

## **FM: Growing a Strong Marriage Creates a Healthy Family: 10** **"The Implications of the Resurrection for the Bride of Christ"**

*"So I wrapped my cloak around you to cover your nakedness and declared my marriage vows. I made a covenant with you, says the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine." Ezekiel 16:8*

Some people celebrate Christmas in July; today we're going to celebrate Easter in August. I hope that's ok. Over the past 9 weeks we have been considering how to build a marriage that pleases God, and makes us more holy. We have discussed facing our fears in marriage, meeting our spouse's needs, rekindling the romance, and surviving life's storms. Today we're going to discuss how the Resurrection of Jesus Christ impacts the Bride of Christ.

The Bride of Christ is a NT metaphor used to describe all those people who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. In the late chapters of Revelation, this 'bride' is revealed, dressed in all her finery, being welcomed to her wedding feast by her beloved Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. But, this concept is built on a phenomenon found throughout the Old Testament. Many OT authors used the married relationship to illustrate and demonstrate the relationship between God and human beings. There is no better example of this than from these words found in Ezekiel's description of how God reaches to each one of us:

*"But I came by and saw you there, helplessly kicking about in your own blood. As you lay there, I said, 'Live!' And I helped you to thrive like a plant in the field. You grew up and became a beautiful jewel. Your breasts became full, and your hair grew, though you were still naked. And when I passed by and saw you again, you were old enough to be married. So I wrapped my cloak around you to cover your nakedness and declared my marriage vows. I made a covenant with you, says the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. "Then I bathed you and washed off your blood, and I rubbed fragrant oils into your skin. I gave you expensive clothing of linen and silk, beautifully embroidered, and sandals made of fine leather. I gave you lovely jewelry, bracelets, and beautiful necklaces, a ring for your nose and earrings for your ears, and a lovely crown for your head. And so you were made beautiful with gold and silver. Your clothes were made of fine linen and were beautifully embroidered. You ate the finest foods – fine flour, honey, and olive oil – and became more beautiful than ever. You looked like a queen, and so you were! Your fame soon spread throughout the world on account of your beauty, because the splendor I bestowed on you perfected your beauty, says the Sovereign LORD.*

*"But you thought you could get along without me, so you trusted instead in your fame and beauty. You gave yourself as a prostitute to every man who came along. Your beauty was theirs for the asking! You used the lovely things I gave you to make shrines for idols, where you carried out your acts of prostitution. Unbelievable! How could such a thing ever happen? You took the very jewels and gold and silver ornaments I had given you and made statues of men and worshiped them, which is adultery against me. You used the beautifully embroidered clothes I gave you to cover your idols. Then you used my oil and incense to worship them. Imagine it! You set before them as a lovely sacrifice the fine flour and oil and honey I had given you, says the Sovereign LORD. "Then you took your sons and daughters – the children you had borne to me – and sacrificed them to your gods. Was it not enough that you should be a prostitute? Must you also slaughter my children by sacrificing them to idols? In all your years of adultery and loathsome sin, you have not once thought of the days long ago when you lay naked in a field, kicking about in your own blood." Ez. 16: 6-22*

What an apt description of each of us, how long has it been since we gave one thought to the days long ago when we were, *'lying naked in a field, kicking about in our own blood?'* Were it not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that's exactly where each of us still would be today. Were it not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ we'd all still be lost in the devastation of our unforgiven sin. Were it not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ the world, as we know it today would be nothing more than hell on earth, if it even existed at all! Were it not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, sorrow, fear and doubt, would rule the day, and despair, destruction and death would rule the night.

To consider the implications of the resurrection for the "Bride of Christ, we turn to the stories of each of the gospel writers, and discover a unique message in each one. What we observe is that following the crucifixion, the death of Jesus, 3 emotions were preeminent. And following the discovery of the resurrection 3 new emotions replaced them. These are the implications of the Resurrection for us, His... "Bride of Christ".

### **1. SADNESS TURNED TO JOY**

*"Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. She saw two white-robed angels sitting at the head and foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. "Why are you crying?" the angels asked her. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him." She glanced over her shoulder and saw someone standing behind her. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. "Why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him." "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned toward him and exclaimed, "Rabbi!" Jn 20: 11-16*

We note from John's account that Mary's sadness turned quickly to joy, at the recognition of Jesus. She leapt from her knees, and joyfully bounded her way to the disciples gathered under lock and key.

Her sadness is but a reminder of the common emotion when death calls the name of a dear loved one. Who of us stricken by death's chill cannot identify with her yearning, her sadness, her helplessness? What was she going to the tomb, to do? In one account she tells the guards she has come for the body of Jesus? What exactly was she going to do with it? Where would she take it? How would she move it? What about that great government sealed stone? In Matthew and Luke she is going to the grave/body to anoint it. It was too late, it had already been dead for 3 days, and further, it had been anointed with tears not that many days prior to this horrific week! She was going to the tomb for the same reason we leave tear stains on tombstones, we just want to be close to those we have loved...and lost.

But how quickly her mood changed. And how slowly we grasp her lesson... Jesus is every bit as alive today as he was that original Easter morning. His being alive has removed forever the sting of death, and the pain of parting, and the sorrow of saying goodbye! For the Bride of Christ, death has been defeated, the cross has been overcome, sorrow and sadness have been converted to joy, unspeakable joy. Is it a sin to be sad at a loved ones death? Do tears at funerals reveal a lack of faith...? No, not really, they are a reminder of how deeply love binds two people, and would that they might remind us today, how deeply God would be bound to us, and how profoundly the resurrection of His son proves that love. The second implication of the resurrection is:

## **2. FEAR GIVES WAY TO HOPE**

*"The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move. The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross.*

*He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed. "Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message." The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Mt. 28: 4-8*

My 1<sup>st</sup> Easter message some 30 years ago was from this text, and it was 4 simple words: COME, SEE, GO, TELL. That is the essence of the gospel, and that is the truth that ravages our fears, and replaces them with hope!

God is and always has been in the inviting business. He invited Adam and Eve to enjoy his Garden. He invited Abraham to birth a great nation. He invited Moses to lead his people back home. He invited Joshua to conquer the Promised Land. He invited Nehemiah to rebuild the wall, and the people. He invited David to greatness, after his adultery and murder. He invited Elijah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Hosea, Amos and Obadiah to continually invite Israel to return to faithfulness. He invited the disciples to join the world-changing movement, and he still invites us today. Come. He invites us to give up our fear of hell and death, by sending Jesus to save us. He invites us to live as redeemed people, sinful, but forgiven; living in darkness, but not in hopelessness!

How vital is hope to our existence as Christians? And I'm not talking about some "out of touch with reality, pie in the sky" false hope. All else might be lost, but hope remains. Our lovers might abandon us, but our Lover never will. When all medical hope has been exhausted, then we cling to our eternal hope. Our world may be destroyed by war, but our hope endures. Fear may reign all about us, but hope reigns above us, and in us, because Jesus is not dead, he is not here, come and see, see for yourself. Your parents may have seen, but what about you?

When you have seen, then you must go and tell! The story is too good to keep it to ourselves. If you're not telling it, then I wonder if you've really seen it! Maybe it's time to take another look.

You can still find the tomb there outside Jerusalem, it's distinguished from all the others, not by its well marked pathway, not by its elaborate decorations, not by its unusual location. It is distinguished from all the others...because it's still empty! The third implication of the Resurrection for the Bride of Christ is:

### **3. DOUBT PRODUCES FAITH**

*"But Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We saw the Master." But he said, "Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won't believe it." Eight days later, his disciples were again in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them, and said, "Peace to you." Then he focused his attention on Thomas. "Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don't be unbelieving. Believe." Thomas said, "My Master! My God!" Jesus said, "So, you believe because you've seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing." Jn 20: 25-29*

As I reread the resurrection accounts, I was struck with how Jesus, AFTER HIS RESURRECTION, encountered a number of different people and what transpired in them, for their doubts to be transformed into faith. Doubt is not an unusual emotion following death, but as we will see, God uses different sources to transition our doubts into faith. Nowhere are any of these participants derided for having doubts, I think doubts are a rather natural part of faith development, frankly. I know I still have some doubts I'm working on. But listen to this list of people with doubts, who encountered Jesus, and see how their doubts, produce faith:

#### **From Matthew 28:**

The Women saw their doubts removed **when they held his feet and worshiped him.** *"And they ran to him, held his feet, and worshiped him"*

And the Disciples saw the transition begin: **when they saw him – worshiped him – and still doubted him.** *"When they saw him, they worshiped him – but some of them still doubted!"*

#### **From Mark 16**

The Disciples and the women: **when they were rebuked...**  
*"He rebuked them for their unbelief – their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen."*

The Disciples and the women: **when they received their commission.**  
*"And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere. "*

#### **From Luke 24**

2 Disciples on Road to Emmaus: **when he broke the bread and revealed scripture:** *"As they sat down to eat, he took a small loaf of bread, asked God's blessing on it, broke it, then gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts feel strangely warm as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"*

The Disciples: **when he opened their minds to the Scriptures**  
*"Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me by Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must all come true." Then he opened their minds to understand these many Scriptures."*

The Disciples: **when he breathed the Holy Spirit on them**  
*"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."*

#### **From John 20**

The Apostle John: **when he saw the empty grave and grave clothes**  
*"He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side. Then the other disciple also went in, and he saw and believed –"*

Mary: **upon hearing Him call her name**  
*"Mary!" Jesus said. She turned toward him and exclaimed, "Rabbi!"*

The Disciples: **upon seeing His hands and side**  
*"As he spoke, he held out his hands for them to see, and he showed them his side. They were filled with joy when they saw their Lord!"*

Thomas: **upon touching his wounds**  
*"Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" "My Lord and my God!"*

All of this makes me wonder: WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR YOU TO BELIEVE?  
When filled with doubts, what will it take for us to see our doubts turned into faith? I  
want to end today with a prayer written by a Dr. Lockeridge, a Pastor in Pennsylvania...  
maybe this will help you believe...

The Bible says my King is a seven-way King:  
He's the King of the Jews - that's a racial King.  
He's the King of Israel - that's a national King.  
He's the King of Righteousness.  
He's the King of the Ages.  
He's the King of Heaven.  
He's the King of Glory.  
He's the King of Kings and He's Lord of Lords.

David said: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork."

My King is a sovereign King - no means of measure can define His limitless love.  
No farseeing telescope can bring into visibility the coastline of his shoreless supplies.

No barrier can hinder Him from pouring out His blessings.

He's enduringly strong.

He's entirely sincere.

He's eternally steadfast.

He's immortally graceful.

He's imperially powerful.

He's impartially merciful.

... Do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizons of this world.

He's God's Son.

He's the sinner's Savior.

He's the centerpiece of civilization.

He stands in the solitude of Himself.

He's august and He's unique.

He's unparalleled, He's unprecedented.

He's the loftiest idea in literature.

He's the highest personality in philosophy.

He is the supreme problem in higher criticism.

He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology.

He's the core and necessity for spiritual religion.

He's the miracle of the age, yes, He is.

He's the superlative of everything good that you choose to call Him.

He's the only one qualified to be an all-sufficient Savior.

.... I wonder if you know Him?

He supplies strength for the weak.

He's available for the tempted and the tried.

He sympathizes and He saves.

He guards and He guides.

He heals the sick.

He cleanses the lepers.

He forgives sinners.

He discharges debtors.

He delivers the captives.

He defends the feeble.

He blesses the young.  
He serves the unfortunate.  
He regards the aged.  
He rewards the diligent and  
He beautifies the meek.  
...I wonder if you know Him?

Well, this is my King.  
He is the King.  
He is the key to knowledge.  
He's the wellspring of wisdom.  
He's the doorway of deliverance.  
He's the pathway of peace.  
He's the roadway of righteousness.  
He's the highway of holiness.  
He's the gateway to glory.  
...Do you know Him?

Well, His office is manifold.  
His promise is sure.  
His life is matchless.  
His goodness is limitless.  
His mercy is everlasting.  
His love never changes.  
His Word is enough.  
His grace is sufficient.  
His reign is righteous.  
His yoke is easy and  
His burden is light.

Oh,...I wish I could describe Him to you.  
But He's indescribable. He's incomprehensible.  
He's invincible.  
He's irresistible.

Well, you can't get Him out of your mind.  
You can't get Him off your hand.  
You can't outlive Him and  
You can't live without Him.

Well, the Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop  
Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him.  
The witnesses couldn't get their testimonies to agree.  
Herod couldn't kill Him.  
Death couldn't handle Him.  
The grave couldn't hold Him.

That's my King. That's my King. Yeah!      Do you know Him today? Let US Pray!

## **BUILDING A GODLY MARRIAGE 10**

### **"The Implications of the Resurrection for the Bride of Christ"**

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## **BUILDING A GODLY MARRIAGE 10**

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#### **Study Guide**

1. Share what it means to you personally to be considered, "The Bride of Christ". How do you see the fact that we are the Bride of Christ, being lived out in our church? How does being part of the Bride of Christ, help you be a better husband/wife?
2. Describe how the resurrected Jesus has personally helped you turn some sadness into you in your life, family, marriage.
3. What 'fears' are you struggling with right now? How might being part of the Bride of Christ help address your fears and how might being part of the Bride of Christ help instill hope in your life/relationships? How do you define hope? What is your primary source of hope? Secondary ones?
4. What 'doubts' are you dealing with right now? How might being part of the Bride of Christ help you process your doubts? Are doubts sin/sinful?
5. Reconsider the scriptures at the end of the message, which one speaks most loudly to you today about moving from sadness, fear and doubt; to joy, hope and faith.