

April 2008

Precious friends and prayer partners,

Greetings this bright and cherry April morning! So many of you pray for me that I must take time to thank you from the bottom of my heart. As I write this, I just received word that it appears very likely that the mission trip to Panama may well take place this summer. I'm still awaiting word as to the details, but I ask you to pray for me and for those in Panama to whom the Lord may send me.

As has become more of a routine for me, I continue leading worship and teaching at the House of Prayer, to facilitate a wonderful fellowship of believers in my home weekly, and to teach Sunday School at the church I attend. Leading worship and speaking during an occasional Church service or retreat still occurs occasionally. In some ways my life is so different from what it was during the many years of heavy travel. Now it has become concentrated on worship and teaching the Word. Your prayers and your support of me as I continue to walk with the Lord is more valued to me than ever you could imagine. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Please hold in prayer those the Lord has given me to disciple. For myself, I ask prayer that I will become more and more faithful to the One we love and worship.

I believe today is the first truly Spring-like day we have experienced here in North Central Indiana. A couple of weeks ago we passed the March date which marked the first "official" day of Spring, but it looked so much like December and January and February. If one were to judge by the **appearance** and the **feel** of things, you might well have concluded that it hasn't been Spring at all until today! And right at this point of not seeing what is supposed to be lies a wonderful little lesson for us.

God has spoken truth to us. He has given us His word, among which are promises like

"I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for good and not for evil, plans to bless you and not to curse you, plans to give you a future and a hope!" Jer 29:11

What are those plans that promise to give us a future and a hope? They are plans not only to be redeemed by Christ, saved by His grace, filled with His Spirit, oh, but there is yet more. He has promised to share all of who He is with us as we rule and reign with Him! Even more, He says His plan is to relate to us as a Bridegroom does His Bride! He declares that He will betroth us to Himself. He says this many times, but in one spot, in particular, He repeats it three times. Where? Check this out:

"I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the Lord. Hosea 2:19-20

Before He speaks repeatedly in the Book of Hosea about relating to us in such an intimate friendship (mind you, this is not a physical marriage, but a "Heart-to-heart" relationship), He describes graphically how compromised Israel is in her relationship to Him. (And of course this applies to us also since we are grafted into Israel when we enter into a saving relationship with Christ).

Further, the Lord describes *how* He is going to get His chosen one (us) to alter our relationship with Him from one of compromise and spiritual idolatry to one of faithful love. In Hosea 2:14, He says in essence, "This is how I'm going to deal with your unfaithfulness to Me;"

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort (or tenderly) to her there".

"In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call Me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' Hosea 2:16

Then He tells how He will cause us in that wilderness place, in that place of encounter with Him, to come back to our first love. This follows His promise to betroth or to wed us as His own.

I have to say at this point that what is running through my mind right now are strains of the old hymn, "What wondrous love is this?" Where am I going with this thought about His plans for us? To this glorious reality: Here is the end-result of His plans for you and me as the very Bride of Christ. Listen as God Himself sings His own Word over you right now.

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

*Then he said to me, "Write: **'Blessed (which means "happy) are those who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!'***

" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." Rev. 19:7-9

My precious friends, herein lies our destiny! Scripture clearly states that Jesus Christ is returning for a Bride, a wife, a church who has prepared herself for this incredible forever with her Bridegroom King! I note **specifically** that the Word says in verse 9 above **"HIS WIFE HAS MADE HERSELF READY!"**



And how does Scripture describe the Bride? She is dressed in white linen, that is to say, she is draped with righteous acts (see above, verse 8). She knows who she is, with whom she is in relationship. She is radiant with love for Him. She is in complete agreement with Him. She joins the Holy Spirit in calling out for Him to come.

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17

My dear friends, you were born for this! This is what you were created for! You were not created to have a career; you were not created to marry and have a family as an end in itself; you were not created to be "in the ministry." You were created to discover and come into your destiny as the very Bride of the Bridegroom King, the Savior of the world, the Ruler of all nations, Jesus Christ! You were created to be different from people who don't know the Lord. You were created to be a person who KNOWS Who loves her or him and is fully complete in possessing that love. You were created to walk without offense. You were created to head North when everyone else is headed south. You were created to delight in sitting last at the table, in bowing the lowest, in washing another's feet. You are destined to be raised by the King

of all kings to a place of privilege undreamt of by the carnal mind of man. And in that position, you will rule and reign with Master of the Universe!

As the critical days in which we live today come and then go, I want to urge you to Awake, oh Bride of Christ! Rise up from your slumber! The King is calling you! The King is calling you to partner with Him, to run with Him, to conquer the mountains, to skip over the hills, to join with Him in His harvest!

*My beloved spoke, and said to me: **"Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away.** For lo, the winter is past, The rain is over and gone. 12 The flowers appear on the earth; The time of singing has come, And the voice of the turtledove Is heard in our land. 13 The fig tree puts forth her green figs, And the vines with the tender grapes Give a good smell. **Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away! Song of Songs 2:10-13***

I guess you might surmise what I've been doing for the last several weeks. I've been teaching on the Bride of Christ at the House of Prayer in Fort Wayne. I tell you the truth, coming into an honest awareness of this reality as my true destiny has radically changed my life these past few years. I cannot encourage you strongly enough to dig into the Word and ask the Lord to increase your fervent love for Him and enlighten you as to just how wide and deep, how high and long is His love for you! Oh, He is so amazing.