

Dress Rehearsal: Getting Ready for the Bridegroom's Return

Peter made a remarkable statement when he said we should be “waiting for and desiring the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet. 3:12b). Previously, I have discussed how the “coming of the day of the Lord” can be hastened by the bride making herself ready (see Rev. 19:7).

The Lord will not return until the bride says: ‘Come!’ (see Rev. 22:17). When the yearning in the bride grows to the point where she can no longer endure without Him, He will be so attracted to her that He will have to come for her. It is this yearning for the Lord that will cause the bride to get ready for Him.

We may think all Christians long for the return of the Lord, but it is more likely very few really do at this time. Of course, as soon as we have a major trial, we tend to want Him to come to get us out of it, but few seem to want Him to return because they love Him so much.

Few Christians would actually admit it, but most actually do not want Him to return anytime soon. For some it would mess up their ministry. Others just have it too good in this life. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:6b, “while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” If we are too comfortable in the world, if our hearts and homes are not in heaven, we have little incentive for seeking to hasten the coming of the day of God.

It is not wrong for Christians to be devoted to their lives on earth. One of the great mistakes of much of the modern church, which has been devoted to the message of the Lord's return, is its failure to build with strategy and vision for the future

of the church on the earth. It is good to have a heart for the work we have been given to do. The answer is not to think less of these things, but we need to love the Lord and His coming even more. The yearning of the bride, which will hasten the coming of the Lord, must be and will be a passion for Him above all things.

It will not be fear of the times or even fear of the Lord that causes the bride to make herself ready. She wants to be without spot or wrinkle because she loves Him so much and wants to be perfect for Him. As John wrote concerning His return in I John 3:3, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." When the yearning for the return of the Lord compels the church to make herself ready, she will consequently hasten His return.

There is nothing more contagious on this earth than a person who is getting closer to the Lord. If just one person in every congregation catches this passion for the Lord, the entire worldwide body of Christ would soon be transformed. This will happen at some point, and the conditions are right for it now. The drier the wood, the more quickly it will catch fire, and much of the body of Christ is in quite a spiritual drought at this time. Only the thirsty will seek a drink, and some are becoming thirsty enough to begin seeking Him again.

It is good to want the Lord so much that we yearn for the second coming, but why don't we start by yearning for His manifest presence in our congregations? Our families? Our jobs? Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself." Of course, He was talking about the cross here, but the earth and all it contains was made by the Lord and for Him. Nothing that was created can be fulfilled until it is accomplishing the purpose for which it was created, and that can only be done in union with Him. Even if it is misunderstood by most, there is a deep yearning in every soul for God. When He is lifted up, He attracts.

Lifting up the Lord is much more than just talking about Him. It is also more than acknowledging His lordship and glory—it is seeing Him transcend over all things. It is seeing more of Him than anything else. When I fell in love with my wife, I could not think of anything but her, day and night. That is what we can call “first love,” or the way we loved at first. We may think this cannot be maintained in a marriage, but it is possible.

However, our union with Christ is supposed to be much greater than our union with anyone on earth, since these earthly relationships are but a type, or model, of the relationship we should have with Him.

The fire and passion of our first love with Christ can easily be maintained if we will seek Him. Not only is He perfect, but also there is no end to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Him. He is forever not only interesting, but also intriguing beyond anything ever created.

We will never exhaust the wonders and marvels of God Himself. Once we start truly beholding the glories that are in Him, we are ruined for life. We just have to have more and more of Him. The more of Him we have, the more addicted to Him we become. But don't worry—He is a well of living water that will never run dry! {eoa}

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