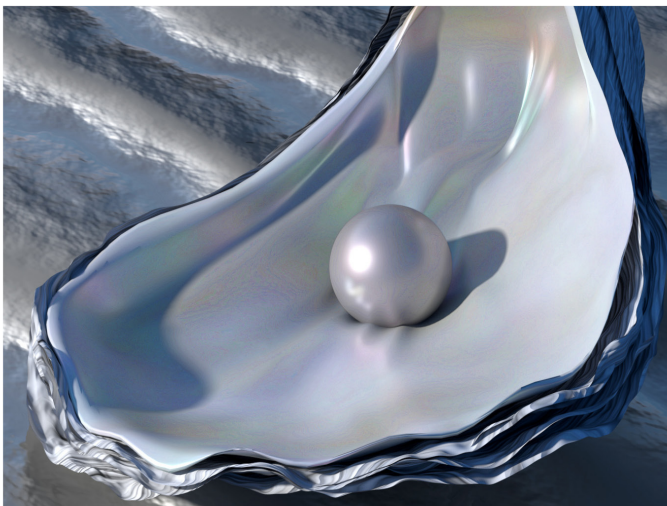


A Better Resurrection

Preparing the Bride - Volume 1



Maurice Barratt

A Better Resurrection

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Preparing the Bride Series Volume 1

by
Maurice Barratt

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Preface

I started to write this book in the second week of July 2021. On 19th July the restrictions, which were put in place because of the Covid19 virus will be lifted and, in England, the legal requirement to wear a face covering in shops, public transport, and other enclosed spaces will end. However, according to a Manchester Evening News survey, 7 out of 10 people will still wear a mask after the restrictions are lifted. They will not be wearing them out of obligation but out of fear and pressure from the media.

I find it so sad that the propaganda about the virus has caused the whole world to be in fear of catching it and yet the survival rate is amazing. A CDC (Centers for Disease Control) update on 26th September 2020 says individuals are more likely

to survive the coronavirus after contracting it. The health agency says if you have the virus between the ages of 0 to 70, you have a 99% survival rate. And if you're over 70, the survival rate is nearly 95%.

Why Live in Fear?

Of course, people died from the virus as they do from cancer, normal flu, heart attacks, and road accidents, but should we live in fear of these things? I think not, and as a believer, I have a clear mandate to not fear anything that can happen to my body but to fear God alone.

And fear not them which kill the body,
but are not able to kill the soul: but rather
fear him which is able to destroy both
soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:28

I believe fear is one of the signs of the last days. Jesus himself told his disciples this when they asked about the last days. He said:

Men's hearts **failing them for fear**, and
for looking after those things which are
coming on the earth: for the powers of
heaven shall be shaken. And then shall

they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near.

Luke 21:26-28

If we are indeed in the last days then the priority of the Believers is to prepare themselves to meet their bridegroom and to look up with excitement. It is time to get in the ark and prepare for what is coming on this earth. The pandemic is not over and there will be no 'back to normal'. Politicians have warned of more pandemics in the future.

The New Normal

The Bible says there will be pestilence and terrible destruction on the earth in the days preceding Jesus' return, so why are the Church not preparing for persecution and for the closing down of Church buildings?. I wonder how many churches have made plans for another major long-term lockdown?

The new normal will be with more restrictions than ever before with more control and fear-mongering. The Mark of the Beast, when it comes, will be supported by fear. If you don't worship the statue of the Beast you will be killed. Nebuchadnezzar

used fear to make everyone bow to the statue he had erected. Only 3 Israelites were not afraid and they were thrown into the fiery furnace. This is what the angel told John about the last days.

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the **mark**, or the **name** of the beast, or **the number of his name**.

Revelation 13:15-17

The disaster of 9.11 and its supposed threat of future terrorism was the beginning of the final part of the plan to bring the net down to control the whole world and set up the Man of Sin. This pandemic is another major step to increase fear in the world population and has been wonderful in its efficacy. The future is not good for planet earth, and while the false prophets are talking of revival and a mighty move of God the true prophets are warning of impending doom and

the return of Jesus to judge the nations and open the seals for it to begin. I believe the majority of churches and so-called prophets have been caught out and exposed.

A Burden

God has placed a burden on my own heart to warn people, but also to help them to prepare for persecution. I am compelled to do all I can to prepare Believers to be ready to face Jesus at his judgement seat where they will have to account for how they have lived since they accepted Christ as their Saviour (as Paul puts it 'to account for things done in his body').

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10

The book of Revelation tells us that after Babylon Falls, the Bride has '**made herself ready**' and the verses that follow say Jesus will come with the armies of heaven to judge and make war on this earth.

And after these things I heard a great voice of many people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: **for he has judged the great whore**, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all you his servants, and you that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and **his wife has made herself ready.**

Revelation 19:1-7

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Revelation 19:11-15

I feel it my bounden duty to prepare Believers for the future because, as Paul tells those Believers in Rome, our redemption is nearer than when we first believed.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when

we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

I pray you will be challenged, exhorted and excited to think you could be included in the generation destined for the first resurrection, changed into the Bride, and then returning in the clouds with Jesus to judge the nations to set up the Millennial Kingdom on earth.

Introduction

This is the start of a new series of studies which I will also film and put on the Barratt Ministries YouTube and Vimeo channels.

I have been thinking of this series for a few years now and feel it is the right time to put pen to paper. There are many exhortations and instructions in the bible to help us to prepare for the return of Jesus and many warnings if we do not. Many times Jesus and the apostles, when talking about the last days, use phrases such as 'take heed' or 'don't be deceived'.

And he said, **take heed that you are not deceived:** for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the

time draws near: therefore don't go after them.

Luke 21:8

And **take heed to yourselves**, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Luke 21:34

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

2 Thessalonians 2:3

And many false prophets shall rise, **and shall deceive many.**

Matthew 24:11

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, **if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.**

Matthew 24:24

And Jesus answering them began to say,
Take heed **lest any man deceive you:**
Mark 13:5

The first thing I will establish in this volume is that not all Believers are the Bride of Christ. I know the majority of Believers think that all who are saved by faith are in the first resurrection of the dead and the joining of Believers in what is known as 'the rapture' of the church, but I will paint a different picture and use scripture to substantiate my view.

Great Apostasy

Then I want to show that rather than a last day's revival before Jesus comes there will be the opposite, a great falling away and apostasy of the church worldwide – indeed I will show that it is already happening all over the world.

After this, in subsequent volumes, I will concentrate on the dialogue of Jesus in the upper room with his disciples, after the Passover meal, until he leaves the upper room to be betrayed by Judas (John 13-18).

I will also look at the letters to the 7 churches in the book of Revelation. Surely these letters are warnings to us that Jesus will judge his church when he returns. The exhortation is to remove the spots

and blemishes, and to be an overcomer, to receive the reward ...for the punishments are severe as I will show.

Chapter ONE

Many Called – few Chosen

I stated in my introduction that I did not believe all those who are saved by faith are the bride of Christ. I will present the reasons for my stance. Salvation is a necessary condition for eternal life and I suppose all denominations believe this to be true. The most famous text that evangelists use states this quite plainly.

For God so loved the world, that he gave
his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

After heaven & earth pass away God will create a new heaven & earth, that will last for eternity, and all those who are saved by faith will inherit this eternal life on the new earth. This salvation cannot be worked for because the Bible makes it very plain that it is by faith alone and is a gift. You cannot work for a gift, it is free and costs no effort on the part of the recipient. What is worked for by definition is a reward not a gift.

The Kingdom is Different

When we talk about the coming Kingdom Jesus preached about, he was not talking about eternal life because he said there were conditions. He was talking about the kingdom he will return to earth with. The book of Revelation tells us that Jesus will reign in this kingdom for 1,000 years. We know that those who overcome and qualify will reign with him. Obviously, not all will overcome or he would not be exhorting the churches to overcome. I will present scripture showing this later in the chapter.

Once a Believer understands that the Kingdom of God is not the Church, that is, not those who are

saved and have eternal life, it makes things much clearer. To inherit the Kingdom we have to work and qualify for entrance into it. This puts a whole new perspective on many of the scriptures. Most times when Jesus was talking about the Kingdom of God, Believers think he is talking about the 'Church' or 'eternal life'. When Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God he was always referring to either the Kingdom in this present age; that is, the one that is non-physical and within a person.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God doesn't come with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.**

Luke 17:20

Jesus was talking about the Kingdom he will bring to earth at his second coming and will rule with his Bride. Jesus will rule with a rod of iron which, to my thinking, cannot be grace but conjures up a regime almost like a military dictatorship.

And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations:

and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Revelation 19:15

The Millennial reign of Christ will be over the whole earth and all those who are saved and alive at the time of his coming but have not risen in the first resurrection. The Bride is composed of those who have overcome and will have been resurrected with new bodies and will return to earth with Christ.

Letters to the 7 Churches

This is what the letters to the churches, in the book of Revelation, are all about. The Church in Thyatira was one of the two churches that did not need to repent and their reward was that they would rule the nations with a rod of iron. Obviously, they will rule with Christ in this kingdom, but they had to overcome to qualify. They qualified by how they lived and what they did, not by faith alone.

And he that overcomes, and **keeps my works** unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of

a potter shall they be broken to shivers:
even as I received of my Father.

Revelation 2:26-27

I will now present scriptures to show that we have to work for the kingdom and that there are clear and precise conditions to obtain this kingdom and to be the Bride of Christ. These scriptures show that suffering for Christ is a requisite for the kingdom and to be in the first resurrection, and imply if we do not suffer we shall not reign.

The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be that we suffer with him**, that we may be also glorified together.

Romans 8;16-17

It is a faithful saying: for if we are dead with him, we shall also live with him. **If we suffer, we shall also reign** with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

2 Timothy 2:11-12

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had taught many, they

returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom** of God.

Acts 14:21-22

There is no tribulation necessary to enter eternal life. It is by faith alone in Jesus' blood sacrifice already made for mankind and is a free gift.

...By any Means!

Paul was assured of his salvation and knew that he had obtained eternal life by his faith in the son of God, but he confessed he had no assurance of being in the first resurrection. He said 'If by any means' he may attain it. He identified that suffering was part of the qualifications.

And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto

his death; **if by any means** I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Philippians 3:9-11

Everyone, saint and sinner, will be in the last resurrection to face God at the 'Great White Throne Judgement', so Paul could not be talking about this resurrection. At the Great White Throne, those who are saved by faith and have their names written in the book of life will qualify for eternal life, and those whose names are not will be eternally damned.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

Paul can only have been referring to the first resurrection, the one that Believers call the 'rapture'. The unsaved will not be in this first resurrection and I believe those who are saved by faith but do not qualify to reign with Christ will not be in it. Those believers who remain when the catching up takes place will face God at the Great White Throne Judgement after 1,000 years and will have eternal life on the New Earth because their names are in the Lambs Book of Life.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But **the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** This is the first resurrection. **Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power,** but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 20:1-6

Escaping the Great White Throne

Those who qualify to be in the first resurrection will get new spiritual bodies. Their eternal fate is sealed and they will not have to face God at the Great White Throne to see if their names are in the book of life. They will already have eternal spiritual bodies that cannot die. The second death, the Lake

of Fire, has no power over them. They are the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven to the new earth.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now, this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:49-53

Rewards or Punishment

When Jesus returns he will set up his judgement seat to determine the rewards or punishment for the Believers who are not in the first resurrection.

Paul clearly states that we all have to stand before this judgement, not for salvation but for our works – how we have lived since we accepted Christ. I know many believe this judgement takes place in heaven but Jesus comes down to earth to set up his kingdom so it would not make sense to judge anywhere else. He will judge Israel first, then the Believers who are left on the earth, and then he will judge the nations. ^{Footnote 1}

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

Matthew 25:31-32

For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10

This will be at Christ's judgement seat on his return and it will be our works that he will judge not

whether a person had faith for Salvation. Those who have only produced wood, hay, and stubble will not be allowed in the kingdom.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble. Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: **but he himself shall be saved**; yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

If a Believer produces wood, hay, or stubble they do not lose their eternal life but they do forfeit the Kingdom. They are saved 'as by fire' as Paul puts it.

Jesus gives a condition to enter the kingdom in his Sermon on the Mount. He says that only those who do his will, not his works, will enter the Kingdom. He looks at using the power of the Holy

Ghost in healing the sick, casting out devils, and many wonderful works. This is scary because he is talking about the Kingdom, not eternal life.

Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.

Matthew 7:21-23

Many Called – Few Chosen

This chapter is entitled, 'Many Called – Few Chosen' and there is a wonderful true story in the Old Testament which is an allegory showing the difference between those called and those chosen. It is the story of Queen Esther.

When king Ahasuerus put away Vasti for her rebellion she was a type of Israel who was put away for the same reason – Israel was always rebellious as Moses told them.

For I know your rebellion, and your stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, you have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?

Deuteronomy 31:27

This king Ahasuerus wanted a new wife and so he sent for all the beautiful virgins throughout his whole kingdom to be brought to his palace in Shushan. There were over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. If only 2 or 3 beautiful virgins from each of these provinces were called we are talking of hundreds of possible candidates to be considered for being the new bride of the king.

And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: and let the maiden which pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

Esther 2:3-4

These ladies were put into a special place and were prepared for presentation to the king. It took a whole 12 months for them to be purified and fit for the king. Their bodies were cleansed and made soft and delicate and they were given herbs to purify and detox the inside of their bodies.

Now when every maid's turn was come to go into king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, that is, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)

Esther 2:12

The Harem is the Church

I believe this Hege is a type of the Holy Ghost who is to purify those Jesus has called out of the world into the ekklesia (those called out), or in our allegory – the Church. After the period of purification, the maidens took it, in turn, to spend time with the king and he would make love to them. They would now all have had an intimate relationship with the king.

In this allegory everyone who is called by God and justified has a personal relationship with Jesus and is like those virgins who were prepared for a relationship with the king.

Now a Concubine

After the encounter with the king, the maidens did not go back into the special place of purification they were placed in the Harem for they were now concubines of the king.

Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

Esther 2:13

Out of all the maidens the King chose Esther to be his bride and reign with him king. This was four years after he had rejected Vasti.

So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:16-17

All the maidens were called to be purified and to have a personal relationship with the king but only one was chosen to be queen. In our allegory, Esther is a type of the Bride of Christ and all those who had a personal relationship with the king were not the bride, but they were not sent back to their villages and provinces but lived in the king's palace for the duration of their lifetime. They enjoyed the king's food, were dressed in finery, and lived in opulence as befitting a concubine living in the palace of a king who ruled over a world empire. But, they did not reign with the king.

Personal Encounter is not Enough

In my mind, this is a perfect allegory of many called and few chosen and shows again that not

all those who have had a personal encounter with Christ will reign with him.

I believe that all who are saved by faith have been called and are in the process of being purified to reign with Jesus in his coming kingdom – **we are in training for reigning**. How we behave as Believers will determine our fate at the first resurrection and judgement seat of Christ.

Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Don't you know that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?

1 Corinthians 6:2-3

What happens to those chosen to be the Bride? They will live and reign with Christ for 1,000 years on this present earth.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark

upon their foreheads, or in their hands;
and they lived and reigned with Christ a
thousand years.

Revelation 20:4

What happens to those not in the first resurrection? They will live in the millennial reign with their rewards or with their punishment. They will die and will be in the great resurrection for the Great White Throne Judgement after heaven and earth pass away to face God.

Blessed and holy is he that has a part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. **But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.**

Revelation 20:4-5

Access to the Tree of Life

They have eternal life because their names are in the Book of Life – but they do not have eternal bodies. They live forever because they have access to the same tree of life that was in the first creation in the garden of Eden. These are the nations that are

saved and have access to the city, New Jerusalem. **But, the bride is the city.** There will be nations in eternity as well as Kings and Kingdoms.

And the **nations of them which are saved** shall walk in the light of it: (New Jerusalem, the Bride that comes down from heaven to the New Earth) and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

Revelation 21:24-25

Let me end this chapter with a challenge. If you are saved by faith then you will have eternal life and live forever on the new earth. But, instead of walking on the streets of gold why not pay the price now and **be the gold?** The bride that comes down from heaven is New Jerusalem made up of gold, silver, and precious stones.

If you do not accept my scenario of what will happen let me leave you with this thought.

Would Jesus reign with carnal, selfish, proud or covetous Christians? They may be saved but how can they inherit the kingdom and reign with

Christ if they have spots and wrinkles that mar their garments.

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:26-27

If you think Christ is going to prepare and purify you just because you are saved you will miss the first resurrection. He has saved you, justified you, and made you righteous but you have to make yourself holy – separated from the world. Scripture clearly says 'The bride has made herself ready'.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and **his wife has made herself ready.**

Revelation 19:7

Chapter TWO

Preparing for Persecution

I find it hard to understand how the majority of Believers I know around the world believe Jesus will return for a wonderfully blessed, prosperous, and affluent church. A Church that will have its members in all the prominent and important positions in banking, industry, the legal system, entertainment, and politics. A church that has redeemed music, the arts, and sport, and that a wonderful move of God will sweep millions into the church in a last-days revival.

I know many prophets have proposed this scenario, but is it scriptural? Where does this thinking come from? It comes from the doctrines of devils because I cannot find any scripture to support such claims.

The Bible does not say Jesus will come for a prosperous church or a powerful charismatic church. It says he will come for a holy church without spot or wrinkles. Righteousness is the right of every Believer because it is not their own; it is imputed by faith in what Jesus has already done. Holiness is a rare thing in a Believer, for holiness means separated – sanctified. It means separation from the world.

Not of This World

When the church is trying to bring the world, with its pride, entertainment, prowess, and self-love, into it they are certainly not a holy church.

I will not use doctrines to state my case I will just use the scriptures for you to consider for yourselves. So take off your doctrinal glasses and just read.

Paul tells us that Jesus is coming for a church without blemish.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse

it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, **not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.**
Ephesians 5:25-27

Glorious in this context is best understood as, 'free from sins' or unblemished in character. Let me show what the Bible says about the last days and surely, no Christian would disagree with these scriptures. The last days started with the Apostles according to Peter. He quoted from the prophet Joel when he addressed the crowds on the day of Pentecost.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said to them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunk, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall

see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy ...

Acts 2:14-18

The strange thing is that it was not all fulfilled at that time so the following verses must be concerning the last of the last days just before Jesus returns to judge and make war. We are still waiting for the following signs to appear. The next verse reads:

And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before** that great and notable day of the Lord come:

Acts 2:19-20

The prophets of the Old Covenant all foretold of dark days and distress of nations accompanying the 'Day of the Lord'. Here are a few examples of many.^{Footnote 1}

Howl; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

Isaiah 13:6

Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Isaiah 13:9

For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

Isaiah 34:8

Perilous Times

What do Jesus and the apostles tell us about the days prior to the return of Jesus coming in great power and glory? When talking about the last days they all talk, and warn, of perilous times to come. Paul writes to Timothy, a young minister, and at first glance, you may think he is talking about the world situation but he is actually telling Timothy what the Church will be like for he says 'having a form of godliness but denying the power' – that can only apply to a Christian. No great revival in this list!

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient

to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, **lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:** from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 3:1-7

The early Church was birthed in persecution and it will end the same way. Paul carries on his letter to Timothy a few verses later:

But you have fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and **all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.** But evil men

and seducers shall wax worse and worse,
deceiving, and being deceived.

2 Timothy 3:10-13

Those who will not take the Mark of the Beast will be killed so there is no protection or deliverance for these saints. These people who are killed have obviously not been raptured, so either they have missed the first resurrection or it has not taken place yet.

And he will do great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he the had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had the power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, **and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.** And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in

their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Revelation 13:13-17

A Great Falling Away

Paul also warned the Thessalonian Church to expect a great falling away. He is not talking about the world, for they cannot fall away because they do not know God. He is talking about the Church and it doesn't seem like a blessing and revival to me. This passage talks of the Man of Sin who will be revealed, so he must expect Christians to be on earth when this man is revealed, so again these have not been raptured when the Man of Sin is revealed.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that you are not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: **for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin is**

revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Don't you remember that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity already works: only he who now lets will let, until he is taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

2 Thessalonians 2:1-11

Jesus himself warned the disciples of persecution if they spoke the truth and lived it.

Behold, **I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:** be therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge

you in their synagogues. You shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee into another: for verily I say unto you, You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man comes. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing

covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:16-28

Signs of His Coming

Again Jesus warns them in the gospel of Luke

And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, **Take heed that you are not deceived:** for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: Therefore don't go after them. But when you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, **they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you**, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what you shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And **you shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends**; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And **you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.**

Luke 21:7-17

Deliverance comes in times of persecution and tribulation in the Bible, not in blessings? The Red Sea opened in times of great distress for Israel, not times of blessing. Lot was rescued in times of great violence and debauchery. When a woman delivers her child, it is a time of pain and anxiety. Paul uses

the analogy of birth when he talks about us being born again with a new body.

For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, **even we ourselves groan within ourselves**, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Romans 8:22-25

Normal Life

Jesus said the last days would be like the days of Noah with people living normal lives – eating drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage. Noah preached for 100 years but there was no revival before the flood came, so why do Christians think there will be one before Jesus comes in judgement? Noah was delivered in times of apathy towards God, not great blessing and revival – no one believed the judgement was imminent.

Daniel prophesied about the Man of Sin and the things that will come upon the earth. He never mentioned a return to God. Those who know God will do exploits but it doesn't say people will turn to God because of these exploits

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet **they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.** Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of

gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

Daniel 11:31-37

Persecution

Christians throughout the third world are already persecuted and I have listed the top 50 countries where it is at its worse at the end of this chapter. ^{Footnote 2}

In the First World, we are already in soft persecution but Christians are unaware of it, because they do not know the sign of the times. When you consider that we cannot preach what the Bible says without harassment in this present climate, it is soft totalitarianism, and so Christians compromise. Christian teachers teach evolution when they do not believe it. They give sex education in infants' schools when they believe it should not be taught until children are much older. Even in factories and offices Christians have to be politically correct, even when they do not believe it in many circumstances such as the LGBT and transgender issues or they will lose their jobs. The USA is the biggest user of

surveillance cameras in the world (as a percentage of their population), China being the country with the highest number).

This is only the beginning of the net that is encircling the world, and I would not be a faithful man of God if I did not warn you that it will get much, much worse in the coming days. We have seen how easily churches throughout the whole world have closed their doors without protest during the present 'so-called' pandemic.

Fear amongst Christians has amazed me over the last two years but Jesus warned us that the world would be in fear before he returns.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; **men's hearts failing them for fear**, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near.

Luke 21:25-28

Let me end this chapter on a positive and cheerful note for the wonderful thing is that Jesus tells us that when we see these things come upon the earth to look up and rejoice for our redemption draws near. Christians should be full of joy and anticipation that soon they may see Jesus, their Bridegroom, returning for them in the clouds.

Footnotes

Footnote 1

Further scriptures about the Great Day of the Lord. Joel 2:11 ; Joel 2:31 ; Zephaniah 1:10 ; Zephaniah 1:14 ; Zechariah 14:13 ; Malachi 4:5 ; Acts 2:20

Footnote 2

Every day, 13 Christians worldwide are killed because of their faith.

Every day, 12 churches or Christian buildings are attacked.

Every day, 12 Christians are unjustly arrested or imprisoned, and another 5 are abducted.

The listed nations contain 309 million Christians living in places with very high or extreme levels of persecution, up from 260 million in last year's list.

Chapter TWO - Preparing for Persecution

Another 31 million could be added from the 24 nations that fall just outside the top 50—such as Cuba, Sri Lanka, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—for a ratio of 1 in 8 Christians worldwide facing persecution. This includes 1 in 6 believers in Africa and 2 out of 5 in Asia.

Last year, 45 nations scored high enough to register “very high” persecution levels on Open Doors’ 84-question matrix. This year, for the first time in 29 years of tracking, all 50 qualified—as did 4 more nations that fell just outside the cutoff. Open Doors identified three main trends driving last year’s increase:

“COVID-19 acted as a catalyst for religious persecution through relief discrimination, forced conversion, and as justification for increasing surveillance and censorship.”

“Extremist attacks opportunistically spread further throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, from Nigeria and Cameroon to Burkina Faso, Mali, and beyond.”

“Chinese censorship systems continue to propagate and spread to emerging surveillance states.”

Chapter TWO - Preparing for Persecution

Here are the top countries where Christians face persecution.

Rank	Country
1.	North Korea
2.	Afghanistan
3.	Somalia
4.	Libya
5.	Pakistan
6.	Eritrea
7.	Yemen
8.	Iran
9.	Nigeria
10.	India
11.	Iraq
12.	Syria
13.	Sudan
14.	Saudi Arabia
15.	Maldives
16.	Egypt
17.	China
18.	Myanmar
19.	Vietnam
20.	Mauritania
21.	Uzbekistan
22.	Laos
23.	Turkmenistan

Chapter TWO - Preparing for Persecution

24. Algeria
25. Turkey
26. Tunisia
27. Morocco
28. Mali
29. Qatar
30. Colombia
31. Bangladesh
32. Burkina Faso
33. Tajikistan
34. Nepal
35. Central African Republic
36. Ethiopia
37. Mexico
38. Jordan
39. Brunei
40. Congo DR (DRC)
41. Kazakhstan
42. Cameroon
43. Bhutan
44. Oman
45. Mozambique
46. Malaysia
47. Indonesia
48. Kuwait
49. Kenya
50. Comoros

Chapter THREE

Hiding Behind Righteousness

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.

Hebrews 6:1-3

I don't think there are many Believers who doubt we are in the last of the last days. One of the

signs according to the Bible is a 'great falling away', but what does this mean? It is not talking of the world for they have nothing to fall away from. They are already under the judgement of God. It can only apply to God's people. Does it mean the Churches will go smaller and Christianity will diminish? I do not believe so. At this present time, Christianity is the largest religion in the world (31%), with Islam as number two (24%) 2.38 Billion people practice Christianity and it amounts to a third of the world's population.

Apostasy

The falling away is not of numbers but of apostasy. We are heading for the One World Church. Catholicism and Islam are very close; in actual fact and according to high-level Jesuits, Islam, which is a modern religion, was started by the Jesuits to secure the temple mount for the last days. Together, these two religions account for 55% of religions and as Islam is the fastest-growing religion if they combined it would mean that over half the population of the earth would be in this joint religion.

I believe the One World Religion will be an apostate Christianity, for the Bible talks about 'antichrist' not anti-Muhammad or anti-Baal. He will be a false Christ showing us the way to god

(Satan, the first Beast of revelation). However, he will be antichrist and not the true Christ.

The majority of those who call themselves Christian will bow to the statue that this man sets up and only a remnant will not bow, just as in Daniel's time with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Only a remnant will not bow and these will be killed. They will be part of the Bride along with those who have already died in Christ.

Let no man deceive you by any means:
for that day shall not come, except there
come a falling away first, and that man of
sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who
opposes and exalts himself above all that
is called God, or that is worshipped; so
that he as God sits in the temple of God,
showing himself that he is God.

Thessalonians 2:2-3

And he will do great wonders, so that he
makes fire come down from heaven on
the earth in the sight of men, and deceives
them that dwell on the earth by the means
of those miracles which he had the power
to do in the sight of the beast; saying to
them that dwell on the earth, that they
should make an image to the beast, which

had the wound by a sword, and did live.
And he had the power to give life unto the
image of the beast, that the image of the
beast should both speak, and cause that **as
many as would not worship the image
of the beast should be killed.**

Revelation 13:13-15

Without Spots

How do we prepare ourselves for this great falling away of the church, stay true, and become the Bride of Christ? Remember, Jesus is coming for a spotless bride. Only those who prepare themselves and get rid of the spots and wrinkles will qualify to be the holy Bride of Christ. Paul tells Timothy, a young minister, to obey certain things to keep himself without spots until the appearance of Jesus.

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and

have professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickens all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

that you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 6 10-14

Peter also talked about the last days and the false prophets that will be prevalent in God's people. He calls them spots in the body of Christ.

They shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time.

Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent **that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, & blameless.**

2 Peter 2:13-14

Jude also confirms that these false prophets of the last days church will infiltrate and mar the Bride.

He also calls them spots.

These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Jude 1:12-13

According to the above scriptures, these false prophets have to be removed from the church for her to be the Bride.

I have shown that not all those who are saved by faith will be the Bride of Christ in chapter 1, but what are the deciding factors? There are many of course, but certainly, the spots and wrinkles are not to be present if we are to obtain this privilege of reigning with Christ.

Presumption

Most Believers I have met over the years because they have the righteousness of Christ, suppose that it is enough to qualify them for being the Bride and to

reign with Christ. They are, however, presumptuous. I grant that the righteousness of Christ imputed in a person is enough for salvation and eternal life but would argue it is not enough to obtain the kingdom.

Reconciled

The righteousness of Christ has been imputed for our faith and it is a gift which we cannot work for. The books balance – our sin on one side of the scales and the blood of Christ on the other side – the debt is paid and we are free, The books are reconciled. Sin no longer has dominion over us, but this does not mean we no longer sin, it means sin has no power to condemn us.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 1:8-9

However, having this righteousness imputed does not guarantee we live a righteous life because there is another righteousness, the one Jesus told

us to hunger and thirst after in his Sermon on the Mount. We cannot hunger and thirst for what we already have, 100% righteousness by faith.

Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Matthew 6:6

We cannot hide behind this righteousness by faith and think we will obtain the kingdom because the bible talks about the fruit of righteousness. This is something we work for to attain the kingdom which is coming to this earth when Christ returns very soon.

Living Righteously

We are 100% righteous and that is why we inherit eternal life but is it the righteousness of Christ and not ours. We have to live a righteous life or we will not inherit the kingdom. We must not be deceived into thinking this righteousness will qualify us for the coming Kingdom and the Bride of Christ. It will only qualify us for eternal life on the new earth.

The fruit of righteousness can better be understood by 'living a right life'. In other words – your right living – not for salvation but to be the

Bride of Christ and hear the words 'well done'. There are many scriptures about the fruit of righteousness but here is a couple.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, **for instruction in righteousness.**

2 Timothy 3:16

And the **fruit of righteousness** is sown in peace of them that make peace.

James 3:18

How can a disobedient, proud, selfish, or covetous Believer expect to reign with Christ for 1,000 years? It is the height of arrogance.

If you want eternal life it will cost you nothing except faith in the finished work of Christ. If you want to reign with Christ as his Bride there is a great cost. There's a cost to doing what is right, through trials, suffering, and hard experience. If you want to be the Bride and reign in the coming kingdom then you need to prepare and get rid of those spots and wrinkles in your secret life. Start to prepare while you still have time. Many will be caught out for we are in the age of great deception in Believers. Don't hide behind righteousness by faith. If you know you

are not living a righteous life then don't be caught out when you stand before Christ at his judgement seat to account for deeds done in your body (how you have lived in this life as a Believer).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive **the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad...** Now if any man builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abides which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

From 2 Corinthians 5:10-15

If you only produce wood, hay, and stubble as a Believer you will not lose your salvation but you will lose the kingdom. We only enter the kingdom through much tribulation according to Paul and Barnabas.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Acts 14:21-22

Perfected through Suffering

Suffering is another way to be perfected and I will discuss this in chapter 6. Jesus is our example as he was perfected through suffering.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, **to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**

Hebrews 2:10

This is not about sin, it's about maturity. A child cannot enter into marriage because children are immature and not developed. So it is for a Believer. If you are not mature and Christ has not been formed in you then it will disqualify you to be the Bride of Christ and be raised in the first resurrection.

My little children, of whom I travail in
birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Galatians 4:19

Believers need to grow up, and mature, put away childish behaviour and lifestyle and become serious about obtaining this prize of the high calling of Christ.

May God help us.

Chapter FOUR

That I May Know Him

I now want to look at a passage in Philippians where Paul shows the progression to obtain the prize of the high calling which, in context, is the resurrection of the Bride. Here is the passage. Please read it slowly because I will be looking closely at it and in particular the four steps to becoming the Bride culminating in the first resurrection.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he

has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:..... But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: **that I may know him,** and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore,

as many as be perfect, be thus minded:
and if in any thing you be otherwise
minded, God shall reveal even this unto
you.

From Philippines 3:4-15

It seems that Paul was willing to give up all his confidence in the flesh, and that includes his great intellect, and all his achievements and status, to really know Christ. He says he counts them as dung, which is to despise them, compared with what he was aiming for.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:..... But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do **count them but dung, that I may win Christ.**

From Philippians 3:4-8

The first thing he says is that he wants to know Christ. What a strange thing for a person who has

been saved by faith to say. Surely he already knew Christ? Surely every believer who is saved by faith knows Christ? This is true yet there is a sense that however well we know Christ we will never know him fully until we have the resurrected body and this is what his statement is all about.

When a Bride is engaged (or espoused, as the Bible puts it), it is an arranged marriage and the Bridegroom goes away to prepare both the wedding feast and marital home. He then comes for his bride and takes her to his father's house, after which the consummation of the marriage takes place. She can learn all about the Bridegroom and communicate with him while they are engaged but until the veil is lifted and they become one she will never really know him as he is.

Oh to be Like Him

In the same way, a Believer is now a son of God, but they are still in the womb and have not manifested how they will be when they get the resurrection body. John says that when we see him we will be like him and then we shall truly know him as he is. We, at this time, are only espoused to Christ and cannot know him fully until we have the resurrected body and are like him.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:2

In the book of Genesis, we are told of the creation of Adam and Eve. It says that Adam knew his wife and she bore Cain and Abel. In other words, they became one flesh – that is what marriage is all about. Not the legal or religious part, but the coming together, the 'leaving and cleaving'.

A Personal Relationship

I think that Paul was longing for this day when he made his statement about knowing him. Unfortunately, I have found that so many Christians know all about Christ, and the doctrines that tell us about him, but they don't seem to have the personal relationship that they claim they have. They show

they do not love him by the way they refuse to do the things he asks of disciples. They seem to me to be very religious and this always hinders a personal relationship with Christ. My question to all is not 'Do you know Christ?' But, 'Does Christ know you?' Which, of course, is very different.

I have used this illustration many times but it fits perfectly with what I am intimating.

I know the King of England

I am English and know all about the monarch that who rules the United Kingdom. His name is Charles. I know his wife, Camilla. His mother and father were Elisabeth and Phillip, I can name all his children. I know where he lives and the location of his country homes. I suppose I could fill a small book with my knowledge of the King and the Royal Family, but if I met him and asked him about his children he would say, 'I am sorry, I don't know you'. This would prove that I only knew about him, but did not know him personally.

So many Believers I meet can tell me all about Jesus, but it is the doctrines about him they understand, and from their conversations it seems as though they lack understanding of God and Jesus by the way they live. When they stand at his Judgement Seat all will be revealed. Many who have

used Christ's power and prophesied in his name and done wonderful deeds in his name will be rejected from the kingdom.

Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.**

Matthew 7:21-23

These Believers may have eternal life, for salvation is by faith alone, but Paul was looking for the first resurrection and to be the Bride, not just to obtain eternal life.

Just a Subject

I am not a friend of King Charles so I have no real relationship with him. I am just one of his subjects. So it is with many Believers. They are servants of Christ but not friends and that is sad.

John the apostle says; If you do not love your brother who you can see, then how can you love God who you cannot see? Christ is not on this earth and we cannot see him, so this applies to Christ as well.

If a man says, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from him, That he who loves God loves his brother also.

1 john 4:20

The Church is full of schisms, denominations, envy, bitterness, and competition, all of which demonstrate hatred and not love. Believers often talk about love but do not demonstrate it in reality. Read what Jesus said about this to his 11 disciples in the upper room just before he went to the cross.

This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. **You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.** From now on I will not

call you servants; for the servant doesn't know not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

John 15:12-15

Obedience is linked to relationship – If my children are not obedient they lose their relationship with me and so it is with God. There is always a price for being obedient and that is why a person is disobedient – they would have to go against what they would like to be obedient. It is a humbling thing to be obedient because we have to do the will of another.

He Wouldn't Suffer

The rich young ruler who came to Jesus wanted eternal life but he would not be obedient to the demands of Jesus when it was exposed what he lacked. He wouldn't suffer the loss of all things, unlike Paul who counted them all dung. There is no change in a Believer's life without being exposed and that is why they do not change, they cannot see the need. They resist exposure because it is painful to their pride.

Let me encourage you to not only know about God and Jesus, but to obey the instructions in

the New Testament and live the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, and you will begin to know him better and become a friend rather than a servant. This will qualify you to be in the first resurrection and you will aspire, like Paul, to know him as he is – the resurrected Christ with all the power that accompanies him. This brings us to his second aspiration, 'the power of his resurrection'.

Chapter FIVE

The Power of His Resurrection

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Mark 13:26

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

1 Corinthians 15:43

The second thing Paul wanted to know was the power of Christ's resurrection. We know that what he ultimately wants is to

be in the resurrection at Christ's coming. I don't think he was wanting to know about the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Paul knew, as we do, that it was the power of God that raised Jesus from the grave. Jesus had the promise that his father would not leave him in the grave for David prophesied it.

For you will not leave my soul in hell;
neither will you suffer your Holy One to
see corruption.

Psalm 16:10

The Power of God

We know it was the power of God and it will be the same power that raises up his Bride at the last trump.

And God has both raised up the Lord,
and will also raise up us **by his own
power.**

1 Corinthians 6:14

I believe Paul is wanting to know what power Jesus had when he was raised from the dead. What power does a spiritual body have? There are two scriptures that confirm this thought that when a person is raised with an immortal body they will

have tremendous power far above what a human body has.

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: **it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:**

1 Corinthians 15:43

And declared to be the Son of God **with power**, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Romans 1:4

When Jesus had risen from the dead he appeared to the 11 disciples in secret and told them the amazing fact that all power had been given to him. This statement proves that all power was not given to him before the resurrection. He had the fullness of God and therefore the whole power of God, but he was not yet worthy to receive the power personally to inherit all things.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, **All power is given unto**

me in heaven and in earth.

Matthew 28:16-18

This power now belongs to Jesus because he paid the price and is worthy to inherit all things but he has not yet come into his inheritance. He is still waiting at the right hand of God until his enemies become his footstool.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth **expecting** till his enemies be made his footstool.

Hebrews 10:12-13

The Power of Angels

When you think of the power that an angel has it seems to be far outside our comprehension. It was just one angel that killed a whole army.

Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

Isaiah 37:36

One day soon an ordinary angel will take Satan and lock him up for 1,000 years. Wow! What power do they have?

Just **an** Angel

And I saw **an angel** come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that, he must be loosed a little season.

Revelation 21:1-3

Angels can appear in many forms. Here is one example.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

Exodus 3:2

What is more astounding is that those in the first resurrection who have new bodies immortal bodies will rule angels, which means we will have more power than they have!

Don't you know that **we shall judge angels**? How much more things that pertain to this life?

1 Corinthians 6:3

Millennial Reign

The inheritance Jesus was promised of his father, was to 'rule with a rod of iron', and have power over the nations of this world for 1,000 years with his Bride.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto me, You are my Son; this day have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Psalms 2:6-9

Those who are in the first resurrection will be co-heirs with Christ and will rule the nations. This is the power Paul longed for; to be co-heirs with Christ and have the same power.

And one of the elders said unto me,
Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe
of Juda, the Root of David, has prevailed
to open the book, and to loose the
seven seals thereof ...And they sung a
new song, saying, You are worthy to
take the book, and to open the seals;
for you were slain, and have redeemed
us to God by your blood out of every
kindred, and tongue, and people, and
nation; and has made us unto our God
kings and priests: and we shall reign on
the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the
voice of many angels round about the
throne and the beasts and the elders: and
the number of them was ten thousand
times ten thousand, and thousands of
thousands; saying with a loud voice,
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain **to**
receive power, and riches, and wisdom,
and strength, and honour, and glory, and
blessing.

From Revelation 5:5-12

Paul knew the power he would have if he attained the first resurrection. The Church in Thiratyra were promised the same if they overcame.

And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will **I give power over the nations:** And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter they shall be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Revelation 2:26-27

Like a Flint

Jesus set his face like a flint for the joy that was set before him and resisted the devil's offer of the power to rule the nations for him, with all its glory as the One World Dictator.

Jesus wanted the real lasting power, not the temporal, transient power that Satan offers which is for this life only.

And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, **All this power will I give you,** and the

glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whoever I want I give it. If you therefore will worship me, all shall be yours.

Luke 4:5-7

Thank God, Jesus resisted Satan's offer. So many of today's ministers have taken Satan's offer of power, honour, riches, and glory and are having their kingdom now.

All Power to the Beast

It is interesting that the One World Dictator, the Beast, Satan personified, will have this power before Jesus returns to usurp him and takes the kingdoms of this world and make them his. Here is what it says about the Beast in the book of Revelation.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. ...And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; **and power was given unto him** to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in

blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: **and power was given him** over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

From Revelation 13:1-8

Paul's Hope

Paul told the Believers in Ephesus that this was his hope and he prayed that they would also have the revelation about the power of the resurrection and their inheritance if they endured to the end.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is **the exceeding greatness of his power** to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,

and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:18-23

Let us learn from Paul and his aspirations to be raised at the coming of Jesus to reign in power and glory. I am sure if we had these facts in our minds we would not be a part of the apostasy that is ravishing the body of Christ at this time.

If we are willing to suffer in this life we will have the glory in the kingdom that Jesus will bring to this earth very soon, because that is Paul's next progression – the fellowship of his suffering.

Chapter SIX

Fellowship of His Suffering

FELLOWSHIP: a mutual sharing, as of experience, activity, interest, etc.

This chapter is mostly scripture because I want to show the reader that suffering is not an option for a disciple. I am not allowed the privilege of putting my own theology or that of a denomination or, God forbid, 'the traditions of the elders' to this subject of suffering. I must align my teaching to the teaching of Jesus

and the apostles from the New Testament which is specific and very clear on the subject. The scriptures I quote will speak for themselves.

The Third Statement

The third statement Paul says in his quest to obtain the resurrection is that he wants the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. What does this mean for those living in the First World, where self-image, self-worth, success, and health and wealth is taught in churches?

In an age when suffering for Christ has been relegated to those without faith, purpose, or destiny in their lives, it is hard for a Believer in the West to accept that suffering is an integral part of discipleship. Yet, Jesus taught this very thing to his disciples in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and says we are blessed in God's eyes when we suffer for his sake.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:10

Blessed are you, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach

you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

Luke 6:22

There are too many scriptures from Jesus and the apostles to be in any doubt about this fact, and yet modern Christianity ignores them and still says for example, 'Christ suffered so that we don't have to suffer' or, 'He paid the price so that we do not have to pay – it is all of grace and not works'. They are right of course for Salvation, but they completely ignore plain scriptures that talk about suffering as being the lot of a disciple. It is because they do not understand the coming Kingdom and the qualifications to obtain it. Salvation is indeed by grace and we do not have to suffer or pay any price to obtain it.

Only Faith Qualifies for Salvation

Faith alone qualifies a person for eternal life. However, the Kingdom is very different for it is not by faith, it is by qualification, and the Bible is very clear about the things we have to do to inherit the Kingdom. One of them is suffering for Christ. That is why Paul makes his statement 'to know the fellowship of Christ's suffering. Here are some of the many scriptures that confirm that suffering is part of a disciples mandate.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

John 15:20

Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

James 5:10

Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

2 Timothy 3:12

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

1 Peter 4:19

Not Open to Interpretation

Fellowship means sharing, so Paul is saying he wants to share the sufferings of Christ. What would a present-day Believer think of that? We cannot put

any other interpretation to this statement because the weight of scripture supports this very desire of Paul. The apostles rejoiced when they were suffering.

And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer** shame for his name.

Acts 5:41

Who now **rejoice in my sufferings** for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

Colossians 1:24

Jesus is our example and he told us quite plainly that we also should expect to suffer.

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, **but also to suffer** for his sake;

Philippians 1:29

Peter is a good example of a man who did not want or believe, he should suffer for Christ. He rebuked Jesus when he was told of the suffering and death that Jesus would face.

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you.

Matthew 16:21-22

After Pentecost

What a difference in Peter's attitude after he had seen the risen Christ, and had been filled with the Holy Ghost. After many years, and trials, later this is what Peter wrote in his letters to the churches.

For even hereunto were you called:
because **Christ also suffered for us,**
leaving us an example, that you
should follow his steps:

1 Peter 2:21

Forasmuch then **as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise** with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin;

1 Peter 4:1

For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? **But if, when you do well, and suffer for it,** you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

1 Peter 2:19-20

But and **if you suffer for righteousness' sake, you are happy:** and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

1 Peter 3:14

For it is better, if the will of God be so, **that you suffer for well doing,** than for evil doing

1 Peter 3:17

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet **if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed;** but let him glorify God on this behalf.

1 Peter 4:15-16

Jesus is our example and he was perfected, that is matured, through sufferings and it would be

outrageous to think we are better than Christ and could be matured without suffering.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:10

For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Hebrews 2:18

Were They All Failures?

The apostles were all martyred, so if suffering is not part of a disciples lot they were failures, and so were John Wesley, Martin Luther, Tyndale, and those in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. How has this teaching of suffering been lost in the modern Church? It has become soft and compromising with the world and has lost its salt and light which, in Jesus' words, leaves it only fit for the dunghill. The early Church was told to expect to suffer.

For verily, when we were with you, **we told you before that we should suffer**

tribulation; even as it came to pass, and you know.

1 Thessalonians 3:4

For as **the sufferings of Christ abound in us**, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:5

For therefore **we both labour and suffer reproach**, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

1 Timothy 4:10

Wherein **I suffer trouble, as an evil doer**, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound

2 Timothy 2:9

Why was Paul looking to suffer with, and for, Christ? It was because he wanted to be in the resurrection of the Bride, the first resurrection. He knew the wonderful rewards just as Jesus did. His eyes were not on this earth but on eternal things and the rewards and glory that awaited him. He followed in the footsteps of Jesus. He was wanting

the glorified body and to obtain the kingdom. Paul encouraged us to do the same.

You be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Head in the Sand?

Paul knew the glory and power that awaited him if he was willing to suffer for Christ. For us not to compare the sufferings of the present time with the glory awaiting those who have the glorified body and decide that blessings and glory far outweigh the light afflictions as Paul deemed then is to bury our head in the sand.

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand **the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.**

1 Peter 1:11

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

2 Corinthians 4:17

But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, **when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.**

1 Peter 4:13

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

2 Timothy 2:12

Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that **you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer:**

2 Thessalonians 1:5

And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as **you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation.**

2 Corinthians 1:7

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and **a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:**

1 Peter 5:1

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.** For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Romans 8:17-18

For the which cause **I also suffer these things:** nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, **and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**

2 Timothy 1:12

A Crown of Life

The seven churches in the book of Revelation, who were all encouraged to overcome, were promised a crown of life. Crowns are for reigning with Christ for 1.000 years. What a wonderful reward.

Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten

days: be faithful unto death, and **I will give you a crown of life.**

Revelation 2:10

I know of no better way to end this chapter than with the benediction that Peter gives at the end of his first epistle.

But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 5:10

Chapter SEVEN

Conforming to Christ's Death

For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Romans 6:7

I now want to look at the fourth aspiration of Paul in his pursuit of the resurrection when Christ returns.

1. That I may know him,
2. and the power of his resurrection,
3. and the fellowship of his sufferings,

4. being made conformable unto his death;

Philippians 3:10

Paul says he wants to conform to the death of Jesus. Surely, he does not mean he has to be crucified. One of the synonyms of conforming is 'to be identical'. I do not believe this for one moment because I cannot find scripture to substantiate the thought that all disciples need to be martyred to be the Bride of Christ and attain the first resurrection.

Obedient and Compliant

Conformed can also mean: to be in agreement or harmony, to be obedient or compliant, and that is how I believe we should look at this 'conforming to Christ's death' – not physical death, although it may mean this for a few – but a dying to self, our Adamic nature. Paul said, when he was still alive, that he was already crucified with Christ.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless,
I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me:
and the life which I now live in the flesh I
live by the faith of the Son of God, who
loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

We may not be called to martyrdom but we are all called to mortify the deeds of the flesh. I am sure this is what Paul was talking about when he said he wanted to be conformable to Christ's death. Even Jesus had to crucify his flesh-life of Adam before his body was crucified. He had to deny himself, for he testified that he only did the will of his father and not his own will. Jesus had to do this because he had the seed and nature of fallen man, Adam, through David and Mary.

According to the flesh!

Both John and Paul tell us that Jesus was of the seed of David according to his flesh. If our sinful nature passes on through our seed (our DNA) then Christ inherited the sinful nature of Adam in his flesh.

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, **according to the flesh**, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;
Acts 2:30

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David **according to the flesh**;
Romans 1:3

Remember that Jesus Christ of **the seed of David** was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

2 Timothy 2:8

Has not the scripture said, That Christ will come of **the seed of David**, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

John 7:42

What made Jesus different from us is that he had the fullness of his heavenly father's seed and was the first human being to be born with two natures. The perfect nature of God and the fallen nature of man. We are only born with the imperfect nature of fallen man and need to be born of the spirit of God to be a partaker of the divine nature. Jesus had a choice as we do but unlike us, he always denied his Adamic nature, crucified his flesh life, and only did what the father showed him – he was perfectly obedient. So because of this, we can boldly say he was without sin, but capable of it.

Then said Jesus unto them, When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am he, and that **I do nothing of myself**; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things.

John 8:28

Jesus never once walked in the flesh. He was tempted in all the ways we are but yet never succumbed to his flesh – he mortified it. He only did what his heavenly father showed him.

For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; **but was in all points tempted like as we are**, yet without sin.
Hebrews 4:15

The Extreme Test

Jesus had the ultimate battle in the Garden of Gethsemane as to whose will he would choose. The incident clearly shows he did not want to do his father's will, but he denied himself and crucified his flesh to please his father. We must do the same and conform to his death if we are to be his Bride

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; take away this cup from me: nevertheless **not what I will, but what you will.**
Mark 14:36

Paul told Believers many times in his letters to the body of Christ that they must crucify their

flesh, the life of our carnal nature, and walk in the newness of the spirit so that they do not conform to the lusts of the flesh.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh ...And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 and 24-25

Love Not the World

He also told us to mortify the deeds of the flesh

For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.

Romans 8:13

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Colossians 3:5

Satan is the god of this world so the world, that is; the system which includes politics, culture, fashion, and entertainment, is our enemy and we have to be dead to it, and it to us if we want to 'conform to his death'. To deny ourselves is to crucify our love of the world, its pride, status, its tinsel and carnal pleasures.

John sums up the spirit of the world in one of his letters.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:15-17

This is holiness – separation from the world. We are certainly in it and so we should be, but Jesus told us we are not of this world and we must live a life of self-denial to it if we want to be like Paul and attain the conclusion these four points are progressing towards; the resurrection of the Bride at Christ's appearing.

This chapter is about the qualifications for being in the first resurrection and it is to conform to his death. Only when we are dead to self can we live to Christ and attain the resurrection of the Bride. (I will look at this first resurrection of the Bride in the next chapter for that is what Paul aspired to.)

We can no longer please ourselves if we want to attain this resurrection for we are in a battle and as Paul says when we go to war we have to disengage from this life with its cares and burdens and concentrate on the job in hand. To endure to the end.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:9

No man that goes to war entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:4

We are to conform to his death if we want to be the Bride and live with him for 1,000 years. The following verse from Paul to young Timothy shows us that there is a condition to living with Christ for he says ...if we are dead with him!

It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with him, we shall also live with him.

2 Timothy 2:11

For those who are willing to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus they can no longer live their lives to please themselves. I think it fitting to end this chapter with the words of that great hymn writer Charles Wesley. If ever there was a hymn to encapsulate the attitude of the Bride is it this one.

Come, Jesus, Lord, with holy fire,
Come, and my quickened heart inspire,
My conscience purged by blood;
Now to my soul Thyself reveal,
Thy mighty working let me feel,
Since I am born of God.

Let nothing now my heart divide,
Since with Thee I am crucified,
And live to God in Thee.
Dead to the world and all its toys,
Its idle pomp and fading joys,
Jesus, my glory be.

Now with a quenchless thirst inspire,
A longing, infinite desire,
And fill my craving heart.

Chapter SEVEN - Conforming to Christ's Death

Less than Thyself, oh, do not give,
In might Thyself within me live;
Come, all Thou hast and art.

My will be swallowed up in Thee,
Light in Thy light still may I see
In Thine unclouded face:
Called the full strength of trust to prove,
Let all my quickened heart be love,
My spotless life be praise.

Chapter EIGHT

A Better Resurrection

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Luke 20:35-36

All of Paul's four statements we have looked at only lead to his one-end desire; that he wants to obtain the resurrection of the dead.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ...If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Philippians 3:10

Paul says 'if by any means' so he did not believe it was a foregone conclusion that he would attain this resurrection. Why do Believers think that they will all be in the first resurrection when Jesus returns for his Bride? Is the modern Church more prepared, more holy, or more qualified than Paul to obtain this resurrection?

They Wanted a Better Resurrection

I think Paul helps us with the phrase he uses for the Hebrew Believers. He talks about the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us who will testify, either for or against us, when we have to stand at the Judgement Seat of Christ to account for our lives since we were redeemed. He says some of these examples of faith did not accept deliverance and suffered wilfully to obtain a better resurrection.

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not

accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

Hebrews 11:35

What does Paul mean by 'better resurrection'? If you are dead and resurrected there are no degrees of resurrection – you are either dead or alive. I can only believe Paul was talking about the glorified spiritual body when it is raised, which is certainly better than being resurrected in a natural body. Many were resurrected from the dead in Jesus' day, but they died again because they did not have the eternal spiritual body that Jesus had when he arose. He was the first fruits, so until that time no one had been raised from the dead, Old or New Covenant, with a spiritual body and all died again. I don't believe there is any other logical explanation for this 'better resurrection'.

Facing the Great White Throne?

I believe those who are not saved will be resurrected when heaven and earth have passed away. The earth will dissolve with fervent heat and they will be resurrected in the flesh they died in. (If they are going to be damned in the lake of fire why would God give them a spiritual body that can't die.) Logic dictates that if their body is to be burned

up it has to be a natural body, not a spiritual one. I believe it will be their spirits that will be tormented throughout eternity.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:7

They will have to face God in the body they sinned in to give an account for their works. The book of Revelation tells us what will happen when the earth and heaven are destroyed by fire.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they

were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

Not only those who rejected Christ will face the Great White Throne Judgement but there will be those who are not in the first resurrection. Those who are in the book of life are not condemned or punished at the Great White Throne. They qualify for eternal life in their resurrected but natural body and will be like Adam was in the garden. He had an earthy body, but it was perfect. If this seems an unusual statement then why is the tree of life, which was in the garden of Eden to keep mortal man living for ever, in the New Earth? Why does it say this tree of life has leaves that are for the healing of the nations?

Saved Nations are Not the Bride

The 'saved nations' cannot be the Bride for John tells us the Bride is clearly the city, New Jerusalem. Read carefully the scriptures below that tell us this.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, **New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**
John 21:1-2

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there **the tree of life**, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and **the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**
Revelation 22:1-2

Access to the Tree of Life

I am convinced that those who are in the first resurrection are the Bride. Those who do not qualify, and have been redeemed, will face God at the Great White Throne and, because their names are in the book of life, will live for eternity in paradise on earth

just as Adam would have done if he hadn't been separated from this tree of life.

Read the following scripture slowly for it shows those in the first resurrection will reign with Christ for the duration of his millennial reign. It says those in the first resurrection will not have to face the Great White Throne Judgement. It is obvious if they have eternal spiritual bodies their eternal fate is sealed and they will reign as the Bride of Christ. The rest of those who are saved face the Great White Throne and because their names are in the book of life they will live forever on the new earth. They are the 'nations that are saved' not the Bride, 'New Jerusalem'. I suggest you read chapters 20-22 of Revelation if you are not sure what happens or the order in which it happens.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that, he must be loosed a little

season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. **But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: **on such the second death has no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 20:1-6

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Luke 20:35-36

If I have not convinced you yet that not all those saved will be in the first resurrection then I can do no more than refer to the words of Paul after he makes his statement about obtaining this resurrection. It is clear from what he says that he did not consider it a foregone conclusion even for himself, the great Apostle. He claims he is striving for this resurrection and he has to press towards it. I believe the prize he had his eyes on was the first resurrection.

If **by any means** I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Philippines 3:11-21

Too Many Conditions

In light of Paul's statement, I think we also should not think it a foregone conclusion that we are the Bride of Christ and will be in the first resurrection.

There are too many conditions to obtaining the kingdom. I have written extensively about this in my books on discipleship and the Parables of the Kingdom series ^{Footnote 1}.

Let us strive with Paul to obtain this Kingdom and the prize of the high calling – the Bride of Christ. What a wonderful aspiration to have and what a motivation to suffer hardship as a good soldier like Paul who was not disobedient to the heavenly vision so as to be qualified to reign with him for 1,000 Years. He knew when his time came to leave this earth that he had obtained the prize he was working towards.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

Acts 26:19

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

2 Timothy 6:6-8

Footnote 1

There are 6 volumes in my series, **Radical Discipleship**. They are available from **www**.

Chapter EIGHT - A Better Resurrection

barrattministries.org.uk or from Amazon as Kindle downloads or paperbacks.

There are 4 volumes to date in my series

'Parables and Hard Sayings of the Kingdom' which are available from Amazon as Kindle downloads or paperbacks.

Chapter NINE

Only One Purpose

If you are a Believer who has accepted Christ as your Saviour through faith in his atoning death, then you have been predestinated according to scripture. Paul tells us clearly in his letter to the Believers in Ephesus that they were chosen by God before he created the heavens and earth. However, this does not mean they have not exercised their free will in accepting his choice.

According as he has chosen us in him
before the foundation of the world, that

we should be holy and without blame
before him in love:

Ephesians 1:4

Paul tells us that if we have been predestinated it is for a purpose, and that purpose is that we are conformed to the image of Christ.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son...**

Romans 8:29

Many Called – Few Chosen

Only those who have been conformed to this image will be the Bride of Christ. Many have been called but few will be chosen because they will not pay the price to be perfected as the Bride. They are saved 'as by fire' but they will not reign with Christ in his coming Kingdom.

Paul then goes on to tell the Believers a progression that ends in the glorified body. This progression is to attain maturity (which the bible often calls 'perfection'), and to be the Bride of Christ. ^{Footnote 1}

I must state again that it is not a foregone conclusion that all believers will be the Bride of

Christ for being saved is not the criteria for being the Bride. Paul feared that although he had espoused the Believers to Christ they might fall away.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtiles, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3

Let me go through this process for us to attain the glorified body at the return of Jesus to this earth to set up his Kingdom. This is the verse that tells us about the progress to becoming the Bride of Christ.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Romans 8:30

1. God Predestinates Us

The first stage happened before creation as I have shown. God predestinated vessels for honour

or dishonour, salvation or damnation. This is not 'Karma' because he has given us free will to choose and we would not have a choice to accept if we were not presented with the opportunity. My wife could not accept or reject my proposal of marriage until I first chose her. Jesus chose us first so that we could choose him.

That is the order and it never changes. This is what Jesus told his disciples in the upper room just before he went to his crucifixion. He is talking to the foundations of the Bride, the Apostles.

You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
John 15:16

2. God Calls Us.

When the time comes, in God's plan for us to be born on this earth, then he calls us sometime in our life so that we can exercise our free will and choose, or reject him. We are all born 'for such a time as this' because our birth is not random when predestined to life or death.

3. God Justified Us

When we accept the sacrifice of his son we are justified by Christ and become a son of God by adoption. We have eternal life by faith and our names are written in the 'Lambs Book of Life'

And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, nor makes a lie: but those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 21:27

4. God Glorifies Us

This is the last stage – we become the Bride. Paul talks about the glorified body, meaning the resurrected spiritual body, that Christ now has in heaven.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Romans 8:17

John shows, being glorified means having the spiritual body Jesus had when he rose from the grave.

These things his disciples did not understand at the first: **but when Jesus was glorified**, then remembered they that these things were written of him and that they had done these things unto him.

John 12:16

5. The End Purpose

That Christ should not be the only one with this spiritual eternal body, but that many would attain this glorious body also.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he **might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

Romans 8:29

What an Encouragement!

After showing us this progression Paul concludes with this wonderful encouragement:

What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31

Marriage without love is no marriage at all – it is a sham! If we do not love God, we do not love his son. God will never allow us to be the Bride of his son for the same reason I would not want my son to marry a woman who did not love him. God can tell if we love his son and we have scriptures to help us decide if we do love him or just say we love him. The acid test is simple. Do we obey his commandments? Most Believers sing that they love Christ but do not fast, do not forgive from their hearts, do not give thanks in all circumstances. I could go on with a whole chapter stating the commandments of Jesus to his Bride. The epistles are also full of instructions for obedience to Christ's commandments. Jesus never gave suggestions – he expects us to obey without question or murmuring.

If you love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:15

If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

John 15:10

Paul starts this passage we are looking at with the following words outlining the conditions to

attain the first resurrection. The two conditions are:

1. Those who love God
2. Those called according to his purpose.

And we know that all things work together for good to them **that love God**, to them who are the **called according to his purpose**.
Romans 8:28

You can only claim this promise if you truly love God and he has chosen you. The promise is for the bride and not all believers, for many do not fulfil the two conditions in the above verse.

Paul says that if this process from start to finish is God's will for us we cannot fail if we meet the conditions.

What shall we then say to these things?
If God is for us, who can be against us?
He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?
Who shall lay anything to the charge of

God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Romans 8:31-34

Paul reverts back to the basis of all relationships and especially marriage – love. He asks the question, 'Who can separate us from the love of God', and the answer is ... nobody! Nothing shall separate us from the love of God, then he lists the things that could separate us if we lose faith and do not press toward the mark of the high calling – to be the Bride. Read Paul's encouragement for the Bride slowly and let it sink in – for to those who keep his commandments and prove their love for Christ nothing will be able to destroy his love for us.

Nothing Can Separate Us

However, Paul lists all the things that will try to separate us so we need to understand his first statement and believe that all things work together for good to those that love god and are called according to his purposes.

May God grant that you may learn to love and obey your Saviour and attain what Paul and the

saints who have gone before will attain – to be part of the first resurrection.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35-39

Footnote 1

Here are a few scriptures that use the word 'perfect' as maturity, completeness, and wholeness, but never sinlessness.

See how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

James 2:22

Chapter NINE - Only One Purpose

For in many things we offend all. If any man offends not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

James 3:2

But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 5:10

But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:4

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:17

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:10

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?

Galatians 3:3

Chapter NINE - Only One Purpose

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

Ephesians 4:13

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Philippines 3:12

The disciple is not above his master: but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master.

Luke 6:40

Chapter TEN

They all Work Together

Paul told the Believers in Ephesus that when Jesus ascended to heaven to present the blood to his father, he gave gifts unto men. Jesus was now a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. We do not have to speculate as to what these gifts are for Paul specifies them in the following verses. They are not natural talents, and neither are they spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Ghost, not Christ.

Wherefore he says, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, **apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.**
Ephesians 4:8-11

There are 4 ministry gifts Jesus gave to the Church.

1. Apostles

2. Prophets

3. Evangelists

4. Pastors and Teachers

These ministries are to the body of Christ and not to local fellowships. Maybe I should dwell here for a moment and let you know how I read the scripture concerning the body of Christ. There is a

passage in 1 Corinthians 12 which shows how God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost minister in the Church of Christ. It is a very interesting study but outside the subject of this book, but I will just show briefly their functions.

Verse 7-11 tells us the function of the Holy Ghost. The power of God manifested in nine gifts.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these work that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Ephesians 4: 7-11

In verses 12-27 Paul shows that Christ is the actual body, or should I say the head of the body, and we are members in particular. A group of Believers would fit this analogy as being an organ of the

body – the eye, the ear, or the heart, and so on. The individuals of the fellowship would be molecules of one of the organs. The whole of the body is the body of Christ. If this is correct then the 4 ministries are not contained in a local fellowship but are for the whole body – the Believers worldwide. Below is the passage I have based my assumptions on.

For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him. And if they were all one member, where

were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

I Corinthians 12:12-27

Verse 28 tells us that it is God who sets the ministries in the church. They are not elected by the body, as are deacons and elders because they

are not for a local fellowship, they are for the body worldwide.

And **God has set some in the church**, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:28

It is interesting that 'evangelists' are missing from this list and I believe it is because they work outside the body of Christ. They are sent into the world to preach the gospel and that is where they should operate. The fellowship where believers meet is to build them into the Bride of Christ and is not the place for evangelism.

These four gift ministries are rare ministries and not altogether understood at these times. Pastors did not oversee fellowships in the early Church, they were overseen by Elders or Bishops. Elders and Presbyters are interchangeable words and those holding these offices were ordained by men according to the conditions laid out by Paul in his letters to Timothy and Titus. ^{Footnote 1}

A Pastor, like the other three gifts to the church, is to the whole body, not a local fellowship. I am not nitpicking about names. If a man oversees

a fellowship and fits the conditions in the New Testament he is an Elder whatever we call him. I just find it sad that calling a local Elder or Bishop a Pastor loses the true function of a biblical pastor which is that he is a teacher and shepherd to the body worldwide.

Whatever you think of my analysis of the above verses it should not detract from what I will now say, for the purpose of this chapter is to show that these four ministries are all for one purpose and one purpose only; that is, to mature and perfect the Bride of Christ ready for his appearing when he will take his Bride and present her to his father. These ministries are to take the spots and wrinkles out of the Church so that Christ is not ashamed of her. If we are not ready for his appearing then we ourselves will be ashamed on that day.

Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Mark 8:38

And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have

confidence, and **not be ashamed before him at his coming.**

1 John 2:28

Paul tells us, in the passage we are looking at, the purpose of these four gifts to the body of Christ and everything points to the maturing of the Bride. Nothing less than the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ will do.

For the **perfecting of the saints**, for **the work of the ministry**, for **the edifying of the body of Christ**: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**:
Ephesians 4:12-13

I will now go through the things that the four ministries are working towards.

1. The Perfecting of the Saints

This of course does not mean sinless perfection, for we cannot attain sinlessness in this life. This is not a problem because we have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. I have shown that perfection is to do

with maturity and wholeness, so the four ministries are to make us mature. An Evangelist cannot do this because he is just the midwife to bring to birth baby, immature, Believers. But, he is nevertheless a part of the process of perfecting the saints, as sure as a midwife is part of the process of producing mature adults – it all starts at birth. The Apostles, Prophets, Pastors and Teachers then work together to mature the baby Believers into mature adulthood so that they can be the Bride of Christ, and that should be the aim of all these ministries. Sadly, I fear that most evangelists do not have this in mind when they are striving to win souls. From my conversations with evangelists from all over the world, their aim is just to win souls, without being part of the process of perfecting them into the Bride of Christ.

2. For The Work of the Ministry

These four gifts to the Church worldwide are to prepare people for ministry, that is servanthood, so they can be obedient to Christ and his teachings, and profitable to the Kingdom of God.

3. for the Edifying of the Body of Christ

To edify means 'to build up', and so these four offices are to build up, by any means, the Believers.

This is not to build 'The Church' because that is Christ's job. Jesus said 'I will build my Church'. So many Pastors think that they have to do this but they are usurping Christ when they try and are actually building instead, the religion of Babylon. These gifts are to build up the individual Believers, not the Church or denomination. Paul then tells us the conclusion of this process, and it includes those who are gifts to the Church as well for he includes himself when he says: '**Till we all come....**'

1. ...in the unity of the faith,

This does not mean we all believe the same things it means that we have the life of Christ in us and we dwell together in unity so that we can be blessed.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Psalms 133

2. ...and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

Paul said, 'that I may know him'. This is not knowing about Christ nor is it knowing all the doctrines of a denomination. It is the intimate relationship with Christ, and the personal relationship, that Believers boast about but fail to attain because they lapse into a corporate relationship with Christ through their denomination.

3. ...unto a perfect man

This perfection is the maturity that only comes through experience, suffering, and obedience to Christ's and the Apostle's teaching. There are no shortcuts to perfection which is why few attain it. Miracles and the power of God do not make a person holy. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost are manifestations of the power of God and can be counterfeited by Satan.

The Fruit of the Spirit is the character of God and this only comes through renewing our mind and the trials of life, and Satan cannot counterfeit this character. We are known by our fruit not our gifts. Here are a couple of scriptures if any of the readers think or believe there is any other way to perfection.

But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, **after that you have suffered a while**, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 5:10

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that **you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.**

James 1:2-4

4. unto the measure of the stature
of the fullness of Christ:

This, obviously, is the aim of all ministry ...or should be if we are to believe the scriptures. This is the end of the plan of God that started in the Garden of Eden. New Jerusalem, the city of God, the Bride of Christ, is what all men and women of faith throughout the ages have longed for. Abraham was looking for this city even before Israel was a nation, or Jesus had appeared in flesh and blood – the city whose builder and maker is God.

Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Revelation 3:12

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

Revelation 21:2

What a wonderful thought that we are not baby Believers anymore but mature adults able to be presented to Christ at his appearance as his glorious spotless Bride. What a wonderful process this is. It is the end of all ministry and this should be the vision of every man and woman of God. How the Church of Christ would be transformed if Pastors and Teachers, Evangelists, Prophets, and Apostles in today's world would have this as their end vision and mission statement.

It is essential that Believers become mature or perfect because Christ cannot be married to an

immature teenager. It is immoral to marry a person who is still a child and so Paul exhorts the Ephesians to grow up in Christ.

That we henceforth are **no more children**, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, **may grow up** into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:14-16

The book of Revelation tells us clearly that the Bride makes herself ready for the marriage to Christ.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for **the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready.**

Revelation 19:7

So how do we make ourselves ready? We don't have to guess because Paul continues and tells us we have to change and not walk like the world. This will be very difficult for Believers in the First World because the church has assimilated the world's business techniques, politics, fashion, culture, and entertainment, and does not know how to be this holy nation and peculiar people that Peter tells us we should be. The world is run by Satan who is the god of this world and we are supposed to be light – it is impossible for them to mix.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, **a holy nation, a peculiar people**; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

1 Peter 2:9

Paul continues in his exhortation to be separate from this world if we want to be mature and the Bride of Christ.

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life

of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ; if so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
Ephesians 4:17-22

In the end, it all revolves around our mind, our attitude, our disposition, for that is where holiness starts and not in the actions. Actions will follow if we renew our minds. Actions, without the right mind-set, are hypocrisy and self-deception.

This is how Paul ends this chapter. He tells us that we must renew our minds That means changing our thinking from that of the world to the mind of Christ.

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Ephesians 4:23-24

And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:2

Footnotes

Footnote 1

Passages that give the conditions for being an Elder/Bishop.

This is a true saying, If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Chapter TEN - They all Work Together

For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Titus 1:5-9

In the next volume, I will look at the letters to the Churches, in the book of Revelation to see how the Bride **has** to be an overcomer.