



THE WEDDING OF CHRIST TO HIS **BRIDE**

PREPARING THE CHURCH FOR THE SECOND COMING



TIMOTHY R. JENNINGS, M.D.

The plan of salvation is God's active intervention to bring sinners back into unity with Him, to win rebellious, untrustworthy, and sin-sick humans back into a relationship of intimate love and trust with Jesus.

The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming
By Timothy R. Jennings, M.D.

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ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DESCRIPTIONS THE BIBLE GIVES OF GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION IS THAT OF A BRIDEGROOM, WHICH REPRESENTS CHRIST, BEING WEDDED TO A BRIDE, WHICH REPRESENTS HIS PEOPLE—THE CHURCH.

“Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; “for **I am married to you** (Jeremiah 3:14 NKJV, emphasis mine).

For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth (Isaiah 54:5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

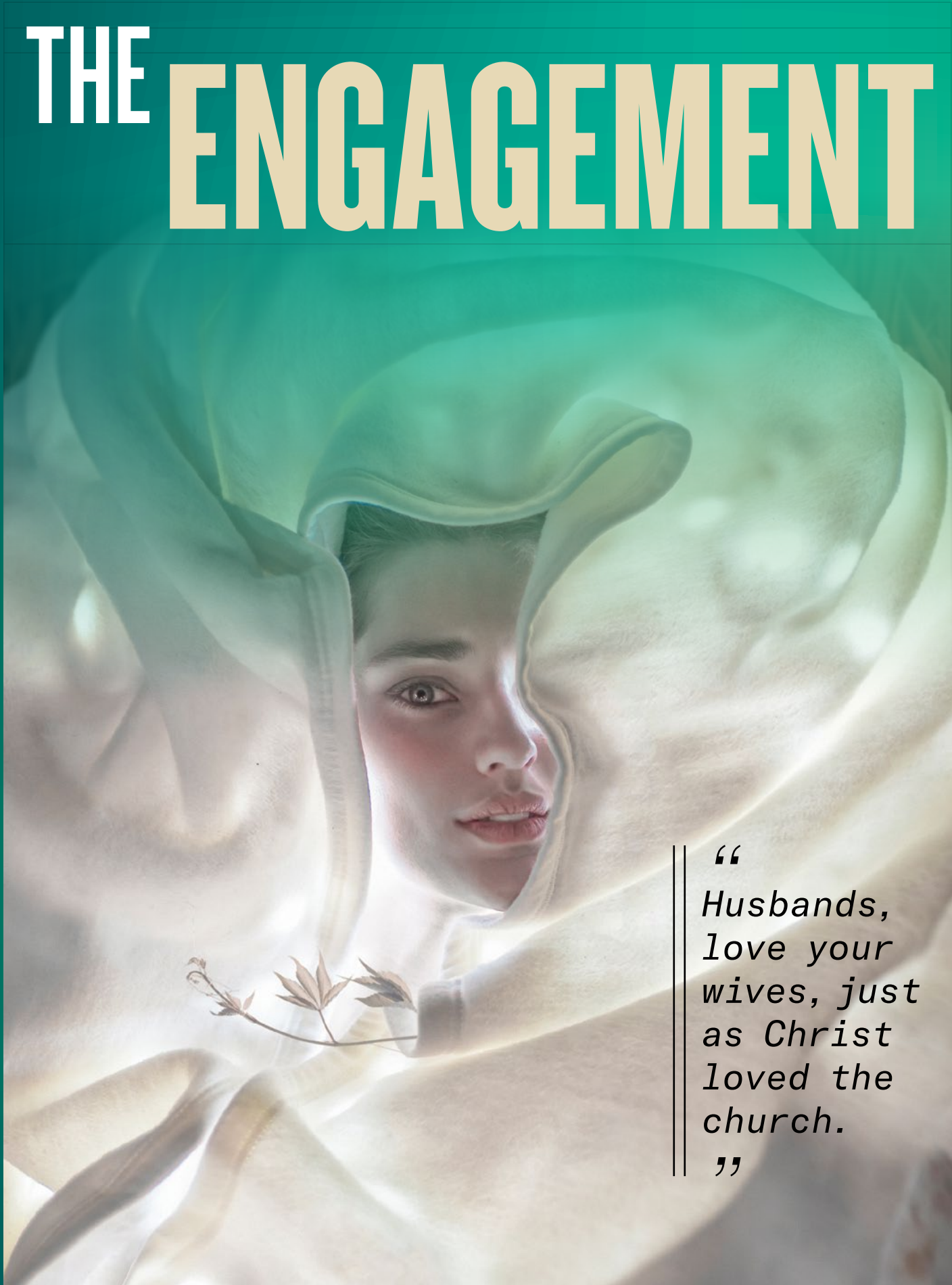
I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him (2 Corinthians 11:2 NIV84, emphasis mine).

A wedding is a joyful event in which two hearts unite in love, devotion, loyalty, and friendship. A marriage, as God designed, is not a legal declaration but an intertwining of hearts, minds, and selves into a greater whole—it is a holy union.

Godly marriage brings two intelligent beings into a type of oneness that defies human logic—a oneness in which each individual retains their unique identities but, simultaneously, under the power of love and trust, functions as a greater whole, a bonded, integrated unit or team, that shares the same values, principles, motives, and methods.

In a holy marriage, each person rejoices in the advancement and success of the other person and celebrates every opportunity to invest in the welfare of their partner. It is a mutually rewarding circle of beneficence in which love flows freely from heart to heart. In such a loving union, the two individuals expand, ennoble, develop, and elevate beyond that which either person would be able to experience or achieve on their own. It is in this unity of love that people flourish and become truly godlike, and, over time, their love grows, deepens, and strengthens even further.

“A marriage, as God designed, is not a legal declaration but an intertwining of hearts, minds, and selves into a greater whole—it is a holy union.”



THE ENGAGEMENT

“
*Husbands,
love your
wives, just
as Christ
loved the
church.*
”

THE ENGAGEMENT	
<p>BUT A HEALTHY MARRIAGE REQUIRES HEALTHY PEOPLE. ONE CANNOT HAVE A HEALTHY MARRIAGE WITH A CHEAT, OR SOMEONE WHO IS ABUSIVE, DOMINEERING, CONTROLLING, EXPLOITIVE, and controlled by selfishness. Healthy marriages require the individuals to not only have love in their hearts, but to also be trustworthy, loyal, faithful people who have the best interest of their spouse paramount in their heart and who would sacrifice self for the welfare of their spouse. And this is true for Christ and His bride. In order for Christ the Bridegroom to be bonded in a “holy union” to His church, the church must be cleansed, purified, and made ready; the people must become holy, mature, and trustworthy—faithful to their Groom. The apostle Paul described it this way in Ephesians 5:25–32:</p>	<p>The plan of salvation is God’s active intervention to bring sinners back into unity with Him, to win rebellious, untrustworthy, and sin-sick humans back into a relationship of intimate love and trust with Jesus, a process in which He cleanses us from everything that separates us from Him, eventually bringing us into complete unity, partnership, and oneness of heart, mind, and soul, just as God designed for husbands and wives.</p> <p>This process starts with a betrothal—a promise to one another, an engagement—which is when we are won over to love and choose to place our faith, our trust, in Jesus so that we accept His proposal to be permanently united in the bonds of everlasting love with Him.</p> <p>I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD (Hosea 2:19, 20 NIV84).</p> <p>God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son to make His proposal of eternal union with Him (John 3:16), to be our Groom, the one who cleanses us from all that defiles and, thereby, unite us in the bonds of everlasting love. God’s proposal, His offer of eternal union with Him, is forever and is for every single sinful son and daughter of Adam and Eve, but we must choose to accept the proposal and cooperate with the Bridegroom to prepare for the wedding.</p>

Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ loved the church** and gave himself up for her **to make her holy, cleansing her** by the washing with water through the word, and **to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.** In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as **Christ does the church**—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” **This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church** (NIV84, emphasis mine).

THE		ENGAGEMENT	
<p>The conversion experience, when we first accept Jesus, is the acceptance of Jesus’ offer of salvation. It is accepting His proposal to cleanse us and heal us from all sin. It is saying “yes” to His marriage proposal—being betrothed, becoming engaged—committing to Him while awaiting the wedding ceremony. While it may seem self-evident, it is important to note here that it is <i>prior</i> to the wedding that we are betrothed; it is at the wedding that the “two become one,” that we become eternally bonded to Christ.</p> <p>It is at the wedding that Christ, the Groom, unites His people, the bride, to Himself in heart, mind, and character, bringing us into complete oneness with Him. This is what Ephesians chapter five describes—Christ cleansing us, washing and purifying us in His righteousness, and putting His living law of love into our hearts and minds so that we are like Him, at one with Him. This marriage covenant is also described as the new covenant:</p> <p>“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they</p>	<p>will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:31–34 NIV84, emphasis mine).</p> <p>God describes Himself here as our Husband; we are to be His loyal and faithful spouse, united in the bonds of love, one in heart and mind with Him. This requires that we die to sin (fear and selfishness—the survival-of-the-fittest drives) and be reborn with hearts that love and trust God, opening ourselves up to God for Him to write His living law of love into our inmost being. This new covenant is the marriage covenant of intimate unity with God, in which Christ cleanses His bride, and is only experienced through Jesus our heavenly High Priest. Note how the New Testament writer repeats Jeremiah’s message in Hebrews:</p> <p>“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest” (Hebrews 8:8–11 NIV84, emphasis mine).</p>		<p>God, through Jeremiah and the writer of Hebrews, describes this as a “new covenant” because Israel chose to accept God’s proposal on the basis of law and their personal performance rather than upon faith and love:</p> <p>Then he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey” (Exodus 24:7 NIV84).</p> <p>A relationship based on rules, law, and legal payments to protect from punishment does not remove fear and transform hearts, does not unite in love, and does not win to eternal trust and loyalty; instead, it leads to adultery and betrayal:</p> <p>Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel’s immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood (Jeremiah 3:6–9 NIV84, emphasis mine).</p> <p>Therefore, God sent us His Son to win us back to love and trust so that He can cleanse us from all sin, uniting us with Him. When our hearts are bonded in love and trust to our Savior, it is then that we become “one” with Him.</p> <p>This unity of love is what it means to <i>know</i> and be <i>known</i>.</p>

KNOWING GOD



IN SCRIPTURE, *KNOWING* ISN'T A MERE COGNITIVE AWARENESS OF FACTS; IT IS AN INTIMATE EXPERIENCE AND UNION WITH

ONE ANOTHER. ADAM *KNEW* HIS WIFE, AND THEN SHE CONCEIVED A SON (GENESIS 4:1).

Eternal life is *knowing* God—not merely *knowing* about God (John 17:3). Jesus said that many people will *know about* Him, claim to be His followers, and even perform miracles in His name, but He will tell them plainly, “I never *knew* you. Away from me, you evildoer!” (Matthew 7:23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

The wedding of Christ and His bride is the final event that precedes His return to receive His bride for the celebration of the wedding supper. This means that the wedding happens *before* the Second Coming; the bride participates *by faith* in the wedding, the union, in becoming one with Jesus. This intimate union with God is what it means to *know* God and be *known* by God.

Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the **wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.** Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” [Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.] Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘**Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**’” (Revelation 19:6–9 NIV84, emphasis mine).

There is a wedding, and then there is the wedding supper. The wedding itself is the uniting in loving commitment of heart, mind, and soul of the two spouses. The wedding celebration follows that joining. The wedding

is not a “legal” event but a holy covenant of love and trust—of placing our committed and unshakable faith in the other.

Some might be uncomfortable with the idea that the wedding of Christ to His church takes place before the Second Coming. But consider:

- When do the saints experience their hearts being bonded into unshakable loyal love to Jesus—before or at the Second Coming?
- When do the saints experience the cleansing of their hearts and minds from fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame so that they can stand firm in every trial—before or at the Second Coming?

Don’t the people of God come into unity, love, devotion, loyalty, trust, and commitment to Christ and experience rebirth with new hearts and right spirits *before* the Second Coming? This is what the Bible teaches!

Prior to Christ’s return, every person who has accepted His proposal and are converted (betrothed) have opened their hearts to Him and experience His presence in the secret recesses of their inmost being, where He cleanses, purifies, and unites them with Himself (wedding), placing His “name” upon them, signifying the sealing of His people into eternal bonds of love with Him. Then He returns and glorifies His people and takes us physically into His presence, where we celebrate the wedding supper of the Lamb.

“
The highly symbolic book is not suggesting that Jesus weds a lifeless city; rather, it uses the imagery of a city to depict a people from every corner of the earth.
”



Just as wives traditionally take the name of their husbands, we take the new name that Christ gives us:

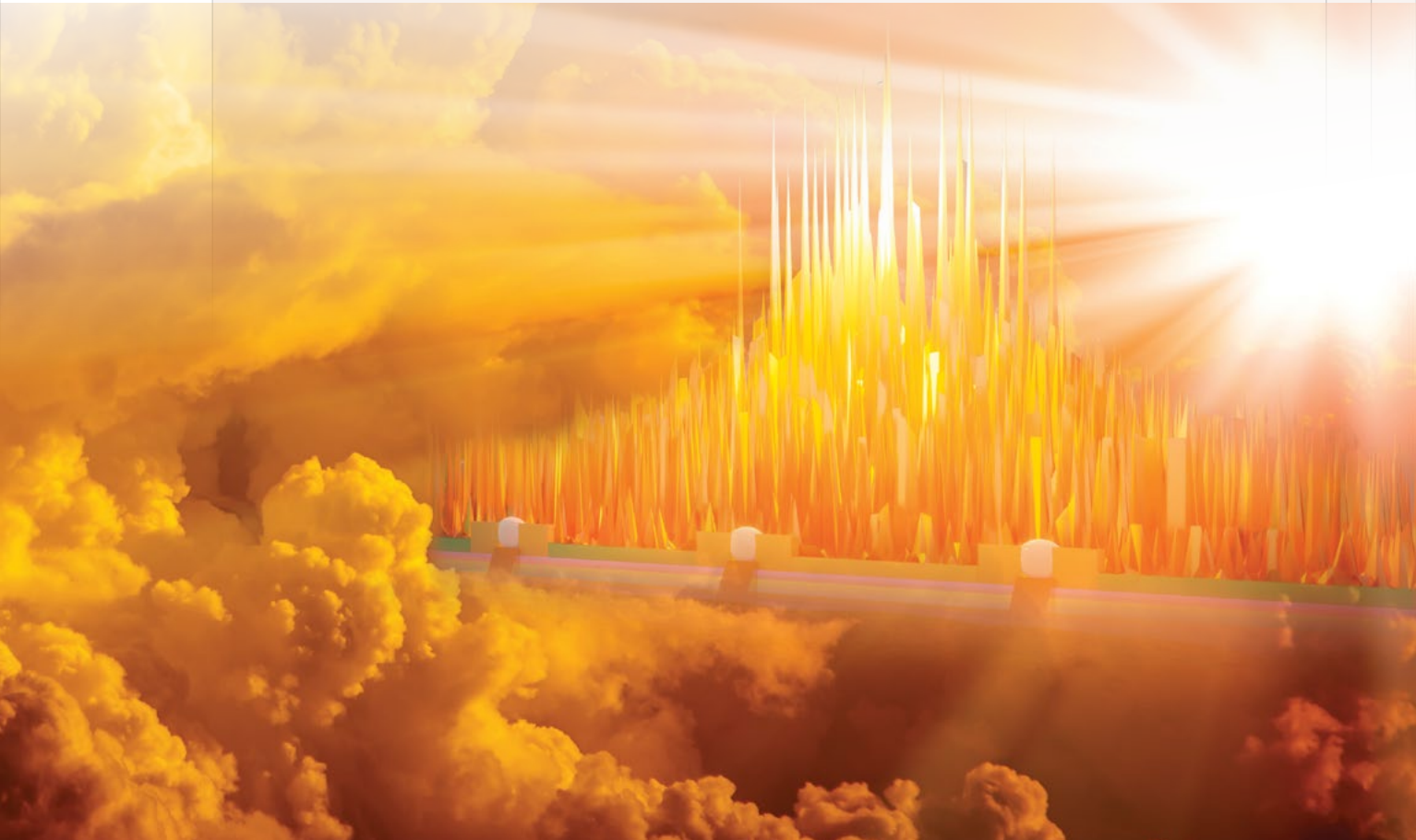
I will make those who are victorious pillars in the temple of my God, and they will never leave it. **I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem**, which will come down out of heaven from my God. **I will also write on them my new name** (Revelation 3:12 GNT, emphasis mine).

It is at the wedding that the saints of God are sealed and have God’s name written upon their hearts and minds such that they are settled in their loving devotion to Him; they are faithful to their Groom and will not betray Him. They will not give their love, affection, or selves to another suitor or betray their Groom for the pleasures of this world or even to protect their temporal lives (James 4:4). They are like Job, who, though faced with terrible trials and tribulations, could not be shaken out of his loyalty and devotion to God and, thus, was described by God as “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” and was commended by God for saying what is right about God (Job 1:8; 42:7 NIV84).

This new name that God writes upon the saints at the wedding is also described as the New Jerusalem; indeed, the Bible describes the New Jerusalem as Christ’s bride in order to help us gain deeper insight into the profound mystery of Christ being united with His bride:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the **Holy City, the new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband**. ... One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you **the bride, the wife of the Lamb**.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and **showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:1, 2, 9, 10, emphasis mine).

Because a marriage is the joining of two intelligent beings in the bonds of love and trust, Revelation could not be describing Jesus being married to inanimate material. The highly symbolic book is not suggesting that Jesus weds a lifeless city; rather, it uses the imagery of a city to depict a people from every corner of the earth who have characters that shine like pure gold, living in glorified immortal bodies, bonded in intimate union with Jesus.



THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE— THE DAY of ATONEMENT

“
The most holy place is where the high priest conducted a special ceremony: the ceremony of bringing the people into ‘at-one-ment’ with God, of two becoming one.
”

BY USING THE IMAGERY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM TO DEPICT THE BRIDE, THE BIBLE GIVES US ANOTHER IMPORTANT CLUE TO HELP US UNRAVEL THIS MYSTERY OF CHRIST CLEANSING HIS PEOPLE AND THE TWO BECOMING ONE.

The New Jerusalem, which is called the bride, is described structurally as being in the shape of a cube (Revelation 21:16). This is the exact shape of the most holy place in the sanctuary (1 Kings 6:20). And as we compare the New Jerusalem to the most holy place, we discover multiple God-inspired parallels:

THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE — THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

- The most holy place was covered in gold; the heavenly city is paved in gold. In Scripture, gold is symbolic of the purity of Christ, the righteousness and holiness of God’s character of love.
- The most holy place was lighted by God’s Shekinah presence; the city is lighted by God’s eternal presence (Revelation 21:21, 22).
- In the most holy place was the covenant box, the place where the covenant was accomplished—the covenant of cleansing, uniting, bonding; in the city are the saints, the living temples in whose hearts the new covenant (marriage covenant) is accomplished.
 - o The manna was the first element placed in the covenant box and represents the saints first partaking of the “bread of heaven” (John 6:32–35), Jesus the living Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14; 6:53–58); the truth as it is in Jesus wins them to trust (betrothal/conversion).
 - o The law was the second item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints, once betrothed (converted) to Christ, opening their hearts to Him; He writes His living law of love into their hearts and minds (wedding/new covenant/cleansing) and renews them in righteousness.
 - o Aaron’s rod that budded was the last item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints who were dead in trespass and sin but, having accepted the proposal (converted) and experienced the union (wedding/cleansing), come alive and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness. This symbolically represents both the reborn life bringing forth Christian fruits and also the glorification of those wedded to Christ living eternally fruitful lives in loving union with the Lord.
- The most holy place is where the high priest conducted a special ceremony: the ceremony of atonement; the ceremony of cleansing; the ceremony of washing away sin and purifying the people (bride); the ceremony of bringing the people into “at-one-ment” with God, of two becoming one. In other words, it was a wedding ceremony! And this ceremony happened at the end of the annual cycle of feasts, right before the Feast of Tabernacles; i.e., tabernacling or cohabitating with God.



<p>The Old Testament ceremonial system had no direct ability to save; salvation is found only in Jesus, who is the “Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8 NIV84). The ceremonial system was added, or given, to lead people to Christ and teach God’s plan to save sinners (Galatians 3:19). Both Old and New Testaments make this clear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ““The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?” says the LORD. ‘I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ... Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow’” (Isaiah 1:11, 16, 17 NIV84). • “I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me” (Hosea 6:6 GNT). • “The gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. ... But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 9:9, 10; 10:3, 4 NIV84, emphasis mine). <p>The purpose of the ceremonial system was to teach the plan of salvation, to teach the reality of Jesus. In that symbolic system, there were seven annual feasts that were like a theatrical play meant to illustrate, to teach</p>	 <p>sinful humans, God’s saving plan from the fall of Adam to the earth made new. Each of the seven major feasts had a real-life fulfillment and covered a portion of human history from Adam’s fall all the way to the earth made new:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passover: The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God “passed over” their sins. He “left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who “takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam’s sin until Christ’s death on the cross. • Unleavened Bread: This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam’s sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity. This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes 	<p>that God had predetermined to “passover” our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from our terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).</p> <p>The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam’s fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wave Sheaf: This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ’s resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53). • Feast of Weeks (Pentecost): The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years 	<p>ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from AD 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trumpets: A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ’s parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the Church. It occurred at the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century. • Atonement: At-one-ment is the time immediately before the Second Coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for “we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today! • Tabernacles: This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.
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Just as the Old Testament Passover feast had a real and literal fulfillment when Jesus died as our Passover Lamb on Passover Friday, so also there is a real and literal cleansing, uniting, bonding, and at-one-ment of the Bridegroom and His bride that precedes the Second Coming. We are living in that time right now!

Just as Paul described in Ephesians chapter five, Jesus cleanses His bride in order to bring His people into at-one-ment with Him. This is the marriage of the Lamb, when Jesus cleanses her from all defilement and clothes her in the white robes of His righteousness—the two become one. This cleansing work is the function of our heavenly High Priest and was acted out symbolically during the Day of Atonement ceremony. When Jesus finishes cleansing His people (bride) from sin, we are then able to stand in His presence without any further “mediating” work by Jesus, because He has restored us to oneness with Himself and the Father.

This cleansing of His temple (people) prior to His Second Coming is also described by Malachi:

See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly **the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant**, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver (Malachi 3:1–3 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Prior to His appearing in glory, Jesus goes to His temple to perform the sacred covenant of uniting His people in eternal at-one-ness with Him by purifying them, the priesthood of



“
Jesus is now in
heaven working
to completely
heal the hearts
and minds of
those who have
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in Him.
”

believers, from all sin, fear, selfishness, and defects of character; writing His living law of love into their hearts and minds, sealing them to Himself so that they are at-one with Him for all eternity. This is the restoration of the kingdom of God within us (Luke 17:21). It is Christ receiving His kingdom (Daniel 7:13)—that is, the receiving, cleansing, and joining of Himself to His bride; this is the wedding of the Lamb.

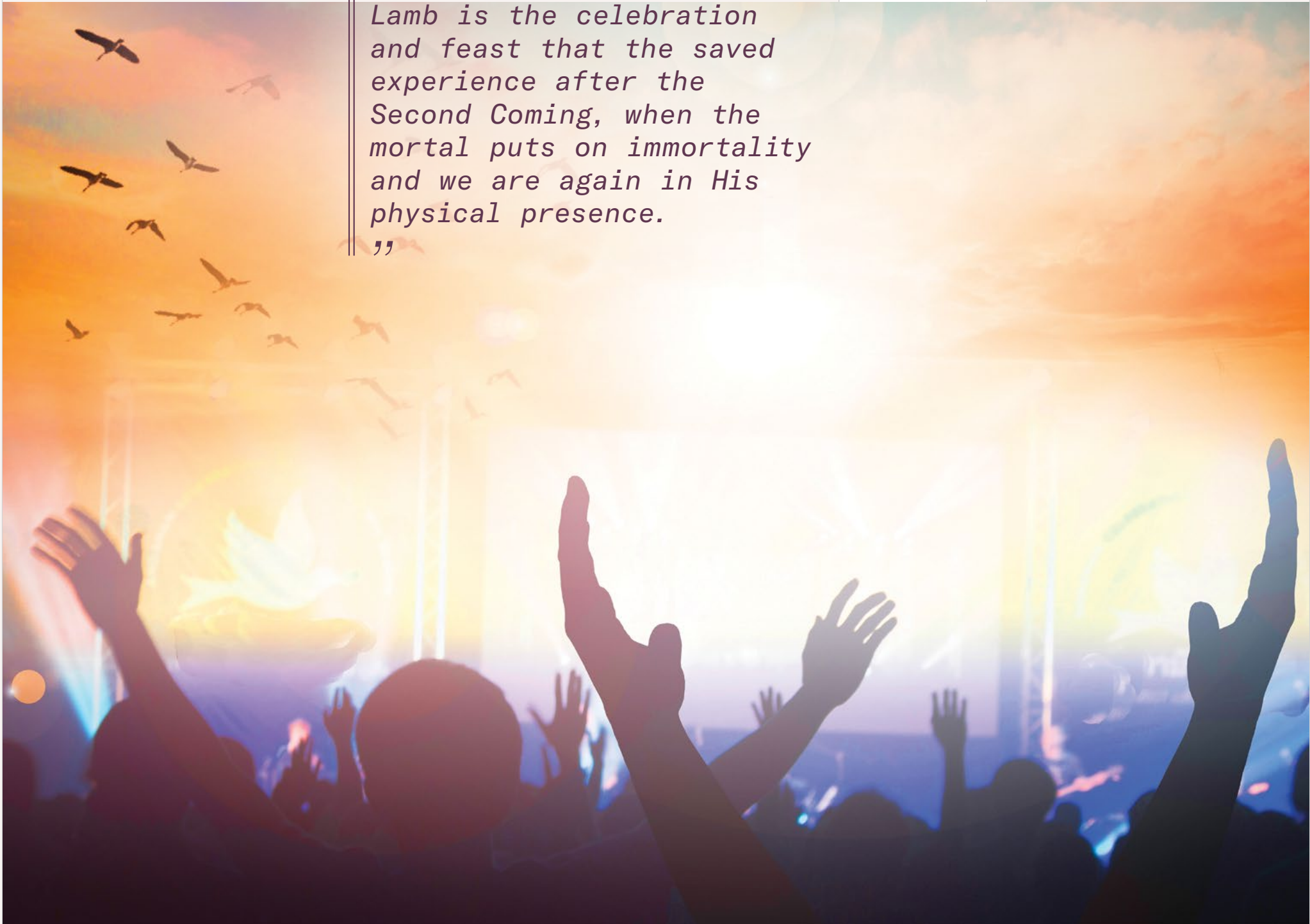
The cleansing of the bride and the cleansing of the sanctuary describe the same event. Jesus is now in heaven working to completely heal the hearts and minds of those who have exercised faith in Him (accepted His proposal) so that when He returns, we are able to stand in His presence and see Him face to face (1 John 3:2). We who are alive on the earth cooperate with Him for the healing and cleansing of our minds, hearts, and characters to make ourselves ready for His return:

Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and **give him glory!** For the **wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.** Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” [*Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.*] Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” (Revelation 19:6–9 NIV84, emphasis mine).

“

The wedding supper of the Lamb is the celebration and feast that the saved experience after the Second Coming, when the mortal puts on immortality and we are again in His physical presence.

”



This wedding is the intimate joining of the hearts and minds of the people with Jesus, the final cleansing of their characters, bringing them into at-one-ment with Jesus, which occurs *before* His appearing; it prepares us to stand in His glorious presence. The wedding supper of the Lamb is the celebration and feast that the saved experience *after* the Second Coming, when the mortal puts on immortality and we are again in His physical presence.

We will be physically present at the wedding supper, the celebration. But the wedding itself happens before the celebration. The wedding is when the betrothed are joined into complete unity and become one. Thus, the wedding is the final cleansing of hearts and minds from sin, the purifying of character, the restoring of the righteousness of Christ within, the writing of His law into our inmost being, that unites us with our Savior. The wedding is happening *now*, and the bride—you and me—are to be making ourselves ready by faith, by following Jesus in loving trust and living out His methods and principles today.

This was all taught symbolically when the high priest, who represented Christ, entered the most holy place on the Day of Atonement with the blood of the sacrificial animal, which represents the sinless life of Jesus that cleanses and purifies, and sprinkled it seven times above the lid.¹ This sprinkling represents the final application of the perfect righteous life of Jesus being reproduced, affixed, and “sealed” into the characters of those who have placed their trust in Jesus. While a few individuals have already experienced this full healing (Enoch, Moses, Elijah) and are examples for us of what we will experience if we also trust and walk with God as they did, the Day of Atonement feast symbolizes the final worldwide cleansing of every person who has placed their faith in God.

¹ The life is in the blood, according to Leviticus 17:11.

WHAT ABOUT the RIGHTEOUS DEAD?



“
This is what happens when we are reborn into a trust relationship with Jesus; we are not the same old sinful person but a new person.
”

But you have come to **Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God**. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose **names are written in heaven** (Hebrews 12:22, 23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

In the Bible, names represent character, our individuality, our unique personhood. When Jacob, whose name means “deceiver,” was fully converted and, in his union with God, experienced victory over his fear and selfishness, his name was changed to Israel, “one who with God overcomes.” Jacob became a “new man” and, thus, received a new name that was representative of his new transformed heart. This is what happens when we are reborn into a trust relationship with Jesus; we are not the same old sinful person but a new person in a loving trust relationship with Jesus and, thus, we get a new name, which is registered in heaven.

The registering of our names in heaven occurs when we are converted (betrothed) to Christ. In the Old Testament, this was represented by the sin offering, when the sinner confessed sins upon the head of the sacrificial animal, then the blood of that animal was applied to the various points of the sanctuary. This administering of the blood into the sanctuary happened all year long and symbolizes all the people throughout human history who have placed their faith in Jesus, having their names registered into the system (Lamb’s Book of Life, Philippians 4:3) as accepting the betrothal, awaiting the day of full cleansing, the wedding, when the two become one—symbolized by the Day of Atonement ceremony.

OF COURSE, SOME MIGHT BE WONDERING ABOUT THE MILLIONS OF FAITHFUL PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED THROUGHOUT HISTORY PRIOR TO THIS TIME OF ATONEMENT. WHAT ABOUT THEM? Are they not already cleansed? Are they not already wedded to Jesus? Some Christian traditions, teaching that the dead are with Jesus the very moment of their death, might ask: Wouldn’t the righteous dead have experienced this cleansing, uniting, at-one-ment with Jesus at the time of their death, when they were taken to heaven? Is there really any need for this end-time cleansing prior to the Second Coming?

This is where the Bible reveals another beautiful truth. The church—the people of God, the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, the most holy place where God dwells—is also described as Mount Zion, and this is the place where the “names” of the righteous are written:

Jesus tells us that for those who are both betrothed to Him *and stay faithful to Him*, He will never blot their *names* out of the book of life but will dress them in pure white (Revelation 3:5). The dressing in white robes is a symbolic way of saying the removal of the filthy garments of sin and our purification with the righteous character of Christ (Zechariah 3:3–5), which is the same as purifying the church, or cleansing the sanctuary, or bringing us into at-one-ment, the wedding. And this cleansing of those who are registered in the Lamb’s Book of Life occurs prior to the Second Coming.

So again, what about those who died throughout history? Is this ceremony for them, or is it only for those living on the earth at the time of His return?

“
He will never
blot their names
out of the book
of life but will
dress them in
pure white.
”

THE DESTINATION of THE DEAD

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHEN THEY DIE? DO THEY RETURN TO DUST? DO THEY GO TO GOD? DO THEY GO TO HEAVEN? OR DO THEY DO ALL THREE?

According to the Bible, human beings are tripartite, composed of three parts:

Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NET, emphasis mine).

THE DESTINATION OF THE DEAD

Is it possible that at death, one part of a human returns to dust, one part goes to God, and one part goes to heaven? Interestingly, computers are also tripartite and serve as a poignant object lesson. In order to have an **operational computer**, one needs **hardware**, **software**, and an **energy source**. Having only one or two of these three will result in a computer that will not operate. All three are required for actual functioning.

In a similar way, to have an **operational** (functioning) **human being**, it requires all three components—**body**, **soul**, and **spirit**:

- The Greek word for **body** is σῶμα [*soma*] and is analogous to a computer’s **hardware**, including the **CPU**—the physical machine, including our brain.
- The Greek word for **soul** is ψυχή [*psuche*], from which we get psyche, as in *psychiatry* and *psychology*, and it means our individuality—our heart, unique personhood, character, identity.² It is analogous to a computer’s **software** (including database/datasets/data).
- And the Greek word for **spirit** is πνεῦμα [*pneuma*], from which we get *pneumonia* or *pneumatic*, and it means wind, air, or breath—as in the breath of life. This is our **energy source**—the life-energy originating from God.

When a computer runs out of power, what state does it go into? It “sleeps.” This is exactly how the Bible describes those who die the first death: They “sleep,” awaiting the resurrection (Psalm 7:5, 13:3; Matthew 9:24; John 11:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). With this in mind, we can now determine what actually happens to the various components of a human being at death.

At the first death:

- The body returns to dust (Genesis 3:19, Psalm 44:25, Ecclesiastes 3:20);
- The spirit—life energy—returns to God who gave the breath of life (Ecclesiastes 12:7);
- But what about the soul (*psuche*/psyche)—the individuality, the software? Where does that go?

“
This is exactly how the Bible describes those who die the first death: they ‘sleep,’ awaiting the resurrection.
”

²The use of the term *soul* can be confusing, because sometimes the term soul refers to the entire living being. When someone sends out an SOS (save our souls), they are calling for their entire living selves to be saved. Here, however, the soul as referenced in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is not the entire living person, but one (the *psuche*/individuality) of the three components that make up the entire human being.

THE CLOUD SERVERS

“
When our bodies die and decay to dust, the breath of life returns to God, and our souls/individualities are safely stored on the heavenly ‘servers’ in the presence of the Lord.
”

I F SOMEONE STOLE YOUR LAPTOP AND WAS THREATENING TO DESTROY IT BUT YOU HAD A PERFECT COPY OF THE DATA BACKED UP ON A CLOUD SERVER, THEN YOU MIGHT SAY, “I’M NOT AFRAID OF THE ONE WHO CAN DESTROY MY laptop (hardware/body/soma) but cannot destroy the software [soul/*psuche*].” This is like what Jesus described in Matthew 10:28 when He spoke about those who might kill us for our faith in Him.


Why is it that the killing of the body cannot destroy the soul? Because the soul is our individuality, our unique personhood, and it is distinct from the body. The question is, *where does the soul go when it is absent from the body?* The apostle Paul answers:

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be **absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord** (2 Corinthians 5:6–8 KJV, emphasis mine).

THE CLOUD SERVERS

But where would our souls/individualities/software be stored in heaven? Would it not be in the heavenly records—the Lamb’s Book of Life (“servers”), where our *names/characters* are recorded? If someone destroyed your laptop but your data was safe on a cloud server, the data would not be active and operational but dormant—awaiting download to new hardware. Likewise, when our bodies die and decay to dust, the breath of life returns to God, and our souls/individualities are safely stored on the heavenly “servers” in the presence of the Lord, in what state are they? They are asleep/dormant/in stasis, awaiting download into new bodies (hardware) at the resurrection.



THE CLOUD		
	<p>Paul brilliantly describes this very process:</p> <p>Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 NIV84, emphasis mine).</p> <p>Did you notice that the very same righteous dead who arise out of the ground are also coming down out of heaven with Christ—and that they are described as coming from heaven in a state of sleep? How can this be? Because their souls/individualities/software, which are stored on the heavenly “servers,” are coming down with Christ to be downloaded into their new immortal bodies during the resurrection at the Second Coming! Jesus, the builder of our tripartite beings, understood this, proclaiming:</p> <p>I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die (John 11: 25, 26 NIV84).</p> <p>The righteous may <i>sleep</i>, but they never <i>die</i>. Their individualities are safe with Christ in heaven!³</p>	
	<p>³ This magazine does not address the fate of the <i>unrepentant wicked</i>. Nothing in this magazine speaks to the mortality or immortality of the soul—that is a different discussion. However, it is the author’s position that the soul is mortal and immortality is a gift from God for the saved. (See Romans 6:23.)</p>	

SERVERS		
		

THE CLEANSING of THE RECORDS



SO, WHAT DO THE HEAVENLY RECORDS (INDIVIDUALITIES STORED ON “SERVERS”) HAVE TO DO WITH THE WEDDING, THE CLEANSING OF THE BRIDE, AND THE REMOVING OF SINS FROM THE SANCTUARY IN HEAVEN?

When Jesus raises the righteous at the first resurrection, will they arise defective and sinful—or perfect and sinless? Obviously, perfect and sinless. But did all the saved who have died throughout history die in sinless perfection—or did they die as sinners who were *betrothed in love and trust* to Jesus yet still struggled with defects in their lives? These saved people died trusting in Jesus but were not completely cleansed, wedded to, or at-one-ment with Jesus in the fullest intimacy of their being. They still had residual defects or habits that had not been removed.

Will they rise with those same defects? Will the thief on the cross, who found salvation in Christ, arise with the heart of a thief longing to steal? Will the great Reformer Martin Luther, known for his hatred toward the Jews, arise hating the Jews and longing to kill them? No! The righteous arise in sinless perfection.


Therefore, something needs to happen in these saved souls *before* the resurrection so that at the moment of resurrection, their previous evil habits, selfish natures, addictive tendencies, and lusts will be gone. Wouldn’t all these vestiges of sin need to be removed so that Christ’s bride is pure, dressed in white, and ready to stand in God’s physical presence?

We could describe this process as cleansing, removing of sins, being united as one with Christ, or a wedding. And from where are these remnants of sin being removed? From the individualities/ souls of the people who have trusted in Jesus. They are receiving from Jesus *His* perfection (symbolically represented in the Day of Atonement ceremony as the sprinkling of blood seven times) so that when they arise, they arise perfected!

This cleansing of the individualities/ souls of the dead is described in Revelation, using beautiful sanctuary symbolism:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar [in the sanctuary] the souls [individualities] of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe [cleansing of their characters at that time], and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed [cleansing of the living on the earth; see Malachi 3:1–3] (Revelation 6:9–11 NIV84).

THE CLEANSING	
<p>So, we could describe the process of the removing of sins as both the cleansing of the sanctuary and the cleansing of the bride of Christ. We could say that:</p> <p><i>Jesus, our heavenly High Priest (Groom), is accessing and analyzing every individual record closely, and for all those who have trusted Him, He removes the sins from their account/individuality.</i></p> <p>In modern language, this means:</p> <p><i>He examines in detail the stored data that constitutes every person, and for those who trust Him, He corrects all damaged code—removes all elements of selfishness, all tendencies to sin, and writes in His perfection!</i></p> <p>This cleansing was acted out on the Day of Atonement, and this is what the saints profess Jesus did for them. (See Leviticus 16:14; Revelation 1:5.) This is why, in the ceremonial system, the law was in the ark in the most holy place, where at-one-ment occurs—but in the new covenant, the law is written by our High Priest into the hearts and minds of the saved. (See Hebrews 8:10.)</p> <p>It is at the wedding that the two become one. It is at this time in history, immediately prior to Christ’s return, that He, our Groom, completes His cleansing of His bride and removes from her all residual defects from the soul/database of each individual (those who have died trusting in Him, as well as the living who trust in Him), so that at the resurrection, each saint will arise in total perfection of mind, body, and spirit.</p>	<p>However, He is able to do this only for those who have given Him the key to their hearts/souls/databases—those who have exercised trust in Him prior to their sleep-death. This provides Him the freedom to access and fix all residual traces of sin from the stored individualities of those who trust Him. But for those who in this life never opened their hearts in trust to Him—inviting Him in—He can do nothing. He cannot write into their character trust and love; He can remove defects from the characters of only those who do trust and love. Trust and love must be chosen and developed by the individual while alive.</p> <p>Imagine the following scenario: You trust your doctor, and while you are asleep (under anesthesia), your doctor performs surgery to remove cancer cells from your body. But what if a doctor performed surgery on you that you never wanted, without your consent or against your will? This is an analogy illustrating why Jesus cannot fix the datasets/characters of those who do not trust Him. It would violate God’s character of love, which requires genuine freedom; it would violate the freewill of the individual sinner. If God overwrote their freewill choices and then imposed His design upon them without their consent, the individuality that they developed while alive would be destroyed, and a new person would be created in their place. Thus, only those who trust Jesus and long for victory over their weaknesses and infirmities of character, and <i>invite Him into their hearts</i> while alive, experience His perfecting work while they are asleep.</p> <p>During the wedding, the hearts and minds of God’s people, asleep or alive, are being examined and cleansed from sinfulness, permanently sealing them into oneness with Jesus in order to prepare them to meet Him face to face.</p>

OF THE RECORDS	
	
<p>Certainly, as soon as one accepts the betrothal from Jesus and is converted, the healing, maturing, and cleansing process for that individual begins. Yet for many, the purification, the coming into a settled and permanent unity with God, is not completed in this life, except for a few Bible heroes, such as Enoch and Elijah. Therefore, just prior to the Second Coming, this final work is needed to prepare the living to be ready to stand in His glorious presence and be translated, just as Enoch and Elijah were.</p> <p>But why wait until now to do this final work?</p>	
<div><div>“</div><div><p><i>If God overwrote their freewill choices and then imposed His design upon them without their consent, the individuality that they developed while alive would be destroyed.</i></p></div><div>”</div></div>	

THE MAN of SIN ATTACKS

“
Satan counterattacked by infecting the Christian church with his lies about God, creating his own imperial Roman counterfeit to the healing work of Christ.
”

AN INFINITE GOD COULD CERTAINLY FIX INDIVIDUALITIES (DATASETS) INSTANTLY, SO WAITING UNTIL NOW HAS NOT BEEN IN ORDER TO PROVIDE JESUS WITH ENOUGH TIME TO CLEANSE THE records of the deceased. Rather, waiting until this time was so that the entire worldwide number of living saints could go beyond betrothal all the way to at-one-ment with Jesus—to be wedded, healed, and sealed just like Elijah and Enoch were. In order to achieve this on a worldwide basis for every single living person who trusts in Jesus required the recovery of sufficient Bible truth to free people from the lies that Satan has introduced into the church.



THE MAN OF SIN ATTACKS

After Christ’s victory two thousand years ago, Satan counterattacked by infecting the Christian church with his lies about God, creating his own imperial Roman counterfeit to the healing work of Christ. God foreknew this would happen and warned His people:

Concerning the **coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him** [returns to gather us for the wedding supper, which occurs after the wedding], we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for **that day will not come until the rebellion occurs** and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 NIV84, emphasis mine).



Satan counterattacked Jesus' victory by introducing "lawlessness" into Christian thought; he did so by exchanging the laws of God for the laws of men. God is the Creator, the builder of everything—space, time, energy, matter, and life. God's laws are the protocols upon which reality is built to operate—the law of gravity, laws of physics, laws of health, and the moral laws. Life and health are possible only in harmony with God and all His design laws for life. Breaking God's laws severs the connection with God and takes one out of harmony with the very basis of life, and the natural result—if God doesn't act to heal and save—is death:

- "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 NIV84).
- "Sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:15 NIV84).
- "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (Galatians 6:8 NIV84).

Thus, the plan of salvation—the new covenant, the at-one-ment, the wedding—is

to restore, to write, God's living law back into the inmost recesses of the hearts and minds of those who trust Jesus (Hebrews 8:10).

But Satan's man of sin introduced "lawlessness" by introducing into Christianity the lie that God's law functions no differently than the rules sinful humans make up, the lie that God's law is like Roman law, imposed rules that require infliction of punishment by the ruling authority. This idea changed the Christian understanding of sin as a terminal condition from which humans need our loving Savior to cleanse and heal us into a legal problem with a god who will kill us if something isn't done to that god to take away its wrath—or create a legal loophole so that he won't be required to kill us.

In other words, Christianity changed into a religion that required offerings be made to an offended god to pay that god for our sins lest the god kill us. This is Satan's view of God and, by this falsehood about God's law, is how he became enthroned into the spirit temple proclaiming himself to be God. As a result, the world was thrust into the Dark Ages, when darkness about God covered the people (Isaiah 60:2).

“
Christianity changed into a religion that required offerings be made to an offended god to pay that god for our sins lest the god kill us.
”

Just as we saw in Malachi 3:1–3, because of Satan's man of sin counterattack, Jesus, prior to appearing in His glory, must first come to His temple to cleanse the people so that we will be ready to stand in His presence. He must remove the lies about Him and His Father that cause Christians to be afraid of God, that cause them to think God is the source of pain, suffering, and death, inflicted upon people as punishment for sin. In order to be at-one, to be wedded in love and trust, we cannot be afraid that the Groom or His Father will kill us. All fear of God must be removed in order for the bride (the living saints) to be united in eternal bonds of love and trust with Him. This cleansing, uniting, purifying, wedding could not happen until Satan's lies infecting Christianity were exposed by recovered Bible truth!

Thus, it is only at this time in human history, the time after the Bible was returned into the hands of the people, the time after the Reformation, that Jesus could complete His cleansing work and wed His living people. These are the people of God who "will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4 NIV84).

WEARING YOUR NEW NAME

WEARING YOUR NEW NAME

“
Jesus is coming soon; at this time in human history, the bride is to prepare herself to meet Him.
”

THE NAME OF GOD IS HIS CHARACTER. THE PEOPLE OF GOD HAVE HIS CHARACTER REPRODUCED WITHIN THEM. THIS RESTORATION OF GOD’S CHARACTER WITHIN THE SAINTS IS THE CLEANSING OF THE sanctuary, the removal of sin and rebellion, the restoration of the saved to God’s original design for humanity, the receiving of the perfection of Christ as their own, being united, at-one, with Christ—being married to Him! We receive our new name: “Christian,” one who is like Jesus.

This is why the heavenly city is described as shining “with the glory of God” (Revelation 21:11 NIV84), for the people of God are filled

with His Spirit, cleansed from all sin, have His law written upon their hearts, and glorify Him in living out His character of love.

Jesus is coming soon; at this time in human history, the bride is to prepare herself to meet Him. I invite you to prepare yourself by opening your heart to Him, accepting Him as your friend, companion, and partner for all eternity and allowing Him to write His design law of love upon your heart and mind, purifying and cleansing you from all sin. Allow Him to write His name upon you and enter into the reality of being wedded to our heavenly Bridegroom!

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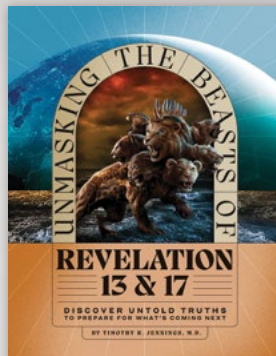
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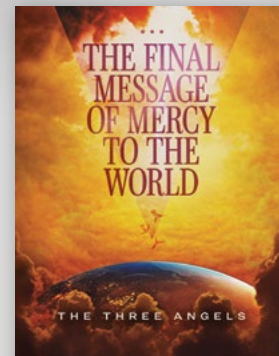
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