

Message Three

The Maturity of the Bride

RM *Hymns*: 1316, 170

Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:6-9; John 3:29; James 5:7;
Matt. 5:48; Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11

Rev 19:6	And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
Rev 19:7	Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
Rev 19:8	And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
Rev 19:9	And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
John 3:29	He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.
James 5:7	Therefore be long-suffering, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain.
Matt 5:48	You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
Col 1:28	Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;
Col 1:29	For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.
Col 3:10	And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
Col 3:11	Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

I. The meaning of the word *mature* in Greek is “at the end point”:

- A. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life; to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Heb. 6:1; Col. 4:12; Rom. 12:2; 2 Pet. 1:3.

Heb 6:1	Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,
Col 4:12	Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.
Rom 12:2	And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
2 Pet 1:3	Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,
- B. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life—v. 4.

2 Pet 1:4	Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
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- C. A mature believer knows and cares for the Body of Christ, being Body-conscious and Body-centered—1 Cor. 12:16, 18-19, 21, 24.

1 Cor 12:16	And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
1 Cor 12:18	But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
1 Cor 12:19	And if all were one member, where would the body be?
1 Cor 12:21	And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
1 Cor 12:24	But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,

II. As used in the New Testament, the word *mature* refers to the believers' being full-grown and perfected in the life of Christ, which they received at the time of regeneration—Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23; Matt. 5:48:

- Titus 3:5 Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,
- 1 Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 1 Pet 1:23 Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.
- Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- A. We should never be content with ourselves but pursue growth and maturity in the life of Christ—Phil. 3:12, 14.
- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- B. We need to go on, to be brought on, to maturity by forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, pursuing toward the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ for the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom—vv. 12-15.
- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Phil 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.
- C. The prerequisite for maturity in the spiritual life is to grow continually in the divine life—Eph. 4:15.
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- D. The ultimate issue of the believers' growth and maturity in the life of Christ is the full-grown man—the church as the Body of Christ growing into a mature man—v. 13.
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

III. In his Epistle, James uses the illustration of a farmer awaiting with long-suffering the precious fruit of the earth—5:7:

- James 5:7 Therefore be long-suffering, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain.
- A. The Lord Jesus is actually the real Farmer, the unique Farmer—Matt. 13:3.
- Matt 13:3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.
- B. While we are awaiting with long-suffering the Lord's coming, He, as the real Farmer, is awaiting with patience our maturity in life, as the firstfruits and harvest of His field—Rev. 14:4, 14-15.
- Rev 14:4 These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.
- Rev 14:14 And I saw, and behold, there was a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.
- Rev 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe.

- C. If we pray, “Lord, come back quickly,” the Lord may say, “While you are awaiting My coming back, I am awaiting your maturity; only your maturity can hasten My coming back.”
- D. It is a great help for us to realize that if we are serious about awaiting the Lord’s coming back, we need to grow in life unto maturity.

IV. To be mature is to have Christ fully formed in us; it also means that we have been fully transformed into His image—Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18:

- Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,
 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
- A. Since the time of our regeneration, the Lord has been working in us so that we may have His image—v. 18; Rom. 8:29.
 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
 Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
 - B. When the Lord has fully worked His image into us and is fully expressed through us, we will be mature in life—Eph. 3:16-17.
 Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
 Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

V. Chapter 3 of Song of Songs shows us the maturity of the seeking one, and chapter 4 continues by explaining that such maturity is reached by the subduing of the will; the secret of the maturity of the seeking one is that her will has been completely subdued and resurrected—v. 4:

- S. S. 3, 4 be omitted.
 S. S. 4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, / Built for an armory: / A thousand bucklers hang on it, / All the shields of the mighty men.
- A. The neck signifies the human will under God; the Lord considers the submission of our will a most beautiful thing—vv. 1a, 4.
 S. S. 4:1a Oh, you are beautiful, my love! / Oh, you are beautiful! ...
 S. S. 4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, / Built for an armory: / A thousand bucklers hang on it, / All the shields of the mighty men.
 - B. If we have a submissive will, our will is expressed like the tower of David that holds all kinds of weapons:
 1. First, our will must be subdued; then it will be strong in resurrection and like the tower of David, the armory for the spiritual warfare—Eph. 6:10.
 Eph 6:10 Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.
 2. The weapons for spiritual warfare are kept in our subdued and resurrected will—2 Cor. 10:3-5.
 2 Cor 10:3 For though we walk in flesh, we do not war according to flesh;
 2 Cor 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds,
 2 Cor 10:5 As we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.

VI. The goal of Paul’s ministry was to present every man mature, full-grown, in Christ for the one new man—Col. 1:28-29; 3:10-11:

- Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;

- Col 1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- A. The Greek word rendered “full-grown” in Colossians 1:28 may also be translated “perfect,” “complete,” or “mature.”
- Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;
- B. Paul’s ministry was to dispense Christ into others so that they would be perfect and complete by maturing in Christ unto full growth.

VII. Genesis 37—47 is a record of the process of Jacob’s maturity:

- Gen 37-47 be omitted.
- A. In Genesis 27 we see a supplanter; in chapter 37, a transformed man; and at the end of chapter 47, a mature person.
- Gen 27, 37, 47 be omitted.
- B. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life:
- God’s eternal purpose can only be accomplished through our transformation and maturity—1:26; Col. 1:28; 2:19.
- Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
- Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- Maturity is a matter of having the divine life imparted into us again and again until we have the fullness of life—John 10:10.
- John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
- C. Maturity is a matter of the enlargement of capacity—Psa. 4:1:
- Psa 4:1 When I call out, answer me, / O God of my righteousness; / Make room for me when I am in straits; / Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.
- Maturity in life is the sum total of receiving the discipline of the Holy Spirit—Heb. 12:5-11.
- Heb 12:5 And you have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him;
- Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."
- Heb 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline?
- Heb 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all sons have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.
- Heb 12:9 Furthermore we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected them; shall we not much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?
- Heb 12:10 For they disciplined for a few days as it seemed good to them; but He, for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness.
- Heb 12:11 Now no discipline at the present time seems to be a matter of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it.

2. Others may see a person who has matured in life, but they cannot see the accumulated discipline of the Holy Spirit which that person has received secretly day after day throughout the years—2 Cor. 1:8-10; Gen. 47:7, 10.
 - 2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.
 - 2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;
 - 2 Cor 1:10 Who has delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver us; in whom we have hoped that He will also yet deliver us,
 - Gen 47:7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.
 - Gen 47:10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went forth from Pharaoh's presence.
- D. God will sovereignly use persons, things, and events to empty us of everything that has filled us and to take away every preoccupation so that we may have an increased capacity to be filled with God—Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:6.
 - Luke 1:53 The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.
 - Matt 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- E. The life of Jacob reveals that everything that happens to us is under God's sovereignty for our transformation and maturity; nothing is accidental:
 1. In order to become mature, Jacob first had to suffer the loss of Joseph, the treasure of his heart—Gen. 37:31-35.
 - Gen 37:31 Then they took Joseph's coat and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the coat in the blood.
 - Gen 37:32 And they sent the coat of many colors and had it brought to their father and said, We found this; please examine it, and see whether it is your son's coat or not.
 - Gen 37:33 And he recognized it and said, It is my son's coat. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.
 - Gen 37:34 And Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned for his son many days.
 - Gen 37:35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted and said, Surely I will go down to Sheol to my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him.
 2. A mature believer has learned that God is merciful and all-sufficient to meet his needs in every kind of situation—43:11, 13-14; 17:1; Phil. 1:19-21a; 4:11-12; cf. 1 Tim. 6:6-8.
 - Gen 43:11 And their father Israel said to them, If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man—a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.
 - Gen 43:13 Take your brother also, and rise up; return to the man,
 - Gen 43:14 And may the All-sufficient God grant you mercy before the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am to be bereaved of my children, I shall be bereaved.
 - Gen 17:1 And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Jehovah appeared to Abram and said to him, I am the All-sufficient God; / Walk before Me, and be perfect.
 - Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
 - Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
 - Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
 - Phil 4:11 Not that I speak according to lack, for I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content.

- Phil 4:12 I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack.
- 1 Tim 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain;
- 1 Tim 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, because neither can we carry anything out.
- 1 Tim 6:8 But having food and covering, with these we will be content.
3. His trust and rest are altogether in the mercy of his all-sufficient God, no longer in himself or in his ability—Rom. 9:16.
- Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
4. The strongest sign of Jacob's maturity was his blessing others—Gen. 47:7, 10; 48:14-16; Heb. 7:7.
- Gen 47:7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.
- Gen 47:10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went forth from Pharaoh's presence.
- Gen 48:14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon Ephraim's head—although he was the younger—and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands with insight, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.
- Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph and said, / The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, / The God who has shepherded me all my life to this day,
- Gen 48:16 The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; / And may my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; / And may they be a teeming multitude in the midst of the earth.
- Heb 7:7 But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

VIII. The mature bride is the goal of God's will and purpose—Rev. 19:7-9:

- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- A. The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers—v. 7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.
- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,
- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Phil 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- B. The marriage of the Lamb is the issue of the completion of God's New Testament economy, which is to obtain for Christ a bride, the church, through His judicial redemption and by His organic salvation in His divine life—Gen. 2:22; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2.
- Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.
- Rom 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
- C. In the Gospel of John, Christ is revealed both as the Lamb who came to take away sin and as the Bridegroom who came that He might have the bride—3:29.
- John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.
- D. Christ's goal is not to remove sin; it is to have the bride:
1. In the book of Revelation, we see that Christ is the Lamb and the coming Bridegroom; therefore, as the Bridegroom, He must have a wedding—19:7-9.

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
 2. The wedding of the Lamb will be a universal wedding; it will be the marriage of the Redeemer and the redeemed.
 3. Christ is coming as the Bridegroom, and we are going as the bride.
- E. A very crucial matter is the readiness of the bride—v. 7:
- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
1. According to Revelation 19:8 and 9, the wife, the bride of Christ, here consists only of the overcoming believers during the millennium.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
 2. The readiness of the bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers, who are not separate individuals but the corporate bride.
 3. In Revelation 19:6 the voice of the great multitude proclaims, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns":
 - a. The reign of God, the kingdom, is related to the marriage of the Lamb.
 - b. The wedding will bring in the reign of the Lord, the kingdom, because all the guests called to the wedding will be both the corporate bride and the co-kings of the Bridegroom; all His co-kings will be His corporate bride.
 - c. To the overcomers, the thousand years of the millennial kingdom will be a wedding feast.
 - d. Everyone invited to the wedding feast will also participate in the thousand-year reign as kings.
 - e. For the overcomers, reigning with Christ in the kingdom will be the wedding feast—v. 9.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.