

Kansas Ladies' Retreat June 28–29, 2019

“So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.”
Hosea 6:3

Introduction

Hosea 6:3
Philippians 3:7–14

Class One: Press on to Know the Character of God—Psalm 139

Opening

I stand in awe of someone who can sing a good song, draw an amazing picture, or remember intricate details from a book they have read, because I can't. We stand in awe of what we are not.

Today, we are going to look at Psalm 139—a psalm that shows us how much we can't do and how much God can do and has done. It is a poetical piece written by David that so clearly exalts God, we will have the right reverence and awe of Him. This psalm reveals the character of God.

1. God is the All-Knowing One, Psalm 139:1–4:

- Speaks of His omniscience
- The word “search” means “to examine, penetrate, investigate” (Heb. 4:12).
- He holds all knowledge because He is the Source of all knowledge. Science is merely the discovery of what God already knows.
- The span of His knowledge is immense—from the huge expanses of space to the intricate details of our lives. He is the Creator and Origin of my brain, so He knows my thoughts.
- No one knows me like God does; no one loves me like God does.

There are limits to my knowledge and understanding, limits to the knowledge and understanding of man, but no limit to the knowledge of God.

We should live in awe of the omniscience of God!

2. God is the All-Powerful One, Psalm 139:5–6:

- Speaks of His omnipotence—specifically His power of protection
- He barricades us: in front of us as the advance guard, behind us as our rear guard, with His mighty hand on us.
- The God who was powerful enough to create the Heavens and Earth is the One who watches over me. He spoke and all things came into being. He is the One who protects my going in and my coming out.
- *“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,”* verse 6.

God does not allow Himself to be fully understood. He is incomprehensible. This does not frustrate David—rather, he calls it a wonderful fact and a cause for worship.

There are limits to my power, limits to what I can do, but there is no limit to the power of God.

We should live in awe of the omnipotence of God!

3. God is the All-Present One, Psalm 139:7–12:

- “*Heaven,*” above
- “*Sheol,*” place of the dead, below
- The “*wings of the dawn,*” to the east
- “*Remotest part of the sea,*” David would have written this psalm in Jerusalem; the sea was to the west.
- God is above and below: to this side and that side. Everywhere, fully present!
- David doesn’t just acknowledge the omnipresence of God, but again brings it to a personal level. God is the all-present One in my life, leading me and guiding me with His mighty right hand.

I am limited and can only be in one place at a time.

We should live in awe of the omnipresence of God!

4. The omniscience, the omnipotence, and the omnipresence of God all come together in a mother’s womb, in the creation of a child, Psalm 139:13–15:

- David speaks of the power of God forming and weaving him, the presence of God within even the womb (a secret to us except through recent ultrasound), and the knowledge God has of my life even before it is formed.
- Cars are manufactured, and houses are built; but we are personally formed and woven by the hand of God.
- What a contrast to the abortion debate we now have in our country. Inside a womb is not an embryo or a fetus, not a blob, but the all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing hand of God at work. Inside the womb is a life!

We should live in awe of this amazing process!

5. God is Sovereign, Psalm 139:16:

- Verse 16 brings in another aspect of God’s nature: His sovereignty.
- God is the sovereign King of Heaven and Earth.
- He has ordained my days and my calling. Even before we were formed, He had a divine plan for our life.

- These verses are not here to help our self-esteem, but to bring us to the realization that we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*” for a divine purpose!
- We are not here to make a living; we are here to make a difference. We are here to be the difference!

Only when we understand who God is, press on to know Him and be conformed to Him, can we make the difference He intends for us to make.

We should live in awe of the sovereignty of God!

6. God is Love, Psalm 139:17–18:

- Can you fathom this? The God of the Universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords is constantly and consistently thinking of me! That is love.
- David says trying to measure the thoughts of God toward him is like trying to measure the sand of the seashore—it is immeasurable. Like counting sheep, he would fall asleep counting and wake up to find God still with him and still thinking of him. Our God never sleeps, nor does He ever stop thinking about us.
- He is immeasurable. The hairs on our head can be numbered. We can stand at the wall and measure our height, stand on the scales and measure our weight, and we can count our birthdays and measure our days. We are measurable—God is not. Can we measure the size of the Universe? Can we measure the span of time—when it began, when it will end? In the same way, we are not able to measure the love of God for you and me.

We should live in awe of the love of God!

7. God is Righteous and Just, Psalm 139:19–22:

- The pretty, feel-good part of the psalm is over. David acknowledges that God has enemies. In the time of David, as in our time, there were some who were opposed to God’s righteous and holy character. David hates those opposed to Him and asks God, in His justice, to rightly judge those people.
- David also has enemies, real physical enemies pursuing him. Because he knows the character of God, he calls on God to deliver him from those enemies.
- We live in a time and place of relative peace. But we, too, have real enemies:
 1. The world, Romans 8:13
 2. The flesh, 1 Peter 2:11
 3. The devil, Ephesians 6:10–20
- This is our battle, and we can call on the character of God to help us be victorious.
- John Owen in his book, *The Mortification of Sin*, said:

“Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.”

Every morning we should turn in awe to God: live for Him and die to sin and self.

8. God is Eternal Life, David's Conclusion, Psalm 139:23–24:

- The psalm starts in verse 1 with David acknowledging that God searches him and knows him. So why, in verse 23, does David ask God to search him?
- In reflecting on the character and nature of God, His goodness and love, David now desires God to search him. He becomes compliant with God's working in his life. He not only accepts it, but he humbly requests it. He wants to be refined and conformed to the character of God.
- David has just reflected on the enemies of God: those who are opposed to His way of thinking. He does not want to be one of those so He asks God to search him and reveal any thoughts that might not be pleasing in God's sight. This is a good prayer for us as well.
- The everlasting way. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*"
- Jesus is the everlasting way. Who is the God we read of in this psalm? It is Jesus!
- Who is our Creator? Our Protector? Our Designer? The Lover of our soul? Jesus!

Knowing this about God, what should I do?

Stand in awe of His character! Because of who God is, we should love Him and serve Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our might!

That's My King!

Class Two: Press on to Know God as Your Savior

Opening

- One of my favorite places in the world to visit is India. If I have never been to India and read a travel book, I can know about India. But if I have never experienced life in India, do I truly know it? No. Not until I go there and am face-to-face with the smells, the people, the chaos, and the customs do I truly know India. And the more time I spend there, the more I know India.

So it is with the Lord. The Bible teaches us about Jesus. As we see the way He lived and moved and ministered with the people, we learn about Him. But it is in experiencing life with Him that we truly come to know who He is and who He is in our life.

- **Luke 11.** As Jesus was teaching the people, out of the crowd a woman popped up and shouted:

“Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which You nursed,” Luke 11:27, obviously referring to what a blessing it would be to be the mother of this great Teacher.

Jesus answered with these words:

“On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it.”

The Word of God is a blessing in our life, but not only when we hear it and learn it, but when we obey it and use it. We don't want to just know about Jesus, we want to experience life with Jesus!

- In the last class, we looked at Psalm 139 and the character of God. His character is revealed to us through the life of God here on Earth—the life of Jesus Christ. We are not going to start with the beginning of His life, but the end of His life. In understanding His death and believing in Him as Savior, we begin our experience of living life with Him.

“For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” John 3:17

Jesus came as the Savior of the world, and today we will press on to know Him as our Savior.

- Matthew 12:34b says, *“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.”* We find deep insight into the heart of God through the words of Jesus Christ—especially His words on the cross.

Let's begin with the hours leading up to the cross:

- The Garden of Gethsemane

- Betrayal by Judas
- Arrest
- Denial by Peter
- Beaten in the face
- Scourged
- Crown of thorns
- Mocked, stripped, spit upon, and scorned by the very people He came to save.
- His Jewish brothers were given the option to see him released. Instead, they shouted, “Crucify Him ... Crucify Him!” (Matt. 27:22–23).
- Finally, nailed to a cross. Through all of this torture and mistreatment, Jesus never cried out.
- But on the cross, amid the most horrific suffering, He still ministered to those around Him. His words, recorded for us in Scripture, still minister to us today.

The Seven Sayings of Christ on the Cross

1. Luke 23:32–37

In Luke 23:34, He spoke words of **forgiveness**:

“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

This is a prayer to the heavenly Father expressing the limitless compassion and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. The physical suffering of the beating, the scourging, the thorns piercing his skull and brow, the nails being driven into His hands and feet had just taken place. The emotional suffering of being betrayed, mocked, stripped, spit upon, and unjustly accused were still fresh in His mind and heavy in His heart. Amid all that suffering, He prayed to the heavenly Father to forgive His persecutors.

Out of the depths of the heart, the mouth speaks, and Jesus has a heart overflowing with forgiveness. Let us press on to know and understand the depth of that forgiveness in our lives.

2. Luke 23:39–43

In Luke 23:43, He spoke words of **promise**:

“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

We need to recognize that Jesus Christ is moments away from death. He speaks of Paradise with factual confidence. At the same time, moments away from death, He cares for the eternal destiny of a criminal. Jesus came to this world as a missionary, and every person He met was a mission field. Jesus is no respecter of persons. He loves you, me, and everyone—not based on who we are, but based on who He is. The Lord desires that all men be saved (see 2 Peter 3:9b).

One thief joined the others in doubt and mockery. But one thief believed Jesus Christ was the perfect Son of God and the Savior of the world. To that thief, Jesus gave the promise of eternal life.

These two thieves represent the two kinds of people who are on the face of the Earth today. Those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world and those who don't. To the first, He gives the promise of eternal life and, to the second, the promise of eternal death.

Out of the depths of the heart, the mouth speaks, and Jesus has a heart that is faithful to His promises. Let us press on to know and understand the promises given to us in Scripture—especially the promise of eternal life through faith in Him.

“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” 1 John 5:11–12

3. John 19:26–27

In John 19:26–27, He spoke words of **love**:

“Woman, behold your son! ... Behold, your mother.”

Again, let's remember the suffering that Jesus has endured up to this point. As He continues to hang on the cross, the nails are ripping at His flesh, the weight of His body is tearing at His shoulder joints, and His lungs are struggling for oxygen. Yet, when He looks down from the cross and sees his mother, He sees her through the eyes of love. The love of Jesus is source-dependent and looks out for the best interest of the one who is loved. He recognizes the pain, fears, and doubts that she is struggling with and, in the midst of His own pain, He ministers to her needs. How He loved her!

Out of the depths of the heart, the mouth speaks, and Jesus has a heart tender with love. Let us press on to know and understand what is the breadth and length and height and depth of that love for you and me.

“We love Him because He first loved us.” 1 John 4:19

4. Matthew 27:45–46

In Matthew 27:45–46, He spoke words of **despair**:

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

What is happening in this passage? Jesus was nailed on the cross about 9 a.m. Around noon, darkness fell on the face of the Earth as God the Father gathered up the sins of the entire world and put them on His Son.

For the first time in His life, Jesus tasted sin. And as He bore the penalty of our sin, the holy and righteous Father turned His back on Jesus.

Isaiah 53 expresses for us what He went through.

*“Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.”* Isaiah 53:4–6

Let’s bring this to a personal level. Place your name in these verses. If you were the only one who would ever have believed in Him, He would have suffered on that cross just for you.

Through all the physical torture and suffering, Jesus never uttered a whimper or a cry. But when He was forsaken by the Father because of our sin, He cried out from the depths of His heart. This was the true suffering of Jesus on our behalf.

Out of the depths of the heart, the mouth speaks, and here Jesus cried out to God with His pain and despair. Let us press on to know and understand the depth of what He suffered for you and me.

5. **John 19:28**

In John 19:28, He spoke words that reveal to us His **humanity**:

“I am thirsty.”

Jesus was fully God and fully human in one body. In His humanity, He was tempted in all ways like we are. He knew what it was like to be poor, to be hungry, to be thirsty, and to be tired and alone. Whatever you have experienced as a human trial, He experienced it first. His life stands before us as an example of how to live on this Earth with the culture and mindset of Heaven.

He fully understands our own humanity and the trials we have as human beings.

6. John 19:30

In John 19:30, He spoke words of **victory!**

“It is finished!”

The Bible says, *“the wages of sin is death,”* Romans 6:23. Because of the sin in our life, we were born into this world with a certificate of debt against us. The payment required for that debt is death. On the cross, Jesus fully paid that debt on our behalf. He not only died for us, He died in our place. (Picture yourself being crucified!)

This cry is a cry of victory because the debt of sin was fully paid!

Out of the depths of the heart, the mouth speaks, and here Jesus cried out words of victory. His victory freed us from death so we could live for Him!

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13–14

7. Luke 23:46

In Luke 23:46, Jesus spoke words of **trust:**

“Father, into YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.”

The Bible says, *“God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him,”* John 3:17.

Jesus was born to die. He came to this Earth on a mission and, once that mission was completed through His death on the cross, it was time to go home to the heavenly Father, home to glory, home in victory. Jesus was totally confident that with His last breath, He would be delivered into the Father’s hands.

Out of the depths of the heart, the mouth speaks, and here Jesus speaks words of trust in His heavenly Father. We can share that same trust when we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

“The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

When we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we can be assured that whatever sins we have committed in life, those sins were paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross; and death,

for us, is simply closing our eyes in this life and opening them face-to-face with Jesus.
Why should we fear such death?

How can we be blessed by knowing these things?

1. Eternal life, John 3:16
2. Spiritual endurance, Hebrews 12:1–3
3. Finding our life, Luke 9:24:

“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

Jesus sacrificed His life for us. We should live a life of sacrifice for Him.

Class Three: Press on to Know God as your Teacher

Opening

When I was 17 years old, I worked in Colorado for the summer. Shortly before leaving for that job, I fell in love with Gene Cunningham. While I was away, he wrote me love letters. I read them over and over, contemplating what he said, being stimulated by what he wrote, and falling in love with him more deeply with each letter he wrote. Why? Because they unveiled for me the nature of this man and what He desired our life together to be.

We have a love letter from God. It is called the mind of Christ and the Word of God. Psalm 19 says that the Word of God is more valuable than gold and sweeter to my soul than honey. It warns us and blesses us, brings joy, wisdom, and understanding. It is a personal love letter from God to me; and each time I pick it up and read it—to contemplate it and understand it more fully—I fall more deeply in love with the God who wrote it. Why? Because the Word of God unveils for me the nature of Jesus Christ and what He desires our life together to be.

1. **Luke 10:38–42**

Mary chose the good dish, that which could not be taken away from her. She chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him.

- **1 Corinthians 2:16**, the mind of Christ
- **Psalm 19:7–11**, restores the soul, gives wisdom, joy, and understanding. The Word of God is true and valuable. It is more valuable than gold and sweeter to the soul than honey. The Word of God warns us of danger, and obedience to it brings blessing and reward.
- **John 8:31–32**
 - ◆ Abiding in God's Word is necessary for a fruitful life. See also John 15. The Word of God sets us free from a wasted life.
 - ◆ If truth sets us free, then lies enslave. The truth of God's Word sets us free from the lies of the world. See yourself as what the Word of God says you are: Sinner, but forgiven; human, but empowered; weak, but made strong in Jesus. When we look in the mirror; we see a kitten; but God sees us as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The Bible not only helps us see who God is, but who we are with God.
 - ◆ Truth. The Word of God is true, relevant, and ancient but not outdated.

2. **Matthew 4:1–11**

- **In verses 1–4**, Jesus is tempted with the lust of the flesh. In this temptation, **the Son of God used the Word of God against the enemy of God.**
- **In verses 5–7**, Jesus is tempted with the boastful pride of life. In this temptation, **the Son of God used the Word of God against the enemy of God.**
- **In verses 8–11**, Jesus is tempted with the lust of the eyes. In this temptation, **the Son of God used the Word of God against the enemy of God.**

- The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, equips us with specific principles to meet specific trials and temptations. **As sons of God, we should use the Word of God against the enemy of God.**

3. Proverbs 9, the wise and foolish woman

- **Verses 1–6**, the wise woman
- **Verse 13-18**, the foolish woman
- **Verses 7–12**, the difference is found in their attitude to truth.

Closing

What is your sphere of influence? We aren't here to make a living; we are here to make a difference.

Class Four: Press on to Know God as your Helper and Healer-

Opening

In the Garden of the Lord

The word of God came unto me,
Sitting alone among the multitudes.
And my blind eyes were touched with light.
And there was laid upon my lips a flame of fire.

I laugh and shout for life is good,
Though my feet are set in silent ways.
In merry mood I leave the crowd
To walk in my garden. Ever as I walk
I gather fruits and flowers in my hands.
And with joyful heart I bless the sun
That kindles all the place with radiant light.
I run with playful winds that blow the scent
Of rose and jasmine in eddying whirls.

At last I come where tall lilies grow,
Lifting their faces like white saints to God.
While the lilies pray, I kneel upon the ground;
I have strayed into the holy temple of the Lord.

~ Helen Keller

Husbands leave, children die, blood tests come back positive, friends betray us, parents abuse us, the world disappoints us. Life hurts. Jesus heals!

1. Reaching out to Jesus, Mark 5:25–34

- Man could not help. By going to man, the problems of “*the woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years*” were multiplied.
- She came to Him after only hearing what others had said about Him.
- She would never have gone to Jesus if it wasn’t for this suffering. He uses—and even allows—suffering in our life to drive us to Him.
- The power of healing came from Jesus and only Jesus.
- Many were near Him; she was the only one who had the faith to reach out and touch Him!
- She set a precedent—she became a living witness of what Jesus could do to heal a person. See Mark 6:56.

Principle: God does not will that all physical needs be healed, but He does will that all spiritual and soul needs be healed.

God's power + Man's faith = Soul healing

2. Principles of Healing for our Soul

- **Trust God.** He knows what He is doing, He has a plan in all of this, He is able, He is willing, and He is the Source. There is no hurt that Heaven cannot heal.
Psalm 147:3
Romans 8:28
Job and Job's wife, Job 5:18
Jeremiah 17:5–8
- **He cares!**
Psalm 56:8
- **Pray**
Psalm 30:2
Philippians 4:6–8
Romans 8:26, 34, the Spirit of God and the Son of God intercede for us. How comforting! **Find joy in God.**
Habakkuk 3:16–19, joy amid suffering
- **There will be an end to our suffering. Every problem has an expiration date—either in time, or eternity.**
Psalm 30:5
Psalm 126
- **Forgiveness is part of the healing process.** Forgive God, forgive others, forgive self.
Ephesians 4:31–32
- **Sharing the sufferings of Christ is an honor.**
1 Peter 4:13
- **Faith in suffering brings reward and glory.**
Isaiah 61:1–3, the testimony of God's work in your life: healed people, heal people.
2 Corinthians 4:16–18, affliction—momentary, light, seen; glory—eternal, weighty, not seen
John 12:23, let us—like Christ—see this glory!

Closing

Have you ever heard someone ask the question, “Where is God?” Have you ever asked the question, “Where is God?” We don't ask this question when we are cuddling a healthy, newborn babe, or moving into a new designer house. People only ask this question in times of pain, in times of suffering. But it is in those darkest times that the light of Jesus shines brightest in our hearts. We are more passionate about reaching out to Him when we hurt. We

find Him lingering more closely with us in our deepest sorrows and sufferings. He “*is near to the brokenhearted,*” Psalm 34:18.

Remember Helen Keller walking in “*the holy temple of the Lord*”? She never beheld with her eyes the endearing smile of her mother, the radiance of a sunset, or the wonder of a double rainbow. She had never heard with her ears the beauty of the meadowlark’s song, the laugh of a little child, or the cry of a newborn babe. Because of the condition that she was born into, there were so many things in this life that she never experienced. Yet, there is one thing she did know—Jesus, the God of all comfort, her Helper, Healer, and Friend. Helen Keller was an overcomer. She was an overcomer because she reached out to the One who has overcome everything. She reached out and touched the robe of Jesus and, by doing so, she lived life in “*the holy temple of the Lord.*”

Let’s walk in the footsteps of a blind, deaf, and dumb lady. Let’s reach out and touch the robe of Jesus; let’s know Him as Helper and Healer; let’s walk in the holy temple of the Lord! **Life hurts, Jesus heals!**

Class Five: Press on to Know God as your Lover

Opening

- Fall in love with Jesus.
- In this class, we will press on to know Jesus as the Lover of our soul.
- In the Bible, the Church—those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior—is said to be “the Bride of Christ.” We are now engaged to Christ, and there is an eternal wedding day coming in which we will be forever married, joined in perfect harmony with the Lover of our soul—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our heavenly Bridegroom.
- We have already seen manifestations of how Christ loves us. His thoughts to us are more numerous than the sand of the seashore, His substitutionary death for us on the cross, and the Love Letter He has written to us. These are all things we enjoy now in a love relationship with Jesus. Let’s see what He has ahead for us as His Bride.

The Ancient Jewish Wedding and the Coming of Christ for His Bride

1. The Bridal Selection, this was done by the father of the groom.

- This is an arranged marriage between Jesus Christ and the Church.

In some arranged marriages, the bride and groom did not see each other until the wedding ceremony. This is the case with Christ and the Church. We have not yet seen Jesus with our eyes, but God’s Word, which is the Mind of Christ, reveals Him to us. We see Him now through eyes of faith; we one day will see Him face-to-face, and so we shall ever be with the Lord!

- A love marriage, “*We love Him because He first loved us,*” 1 John 4:19.

2. The Bride Price

- **John 3:16**, Jesus paid the highest of all prices for His Bride—His own life.
1 Peter 1:18–19, “*Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold ... but with precious blood ... the blood of Christ.*”
1 Corinthians 6:20, “*For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.*”

3. The Betrothal or Engagement

- The bride had the opportunity to accept or refuse the offer of marriage.
- At this engagement ceremony, the bridegroom would offer the bride a cup of wine. If she accepted the cup, the engagement would be complete. The sipping of this wine together symbolized the life they would share together. To the Jewish mind, wine symbolizes joy.

- Before Jesus went to the cross, He celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples. At that supper, He took the cup and blessed it saying, *“This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you,”* Luke 22:20 (NKJV).
- As we take the cup at the Lord’s Table (or communion), we are remembering His blood shed on our behalf, but it is also a reminder that we are the Bride of Christ. One day, He will be returning for us as His Bride. In drinking the cup, we are saying “yes” to His proposal of eternal marriage!
- We should live in anticipation of that return, even so, *“Come, Lord Jesus!”* (Rev. 22:20).
- Jesus also lives in anticipation of that day. He said to the disciples, *“I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom,”* Matthew 26:29.
- At the close of this engagement ceremony, the groom would give the bride a costly gift—one to remind her of His love. In Christ, we are given *“every spiritual blessing”* (Eph. 1:3), *“His lavish grace”* (Eph. 1:8), and *“the gift of the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the Son”* (1 Cor. 2:12). A bride would never refuse a gift and we—as believers, the Bride of Christ—should make full use of the spiritual resources we have in Christ, for the glory of our eternal Husband. We are to receive with an open hand the spiritual gifts He has given us and use them to live for Him and for His purpose and glory!
- The betrothal or engagement was legally binding. At the close of this ceremony, the couple was considered married, but the consummation of the marriage was yet in the future. This is where we are with Christ now.

4. The Time of Preparation

After the engagement would come an unknown time of preparation.

The groom would return to the father’s house and the bride to her father’s house. Each would use the time apart to prepare for the coming wedding day.

- The groom would prepare a home, *“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; and 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 14:2–3.

Jesus created the heavens and the Earth with all its beauty and glory in only six days. He has been in Heaven preparing a home for you and me for the last 2,000 years! What a home it will be!

- The bride also used this time as preparation:
 - ◆ Sanctification. She was sanctified, or set apart to the husband and, during this time, prepared for her wedding day. She went through practices of purification. Today we are in the “making-herself-ready” process. We, too, are sanctified, set apart from this world unto Jesus. We are in the world, but not of the world. Our citizenship is in Heaven above. We belong to our heavenly Bridegroom. To love

this world and the things of this world above our love for Christ is to commit spiritual adultery. We are to live a pure life of devotion to Him.

Psalm 45:10–11, a song celebrating the King’s marriage:

“Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear; forget your people and your father’s house; then the King will desire your beauty. Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him.”

◆ **Beautification**, 1 Peter 3:1–6

During the preparation time, the bride went through routines of beautification—like an ancient spa treatment. Our heavenly Husband looks not at the outer appearance, but the heart and is interested in the beauty of our soul. Our inner person is beautified by a meek and gentle spirit that is demonstrated through submission to God and to our earthly husband.

- During this time of preparation, the bride designed and sewed her wedding gown.

Revelation 19:6–8:

*“Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready.**’ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”* (emphasis added)

Part of the “making-herself-ready” process is to—today and every day—be designing and embellishing our eternal wedding gown through service and good deeds. A prayer ... a jewel ... a giving ... a pearl ... a service ... a ruffle? How much does your life embellish the eternal wedding gown of the bride?

5. The Return of the Bridegroom-

The bride did not know when the groom would return for the wedding. The groom did not know when the wedding would take place. The father of the groom would decide when proper preparation had taken place and the time when the wedding would occur.

- This would usually occur at night. A shofar (trumpet) would be blown and a procession would come along with the groom to get the bride. She had to always be ready!

1 John 2:28:

“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”

- We also should live in anticipation of the return of Christ for His Bride.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

- The bride would be carried to the ceremony in a litter or *aperion*, accompanied by dancers, singers, and musicians. This was the most joyful time of the whole Jewish ceremony as it ended the long period of waiting and anticipated the coming consummation of the marriage.

6. The Consummation of the Marriage

- Once the bride had arrived at the father’s house, the groom would take her into the bridal chamber and be alone with her for seven days. During this time, they would consummate the marriage, and the marriage would be complete.
- It may seem funny to be talking about love-making between a man and woman as a picture of Christ and the Church, as a picture of Jesus and me. But the Bible repeatedly uses words of sexual intimacy and the marriage union to describe the spiritual/soul intimacy we should have with Jesus.
See Ephesians 5:25–32.

7. The Wedding Feast

Following the consummation of the marriage, there would be a marriage feast attended by friends of the bride and the bridegroom. The couple would share their first meal together and the cup of wine. This marriage feast awaits us—this is when Jesus will once again drink of the cup with His Bride.

This takes place for us in the coming Kingdom, called the 1,000-year reign of Christ—the Millennium.

Revelation 19:6–9

Conclusion

Let us press on to know Jesus as the Lover of our soul. Each one of us is a precious jewel that He both created and died to redeem. He seeks us; He loves us; He wants us to come to Him in prayer and worship, for comfort and affection. He loves each one of us as if there were only one of us.

Jesus Loves Me!