example of a ‘call now to take part ...’

SLIDE THIRTEEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **PERSEVERE**

- **Persevere** while we await the Groom’s return [Matthew 24:13; 2 Peter 1:5-7]

*... the one who **endures** to the end, he will be saved.* —Matt 24:13.

*... applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in **your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.*** —2Peter 1:5-7.

- Good grief ... There’s that **action** stuff again!

SLIDE FOURTEEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **THE BRIDAL STORY**

- God’s **Marriage-like Covenant** with the *World* Through Jesus
- Typical **Jewish wedding** as a **foreshadow** (like the **Law** and priesthood, **Passover**, etc.)
 - The **Jewish Bridal Story** fulfilled by our Christ and us in the New Covenant:
- **STEP ONE: Selected** as the ‘bride’ for Jesus [2Corinthians 11:2]

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. —2Corinthians 11:2.

SLIDE FIFTEEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **CUP OF THE COVENANT**

- **STEP TWO:** **Betrothal** confirmed with the ‘Cup of the Covenant’ [Matthew 26:27-29]

*And when He had taken a **cup** and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is **My blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day **when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.** —Matthew 26:27-29.*

SLIDE SIXTEEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **GIFTS**

- **STEP THREE:** Giving of **gifts: Righteousness & the Spirit** [Acts 2:38; Romans 5:17] ... *our* body and mind in purity and holiness (1Corinthians 6:20 & 7:23)

*Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit.**" —Acts 2:38.*

*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the **gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. —Romans 5:17.*

SLIDE SEVENTEEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **SEPARATION & HOME**

- **STEP FOUR** (notwithstanding bathing, etc.): Separation and the **building of a home** [John 14:2-3]

*In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for **I go to prepare a place for you.** If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.** —John 14:2-3.*

- So, we remain faithful, wearing **white garments in purity and righteousness as we wait for the ‘blowing of the trumpet’** not unlike when God first faced the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai. More on this another time perhaps ...

SLIDE EIGHTEEN: THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE ... **MARRIAGE**

- Then at a **time known only to the Father, announcement** and **gathering** for the marriage supper!
- **Marriage** and second cup [**Matthew 26:28-29**] [**Revelation 19:7-9**] *But I say to you, I will not **drink** of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.* —Matthew 26:29.

*... for the **marriage of the Lamb** has come and His bride has made herself ready ... for the fine linen is the **righteous acts** of the saints. ... Blessed are those who are **invited** to the **marriage supper of the Lamb**.* —Revelation 22:7-9.

- The **cup of blessings**!
- We must be **known by God** to be **invited** to the marriage supper!

We **can't earn** our way into the Kingdom of God by what we do. The offer to enter the covenant is free to anyone willing to believe, choose, and act.

I hope you understand by now that this is **not a spectator sport** ... action is critical to our **salvation** from God's wrath to come and the indwelling of the **Spirit** in the meantime:

- Our **feelings** must **lead to actionable** love ... doing the right thing no matter how we feel.
- Action born of our faith and love **prove our commitment to the covenant**.
- Our **righteous acts are the fruit** that **prove our sanctification and transformation**.
- Our perseverance and obedience done for the covenant and by the Spirit **secure our place at the marriage supper of the lamb**.

Where will *you* be dining when the betrothed are gathered for the marriage supper?

Does God know you? Have you just believed in God but never given yourself in covenant?

SLIDE NINETEEN: INVITATION TO BECOME THE BRIDE

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes, take the water of life without cost.

- If you've **never answered** God's call, treating Him instead like a **celestial sugar-daddy**, you're likely not partaking of the Kingdom of God. You're not part of the Bridal party. Your end is as certain as if you'd rejected God and Christ outright.
- If that's you, there's no time to waste! **Come**.
 - Openly answer God's call and repent and give your life to Him – all that you are and have – for His use. Be a part of the community and Kingdom of God. **Come!**
- Enjoy salvation from His coming judgment and the gifts of righteousness and the Spirit. **Come!**
- We'll **then hold communion** together as the community of God and partakers of the power of His Kingdom through the Spirit!

SLIDE TWENTY: COMMUNION, REVIEW, & PRAYER

COMMUNION

- Jesus' fulfillment of the Passover Shadow [1 Corinthians 5:7]
- So we remember the **sacrifice** – the cutting (Berith) – that enables our covenant with God
- We also remember the **covenant** enabled by the sacrifice ... as the faithful bride
- Hold communion:

And when He had taken some **bread** and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My **body** which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

And in the same way He took the **cup** after they had eaten, saying, "This **cup** which is poured out for you is the **new covenant** in My blood."

REVIEW

- God doesn't want or need your **affirmation** – He **wants your partnership**.
- We must **answer God's call** vocally, mentally, and physically as we learn and follow in true, worshipful, and actionable love.
- We are **part of God's Kingdom** only **when we are His bride and operate in the Spirit** that is given to all who answer the call and follow in obedience.
- As the Bride, we **remember the sacrifice and covenant** to which we agreed when holding communion.

PRAY & RELEASE

The LORD bless you, and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'

- Praise Team