

GOD'S THREE END TIME PURPOSES

The only solution to the problems of the world, the only hope is the coming of God's kingdom on earth. Every committed Christian needs to be lined up with that hope. It says in 1 John 2:17,

"He who does the will of God abides forever."

God's will isn't going to change. If there has to be any change it has to be in *our* will.

But if we align our will with the will of God, if we make the purpose of God our purpose in life, we are as *unshakable* and *undefeatable* as the will of God!

He who does the *will of God* abides forever.

The crucial question for every person is this,

Are you aligned with God's will?

Is God's purpose your purpose?

I would say for the great majority of churchgoers in this nation, that is not so. They're involved in all sorts of religious activities but they've lost sight of the goal, the end and purpose which is the *establishment of the kingdom of God on earth*.

This is an audio study by international Bible teacher Derek Prince

This text compilation is by Albert Chipps

PART ONE: Your kingdom come



I've been asked to speak on God's three end time purposes. So, first of all I want to give you God's goal for the present age. What is the goal to which God is working? You'll find the answer in three words in Matthew 6:10, part of a prayer that we call the 'Lord's Prayer'. Most of us who have grown up with a Christian background have prayed this prayer more times than we can ever remember. Most of us did not realize what we were praying for. These are the words, **"Your kingdom come."** Then it goes on, **"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."** So, the prayer is, **"Your kingdom come on earth."** And that is the ultimate goal of God for the present age. It's the coming of God's kingdom on earth under God's chosen King, the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe He will actually have an earthly kingdom and He will reign as a king. I believe this is the only solution to the problems of the world. There is only one hope, it's the coming of God's kingdom on earth. Every committed Christian needs to be lined up with that hope. It says in 1 John 2:17, **"He who does the will of God abides forever."** God's will isn't going to change. If there has to be any change it has to be in our will. But if we align our will with the will of God, if we make the purpose of God our purpose in life, we are as *unshakable* and *undefeatable* as the will of God. He who does the *will of God* abides forever. This is a crucial issue for every person here tonight. Are you aligned with God's will? Is God's purpose your purpose? I would say for the great majority of churchgoers in this nation, that is not so. They're involved in all sorts of religious activities but they've lost sight of the goal, the end and purpose which is the *establishment of the kingdom of God on earth*.

There are a great many passages of Scripture that speak about this kingdom, I just want to read two. The first is from Daniel 2:44. We can't go into the background of this but it's the interpretation by Daniel of a vision that King Nebuchadnezzar had. He didn't understand it and he couldn't even remember his vision. Supernaturally God showed Daniel what the vision was and showed him the interpretation. This really is the climax. Daniel 2:44, **"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."** So God at a certain season in human history, and I believe myself it's very close, is going to set up a kingdom which will stand forever, which will never pass away, never pass on to others. It will destroy utterly, totally, finally, completely, all rival kingdoms. And then in Psalm 72 we have this prophetic picture of the Messianic kingdom. This is what is called a Messianic psalm. In other words, its theme is the kingdom of Messiah. Psalm 72. We will not read it all but just some verses. I want you to notice two main aspects of this kingdom. First of all, the essential requirement for peace is *righteousness*. Without righteousness there *never will be peace*. The politicians and other leaders who talk about peace but bypass righteousness are deceiving themselves and others. *There never can be true peace without righteousness*.

Secondly, this psalm emphasizes something which I think many Christians have, let's say Evangelical or Full Gospel Christians, have not adequately appreciated, that is, God's *intense concern for the poor and the needy and the downtrodden*.

So I'm going to read verses 1–4 and then verses 8–14. This is a picture of the kingdom and the King. ***“Give the king your judgments, O God, and your righteousness to the king's son. He shall judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people and the little hills by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people, He will save the children of the needy and will break in pieces the oppressor. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river [that's the River Euphrates] to the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents. The kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before him and all nations shall serve him. For he will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy and will save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their life from oppression and violence, and precious shall be their blood in his sight.”***

Basically, with exceptions, humanity does not care for the poor. The majority of our governments in the world today do not care for the poor. It's very interesting, I hadn't planned to say this but in Ezekiel 16:49 God paints the sins of Sodom. You all know Sodom was the city that was destroyed because of sodomy, homosexuality. You'd think that sodomy would be listed in the sins but it's not. It says the sins of Sodom were pride, fullness of bread, abundance of idleness, and they did not strengthen the hands of the poor and the needy. Out of those conditions homosexuality arises. And, it's out of those conditions that it has arisen in the United States and other western nations. But notice that the *main condemnation of Sodom* was that they *did not strengthen the hands of the poor and the needy*. Basically in the world today two things are happening simultaneously. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Most of the political negotiations that take place are aimed to protect the rich. The god of this world basically is mammon. It's wealth. No matter how wealthy people get they still want to be wealthier. And, with some wonderful exceptions, the *rich do not care for the poor*. Within a few years the interest payments of the poorer nations will equal all the money that is allotted to them from the wealthy nations. In other words, they'll be getting precisely zero. I'm not political but I have become increasingly aware that God is extremely concerned for the poor. The Scripture says in countless different places that He will judge those who oppress the poor. This is one of the aspects of the kingdom of God, there will be justice for the poor, which there isn't at the present time. If you are rich, basically you can get away with anything if you have enough money. If you don't have much money there are a lot of things you can do that are legal but you won't be able to do them.

PART TWO – Birth pangs



Now, let me point out one other fact about this kingdom and then we're going to come to the actual process of establishing the kingdom. In Psalm 92:5–7 the psalmist deals with an issue which is very current. It's the *rise of the wicked*. Why does God permit this? Does God care? This is what the psalmist says in Psalm 92:5–7, ***"O Lord, how great are your works. Your thoughts are very deep. A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this. When the wicked spring up like the grass and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever."***

So God *permits* iniquity to flourish. He permits a tremendous harvest of iniquity and it's taking place in the world today. But His purpose is to destroy them all. I don't suppose there's many of us here that are not concerned at some time about flagrant injustice and wickedness in places of power. Well, God's answer is, *"I'm letting them grow up but one day they'll all be mown down by my judgment."*

Now I want to speak about three main purposes that God has to be fulfilled before this kingdom can be established. We'll turn to Matthew 24. This is the great prophetic discourse that Jesus gave from the Mount of Olives overlooking the temple area. It's recorded in three gospels, in Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13. There's slight differences of emphasis, it's like if what I'm saying were to be photographed by video cameras there could be three different cameras, all of them taking the same message but from different angles. We'll turn to Matthew 24. Jesus was asked a question, verse 3, ***"What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"*** Not *a* sign or the signs but *the* sign. And in the following verses He gave a specific answer. But before He gave *the* sign He gave a number of signs which were signs but not the sign. We'll not look at them all but we'll go down to verse 7, Jesus says, ***"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pangs."***

The establishment of God's kingdom is going to come by a 'birth'. It cannot be organized; it can only come by a birth. That's true for every individual who enters the kingdom of God, he has to be born again. There is no other way. It's true for the whole earth. For the kingdom of God to come there has to be a birth. And as you all know, a birth is preceded by labor pains. When you are aware of the labor pains and when they become more intense and more frequent you know the birth is near at hand. I believe we are in the period of the labor pains of the birth of the kingdom of God on earth. These are the labor pains that Jesus described in verse 7. He said nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. The word 'nation' in Greek is 'ethnos'. It's the word which gives us 'ethnic'. What He's speaking about is ethnic conflict. And that is one of the most conspicuous features of the present situation in the world, and it's increasing. Personally, I believe it will continue to increase. Kingdom against kingdom is more political wars like World War I and World War II.

Now we're going on and the key word in Matthew 24 is "then" which occurs nine times altogether. In other words, it's a series of situations that develop, one after the other. After it says all these are the beginning of birth pangs, verse 9 says, ***"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and***

kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake." I've often asked Christian groups who is 'you'? 'You' is 'us'. Is that right? (That's not good English). Have you realized that fact? Those words are addressed to followers of Jesus. So, in this time of birth pangs they will deliver you up to tribulation, will kill you and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. Verse 10, ***"Then many will be offended, will betray one another and will hate one another."*** Again, that's Christians. Many Christians will give up their faith in the face of the persecution and to save themselves they will betray their fellow believers. This has been happening in the Soviet Union and in China probably for one or two generations. But it's going to become far more widespread. Verse 11, ***"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many."*** The greatest single danger that confronts us as Christians in the present time is not persecution, it's *deception*. Jesus warned us against deception more than He warned us against anything else. I say to each of you, if you say, 'it couldn't happen to me', it probably will happen to you. If your attitude is "I couldn't be deceived," you're a candidate for deception. I have learned by many years of experience the only thing that can keep us faithful is not our cleverness, our knowledge of Scripture, our ministry gifts, our status, it's the mercy of God. Paul said, *"I give my opinion as one who has obtained mercy of the Lord to be found faithful."* I regularly acknowledge to God, "God, if I am to remain faithful it will be by your mercy and your mercy only. Not by my cleverness, not by the languages I know, not by the Scriptures I can quote, not by the past experience of ministry, but only by your mercy." And then it says in verse 12, ***"Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."*** The Greek word for love there is that famous word 'agape'. It means primarily the love of Christians. Love of many Christians will grow cold. Why? Because lawlessness abounds. Looking back over the last 20, 30 years, would you say lawlessness is abounding? Has abounded more and more and more until, as a matter of fact, really there is no force that can contain the lawlessness in this nation. People blame the police but the police can only maintain law and order if the *majority of citizens* are law abiding citizens. When that comes to an end there *is no way to maintain law*. And the result will be unless we're on our guard that in this atmosphere of lawlessness our love will grow cold. Then Jesus says in verse 13, ***"But he who endures to the end shall be saved."*** Actually the Greek is more specific. It says he who *has* endured to the end will be saved. You're saved now. To remain saved you have to endure to the end. Otherwise you will not be saved. That's a pretty grim picture. But the next verse is astonishing, it's so paradoxical. You would expect that Jesus would say in that situation hide yourself, keep out of sight, do everything you can to protect yourself and your family. Don't become conspicuous. Maybe you'll make your way through. Actually He says the exact opposite. In the light of this situation here is the sign. Previously we looked at signs, now we look at *the* sign. ***"This gospel of the kingdom will be preached [or proclaimed] in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come."*** What is the final, conclusive sign? The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom in all nations. That is not a popular message. It says in Acts 17 about the apostles in Corinth, the enemies criticized them and they summed up their message this way. First of all they said, *"These people have turned the world upside down."* Would they say that about you and me? Have we turned the world upside down? And then they said, *"These all say there is another King, one Jesus."* That was how the unbelievers summed up the message. I want to ask you, is that how unbelievers would sum up the message of the gospel as we proclaim it today? I don't think so.

PART THREE – Signs of the times



Mostly we go with the approach God will meet your need. It's true, He will meet your need but the problem with that is it leaves people with the impression that *God is there to meet their needs!* That is the attitude of most American Christians today. God is a good God and He'll meet my need. The truth of the matter is *God doesn't exist for you, you exist for God.* The most important thing is not to have your need met, it's to glorify God. There has to be a different presentation. But this is *the* sign, ***"This gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world as witness to all the nations and then the end will come."*** That's an *absolutely specific answer* to a *specific* question. Do you agree with me?

Let me just turn for a moment to a picture of the harvest in Revelation 7:9–10. It says in verse 9, ***"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.'"*** And notice there had to be people there from *all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues*. So people of *every* tongue, *every* tribal background, *every* ethnic group, *have to be reached with the gospel*.

I believe God is *jealous* for the glory of His Son. In the end Jesus will not have died in vain for any ethnic group, any linguistic group. There will be at least *one* representative there before the throne. But, they will never hear unless someone preaches. I would say in a way that priority number one for the church of Jesus Christ is the ***proclaiming of the gospel of the kingdom in all the world to all nations***. And, you'd have to acknowledge that really in most religious groups at this time that has a very low priority. In fact, I think a whole lot of Christians aren't even *aware* that it's on the list. We need a tremendous adjustment. We need a change. We need what they used to call an 'awakening'. We, people like you and me. Not the people out in the street, not the people in the, quote, 'old line' denominations, but people like you and me. We need an awakening. The Bible says *a son who sleeps in harvest causes shame*. Our churches are full of sons asleep in harvest.

We'll come on to the second thing that has to be achieved before the end can come, and that is the *restoration of Israel*. When I say Israel I mean Israel and not the church. Endless confusion has come into the church because a lot of people have started to apply the name 'Israel' to the church. There are 79 places in the New Testament where the word 'Israel' is used, I've investigated every one of them. And my personal conclusion is Israel is *never* used as a synonym for the church. The truth is very simple, Israel is Israel and the church is the church. God has a plan for each and He has enough for both. He doesn't need to rob one to bless the other. Probably there is no greater source of confusion in the church today than the misunderstanding about the identity of Israel. Actually, it's interesting because the Jewish people have a corresponding misunderstanding about the identity of the church. When they talk about the church they mean people like Adolf Hitler. He was a baptized Roman Catholic. They lump all of us together until God begins to speak to them and deal with them. And let's say it honestly, the

people that the Jews fear most is the Christians. Does that shock you? Well, a Jewish person with some knowledge of his own people could stand here for an hour and give you simple, basic, historical facts why the Jews fear the Christians more than any other group on earth.

But now turn to Matthew 24 again and I want to point out to you a dramatic change of focus. It's like we've had a video screen that embrace basically the whole world. And suddenly the focus changes to one very small area of the earth's surface which is Jerusalem and the land of Israel. Because verse 15 goes on, ***"Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolations spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place..."*** And as far as I'm concerned, in the light of Scripture there is only one holy place and that is the temple area. ***"...then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..."*** Notice it doesn't say the West Bank. So, our focus has suddenly changed from all nations and the whole world to the city of Jerusalem and to the Jewish people in the land. This corresponds to a passage in Romans 11:25–26. Paul is writing here to believers from Gentile backgrounds and he says, ***"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery lest you should be wise in your own opinion*** [or lest you think too highly of yourself] Now, what is the mystery? That hardening in part has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so, all Israel will be saved. There is the transition from Matthew 24:14 to verse 15. First of all, the full number of the Gentiles has to come in. Every Gentile elect by God from eternity for salvation has to be brought in. Then all Israel will be saved. Israel is the only nation of which the Bible promises that an entire nation will be saved. But, you need to bear in mind what we perhaps should look at for a moment in Romans 9:27. ***"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant*** [the remnant] ***will be saved."*** Not a remnant but the remnant. That is the remnant chosen and foreknown by God. When it says all Israel will be saved, all Israel will be the remnant. That will be the entire nation that is left. Israel has to go through a lot before that happens, what Scripture calls the 'time of Jacob's trouble'. I think it's very important for all of us to realize the special position that the Jews occupy in the purposes of God. It's a very hard fact for a lot of Gentiles to swallow because most of us who are not of Jewish background have been brought up in varying degrees to despise the Jewish people, to make snide remarks about them, etc. It's really bred into most Gentiles. Paul says we better be careful. He says we're not the root, we're the branches. Remember, the branches don't bear the root, the root bears the branches. The root is Israel. There's going to have to be a tremendous change in the thinking of multitudes of Christians in this respect because God is going to judge the nations on the basis of their attitude to the Jews.

PART FOUR – Gods choice of Israel



I think it's very important for all of us to realize the special position that the Jews occupy in the purposes of God. It's a very hard fact for a lot of Gentiles to swallow because most of us who are not of Jewish background have been brought up in varying degrees to despise the Jewish people, to make snide remarks about them, et cetera. It's really bred into most Gentiles and Paul says we better be careful. He says we're not the root, we're the branches. Remember, the branches don't bear the root, the root bears the branches. The root is Israel. There's going to have to be a tremendous change in the thinking of *multitudes* of Christians in this respect because God is going to judge the nations on the basis of their *attitude to the Jews*.

The Jews didn't choose themselves, *God* chose the Jews. If it had been left to the Jews they would not have chosen themselves. You have no idea how much they would like to get away from the responsibility of being chosen. And right at the moment the government of Israel is doing *everything it can* to divorce itself from that responsibility. But, they won't succeed. The Prime Minister of Israel said the first day he became Prime Minister his one official statement was, "*We are a nation like any other nation.*" It sounds good but it isn't true. They didn't choose it, we didn't choose it, *God* chose it. If you have a problem with the Jews your *real problem is with God!* You know what I believe? I believe God makes the right choice, in our lives, in the church and among the nations. I mean, if it had been left to me I wouldn't have made that choice. But God didn't leave it to me. The choice of the Jews is God's choice. He knows what He's doing. Personally, I believe He's the *only* person that can deal with the Jews! I not saying that to be smart, I'm just saying they're not an easy people to deal with. God says, "*I've accepted the responsibility and in the end I'll produce what I've promised.*"

Jesus said, "*Wisdom is justified by her children.*" In other words, what wisdom produces is the justification for wisdom's choice. God hasn't finished. Don't judge the product until it's complete. Anyhow, I want to point out to you, and this is a very, very important fact, it's extremely important for the United States of America. As you know I'm British by background and Britain at one time had the mandate for the government of what was called Palestine and when the United Nations decided to give the Jewish people a very small strip of territory the official reaction of the British government was to do everything short of open war to oppose it. Not only am I British, I served in the British Army and I was living in Palestine at that time so I'm speaking about something of which I was an eyewitness. Britain had a vast empire, there were 40 million Arabs with modern armies against 600,000 Jews with very few military weapons. And who won? The British Empire fell apart. *From that day that it turned against the purposes of God for Israel, the British Empire went into decline!* They gave lip service to being in favor of the Jews but it wasn't the way they acted. I have to tell you frankly as Americans, the American government is basically following in the footsteps of Britain. They are in actual fact *opposing the*

purposes of God for Israel. They do it with nice, polite language, they start peace processes, but right at the bottom of it is an anti-Semitic attitude.

Let's read what it says in Joel 3:1–2, ***“For behold, in those days and at that time*** [the Lord is speaking], ***“When I bring back the exiles of Judah and Jerusalem*** [this is the time of the regathering of the Jewish people in which we are now living] ***I will also gather all nations...*** [That's all Gentile nations, the Hebrew word is 'goyim'] ***...and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat...*** [and the name Jehoshaphat means 'Jehovah judges'] ***...and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of my people, my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations. They have also divided up my land.”*** So God says, *“I'm going to judge the nations on the basis of the way that they have dealt with the Jews.”* Whether you like it not, that's how it's going to come. But it's very much in our own interest to take note of that. Not only did they scatter them but, listen friends, they divided up their land. God says “not *their* land but *my* land.” We need to bear in mind that first and foremost it's God's land, then it belongs to Israel because *God gave it to Israel!* Now as a Britisher I have to say Britain carries the main responsibility because in 1919 or 1920 the League of Nations gave Britain the mandate for that territory with the specific understanding that they would create a national home for the Jewish people. And in 1922 the British government with one stroke of a pen took 76 percent of the allotted area and made it an Arab state, originally called Trans-Jordan, now called Jordan, in which no Jew is permitted to live. That means what's left is 24 percent! Then the United Nations offered to the Jews about 10 percent of the 24 percent remaining. God intervened and now at the present time, who knows? One thing I will tell you is *God will judge all nations by the way they have related to the Jewish people.*

If you turn to the New Testament, Matthew 25:14, which refers to the coming of the King and the kingdom, and you need to understand that Matthew 25:40 is a *direct reference* to Joel 3:1–2. It's the same scene. It says, ***“When the Son of man comes in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory... [that's his earthly throne. At the moment He's sitting on his Father's throne] ...all the nations [goyim] will be gathered before Him and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.”***

So all nations will be gathered before the Lord Jesus when He comes as King and He will separate them into two groups, the sheep on the right hand, the goats on the left. And the basis of division, if you'll study that chapter carefully, is how they have treated the brothers of Jesus. *“Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did not do it to me.”* God has chosen to make the *basis* of His judgment the *way the nations have related to the brothers of Jesus.* And the judgments are appallingly severe. It says concerning the sheep, *“Enter into the kingdom prepared for you by my Father.”* That's the earthly kingdom of Jesus. To the goat nations He says, *“Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”*

So, in a certain sense in the political arena, the supreme purpose of God at this time is the *regathering of the Jewish people in their own land as a preliminary to restoring them to Himself.* Few of us, I think, can take into account the immensity of the miracle that the Jewish people were scattered for nineteen centuries among more than one hundred nations under *every pressure* to give up their identity. And, they remained a *separate, distinct people.* In the last 90 years, I think it's less, they have been regathered from more than *one hundred distinct nations!* I don't know whether you can understand what a miracle that is! It's one of the major demonstrations of the control of God over human history that has *ever taken place in the history of this planet!* The Jews were scattered for nearly 2,000 years, and some of them for *more than 2,000 years.* The Jews from Yemen were scattered for 2,500 years. Some of the Jews from Iraq. But they remained a separate identifiable people and were

then brought back to that land is in my opinion in many ways is as great a miracle as the exodus from Egypt. Why did it happen? Because God *intended it to happen!*

PART FIVE - the bride has made herself ready



We come to the third and final development that has to take place. That is the preparation of the church of Jesus Christ to be the bride of Christ. We'll turn, first of all, to Revelation 19:6–8. ***"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready (That's the church) and to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.'"*** I want you to notice that when the time of the marriage supper comes, the bride will not be *making* herself ready. She will have *made* herself ready. In other words, *now* is the time of preparation. When the event comes it will be too late to start preparing then. The bride *has made herself ready*.

If you are not preparing I don't see how you can be possibly ready. If you're not even *aware* that you have to prepare, how can you possibly be ready? It's something that requires a lot of preparation. I think for most women it's the most significant single day in their lives, the day of marriage. *That's how it's going to be for the church!* It's going to require preparation. His wife has made herself ready. Not *is* making herself ready or *is* making frantic, last minute preparations, but *has made herself ready*. What are the requirements for the bride to get ready? I want to offer you very briefly three:

1. TOTAL LOYALTY TO JESUS.

A *heart* relationship. Not merely a doctrinal relationship or an intellectual relationship but a *heart relationship*. A heart which gives Jesus - first place and will not share it with any other. Ruth and I love one another as husband and wife, we have a wonderful marriage which I thank God, but we are absolutely clear, each of us, Jesus has first place. We never let the relationship with a spouse take precedence over our relationship with Jesus. *Never*. That's one reason why we have a good marriage. Because when Jesus is in His right place, other things fall into place. I'm grateful. Let me read 2 Corinthians 11, just two verses. Paul is writing to the Corinthian church and he says in verses 2, ***"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."*** Now, betrothal was somewhat like engagement but in Biblical culture it was totally binding. It was as binding as marriage. It was not something you could break. But, it was not the consummation of the marriage. He says as a *chaste virgin*. If you turn to 1 Corinthians 6 you find out what kind of people belonged to the church in Corinth. In verse 9 and following Paul says, ***"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither***

fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” You need to bear that in mind. You can call it *premarital sex* if you like but if you practice it you *cannot enter the kingdom of God!* It rules you out unless you repent and change your lifestyle. Then, Paul says, ***“Such were some of you...”*** Think of that. He says, ***“I have betrothed you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*** What a testimony to the power of the blood of Jesus. They were the lowest of the low and yet through faith in Jesus and the power of His blood Paul could refer to them as a *chaste virgin*. He said, ***“That’s how I’m betrothed to Christ.”*** Now he said, ***“My great concern is that you remain faithful to your commitment to the bridegroom until the marriage ceremony.”*** He says in the next verse, ***“But I fear lest somehow as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your mind may be corrupted from the simplicity and sincerity that is in Christ.”*** So that’s the *danger* that faces us between the time of betrothal and the celebration of the marriage supper, is that our minds may be corrupted from the simplicity and sincerity which is in Jesus Christ.

Well, I have to say that I see that happening to *multitudes* of believers. One of the factors is what they call New Age teaching which has infiltrated a great deal of the church and corrupts our minds from the simplicity and purity that is in Christ Jesus. Another is a whole lot of theology. Personally I’m not really in favor of theology. I believe in the study of the Bible. I believe in the systematic study of the Bible but when people become too preoccupied with intellectual understanding and achievement they usually lose their faith. And when the church becomes preoccupied with educational achievements it usually becomes spiritually corrupted.

2. A HEARTFELT YEARNING FOR THE RETURN OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

If we turn to Hebrews 9:28 it says, ***“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many; to those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation.”*** To whom will He appear? To those who *eagerly wait for Him*. Those who are on the tip toe of expectancy. He will not appear to others for salvation. That’s very simple logic. The bride’s first concern is to be ready for the bridegroom’s return, *eagerly awaiting Him*. So, let me ask you, are you yearning, are you longing for the return of the bridegroom? Are you eagerly waiting, not just waiting, but eagerly waiting?

3. TO HAVE THE PROPER CLOTHING.

Everybody knows that for the bride, her attire is one of the most important features. And you see, it says, ***“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”*** In other words, for your bridal attire you’re going to have a *record of righteous acts*. It’s the things you have done for the Lord that will become your attire. Now be honest, some of you at the moment don’t have more material than will make a bikini! You need to change. We are going to be clothed in what we’ve done for the Lord.

If you turn back in Revelation to chapters 2 and 3, to the messages to the seven churches, there’s one thing that Jesus says to every church. Do you know what it is? ***“I know your works. I know what you’re doing.”*** He doesn’t say, “I know your doctrinal statement, your denominational position, your theological background.” He says, ***“I know what you’re doing.”*** And that’s what’s going to provide your marriage garment. It’s not going to be doctrine; it’s going to be things you’ve *done*. And it’s not always easy to serve the Lord, sometimes the pressures are great. But next time you’re really honestly serving the Lord and you feel all these pressures coming against you, and I want you to know they come against Ruth and me just as much as against anybody else. Just bear in mind it’s all part of providing your marriage gown. You’ll feel different about it then.