

## The Call to Fasting – A Call to Experience the Depths of God

### I. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PROPHECIES FOR THE END-TIME CHURCH (REVELATION 22:17)

**16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things [the events described in the book of Revelation] for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” 17 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 desires take the water of life without price. (Revelation 22:17)**

A. This is one of the most informative and significant prophecies in the Bible describing the End-Time Church and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the generation of the Lord’s return. **This prophecy describes the Church in deep unity with the Holy Spirit, saying and doing what the Holy Spirit is saying and doing.** What is the Spirit doing? – The Spirit is interceding for Jesus to “come” (manifest His power) to His Church.

B. This will be the first time in history, that the Church worldwide will be in dynamic unity with the Spirit and therefore, will be full of power as we experience intimacy with His heart. It is clearly established in the Word of God that the Holy Spirit will be resting on and moving through the Church in great power and in greater ways as we approach Jesus’ return (Joel 2:28–30). The manifestation of the Holy Spirit in and through the church will crescendo in the final decades of this age which will far surpass the book of Acts in scope and magnitude.

### II. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL ESTABLISH THE CHURCH’S IDENTITY AS A CHERISHED BRIDE BEFORE THE SECOND COMING

**25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:25–32)**

**7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure...” (Revelation 19:7–8)**

- A. It's critical that we understand Bridal Theology. This enables us to view everything through the eyes of a cherished Bride with loyal devoted love for her husband. If we are not loved and in love, then we will compromise, lack courage and be spiritually bored. This message of Bridal Theology is not optional for the end-time church. While the church has always been seen from heaven as a Bride, the church has not always viewed herself this way as her primary identity – and at the return of Jesus, it's imperative that we do.
- B. The Holy Spirit for the first time in history will universally emphasize the Church's spiritual identity as Jesus' Bride. Notice that this Scripture does not prophesy the Spirit and the family say, "Come." Nor does it say the Spirit and the army, nor the kingdom, nor the body, nor the temple and not the Spirit and the priesthood but only the Spirit and the Bride. This is not to undermine the value or significance any of the other Scriptural 'faces' of the church; all are valid and important. But not all are emphasized the way the face of the Bride is emphasized.
- C. The core message of Bridal Theology speaks of our call to experience the deep things of God's heart (emotions). It is the clearest disclosure of the heart of Jesus towards His people in jealous and tender love. The foundation of the Bridal message is understanding and experiencing Jesus' desire (affection) for us as we walk in present tense intimacy with Him.

**The Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...<sup>12</sup> we have received...the Spirit...that we might know (experience) the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Cor. 2:10-12)**

**You may be able to comprehend...the width and length and depth and height-- to know (experience) the love (affections or emotions) of Christ... (Eph 3:18-19)**

- D. As sons of God, we are in the position to experience God's Throne as heirs of His power/ authority (Rev. 3:21; Rom. 8:17). As the Bride, we are in position to experience God's heart (emotions, affections or desire for us). Both are unique positions of privilege before God.
- E. As women are the sons of God, so also men are the Bride of Christ, both describe our position of privilege before God, rather than pointing to something that is intrinsically male or female.
- F. Most Christian women do not struggle with the idea of being sons of God because they do not see it as a call to be less feminine. However, often, men struggle with being the Bride of Christ because they wrongly conclude that it is a call to become less masculine. They do not understanding it as a position of privilege with God that enables us to encounter His heart. It is a call to experience the deep emotions of God's heart, this includes the supernatural ability to feel His desire for us.
- G. The revelation of the emotions (affections) of God will usher in the greatest move of God in history as the church matures through being established in her identity as the Beloved of God.

### **III. FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SPIRIT THROUGH FASTING AS WE AWAIT JESUS' RETURN (MT. 9:14-16)**

**14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” 15 And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. (Matthew 9:14–16)**

**“But you, WHEN you fast, anoint your head and wash your face...your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Mt. 6:18**

- A. John the Baptist’s disciples were deeply committed to fasting. But their philosophy, theology and motives behind it were damaging to their spiritual health. Jesus speaks to them concerning what I believe is the primary mode of fasting in the New Covenant: fasting before a jealous and tender Bridegroom to experience the depths of His heart (1 Cor. 2:9–11).
- B. This paradigm of fasting enlarges the heart through encountering God’s beauty (attributes and emotions) and His affections towards us. This is not a fast to achieve God’s attention but to experience the affections He already has for us. We fast not to move His heart but to move our own. John’s disciples were fasting to demonstrate their commitment so as to move God’s heart. Jesus gently rebukes them and explains that this is unnecessary and counterproductive from the human side and the divine side.
- C. Jesus explained that grace for fasting would be released upon the disciples once He left them and they experienced the pain of His absence.

**“And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and THEN THEY WILL FAST.” (Matthew 9:15)**

- D. The purpose of fasting is to increase our experience of God—the One we love. Above all, it tenderizes our hearts to receive more of God, faster and deeper. The purpose of fasting is love.
- E. When we fast we resist the legitimate pleasures of this age (like food) in hunger for pleasures which are superior in quality.
- F. Fasting is deeply connected to our pursuit of pleasure and our stewarding of pain. It’s one of the greatest escorts in to the superior pleasures of the Gospel. And it’s one of the greatest ways we can steward our internal “burden” of being “away from the Lord:”

**1 For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:1–7)**

- G. While Matthew 9 presents the primary mode of fasting in the New Covenant it by no means represents the only mode. There are 7 types of Biblical fasts:
1. Fasting to experience the power of God in ministry (Mt. 17:21)
  2. Fasting to receive divine assistance and prophetic revelation to understand end-time events (Dan. 9:1-3; 20-23; 11:32-35; etc.)
  3. Fasting for the fulfillment of God's purposes in a city/region (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Anna, John the Baptist, etc.)
  4. Fasting to stop or avert a crisis/judgment (Joel 2:12-17)
  5. Fasting for protection (Daniel, Ezra, Esther, etc.)
  6. Fasting for prophetic direction (Acts 9:9; 13:1-2; 14:23; Luke 6:12-13)
  7. Fasting for encounter and experience with God's heart towards us (Matthew 9:14-15)