

# Session 5

## Five Characteristics of the Bride of Christ

### This session covers:

- How the end-time church will be glorious and prepared
- How the end-time church will have intimacy with Jesus and exercise great authority
- How the end-time church will receive eternal rewards

### This session corresponds to:

- Session 5 of *Understanding the Bride of Christ* CDs

### 1. The End-Time Church Will Be Glorious.

#### 1. King Ahasuerus' two banquets picture God inviting His creation to enjoy His glory in eternity past and throughout human history.

- Esther 1:3-4 states that King Ahasuerus held a banquet and displayed the glory of his kingdom for 180 days.
- This feast pictures eternity past, when God displayed the fullness of His glory to every angel and to every created being—even to the angelic beings who would eventually rebel against Him.
- The king's second banquet is a picture of God revealing His glory throughout human history. Esther 1:5-8 states:

When these days were completed [the 180 day banquet], the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. There were hangings of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine

purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, and couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones. Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty. The drinking was done according to the law, there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household that he should do according to the desires of each person (Est. 1:5-8).

- The king's second banquet, given at the end of the first, lasted seven days and was for everyone.
- All the people in the kingdom were invited to experience the riches of his palace and garden and to drink freely from the king's bounty. "There was no compulsion," for the king allowed everyone to "do according to [their] desires."
- This seven-day feast symbolizes human history from Adam until now. As Peter wrote, a day to God is like a thousand years to man (2 Peter 3:8). Most prophecy scholars believe that there will be 6,000 years from creation to the second coming of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Thus, six days of the banquet, or 6,000 years, refers to the time of Adam to Jesus and from Jesus through the entire Church Age. The last day of the banquet, therefore, relates to the Millennial Kingdom, the 1,000-year period when Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem (Rev. 20:6).
- During this banquet, the king honored the free will of his people. He valued their right to choose or reject the bountiful provisions of his kingdom.
- The picture here is inescapable. Throughout history, God has invited everyone to come to Him, to fully partake of the divine pleasures of His kingdom, and to enjoy the pleasures of heaven for eternity. But there is no compulsion. People are free to enjoy all of God that they desire or to reject His kindness and grace.

## **2. In the end times, Jesus will display His glorious bride to the entire world.**

- It is interesting to note that the seventh day of the banquet was different than the first six. Esther 1:10-11 states:

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful (Est. 1:10-11).

- Even though Vashti rebelled against the king's request, this event still depicts the Lord's desire to display His bride's beauty during the Millennial Kingdom.

- The heavenly Father is calling the bride He has chosen for His Son to come forth in glory in the end times. As we transition from the Church Age to the Kingdom Age, Jesus will display His beautiful bride to the entire world so that all creation might see her glory.
- Before the Lord returns, the Holy Spirit will prepare a glorious bride *in the earth* that He will present to Jesus at His second coming (Eph. 5:27).
- Even now, the Holy Spirit, through His servants, is inviting all nations to become a worthy bride and to join the wedding feast. Those that reject this invitation will be without excuse when Jesus returns as Judge.
- Jesus' great desire is to display His bride's beauty during the seventh day of the feast so that all creation will give glory, honor, and praise to God.
- Every angel and demon, ruler, principality, and power in heavenly places will see the beauty of Jesus' bride in the end times.

## 2. The End-Time Church Will Be Prepared.

**The end-time church will go through a God-ordained preparation process before partnering with Jesus in the end times, partaking in the marriage supper of the Lamb, and ruling and reigning with Jesus for all eternity.**

### 1. Those who willingly and eagerly cooperate in the preparation process will be granted great favor to be made ready.

- For Esther, it all started with her saying "yes" to the preparation process. Esther 2:2-3 states:

Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. Let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given them" (Est. 2:2-3).

- As King Ahasuerus searched for a worthy wife, many beautiful young ladies were brought to the king's palace to be *prepared* for this privilege.
- We can only guess at what was going through their minds as they approached the palace. Some were probably filled with hope at the idea of a new life. Others may have been taken against their will; perhaps

they were already betrothed to someone else—someone they loved deeply.

- We can imagine that many of these young ladies were eager to exchange a life of poverty for life in the palace, where they could wear the finest clothes and eat the king's delicacies.
- But Esther was different. She wanted to please the king. And she was willing to do whatever was necessary to be prepared for him.
- The Bible says that Esther pleased Hegai, the king's eunuch, and found favor with him (Est. 2:9). In other words, Esther was in hearty agreement with the preparation process.
- Because Esther wanted to please the king and be prepared for him, Hegai quickly provided her with cosmetics, provisions, and seven choice maids to assist her. Then, he moved her to the best place in the harem.
- In the same way, we must say "yes" to the Holy Spirit's preparation process.
- Knowing that our "yes" will lead to many uncomfortable myrrh baths as our self-centered nature is crucified, we must yield to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to make us ready.
- It was not until Esther pleased Hegai—that is, until she said "yes" to the preparation process—that favor was granted to make her ready. Likewise, we must give the Holy Spirit permission to make us ready.
- As many Bible teachers have rightly said, the Holy Spirit is a gentleman and will not force Himself on us. Giving the Holy Spirit permission to work is an absolutely necessary part of the preparation process.
- Saying "yes" is not a one-time decision. We must say "yes" in every season.
- In these critical days, God is looking for people who are determined to allow the Lord to work in their lives—both in the good and difficult times.

## **2. The preparation process involves "myrrh baths" that produce meekness in our lives.**

- Like all of the young maidens who were auditioning to be the king's wife, Esther went through a full year of preparation.
- For the first six months, Esther had to bathe in myrrh (Est. 2:12).
- Myrrh comes from a tree in the Middle East and it had many uses in ancient times. It was used as a burial spice; it was an ingredient in the anointing oil used by the priests; it was an ingredient in the drink offered to Jesus on the cross; and it was a perfume used by Middle Eastern women.
- In addition, myrrh was commonly used to heal many ailments and as a purifying agent to remove impurities and to soften the skin.<sup>2</sup> Myrrh is bitter to the taste but gives a sweet aroma.
- For six months, the young ladies were given myrrh baths to cleanse them from their past life. The myrrh would penetrate deep into the pores of their skin, removing the grime of a rural, agricultural life.

- The myrrh baths would leave the young women with clean, soft skin that left no trace of their poverty-stricken life in the fields. After these myrrh baths, their skin was fit for a king.
- Symbolically speaking, myrrh baths represent the purification process that is required to be a worthy bride for Jesus. It symbolizes dying to self by embracing the cross.
- Jesus said, "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38). To become a bride who is "worthy" of Jesus, we must take up our own unique cross and die to ourselves so that we can be delivered from every sin and stronghold.
- Myrrh, as a healing agent, refers to God's healing power in our lives. All of us need God to heal us from any abuse, rejection, or trauma that we have encountered in this fallen world. Until we have dealt with our fears and the pains of our past, we are trapped inside—unable to receive love or to give love.
- God's healing power softens our hearts and helps us to receive His love at a deeper level. Just as it is with myrrh, this process often tastes bitter, but in the end, it yields a sweet aroma.
- Myrrh baths produce meekness in our lives. Meekness is a temperament of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as good, and therefore, do not dispute or resist them.
- When Esther was given the choice of taking whatever she wanted in to the king, she "did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised" (Est. 2:15).
- Through the preparation process, Esther had been broken of self-will, independence, and striving against authority. In the same way, our myrrh bath treatments cleanse us from the independence of Vashti while producing the meekness of Esther.

### **3. The preparation process will adorn the bride with great beauty.**

- During the second six months, the young ladies were provided with "spices and the cosmetics for women" (Est. 2:12). Whereas the myrrh penetrated deep within the skin to purify, the spices and cosmetics—the "preparations for beautifying women"—produced an external beauty and a sweet aroma (Est. 2:12, NKJV).
- The rubbing with spices symbolizes the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Hebrew word for anoint means to rub or smear.<sup>3</sup> The oil that God used to anoint the priests and the tabernacle consisted of oil mixed with sweet smelling spices.
- After we go through our myrrh baths, we are beautified by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control within us (Gal. 5:22).
- He empowers us to prophecy, to operate in great faith, to release healing and miracles, to have supernatural wisdom, and to know the secrets of men's hearts (1 Cor. 12:8-9).
- The Holy Spirit enables us to walk in the fruit of the Spirit and to minister in the power of the Spirit.

- As we are led by the Spirit in all things, we are God's sons who release the aroma of Christ to the Father (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 2:15).
- Just as Esther and the other young ladies were rubbed with oil mixed with spices, we are beautified by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

#### **4. The preparation process is a prolonged time under the governmental hand of God.**

- The entire preparation process took 12 months, which ensured that the ladies were not pregnant and gave the eunuchs enough time to make them ready for the king.
- The number 12 is also biblically significant. Twelve refers to God's governmental rule. For example, there were 12 leaders of the tribes of Israel and 12 apostles. There are also 24 elders before the throne of God (24 is a multiple of 12; see Rev. 4:4).
- Thus, our preparation process does not last for a literal 12 months; instead, our preparation is a prolonged season under the governmental hand of God.
- In summary, to be prepared for the king, Esther went through six months of myrrh baths and six months of being beautified with spices and cosmetics. In a similar way, when we say "yes" to be the Lord's wife, we will go through our own preparation process under the governmental hand of God.
- During this season, our wounds are healed, the defilement of sin is cleansed, and strongholds that have kept us in bondage are broken. The Lord trains us to walk in the fruit of the Spirit, to minister in the gifts of the Spirit, and to rely on the Holy Spirit for everything.
- We are broken of pride and rebellion. Meekness and love reign in our hearts. We go into the process seeking our own agenda, and we leave wanting God and God alone.
- This preparation process makes us beautiful to the Lord and produces within us the sweet fragrance of Christ. Like the maiden in the Song of Solomon, we come out of our wilderness of preparation "leaning on [our] beloved" (Song. 8:5).

### **3. The End-Time Church Will Be Intimate with Jesus.**

#### **1. Looking at Esther's life, we see two qualities that help us develop an intimate relationship with Jesus.**

- Esther 2:16 states, "So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign" (Est. 2:16).
- Like Esther, all of the bridal candidates went into the king in the evening and then returned to the second harem the next morning to wait for the king to call her back.
- From the story, we know that the king loved Esther more than the others and chose her as queen (Est. 2:17). Why? There were two reasons.

- First, Esther had willingly submitted to the preparation process and was thus transformed by it.
- The Bible says that Vashti was beautiful, but Esther was both “lovely and beautiful” (Est. 2:7, NKJV). Vashti was beautiful on the outside, but Esther was beautiful on the outside and lovely on the inside. In other words, she was loving, caring, peaceful, humble, and meek.
- When we are born again, we are beautiful to God. Loveliness, however, is developed through brokenness. Because Esther willingly submitted to the preparation process, every form of independence was broken and loveliness was developed within her.
- The second reason Esther was chosen as queen is because she wanted to please the king more than she wanted to please herself.
- When Esther went in before the king, she only took what the king’s advisors suggested; she was not there to please herself. Because she pleased him in the secret place more than the other virgins, the king called her by name and chose her as queen.

## **2. The end-time church will be intimate with Jesus.**

- Like Esther, as we willingly submit to the preparation process, seeking only to please the King, we will be transformed into a worthy bride and we will have an intimate relationship with Jesus.
- As it says in Esther, Jesus calls us by name into His presence (Est. 2:14). For too many years, the church has known Jesus from a distance. We have attempted to serve Him rather than partner with Him. But this way of relating to Jesus is changing.
- Knowing Jesus intimately and pleasing Him in the secret place is critical in the end times.
- We please Jesus in the secret place by going regularly and eagerly into His presence in worship, prayer, and to listen to His voice. We please Him as we put aside distractions and other good things to seek Him in intimacy.
- The end-time church will press in to know the Lord like no other time in history.

## **4. The End-Time Church Will Have Great Authority.**

**The bride of Christ will not be a spectator in end-time events. She will be a participator. She will be given great authority and will partner with Jesus to bring His kingdom from heaven to earth.**

### **1. The bride of Christ will be given great power to exercise kingdom authority in the end times.**

- Beyond being prepared for the king and bringing him pleasure, Esther was called to intercede for the deliverance of her people. As the story

goes, a crisis arose in the land and Mordecai called Esther to intervene on behalf of the Jews.

- When Esther realized the urgency of the times, she risked her life and asked the king to have favor upon the Jews. Read what happened:

Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace. When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter. Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you." Esther said, "If it pleases the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him" (Est. 5:1-4).

- On the third day, Esther stood before the king in her royal robes, and he extended the golden scepter to her. The "third day" foreshadows Christ's resurrection, and Esther's royal robes symbolize the authority of the kingdom.
- Donning royal robes on the third day portrays the bride of Christ being clothed in resurrection power to exercise the authority of the kingdom.
- The golden scepter represents the authority of the king. When the king extended the scepter to her and offered her up to half his kingdom, the king was granting Esther the authority she requested (Est. 5:3). With this gesture, the king signified his willingness to grant her authority to act on his behalf.

## **2. Knowing Jesus in the secret place is the key to operating in kingdom authority.**

- Why did the king grant Esther such authority—up to half of one of the largest kingdoms in world history? Because he "saw [her] standing in the court" (Est. 5:2).
- Esther confidently approached the king and thus gained his favor. And, more importantly, she was able to stand with confidence in the inner court because she had been there before.
- The inner court symbolizes the Holy of Holies—the secret place where we meet with God. Esther stood with confidence before the king, even at the risk of her life, because she had a history with the king. She had a history of submission to his will *and* a history of pleasing him in the secret place of his chambers. Because of this, she was able to go before the king, expecting him to answer her request.
- Esther came to the "door" of the throne room. When the king saw her, he granted her favor because he *knew* her in the secret place.
- The same is true in our relationship with Christ. As we grow closer to Him in intimacy, He entrusts us with greater authority.



### 3. With great authority, the bride of Christ will engage in spiritual warfare and intercede for God's end-time purposes to be established.

- Esther used her newly granted authority to intercede for her people. Think for a moment about what she did. She asked the king for favor on behalf of her people. That is, Esther *interceded*. Notice this passage:

Then Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my *petition*, and my people as *my request*; for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king." Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?" Esther said, "A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman!" Then Haman became terrified before the king and queen (Est. 7:3-6).

- Esther's intercession quickly expanded from simple requests for favor and provision to asking for the destruction of her "enemy...[the] wicked Haman" (Est. 7:6). Her intercession transitioned from prayers for her people to asking for the defeat of her enemy.
- In response, the king had Haman's face covered and he was hanged. Immediately following this, Mordecai was given Haman's signet ring, signifying that he had been exalted to the position of power and authority that Haman once held (Est. 8:2).
- Esther's intercession continued as she implored the king to reverse Haman's evil scheme against the Jews (Est. 8:3-6). Once again, the scepter was extended to her, and the Jews were saved from destruction. In fact, the king gave the Jews the right to defend themselves against any enemy who might attack them in the future. As a byproduct of Esther's intercession, reverential fear came upon the nation, and many converted to Judaism (Est. 8:17).
- In a similar fashion, the bride of Christ will come before King Jesus and intercede on behalf of the church, Israel, and unbelievers as a one-world government, a rapidly deteriorating society, a universal religion, and a demonically controlled global economy begins to emerge (Rev. 17-18).
- In the end times, the bride of Christ will not sit idly by as the spirit of antichrist arises in the earth, our religious freedoms are taken away, and persecution intensifies against the State of Israel, Jews, and Christians.
- Just as Esther's intercession moved from petitions for deliverance to requests that her enemy be destroyed, the end-time church will engage in spiritual warfare like never before in history. She will take authority over, bind, and resist the demonic forces at work in the end times.

- Just as Esther’s prayers resulted in the destruction of Haman and his 10 sons, the overcoming bride will partner with Jesus to release judgments against the Antichrist and his worldwide kingdom (Rev. 5:8, 8:1-6; Luke 18:1-8).
- Through prayer, she will partner with Jesus until “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” (Rev. 11:15). How exciting that the bride of Christ will be granted such great authority!
- The bride will also operate in great power, even doing greater works than Jesus (John 14:12).
- As Esther’s intercession inspired many to convert to Judaism, the end-time church’s prayers will lead to the greatest harvest in history, including the salvation of Israel (Rev. 7:9-17; Zech. 12:10).

## **5. The End-Time Church Will Receive Eternal Rewards.**

### **1. The bride of Christ will celebrate at the marriage supper of the Lamb and rule the nations with Jesus in the Millennial Kingdom.**

- After Haman and his 10 sons were defeated and the Jews were allowed to defend themselves, the Jews established the annual Feast of Purim to memorialize their great victory. They feasted and celebrated, rejoiced, and sent gifts of food to one another (Est. 9:17-19). They celebrated because their mourning and sorrow had been turned to gladness.
- In addition, King Ahasuerus elevated Mordecai to second in command, making him great among the Jews and giving him unprecedented favor in the nation (Est. 10:3).
- In a similar way, Jesus, along with His armies in heaven—the worthy bride included—will return, defeat the Antichrist, deliver Israel, and save the worldwide community of saints (Rev. 17:14, 19:11-21; Zech. 14).
- The marriage supper of the Lamb—the great feast celebrating the marriage between Jesus and His wife—will be held (Rev. 19:7).
- The Millennial Kingdom will be established, and Jesus will rule the earth from Jerusalem along with His triumphant bride.
- In that day, the bride will be glorious, honored, and feared throughout the earth. What a reward this will be!

**Like Esther, let’s embrace the preparation process and pursue intimacy with the King so that we will be transformed into a worthy bride for Jesus. Then we will be given great power to exercise kingdom authority in the end times and receive our fullest eternal reward.**

## Notes

1. <http://www.raptureready.com/featured/schaefer/seven.html>, referenced on March 11, 2009.
2. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), s.v. "Myrrh," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).
3. New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary, (1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.), "anoint", referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).



## Review Questions

### True or False

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The end-time church will be utterly destroyed by the Antichrist but will triumph in the Millennial Kingdom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. All believers, when they are born again, are automatically prepared for the end times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. In order to be ready for the end times, the church must develop true intimacy with Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Knowing Jesus in the secret place is a major key to operating in kingdom authority.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Because of God's sovereignty, Jesus will defeat the Antichrist and his kingdom without any involvement from the end-time church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. After the Lord returns, the bride of Christ will rule the nations with Jesus in the Millennial Kingdom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The bride of Christ will receive great eternal rewards after she has made herself ready.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Being prepared for Jesus, although extremely important, does not affect our degree of intimacy with Him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Intercession is one of the main ways that the church will operate in great authority in the end times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. During the season of preparation, our wounds are healed, the defilement of sin is cleansed, and strongholds that have kept us in bondage are broken.

### Fill in the Blank

11. One reason Esther was chosen as queen is because she wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ the king more than she wanted to please herself.
12. The bride of Christ will not be a \_\_\_\_\_ in end-time events. She will be a \_\_\_\_\_.
13. The bride of Christ will be given great authority and will \_\_\_\_\_ with Jesus to bring His kingdom from heaven to earth.

14. Knowing Jesus in the \_\_\_\_\_ is a major key to operating in kingdom authority.

15. In the end times, Jesus will display His bride in all her \_\_\_\_\_ to the entire world.

Match the statement on the left with the appropriate characteristic of the end-time church on the right (You can use an answer more than once).

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. We must say "yes" to the Holy Spirit and willingly cooperate with His work in our lives.

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. Jesus' great desire is to display His bride's beauty to the entire world.

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. All of us need God to heal us from any abuse, rejection, or trauma that we have encountered in this fallen world.

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. The end-time church will desire to please Jesus more than she wants to please herself.

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. The overcoming bride will partner with Jesus to release judgments against the Antichrist and his worldwide kingdom.

Matches for 16-20

- a. The end-time church will be glorious.
- b. The end-time church will be prepared.
- c. The end-time church will be intimate with Jesus.
- d. The end-time church will have great authority.
- e. The end-time church will receive eternal rewards.