

## MARRIAGE & OUR ETERNAL DESTINY

GEN 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

In other studies We saw how God had already determined our eternal destiny before the worlds were. God established His eternal purpose first and then designed everything toward that end. Everything that God did and is now doing is to complete His predestined goal. We have defined that predestined goal as the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ and the wife of the Lamb. God has prepared a Kingdom for His Son and is now preparing HER for that Kingdom. This preparation for the Kingdom includes the development of the character of Jesus Christ, God's ideal man, in the bride for Christ. The summation of that Divine Character is "AGAPE". Because "purity of heart" manifests as "Agape", God must purify our hearts to develop the divine character within us.

Since we only learn and develop His character through trials, sufferings, distress, tribulations, disappointments and the crucifixion of the self-life it is clear that it must be accomplished here in this life because these dimensions of suffering will not be available in heaven.

GAL 5:22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] Now those **who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.

Because the fruit of the Spirit cannot be produced in heaven, it must be produced here through the crucifixion of the flesh or the self-life. It is the conflicts of earth and not the harmony of heaven that produces these eternal results. [ benefits]

1PET 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; [13] but to **the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing**; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. [14] If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Without the revelation of His glory and the perfection that is necessary to dwell in His Presence, there is no way we can **rejoice in sharing His sufferings**. If we refuse His sufferings now how will we rejoice at His coming? If we are not changed into His likeness now how will we rejoice at His coming for His bride?

The paramount question that confronts those who have been called to suffer in extreme ways is "WHY." Does it really take a lifetime of suffering, of sorrows, of disappointments, of distress and of tribulations to transform us from what we are to what we must become? It depends upon where in His eternal Kingdom He has predestined you to stand and function. There may be sphere of Government, a realm of authority, a service position or an eternal vocation that requires a certain kind of person with certain kind of characteristics to fill that post. This is God's training camp to prepare us for the destiny He purposed before the worlds were. If we always remember that we must be transformed into His image and His character to be joined to Him and participate in the New Jerusalem, the preparation will not be overwhelming.

## BUT WHY MARRIAGE?

While the scriptures don't really explain all these things there is a divine logic that seems to set these things into the divine plan. We begin with the understanding that marriage is the divine PLAN. It becomes the LABORATORY OF LIFE that reveals our defects and establishes a QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEM for the production of candidates for the Kingdom. Understanding this principle will help us see the process of CHANGE that is initiated under the divine hand of God. This factory called the Christian life is designed for the production of perfected saints.

What then does the finished product look like? Like "Agape." This manufacturing plant "called marriage" is for the development and production of "AGAPE." Holy matrimony begins with something far, far less than Agape. In fact we have no idea what Agape means. During wedding ceremonies we read 1 Cor 13 as if this "physical attraction", this untried love, is the real thing.

Most everybody begins "the married life" totally selfish and self-centered with the idea that my partner must make me happy and meet all my needs. "I" am the center of this marriage and everything revolves around me. We do it my way or it is the highway for you. Many marriages collapse very quickly simply because of selfishness and one lording it over the other. The first principle of marriage is learning to die to "self." The weakest partner is the one expected to die to their own will in order to accommodate the will of the stronger.

It is rather amazing that the same principle is true of the marriage of the Lamb. The CROSS is the principle upon which this eternal bond is established. Marriage is designed so that we don't need any **outside stress or problems** to perfect us. The marriage will provide every opportunity to uncover all our defects and failures. Bad attitudes and character problems soon are manifest and shout at us very boldly. Children will multiply the opportunities to reveal our failures and bad examples and bad attitudes.

Our ancestors become the scape goat for our bad conduct. We blame our failures on our heredity. Sometimes marriage is more stressful than war and has many similarities. It is amazing how enemies can live in the same house. In 1865 the civil war was between brothers but marriage seems to be civil war between husband and wife. When one wins the other loses.

Where is the best place to learn unselfishness? At work or at home? At the church? Where is the best place to be humble and patient? At church or at home? Where is the best place to learn longsuffering and gentleness? At work or at home? Where are our defects revealed more glaringly? At home or at church? Submission is difficult to learn whether at work, at church or at home. Married life produces all the stress necessary to reveal every defect in our life.

If we have a revelation of eternity we understand that marriage is the best place for our sanctification and preparation. God can show us our defects everyday in a marriage that has conflicts and confrontations. Not only can we see our defects but we also have the extra benefit of our mate helping to point them out. This is an added blessing because what we choose to ignore is shouted from the house tops. These defects will be remembered by our spouse and continually identified and analyzed even after they begin to be corrected. This speeds up the identification of other defects we didn't know about.

If when God's little helpers point out our defects and shortcomings we acknowledge it, confess it to God, repent and ask Him to cut it out of our life He will certainly do it. If when these benefactors point out our problems we turn and point out their problems and insist their problems

are greater than our problems, we lose the benefit of the revelation.

1 JOHN 1:8] If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins **and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** [10] If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

The key to the cleansing is the confession. Of course we won't confess if we fail to acknowledge that we have a problem. Blaming someone else for our bad behavior doesn't solve the problem. In fact, just trying to do better in the future is also fruitless because the good we want to do we can't do and just end up making things worse.

After we recognize there is a hostile beast within us (called self), the next step is to identify the solution. We soon discover that only God can tame this savage beast. Trying harder to control him is a rough ride and he will eventually throw you off. This beast only yields to crucifixion and is only controlled by death. If we sincerely turn this beast over to death, God will surely slay him. However, it may seem like this beast has 7 heads that rules with ten horns over 10 areas of our life. Many will get discouraged before all 7 are cut off. One of these heads may control our sex life and we want to save this one for last (when we are older). One may control our finances and we want to buy some more things on our credit card before we deal with this one.

The pain of losing a functioning head will be less if we see God is making an opportunity to free us from all heads but Christ. If we are "organs" in His body then only one head is possible.

The crucifixion of self and the suffering that accompanies the death must be seen from the viewpoint of eternity future. All the suffering and pain makes no sense at all unless we recognize that God is working for eternity future and the perfection we must attain to in order to fulfill His eternal purpose.

Probably no marriage is completely harmonious because two separate lives are trying to merge into one. Two lives begin with different goals, different styles, different ideas of what is "normal", different methods of dealing with problems and different vision of the future. They begin with different needs but all begin out of some selfish desires. Our motives in marriage are not always pure and without hypocrisy.

The real blending of two lives only begins after marriage no matter the length of courtship. Some days we wonder who this stranger is living in my house. When some recognize this is NOT the person I married they start looking for ways of canceling the contract and starting over. Most don't understand that to blend two lives together until the two becomes one is a long and difficult process. Selfishness and self-centeredness does not die easily or quickly.

The same thing happens in the spiritual realm when we try to blend our life with the Zoe Life of Christ. The problem is that **nothing of our old life is acceptable** or is even able to blend with His resurrection life. That means our old life must die, be buried, and a new resurrected Life rises out of the grave. This is all provided for at water baptism but the experience of it is a continuing death to self. Water baptism must result in the reality of our daily cross to overcome the self-life.

For this reason we don't experience a "blending of our old life with His resurrection Life." Rather there must be an exchange where we lay our life down and then receive His Eternal Resurrection Life (Zoe). This is NOT a blending but an EXCHANGE. Ours for His. This doesn't begin at the

marriage feast of the Lamb as we expect in the natural. This begins now and should be complete at the marriage feast of the Lamb. That means that the death to the self-life is the goal of this life on earth.

The fact is that no two persons are immediately “compatible” in the natural by the joining of two together in marriage. This “compatibility” must be learned and the incompatibility endured until change comes. Usually the weakest one is expected to change and conform to the strongest. Successful marriage in the world then becomes the submission of the weakest to the strongest “self -life.”

This is also true in the spiritual realm. God is the Lord and He doesn't change! He doesn't need to change. That only leaves us to do the changing. He will not conform to our image, therefore, we must conform to His image. Since He is strongest we must submit to His Headship and do His will and bring joy to His heart. He IS the PERFECTED ONE! He cannot be conformed to our fallen human life so we must be conformed to His perfected resurrection Life

We have been espoused to one Husband but we also must be counted worthy of marriage. He has chosen us but we must make our calling and election sure. We have been selected but we still must be without spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless. We must grow up in all things into Him. He is not coming back for a baby bride! Many are called but few are chosen. [Some are cold and a few are frozen!]

Transformed human character will manifest itself in heaven in praise, worship, thanksgiving and rejoicing. He will be the center of ALL attention. If we still desire to be the center of all attention we surely won't fit in there.

Since the fallen human nature contains nothing compatible with the eternal Kingdom of God it must be totally removed. Within the human nature is all rebellion, iniquity, self righteousness, impatience, strife, immorality and anger (and things like these). The “kingdom” where Satan rules is in each one of us. When he finds himself in us he has a place from which to rule.

JOHN 14:30] “I will not speak much more with you, for the **ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me**; Satan could find nothing of himself in Jesus upon which he could stand or control.

This same goal is set before us. For God's Kingdom to be supreme in our lives everything unlike God's Kingdom must be removed. To fully participate in the “full Passover” all leaven must be searched out and removed outside the borders of our camp. If the Kingdom of God is to be fully functional within us, everything that is of Satan must be removed.

EX 12:15 `Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, **that person shall be cut off from Israel.**

EXO 12; 6] “For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. [7] “Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders.

Leaven speaks of false teaching, hypocrisy, false authority, malice and wickedness. Whatever is

not of God is leaven and therefore is something that Satan has opportunity to affect. If we get rid of all the leaven in our lives Satan will find nothing of himself in us.

Since the leaven must be removed from our homes I am using this type to apply to marriages in which the leaven is revealed. Trying to fix marriages with human devices is discouraging because they don't cut off the roots.

Getting rid of these "defects" is the source of a lot of stress in the marriage. We have been led to believe that stress in marriage is not good and much marriage counseling is focused upon removing stress. If we understood that marriage is not designed to make us happy but to help us come to perfection, the stress would be seen in a different light. Since self-centeredness and selfishness is "the" root problem in man, marriage is the perfect place to correct these problems. Unfortunately we have been led to believe the purpose of marriage is to make everybody happy and contented.

God's purpose in marriage is to be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it and rule

over it. GEN 1:26] Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over

the cattle **and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**"[27] And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. [28] And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." There was a government designed into the creation of man and he was commissioned to rule over the earth. This design for ruling was built into both the man and the woman. After the fall something changed. GEN 3:16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

This is the root source of the stress in marriage. Who is going to rule and who is going to be ruled over. If God had designed marriage for pleasure and happiness something has gone wrong. The divorce courts are evidence that there is no difference between saved and unsaved. Both the world and the church have thought that marriage was for the purpose of pleasure and happiness. If that is not happening we must have been deceived into marrying the wrong person.

This stress can be a great help in developing us into maturity and revealing to us the areas of our life that are not yet Christ-like and transparent. Is it possible that marriage has been designed (or redesigned) to produce brokenness, humility, patience, longsuffering, gentleness, submission, kindness, goodness and faithfulness in both parties? Is it possible that God has designed marriage to develop in us His own kind of Love, Agape?

Where else can the average believer learn "sacrificial Love" as well as in marriage? The church of course is another place but the every day contact is not the same and our defects are not as evident. Of course there is the mission field where sacrificial Love can be learned but this is not the same kind of stress. We tend to be more compassionate with the faults of others who are not intimately attached. We can "flee" from the conflicts in the church for at least a little while but in the home there is no place to go!

Since “SELF” is the greatest enemy of “sacrificial Love, Agape”, God must deal with the self life until it is reduced to nothing. “Self” is not just physical but has a spiritual root that grows out of Genesis 3rd chapter. For that reason “physical therapy” or physical counseling is of little benefit. Unless there has been a spiritual advance and growth in our spirit counseling is just talk. The Bible remedy of death to self requires a spiritual advance. This requires that “the fallen nature” be laid aside and replaced with the provision of God’s grace and His Life.

Since only God can remove and put to death the fallen nature, man remains helpless except to acknowledge the fault, confess it, repent of it and ask God to remove it. To depend upon some therapy or man trained “expert” to solve these problems by transferring the guilt to someone else has no eternal benefit. Only when man takes full responsibility for his faults and seeks God for their removal will we see solutions that results in eternal advancement. Since each of us has so many defects this requires that we do business with God every day. Hopefully, after we have practiced this “righteousness” for a time it will become second nature to us.

Fallen ego is a monster that we can feed or starve depending upon our revelation of God’s eternity and our eternal destiny. The Christian life then is the “laboratory” where God works his testing, mixing, separation, addition and compounding to produce a product for His eternal Kingdom. In the centrifuge of trials and testing God separates the dross of fallen human life and adds the blessing of Christ and His Life. Since Christ and His Life IS “Agape” when He becomes our life we easily manifest “Agape” and fit into God’s eternal plan. The authority of His Kingdom is delegated according to our mastery of “Agape, Love”. The giant ego of man is the enemy of Agape. The least in ego will become servant of all and therefore be the greatest in the Kingdom because in the Kingdom love rules.

Without judging anyone it is obvious that the greatest in ego will manifest the least in Agape. While the one who is greatest in ego will love himself unconditionally, he will not be able to love his neighbor because all his love is for himself. The one greatest in ego will be quick to crucify others while saving themselves. The super-ego (egotism) must be seen as a spiritual problem whether it exists by genealogy or environment. The Isaiah 6 revelation can do wonders for the transformation of ego to humility (ego-less) but counseling is of limited benefit. Egocentric means more concern for yourself than others. (Self-interest) It can also refer to an exaggerated feeling of self-importance. ( Egoism)

An egotist is one who has an over concern for his own happiness and well being. Egotism means talking constantly about yourself. Yourself is the center of your ideas and conversation. Ego-trip is the course we travel to satisfy ourselves. It should be obvious that two egotists will have difficulty living together. Movie stars are a good example.

From this it should also be obvious that the egotist and the ego-centric must be humiliated (permanently) before they will grow into the measure of Agape that is required for service in the Kingdom government of God.

The only eternal right the egotist has is the right to die, be buried and then forgotten. The old self, the egotist, will frustrate the purpose of God for his life because he will not be able to learn sacrificial love. This will eliminate him from God’s eternal government. It may be still possible to be saved but not part of the government.

PHIL 3:10] that **I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection** and the fellowship of His

sufferings, being conformed to His death; [11] in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. [12] **Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect,** but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

One goal of this Christian life is to “know Him and the power of His resurrection.” Paul knew he had not yet attained to that state. In other words he is seeking something that is experiential. Death to the self-life, the ego, the big “I” is necessary before we can experience the power of His resurrection, in this life. Otherwise all Paul had to do was wait until his body died and resurrection would be automatic.

2 COR 4:6] For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is **the One** who has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Christ.

2CO 4:7 But **we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;** [8] we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. [11] For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. [12] **So death works in us, but life in you.**

This is such a simple fact but is very difficult to explain. Why should death have to work in the minister before life could work in the believers? [In this case the metaphor of the “body of Christ with each one being an organ” does not apply.] To minister out of the resurrection life of Christ it is necessary for the minister to first die to the egocentric life.

JOHN 12:24] “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] **“He who loves his life (ego) loses it; and he who hates his life (ego) in this world shall keep it to life (Zoe) eternal.**

It would be quite unusual for the egotist to minister the Zoe Life of Christ. The egotist must first fall into the earth and die to his ego (self-life) before he can bring forth the fruit of the Zoe Life of Christ in the believer.

Since the egocentric, the selfish, the self promoting cannot possible manifest the Agape Love of Christ, which is self-sacrificing, marriage is effective in developing an “elder”, minister.

To Agape our spouse as Christ Loved the church and gave Himself up for her seems impossible, improbable and irrelevant. Who can accomplish that dimension of Agape Love and for what reason?

1JOHN 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.** [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.** [12] No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, **God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.** [16] And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. **God is love,** and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. [17] By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; [20] If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, **cannot love God whom he has not seen.** [21] And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

This Agape LOVE IS the goal of the Christian life. If we don't attain to Agape we have fallen short of God's design and His purpose. Since this dimension of Agape does not originate on earth where will we get it? Has God commanded the impossible? YES! To the unsaved this is impossible! However, it is possible to the born-again believer.

When God, Himself, abides in us, His Love, Agape is perfected in us. This miracle then is not from us but from Him Who abides in us. ROM 5:5] and hope does not disappoint, because **the love (Agape) of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.** The Love of God really does abide in us and came with the Holy Spirit when He filled us. If we have His Love in us why is it that we have so much trouble manifesting His Love to our spouse?

2CO 4:7 But **we have this treasure in earthen vessels**, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;

This earthen vessel must be this big ego, this self-life, this egotism that imprisons the Love of God so it cannot be seen. It is trapped in the dark recesses of our "old self". The liberating force that will release Agape must break the earth vessel of egoism. The egotist sees no benefit of crucifying the self-life because he sincerely believes he is the center of the universe and everything revolves around him.

For that reason God cannot use him now or in the Kingdom yet to come. Since he is the king over his own life, the Kingdom cannot be within him. Since EGO is on the throne Christ is on the outside looking in and knocking. He is willing to sup with us but He fellowships from the throne of our life and not at our feet.

All this reveals the root problem in troubled marriages and dysfunctional families. Some troubled marriages seem impossible to fix and restore. The popular saying is that some marriages are not worth saving. In situations of violent abuse this may be true if there is no desire to change. However, any marriage can be saved if both parties are willing to die to their old selfish life. When both egos fall into the ground and die the marriage can be restored. The old excuse that "We no longer love each other" is irrelevant or "we are not compatible" may be true but no two selfish people are ever compatible. You probably never were compatible.

When neither partner is willing to yield to God and die to self there is nothing anyone can do to help. The solution to the problem is spiritual and not just mechanical. To just try harder to get along is no solution. To try not to criticize the other is not the solution. The solution is to fall into the earth and die and that is a spiritual experience and not just another cliché.

The first step to a solution is to understand that this life is a training camp for eternity. It is the preparation for ruling in the Kingdom of God. It is developing our Love for God and for others that is a requirement for the bride of Christ. It is dying to our ego and self-life which is focused upon our own will so that we may truly submit to His will.

This life is the factory where citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven are produced. The raw material looks like dirt but the finished product looks like precious jewels. The raw material is egocentric and nasty and the finished product is fully surrendered and in Christ likeness. The raw material is full of self but the finished product is the fulness of Him that fills all in all. All this adjustment in attitudes and character must take place here in the factory. Jesus is returning for the finished

product and not a bunch of unprocessed material.

It seems that God has designed marriage and spouses to provide the primary revelation of our faults, defects and fallen egos. If we understood that principle clearly we could be sensitive to accept all criticism and discipline as coming from the hand of God. Heb 12 says that God disciplines us so that we might share His holiness. How and when does He do that? He most likely uses people that have a lot of faults to point out our faults. That way we must humble ourselves in order to benefit from the revelation. If we just look at the instrument that God uses we will reject the observation because that person is not worthy to point out my faults. The next revelation may come in the form of trials, suffering and conflicts because we didn't heed the first witness.

The trials will be shorter and we will be able to advance faster if we humble ourselves as soon as our faults are pointed out. If we see every conflict and affliction as a spiritual problem within us we will overcome very quickly. If we only see the other person's faults in the conflict we will have to go around the mountain again and again until we get it right. Whether or not the person pointing out our failures is right or wrong is irrelevant. Just take it as from the Lord and repent and ask God to remove the defect. When we dismiss the criticism because we think we just have a personality conflict instead of a spiritual problem we waste the moment when we could change.

Since perfection is a long way off, each time we repent we take another step in the right direction. To rebel because of the personality of the person that pointed out our defect will delay our stepping into God's plan. If being transparent about our weaknesses and failures and quickly repenting could be called "therapy" it must be "righteous therapy."

Some people still doubt if God speaks today or if He actually gives revelation from His Word. Several of the old saints have testified about the "deeper death of the soul" bringing enlightenment to the spirit of man. If this is true it seems that the more the "old ego man" is crucified the more the spirit of the new man is able to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying. We could say that the deeper the death of the self-life the greater the understanding of the mysteries of God. Of course there is also a greater manifestation of His character which is His Love.

Madame Guyon testified that after so many years of untold suffering she entered into a calm and sweet indifference to trouble and pain. In that state she entered into sublime visions of God and understanding of coming ages. In other words the death to the self-life opened up realms of revelation and God's voice that were not normal before.

In case we think that God wants to take us into death of self just to bless us in this life we should be aware that God's design is primarily for eternity. The temporal blessing is a side benefit. Whatever God does it's ultimate goal is to develop character suitable for rulership in eternity. It would be difficult to justify all the martyrs, all the suffering, all the persecution of the saints EXCEPT if all this relates to rank in the eternal Government of God. If all these things do not result in an increase of the Agape Love of God, what a waste! Those who give up because of the fire will never produce Gold for the lampstand.