

The Thanksgiving Blending Conference

November 23-26, 2023

GENERAL SUBJECT: THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST AND OUR GROWTH IN LIFE UNTO MATURITY

Message Six

The Joy Set before Christ and the Joy Set before Us

RK Hymns: 960

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

- Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.
- Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- Neh 8:10c ...And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

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.
Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
- 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.
Heb 9:28 So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him, apart from sin, unto salvation.
1 Pet 2:24 Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.
2 Cor 5:21 Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.
- C. Colossians 2:15 portrays the warfare that took place at the time of Christ’s crucifixion:
Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
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.
Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
 3. The rulers and authorities are evil angels, fallen angels that are subordinates of Satan working for him—Eph. 2:2.

- Eph 2:2 In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience;
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:
Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
 - 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.
Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

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:

- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- A. The maturity of the bride—vv. 7-9; Eph. 4:13-15:
- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
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.

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,

Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.

Phil 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
 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.

Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

B. The building of the bride—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16:

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

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.

Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Exo 25:8 And let them make a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell in their midst;

Exo 1:11 So they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built storage cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Raamses.

Exo 40:2 On the first day of the first month you shall raise up the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting.

Exo 40:3 And you shall put the Ark of the Testimony there, and you shall screen the Ark with the veil.

Exo 40:34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

Exo 40:35 And Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud settled on it and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

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.

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

3. God's building is the corporate expression of the Triune God—1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 17:22; Eph. 3:19b, 21.

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.

John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;

Eph 3:19b ... that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

C. The righteousness of the bride—Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 22:11-13:

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and

- Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt 22:11 But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,
- Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
- Matt 22:13 Then the king said to the servants, Bind his feet and hands, and cast him out into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.
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.

Matt 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
 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.

2 Cor 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

Eph 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
 3. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
 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.

Matt 22:11 But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,

Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Matt 22:13 Then the king said to the servants, Bind his feet and hands, and cast him out into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.
- D. The beauty of the bride—Eph. 5:25-27:
- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
- Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.
1. As the bride, the church needs beauty; the beauty in Ephesians 5 is for the presentation of the bride.

Eph 5 be omitted.
 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:

- Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...
- 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:
- Eph 6 be omitted.
Rev 19 be omitted.
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.

Rev 17:14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them.

Rev 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

2 Tim 2:4 No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.
 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.

Eph 5 be omitted.
Eph 6 be omitted.
Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
 3. Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21.

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Rev 19:12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written which no one knows but Himself.

Rev 19:13 And He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God.

Rev 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

Rev 19:15 And out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations; and He will shepherd them with an iron rod; and He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Rev 19:16 And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev 19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come here; gather yourselves to the great dinner of God,

Rev 19:18 That you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free and slave and small and great.

Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.

Rev 19:20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone.

Rev 19:21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeds out of the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.
 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.

Matt 22:11 But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,

Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

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.
1 Thes 5:16 Always rejoice,
 - 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.