Jesus: Bridegroom, King and Judge – part 1

1. Introduction

a. Is the world now a better place than when we were children? The bible is clear that in the years preceding Jesus' return, the world will undergo many significant changes and unprecedented pressures. God is going to shake everything that can be shaken, and when God shakes, everything is disrupted and everyone's lives are affected. Sin will reach its greatest level of wickedness which will have its own impact on the world. Law and order will be challenged, nations will be thrown into chaos with corruption and greed at every level of society. Globalisation will give rise to the rapid spread of darkness across the face of the earth.

b. The bible also tells us that as the darkness gets darker, as Satan rages against the human race, and as the earth groans, the light will also get brighter as God pours out his Spirit in unprecedented measure. There is a harvest of souls to come on a scale that we have never seen before.

Isaiah 60:2 *For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.*

c. The world is rapidly heading towards a crisis where the conflict between light and darkness will finally be resolved. This resolution will come when Jesus returns to defeat his enemies and take control of the nations of the world, establishing his kingdom rule on the earth forever.

d. We study the scriptures so that we are prepared for what is to come. It means that we can correctly interpret the signs of the times that the bible tells us to look out for, and then we can respond in the right way to Jesus by understanding his heart and his plans. We come into agreement with what Jesus is doing instead of resisting him, and by knowing beforehand what he will do we will not be vulnerable to fear, offence or deception.

e. We must devote time to focus on Jesus, and get a right perspective of how we should view him in the context of the last days. This will complement the many aspects of Jesus that we have been considering in the book of Hebrews.

2. Who is the real Jesus?

Matthew 24:5 *Many will come in my name, saying "I am the Christ", and they will lead many astray…*

a. Jesus warned us that in the last days there would be many who would come in his name. By deception many will be led away from real faith. The one thing that will keep us from being led astray is to know who the real Jesus is, so that we will be able to discern when we encounter a false Messiah or false teaching.

a. Knowing who Jesus is, and what the Bible says about him in context to the end of the age will keep us anchored to faithfulness through all the challenges that we may encounter in the days ahead. This will keep us focused, and we will not be easily led astray either by false doctrine or by a false Messiah.

b. In particular, there will be three attributes of Jesus that people will find offensive and that will cause people to stumble:

i **He is fully God and there is no other God** – Jesus' deity is His right to establish absolute standards for which the nations are accountable to Him. Jesus is not tolerant and accepting of a worldly view of righteousness and love, and this will be a major area of conflict in the last days.

ii **He is the only way of salvation** – There is no way by which men may be saved except through Jesus. Many will be offended at the idea that they need a saviour.

iii **He is the only one wise enough to judge rightly** – As the perfect man who lived out every purpose of the Father's will Jesus possesses the wisdom and the love to judge sin in time and eternity.

c. At the end of the age there will be a great battle for the human heart regarding the truth about Jesus. The Holy Spirit was sent to glorify and exalt Jesus and to guide us into all truth about Him (John 16:13-14). Because of Satan's deceptions, the last days will see some believers fall prey to doctrines that lie about the person of Jesus. Rightly identifying who Jesus is will be the foundational issue for those living in the last generation.

3. Old Testament context

a. We need to first see a little context from the Old Testament. Jesus has three primary "offices" established in the Old Testament that He fulfils: He is a **priest**, a **king**, and a **prophet**. Israel's government was established by God. He established three offices within their governmental structure to guide the people of Israel.

b. **Priest** – in Israel's development as a nation this was first role established in governing the nation. Priesthood was established first because God desires nearness with us, so that we encounter his fiery, passionate heart.

i Leading the priesthood was the High Priest, functioning as the spiritual leader of the nation, and the mediator for the people. He was the only man in the nation who could enter into the Holy of Holies. The High Priest, together with all the priests of Israel, were intercessors for the people, offering sacrifices that enabled Israel to maintain her relationship with God.

ii Jesus fights for us as a High Priest and an intercessor because He is establishing **His Bride**. His motivation, as the scriptures describe it, is one of a passionate Bridegroom who is filled with zeal for His Bride's well-being, purity, and destiny.

c. **King** – the next role in governing the people of God that scripture revealed was the king. The priest was God's choice to represent the people; the king of Israel was there to represent God and His desires for the nation.

i King David understood there was a Greater King than himself ruling over Israel, and that he represented him. The role of the king was that of the highest position of leadership with the greatest amount of power over the daily affairs of the people. As a king, Jesus has the right and privilege of fighting for us in every area of our lives – and in every sphere of society.

Psalm 2:6 *"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."*

Here God confirms the enthronement of Jesus, the faithful Son, who, through his obedience, has been exalted as king to the highest place in heaven and earth.

d. **Prophet** – the prophet was a messenger and a preacher that God raised up from time to time to confront the nation of Israel in times where the spiritual (priestly) and political (kingly) leadership had drifted off course.

   i Prophets remind the people about the first things, which are the foundations of truth, and give a clear picture of the last things, which are the promises of God and the future of Israel.

   ii Jesus functioned as a prophet during His first coming, warning His people of what was to come. Now God has appointed Jesus to be the judge at the end of the age, and there are many Old Testament prophecies that point to Jesus, warning that he is coming at the end of the age to destroy all who oppose him.

Deuteronomy 18:15 *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen…*

4. The face of Jesus in the last days

a. In the last days the world will be challenged with three aspects of Jesus' nature. Instead of priest, king and prophet, the emphasis that the Holy Spirit will make in the last days is to reveal Jesus as the Bridegroom, King and Judge.

Psalm 19:1-5 *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands…Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world…<u>like a bridegroom coming forth</u> from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course."*

Psalm 10:16 *"<u>The LORD is King for ever and ever</u>; the nations will perish from his land"*

Psalm 96:13 *"…they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, <u>he comes to judge the earth</u>. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth"*

5. The revelation of Jesus as a Bridegroom

a. You may have encountered several aspects of God's nature that have become accepted in church culture that help us to understand who he is.

   i **Lordship** – in the past there has been an emphasis on our interaction with God in a servant/master relationship, producing ready obedience to his commands.

John 13:13 *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.*

   ii **Friend** – There has also been an emphasis on our relationship defined in terms of friendship, producing a deeper measure of encounter with the Living God.

John 15:15 *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

   iii **The Father Heart of God** – The role of the Father and his loving heart towards us has been widely understood as well, bringing much healing to hearts through this revelation.

Romans 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

b. There is another theme found throughout the bible that speaks of the intimate role of the marriage relationship between God and his people – for many in the church this is a new idea.

Isaiah 54:5 *For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.*

Jeremiah 3:14 *"Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion…*

Ezekiel 16:32 *Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!*

c. Jesus as a Bridegroom is not just an Old Testament concept. John the Baptist called Jesus the Bridegroom. In calling Jesus the Bridegroom, he was saying that the one he was making way for wasn't only the Saviour, but that he was to be identified as one who was coming for his Bride.

John 3:28-30 *You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' [29] The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease.*

d. Even more powerful than John's testimony is what Jesus said about himself:

Matthew 9:14-15 *Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" [15] And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

Jesus was addressing the surface issue of fasting, but he turns their attention to the deeper reality of his coming crucifixion, and in so doing he refers to himself as the Bridegroom. He is beginning to teach his disciples about the realities of their identity as the Bride and how they are to relate to him in that context.

b. What does it mean for us to see ourselves as the Bride of Christ and to see Jesus as our Bridegroom? Jesus feels **deep delight, burning desire and jealous affection** for His people. Jesus loves us with the same degree of love with which the Father loves Jesus. (Song of Songs 2:14; 4:9; Mark 3:13-15; John 17:24).

John 15:9 *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*

Isaiah 62:4 *You shall be called Hephzibah… For the Lord delights in you… [5] As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.*

i Jesus' desire is to make us feel loved. He wants us to know his love in a real way, not just as a concept. He finds great pleasure in sharing his heart with us.

ii This expression of love is expressed in the way he trusts us. As his equally-yoked Bride, he invites us to partner with him in the work that the Father has entrusted to him.

e. The Bridegroom message is about Jesus' beauty, His emotions for us and His commitment to us to share His heart, home, throne, secrets and beauty with us (Song of Songs 2:14; 4:9; Mark 3:13-15; John 15:9; 17:24). He empowers us to respond with our own love for Him – even though it may be weak and erratic, yet He receives it with all His heart.

f. We can move His heart simply by our response to Him – we can bring Him pleasure – he deeply delights in who we are. You have the capacity to give to Jesus something He cannot get from anywhere else.

John 17:24 *Father, I desire that they whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

g. Jesus' desire for us is not about an ***anointed workforce***. Jesus is looking for lovers. He understands that as ***voluntary lovers*** our work output will be far greater.

   i Jesus doesn't **need** us; He **wants** us! He didn't save us because he had to – but because he desires us. We are His inheritance (Psalm 2:8; Ephesians 1:18), His pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46) and joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

h. Understanding Jesus' love for us isn't based on our **performance**, but on **our identity as His eternal companions**. This means that we will run ***to*** Him in our weakness, rather than ***away from*** Him in shame and fear when we stumble (1 John 4:18).

i. Another dimension of this love that gives us confidence: the love of a Bridegroom is a jealous love. Jesus is filled with a jealous love for the ones that are His, and He is faithful in guarding His possession.

   i Jesus insists on being the sole object of His bride's love and devotion. If she strays, He is roused to jealous anger.

j. The bible is filled with the imagery of Jesus as the Bridegroom and the church as His Bride. God wants us to understand the incredible **privilege**, **dignity**, and **honour** we have in this Bridal relationship with Him.

k. The church is in great transition. As our understanding of where we are in God's timeline has become clearer, our theology and where we focus our attention has been refined and realigned. We are being challenged to see Jesus rightly, and to understand the fiery passion in his heart for his Bride.

   i We must let this revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God excite us and motivate us, as we seek to understand his heart of kindness and great love for us. Then we can express our adoration and commitment as we give our all to him with affection, gratitude and confidence.

6. Conclusion

a. What kind of response Jesus is looking for as a consequence of this revelation of his end-times purposes as Bridegroom, King and Judge? There is a response that we should consider in view of what we have been looking at today.

b. This three-fold revelation of Jesus isn't random, but a strategic revelation intended to awaken a specific response in the heart of God's people, especially in the generation that sees the Lord's return.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, **beholding** as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the **same image** from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

John 4:14 *Whoever **drinks** of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become **in him a fountain of water** springing up into eternal life.*

John 7:37 *Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and **drink**. [38] He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, **out of his heart will flow rivers of living water**."*

c. These scriptures illustrate the process at work within us as we respond to the revelation of Jesus' heart towards us, and our hearts are awakened by his love.

   i The process is directional – firstly "**to us**", secondly "**in us**" and thirdly "**through us**"

d. It begins as we **behold** Jesus, encountering his heart. As we "drink" of the Holy Spirit, revealing Jesus to us, we are progressively transformed into the same image, and we begin to take on the same characteristics in our own lives.

e. Then there is an **internal transformation** that takes place as we encounter the heart of Jesus in his word. The living water becomes a fountain, continually refreshing and empowering us with a never-ending supply of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

f. And the final stage of this process is a river of living water that **flows out** from us, where God gives us his endless resources to give away to others.

   i Jesus gives us access into the deepest things of His heart: his emotions, his feelings, what pleases Him. And as we experience those things we're growing in deeper revelation about how He feels for us, but also we're being empowered by the Holy Spirit to reciprocate that kind of wholehearted love back to Him.