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You Are Betrothed to Christ—P1

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3 NASB).

Jesus and His Apostles referred often to betrothal and marriage as describing the bond between Christ and the Church, and it is the reality we must grasp to have a deeper understanding of our relationship to Jesus.

In Jewish marriage tradition, a young woman would be betrothed to a man who had chosen her to be his future wife. In the betrothal ritual, the man and woman committed to sanctify themselves for each other and were bound together legally as husband and wife. During the betrothal period (roughly around a year), while not united yet in body, they were one body in spirit, until the betrothal period was fulfilled at their marriage supper.

Once they had been betrothed, the husband gave his new wife a pledge of his love and faithfulness to her—something that would remind her of him and recall to her mind and heart all that he had said to her in his brief time with her. After this, he left her, returning to his father’s house to prepare a room for them to start their life together. He would return for her only when his father decided it was time.

The bride did not know when her husband would return for her to take her away from her father’s house. This period of betrothal had a known start date, but the end date was known only to the bridegroom’s father—he alone would decide when the time was right. During this unspecified time period, the bride was to prepare for her wedding, focusing all her energies on giving up her former life with its duties and expectations of her while learning the ways of her husband’s household, sanctifying herself to be pleasing to her future husband.

When Jesus left His disciples, He told them, *“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you”* (Jn. 14:1-2). And then He prayed with them, telling His Father, *“For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth”* (Jn. 17:19). Paul explains: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless”* (Eph. 5:25-27)— *“the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him”* (1 Cor 6:17).

Before He left, Jesus gave them this pledge: *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you”* (Jn. 14:16-17). *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge”* (2 Cor. 1:21-22), *“whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you”* (Jn. 14:26b).

“He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:5-8 ESV). May we so long to go to our new home with Jesus forever! Even so, Amen.

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