

## WHERE ARE YOU?

**Genesis 3:9, And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, "Where are you?"**

**The Bible presents us some soul searching and challenging questions.**

John, chapter 21, Jesus asks Peter 3 times, " Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

Matthew, chapter 16, Jesus ask disciples, ". . . He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Ezekiel 37:3, the Lord ask Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

1 King 19:9 and in verse, 13, the Lord asks Elijah, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Genesis 21:17, the Lord speaking to Hagar asks, "What is the matter, Hagar?"

All of these questions have the purpose stimulating us into action, into challenging us to move ahead with purpose, to do some soul searching.

Perhaps though, the most profound question asked in the Bible is found in Genesis, chapter 3, where we find Adam and Eve after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, hiding from God in the Garden. In verse 9 it says:

**And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, "Where are you?"**

The Lord asked the questions so that Adam might know where he was in His relationship with His Lord, spiritually.

All of these questions have the purpose stimulating us into action, into challenging us to move ahead with purpose, to do some soul searching.

God is asking you, "**WHERE ARE YOU?**" "Where are you in your relationship and walk with the Lord?" The Lord is asking that you do some **earnest** and **honest** soul searching. He is challenging you to quit playing church and get serious about the work He has for you.

Why? **Why is this soul searching needed?** Why do you need to get serious with the Lord? The simple answer is that **Jesus is Coming**. The Apostle Paul in Romans 13:11 puts it this way: **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. Knowing the time.** Is there any doubt that we are in the last times? All the signs,

- signs concerning world politics;
- signs in the weather;
- signs in the society of men (the moral decay).

All of these signs are indicating that the time is at hand!! Jesus is coming SOON!!

Because we know the time, Paul says, "it is high time to awake out of sleep."

**Matthew, chapter 25, verse 5, speaking of the 10 virgins in the parable of the 10 virgins, IS A PICTURE OF THE BODY OF BELIEVERS TODAY. "While the bridegroom tarried, THEY ALL slumbered and slept."**

**"THEY ALL SLUMBERED AND SLEPT"** The body of believers today is asleep and the call of the Lord is going out "To awake out of sleep" and do some soul searching for the answer to the question of the Lord to Adam. "Where are you?"

### **Where are you in your relationship with the Lord - in your spiritual walk?**

Paul continues in Romans 13:11 saying it is important to wake up because **"now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."**

Salvation here is speaking of the final salvation which takes place at the time of the Rapture of the overcomers . It is the salvation, or the changing of this corruptible, mortal physical body into one that is incorruptible and immortal. It is nearer that when we received Jesus. In fact it is right at the door!

**"Where are you?"** are you pressing on in your spiritual walk, reaching forth for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The prize is being a part of the company of overcomers when the Lord returns for His bride before the Tribulation.

Or, are you at a place of complacency that is self-satisfied with where you are and what you have and are accomplishing. If so you need to be reminded that **Paul says,**

**Philippians 3:12, " Not as though I had already attained (achieved that status) and again in 3:13, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended..."**

### **Where are you the Lord is asking, IN YOUR:**

- **spiritual life**, on a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your spiritual life, that is, your life being a reflection of Jesus would be a 10; your life a reflection of the world being a 1.
- **soul life**, how would you rate your soul life, especially your emotional life - under control being 10; emotionally unstable being 1;
- **physical life** how would you rate your physical life, the lusts of the flesh and lusts of the eyes under control being 10; the lusts of the flesh and lusts of the eyes out of control being 1.
- **relationship with Jesus** - on a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your relationship with Jesus - absolutely, totally, head over heels, breathtakingly in love with Jesus being 10; being in the company of the 5 foolish virgins who did not have a personal intimate relationship with Jesus being 1.

### **1. WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE?**

In-order to help us answer this first question "where are we in our spiritual life on a scale of 1 to 10?" objectively and honestly we want to see from the Bible, 1st of all, the characteristics of the carnal believer and then 2nd, the characteristics of the spiritual believer.

Paul sets up this comparison of spiritual and carnal believer.

**1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.**

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF CARNAL BELIEVERS**

**1 Corinthians 3:3, For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?**

Hebrews 5:11-13, of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

**Luke 21:34, overcharged (*burdened down*) with . . . cares of this life**

From these Scriptures we see that the characteristics of a carnal believer are:

- envy (jealousy);
- strife (quarreling);
- divisions (standing apart from others);
- dull of (spiritual) hearing (of understanding spiritual truths); and
- lacks skill in applying God's Word to his life and conduct.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL BELIEVERS**

**2 Peter 1:5-7 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.**

2 Peter 1:5-7 not only sets forth the characteristics of the spiritual believer but is also the **gauge/ measuring rod** by which one determines where he is in his spiritual life. A spiritual person is one who is giving diligence to his spiritual maturing by adding to his faith:

- **virtue or integrity** - He is a person whose life both in public and in private is one of honesty, sincerity and truth.

**Rom 13:13, Let us walk honestly, as in the day;**

**1 Corinthians 5:8, . . . keep the feast . . .with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth.**

- **to virtue he adds knowledge** - He is a student of the Word, growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2 Timothy 2:15, Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

**Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge**

**Proverbs 29:18, Where there is no vision (divine revelation), the people perish:**

- **to knowledge he adds temperance or self-control** - He is person who in times of temptation has learned to say:

**Luke 22:42, Father . . . not my will but thine be done.**

**Galatians 5:16, This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.**

- **to temperance he adds patience** - He is a person who perseveres in times of trials.

**James 1:4, (letting) patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.**

**2 Cor. 5:7, For we walk by faith, not by sight:**

- **to patience he adds godliness** - He is a person who is becoming more God like in his life, he doing what is right (good).

**Hebrews 5:14, . . . those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

- **to godliness he adds brotherly kindness** - He is a person who in submission and humility desires to be of help and service to his brothers and sisters in the church, full of compassion and forgiveness for those who wrong him.

**Ephesians 4:32, And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.**

**1 Peter 5:5, . . . all be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.**

- **to brotherly kindness he adds charity** - He is a person who gives his love unselfishly and self-denyingly expecting nothing in return.

**Ephesians 5:1-2, Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.**

## **2. WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR SOUL LIFE?**

In respect to our soul life, let us keep in mind that we are a 3-fold being, having a spirit, soul and body. And since we are a 3-fold being, **salvation is likewise 3-fold**. **Salvation accomplished**, this refers to the eternal salvation received when you were born again; **salvation which is the process of be accomplished (progressive salvation)** - this refers to the salvation of your soul; and **salvation yet to come** or the salvation of your body which will take place when Jesus returns for us.

Beloved your soul is not yet totally and completely saved, delivered from the things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life; nor will it be in this life, even as the Apostle Paul says,

**Philippians 3: 12 & 13, Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect . . . I count not myself to have apprehended . . .**

Your spirit is already conformed to the will of God; your soul is being conformed to the will of God. Now your soul consists of your mind, will, and emotions.

The **MIND** of the **carнал soul** says, I am in control of my own destiny. Knowledge/education is the key/answer to man's problems.

The **WILL** of the **carнал soul**, says I will do what I want, the way I want to do it. I am a free spirit. God wants me to be happy, and I am happy when I can have my way. and do what I want to do.

The **carнал soul** is controlled by how he feels, by his **EMOTIONS** –

- anger
- frustration
- self-pity
- disappointment
- doubts
- worry
- fear
- and other negative emotions
- condemnation

God is working in your soul, both the willingness/desire and the doing of His good pleasure. That is to say bringing your soul into submission to the spirit; rooting out these negative feelings, so that your emotions will be expressing, love, joy, peace, thanksgiving and the like.

Now what are you to do when these negative feeling rise up in you? When as Paul says in Galatians 5:17,

**"the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the that ye would."**?

**The answer to the question "What are you to do when these negative feeling rise up in you?" is seen in the following Scriptures.**

**2 Corinthians 10:5, Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;**

**Ephesians 4:26, Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:**

**Proverbs 3:5, Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.**

**Psalms 118:8-9, *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.***

**Psalms 116:7, Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.**

**James 1:2, My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;**

**Romans 8:1, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.***

**Colossians 3:15, And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.**

**2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

Once again the question. Where are you in your soul growth, soul salvation? **The gauge/measuring rod for making this determination is seen how effective you are in:**

- taking every thought captive;
- not letting the sun go down on your wrath;
- counting it all joy;
- trusting in God and not your own understanding or in others;
- letting the peace of God rule in your heart;
- speaking to your soul;
- letting who you are in Christ Jesus direct your thinking, your desires and your emotions (an identity crisis opens the door for negative emotions)

### **3. WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR PHYSICAL LIFE?**

God is challenging you to examine yourself as to how well you are caring for your physical body. Does your physical body and its wants, desires, lusts have a lot of control over your life or do you have your body under subjection. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:27 says,

**I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.** Concerning your physical body, keep in mind that you, as a child of God, belong to God, this includes your body.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body<sup>[a]</sup> and in your spirit, which are God's. Your body is not yours do treat and do with as you please. You are to glorify God in and with your body.

Let's identify some of the problem areas in the physical life which can keep one from glorifying God in their body. These problem areas can be classified under two headings as seen in 1 John 2:16,

**"For all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes . . ."**

**1. lust of the flesh** - inordinate desires of the flesh - that is to say "lacking restraint or not under control"

a. **Sexual sin**, such as:

**1. pornography** - Pornography leads to actual sexual sin.

**1 Corinthians 15:33, Be not deceived: evil communication corrupts good manners.**

**Romans 13:14, . . . make not provisions for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.**

**Eph 4:27, Neither give placeto the devil.**

**2. fornication** - Fornication is defined as any sexual act which is done outside of the marriage bed. That is to say, any sexual act which is not done between a man and woman who are married to each other is fornication.

**1 Corinthians 6:15-16, 18, Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh . . .Flee fornication. . . he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.**

**Exodus 20:14, Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

**Lev. 18:22, Thou shalt not lie with man-kind, as with womankind: it is abomination.**

**Leviticus 20:15-16, And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.**

**Rom 1:26-27, For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.**

b. **Overeating** - surfeiting (over eating), gluttony, obesity are a big problem among believers.

**Luke 21:34, And take heed to yourselves. Lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with **surfeiting** . . .**

c. **Drunkenness** - addictions of all types

**Luke 21:34, And take heed to yourselves. Lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with . . . **drunkenness** . . .**

**2. lust of the eyes**, seeing something and wanting it. This has to do with:

a. **coveting and greed**

Exodus 20:17, Thou shalt not covet . .

1 Timothy 6:8-9, And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.  
b. envy/jealousy

Rom 13:13, Let us walk honestly, as in the day . . . not in . . . envying.

1 Corinthians 3:3, For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying . . .

Galatians 5:19-20, Now the works of the flesh are . . . emulations (jealousies).

#### WHAT TO DO TO KEEP THE PHYSICAL BODY IN CONTROL:

**1. Pay attention to yourself** as to what you are doing, or not doing - examine yourself.

Luke 21:34, Take heed to yourself . . .

**2. Bring/Keep your body under subjection**, that is to say, do not let the appetites of the body control how you live, what you do, eat, drink, or wear.

1 Corinthians 9:27, But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

**3. Not placing yourself in situations of temptation.**

2 Corinthians 2:11, lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Eph 4:27, Neither give place to the devil.

Romans 13:14, . . . make not provisions for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

#### GAUGING YOUR PHYSICAL LIFE!

The gauge for determining where you are in your physical life is **CONTENTMENT**. To the extent you are content when you are taking heed to yourself by . . .

- keeping your body under control/subjection, not allowing the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes to have their way;
- not placing yourself in situations of temptation;
- not making provisions for the flesh;
- . . . will determine where you are in your physical life.

#### 4. WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS?

Now concerning our relationship with Jesus we want to understand that it is a two-fold relationship.

This is seen in the parable of the 10 virgins - Matthew 25:1-12. All ten were believers, but the 5 foolish did not have an intimate relationship with Jesus.

**First** of all as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a **Positional** relationship with Jesus? We are in Him and He is in us. Amen! So let us understand without any doubt that through the positional relationship with Jesus we have eternal salvation full and free - we did not do any thing to earn it nor can we do anything to lose it.

**Ephesians 2:8, For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:**

**Romans 6:23, For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Romans 8:35-39, 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 thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, 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.

1 Peter 1:5, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time

John 10:28-29, And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

Secondly, we have a *provisional* relationship, and where you are in your provisional relationship is determined by your *love for and intimacy with Jesus*.

The Bible tells us, Luke 10:27 to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind and with all of our strength. . .

*Are you absolutely, totally, head over heels, breathtakingly in love with Jesus*; or perhaps you must say with Peter, Lord, as he confirmed three times? "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

*Is your love for Jesus constraining you to live unto Him and not yourself?* Now, what ruler or standard is there by which to determine, gauge *HOW MUCH YOU LOVE JESUS*.

Ephesians 5:30-32, For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

1 Corinthians 12:12, For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

Ephesians 5:29, For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Romans 12:5, So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

1 John 3:23, And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

What is the standard for measuring your love for Jesus? *Is it not your love for your brothers and sisters in the body?*

*Now what is the standard/gauge of our love for one another?*

1 Corinthians 13:1-8, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.



**But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away.**

In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this world (1 John 4:17) The standard to which the believer is to attain is absolute perfection. "So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"(Matthew 5:48) A perfect love is such that both loves GOD, and loves it's brother also. God's purpose for us is nothing less than Christ-likeness. "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren"(Romans 8:29) The goal of every true believer is to conform into the image of Jesus Christ – and to be like Jesus Christ – this is pleasing to God the Father and Glorifies God. (1 Cor 10:31) We are not to be conformed to this world (Rom 12:2)-We are to be separate from this world (2 Cor 6:17-18)

### **Who Is The Bride of Christ?**

We should understand how little time is left before Jesus comes for His Bride. He is coming for a Bride who loves Him with all their hearts, . . . who talks with Him throughout the day, walk in purity and faithfulness . . . and who listens to Him as they continually feed on the Word of God.

The first thing that we need to know who is the Bride? Most people believe that every born again person will be soon be raptured and at that time become a part of the Bride of Christ. Revelations 21:9-10 clearly says . . . And there came unto me one of the seven angels .. saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

In Revelation 3:12 it is clear that the Philadelphian church, which were overcomers and the one type of all the churches in chapters 2 and 3 that could be said to be the Bride. So it is apparent that this group of overcomers, which is the Bride, are named after the place in which they live, the New Jerusalem. This heavenly city is now a part of Heaven and will come down to earth at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus. Notice also that the Bride will take on the name of their groom, Jesus, as that name is written on them at the wedding. The intimate relationship the Lord has with His beloved is referred to in Song of Solomon chapter 2. refer to the rapture of that Bride to a place the groom lives referred to as the clefts of the rock. 13 . . . Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. (this is the rapture) 14 O my dove, in (or into) the clefts (means refuge) of the rock (means fortress or stronghold), in the secret places of the stairs (as in Jacob's ladder which led to heaven). So just as "the rock" refers both to Jesus and the place He abides, "the New Jerusalem" refers to the Bride of Christ and the place that she ultimately will abide.

In Ephesians chapter 5, there is a comparison between an earthly groom, or husband, and Jesus . . . and an earthly bride, or wife, and the heavenly Bride of Christ. The secret or mystery about the identity of the future Bride of Christ is revealed in verse 32. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. The Bride is specifically "called out" of the earth to go with the Lord Jesus.(as recorded in Revelation 4:1 Come Up Hither. This is what Jesus shouts at the moment of the rapture.

The Chaste Virgin that is espoused. To make it clear that the Bride is not just the heavenly city, but a specific group of saints, let us look at 2 Corinthians 11:2. 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. Here speaking to a specific group of believers who He says are espoused or betrothed to Christ who is to be their husband. That group is described not just as virgins . . . all believers are called virgins. But this verse speaks of a specific kind of virgin that will be chosen to be the Bride of Christ. That kind of virgin, destined to be espoused to Jesus, is a chaste or pure believer.

The Bride of the First Adam, In the book of Genesis, we see how the first marriage involving the first Adam, shadows the heavenly marriage of the second Adam, Jesus. When God created the first Bride for Adam, he first put him to sleep. He then created Eve, his bride, taking her out of his body. Today, just about the entire body of Christ, like the body of the first Adam, is asleep. They don't realize how soon that Jesus is coming for His

Bride. When the second Adam does come, like in the first instance, the Bride will be taken out of the entire Body of Christ, via the first fruits rapture!

There are two groups of believers that make up the church. We have seen that the Word of God refers to them as the Bride and the tribulation saints; the wise and the foolish; and the great and the least. In *Romans 8:1* *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Notice that this verse refers to two groups of those that are “in Christ Jesus,” those that “walk according to the Spirit” . . . and those that “walk after their flesh.” If you walk after the Spirit, you will be walking after the Word. It is the power of the Word of God that allows you to live an overcoming life of freedom and victory.

On the other hand, a believer that “walks after their flesh” is ruled by their senses. They make decisions for their life based upon what feels right, sounds logical or gives them pleasure.

In *Romans 8:29*. It says that those that are “conformed to the image of His Son” or in other words, those that walk after the Spirit or Word (who is Jesus), are the “firstborn among many brethren.” The “firstborn” is a reference to the Bride who are first to be birthed via the rapture into the mount Zion. This is confirmed in *Hebrews 12:22-23* which refers to the two groups that are found in the “heavenly Jerusalem” after the whole church has been gathered. Notice it says the “firstborn (the Bride) among many brethren. The Bride is “among” the “many” tribulation saints, also called the “general assembly.” When the church is complete with the addition of the tribulation saints at the second rapture there will be many brethren, “a multitude so great that no man could number them” (*Rev. 7:14*).

All seven of these churches are made up of believers that are born again. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*(*Rev 3:6*) Each type of believer represented by one of these churches will have their immediate future and even their eternal destiny determined by whether they “listen up” and do what Jesus is saying. He is telling believers everywhere to be overcomers in this life. You cannot be the Bride without being an overcomer. Each of the seven references to overcoming has a promise attached to it. Some of those promises apply just to the Bride. Others apply to both the Bride and the tribulation saints.

Let us look at the promises given to those that are overcomers in Revelation 2, verse 7. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* The next promise is in *chapter 2, verse 11. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.* See other promise given to overcomers is in *verse 17, 2:26, 3:5,12.* This appears to refer to the overcomers that make up the Bride. The last promise to the overcomer is listed in *chapter 3, verse 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* A throne is a place from which a king rules and reigns. Revelation 7 shows the overcoming tribulation saints not reigning from a throne, but “serving in the temple.”

“How do we overcome?” According to *1 John 5:4* it all comes back to exercising faith or doing the Word of God. *1 John 5:4 . . . and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* So no matter what the trial, temptation, or problem that we may face, it is only by staying close to Jesus, loving Him and obeying what He has says that we walk in victory as overcomers.

Throughout the Bible the term “chosen” refers to three different groups of people. Israel has been and will be the chosen of God. They were originally chosen to be God’s bride before they rejected God(*Jer. 3:8*). Other scriptures refer to the whole church made up of both the tribulation saints and the Bride, being called *chosen*. But the group that is “called, chosen and faithful” will be “with Him as Bride.” If a believer is not *faithful* enough to be *chosen* to be the Bride and go in the first rapture, they will have to be *faithful* during the tribulation period in order to be *chosen* to complete the body of Christ at the second rapture of final harvest. And the foolish virgins that are left behind at the second rapture.

*2 Peter 1:9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.* The foolish virgins were not watching for their groom. They did not have the foresight to

keep oil in their lamps.” They cannot see “*afar off*,” . . . their focus is not on heavenly things, but on things pertaining to this world. And as a result they find themselves sinning, forgetting that Jesus has paid the price to deliver them from those sins. Remember that in *Revelation chapter 3*, another type of believers that will make up the tribulation saints are told to “*anoint their eyes with eye salve that they may see*.”

*Making Sure You’re Called & Chosen in 2 Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.*

All believers are warned to be diligent to make sure that at the calling of the Bride that they are among those that are chosen. How do they make sure that they are chosen? By *doing these things*. . . . exercising faith, self-control, endurance, holiness, brotherly love and agape. If a believer *does these things* they can know that they will *never fall* and end up in the tribulation that is to come upon the whole earth.

### **The Wedding Invitation**

Let’s take a look at a passage of scripture in *Matthew 2:2-8* that gives a parable that points out several truths about God’s quest for a Bride. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king (the Father God), which made a marriage for his son (Jesus), ..But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:...The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.* These believers are neglected, invitation allowing sin in their lives.(Verses 11,23) Here a believer immediately disqualifies from being in the wedding is to not have a wedding garment. In *Revelation 19:7* it says that the wife of Jesus *makes herself ready* ahead of time. She is seen as holy before her Lord. *Verse 8 of Revelation 19* says that she is “*arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.*” Notice that the individuals that don’t have a wedding garment are not enough to be the Bride, that they are speechless! Being found unfaithful and without a garment of righteousness, these believers realize that they have been cast out there is weeping of remorse and gnashing of teeth that they have been left behind to face the tribulation.

The Bride . . . Few in Number. The next verse makes an observation that indicates how few in the body of Christ will be ready when Jesus returns for His Bride. *Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.* Among all believers, many are the number that are called to be the Bride, but few are found worthy to be chosen.

Like Paul, believers today desiring to be the Bride have great motivation to press on for that prize of the high calling. Part of that pressing on is to walk in holiness. *Titus 2:12-13* refers to our need of holiness as we look for our catching away as the Bride.

*Titus 2:12,13 . . . denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;* In *1 John chapter 3* refers to the rapture and our supernatural change to resurrected bodies when it says . . .

*1 John 3:2 . . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

*Titus 2:13* verse referred to the catching away of the Bride as our “*blessed hope.*” After describing the moment we meet Jesus in the air to be raptured, this blessed hope is referred to in the next verse, as the motivation for us to live holy lives. *1 John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

*In Psalms 24:3 Who shall ascend (take away up) into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?”* in other words “be raptured”) into the “holy hill,” the mount Zion. *Psalms 24:4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart .*

Several places in the Word of God (*1 Chronicles 16:29, Psalms 29:2*) we are commanded to “*worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*” The same quality that makes God beautiful, His holiness, . . . makes us beautiful to Him. *1 Corinthians 3:9* says that “*we are God’s building.*” *1 Peter 2:5* says that we “*are built up a spiritual house.*” What makes all of us that make up that house so attractive? *Psalms 93:5* gives us the answer. “*Holiness becometh (or*

*makes beautiful) thine house.* Once again, one of the qualities that makes us desirable to our groom Jesus is not our physical characteristics . . . but our holiness.

Why are we repeatedly commanded (*Leviticus 11:45, 19:2, 20:26, 21:8* and *1 Peter 1:16*) to “*be holy even as He is holy?*” Holiness is not just important to make us a beautiful Bride for our groom. Holiness is the very nature of God that we too must have to live with Him eternally. There are scriptures that confirm this awesome truth. *Hebrews 12:14* says that “*without holiness, no man shall see God*’ Jesus stated it this way in *Matthew 5:8* in the sermon on the mount. “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*”

So holiness is one of the qualities that is all important in determining who is raptured and who lives on in the New Jerusalem. That hope of being raptured, changed to be like Him in the twinkling of an eye drives all those that would be the Bride to make themselves pure. Once again to be one with Jesus as His Bride we must be pure and holy even as He is holy.

### **Royal wedding Song.**

*Psalms 45:13* The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace. The company of people that are the apple of the King’s eye, His Bride, are described as being “all “glorious within.” In *Ephesians 5:27*, the called out one by God who true and faithful are the Bride. They are described as “glorious” because they are “holy and without blemish” within. According to verse 14 of *Psalms 45*, at the time of the wedding the members of the Bride are “brought to the King” their groom. Those who wise virgins, are “brought to the King” (via the second rapture) for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In *2nd Timothy 2:20,21*, a vessel is made unto honor, or in other words, the person becomes the Bride by being sanctified having a pure heart, purging themselves from lusts. They are “righteousness” (The Bride is Pure), “faith” (The Bride is Faithful) and “charity or agape” (The Bride is a Lover). In *Matthew 25:10* says it will be “those that are ready that will go in with Him to the marriage” and then the “door will shut” and those shut out will have to face the tribulation. *Revelation 19:7* says . . .the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. If you want to be counted worthy to be the Bride, you need to make yourself ready NOW! There are two commands that God gives us that must be heeded if holiness is to become a lifestyle.

*James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

The first command is to Submit ourselves to God. The second command is to resist the devil. You must do both, but the first must always and continually be done first. So we will talk about how to submit to God now and how resisting the devil enters into walking in holiness. The very next verse gives insight in how we are to submit to God.

*James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts,*

We submit ourselves to God by humbly drawing near to Him with a pure heart. Part of the process of submitting yourself to God is to ensure that you have a pure heart when you draw nigh to God to commune with Him. Only when your heart is pure and you are holy as He is holy, will He draw near to you in close fellowship. Sin blocks intimacy with God. So how do we get rid of any sin and obtain the purity of heart.

We love Jesus with all of our strength by being full of faith, ever strong in the power of His might. Our living by faith or doing the Word is an outward demonstration of our great love for Jesus. Prayer is one of the main ways that we have communion with God. The more you consistently talk with someone sharing your heart with them the more intimacy you have with them. It is the same way with our relationship with Jesus. He wants us to pray, talking with Him throughout the day. You need to continually “abide in Jesus,” be “into Him” and have the “eyes of your heart enlightened” so that you can “see the hope, or vision of His calling”(Ephesians 1:18) We are conformed to the image of Christ in holiness, because Christ is made unto us sanctification. *Second Corinthians*

3:18 says we are being changed into the image of our Lord from glory to glory. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." We put on the new man which is being renewed in knowledge after Him. When the vision of the glory of Christ is perfect, the conformity will be perfect. We progress from one stage of grace, glory to another. One day we will have full conformity to the image of Christ.

Pray to be Counted Worthy; Luke 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. "Being counted worthy" has everything to do with being caught up as the Bride in the first rapture to "stand before our groom, the Son of man."

"The signs are all around us, so wake up, join in the soon coming rapture of the glorious Bride of Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, be a lover of God and people. Abide in Christ. Be holy. Be faithful. BE THE BRIDE!