

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER ATLANTA
THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD PT 3
NOVEMBER 19, 2017 –JAMIE BURNS PRIDGEN

I. The Knowledge of God's Love & Purpose for Humanity

A. A.W. Tozer once said, "*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us...*" What do you conceive God to be like? How do you think He feels towards you? Do you think He is mostly glad and proud or mad and disappointed with your life?

B. God desires that we would glory in the knowledge of who He is. He longs for a people who would know and understand His heart and the things in which He delights. He declares through the prophet, Jeremiah that He delights to extend lovingkindness to His people. It makes God happy to be kind to us. He loves people deeply; therefore, He is exceedingly kind towards us.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 "Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24 but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment [justice; NAS/NIV], and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, says the Lord."

C. In Ephesians 1, Paul fervently prayed for the church in Ephesus. He prayed that the scales would fall from their eyes so that they would not miss the romance God is extending to them on this journey called life.

Ephesians 1:17-19 "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power"

D. In revealing Himself as a Father and Bridegroom, God gives us so much insight into the knowledge of His heart, His emotions, and His posture towards us. He is overflowing with love and delight towards us the objects of His affection. The position of privilege that He has granted us is unfathomable.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

II. Understanding the Eternal Mystery

Matthew 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son"

A. God's ultimate purpose for His creation is to provide a family for Himself and a bride for His Son (Eph 5:31-32, Rev 19:7-9). The great mystery of God, His hidden plan from eternity past, is arranging a marriage for His Son, finding a partner suitable for Jesus (Mt 22:2). The Father and the Holy Spirit are committed to preparing the Church to be the eternal companion of Jesus and training her to rule the earth with Him. (Eph 4:13, 5:27, Rev 19:7, Rev 5:10).

B. The eternal plan of the Father has always been to present His Son with a bride. The Father sends out the Holy Spirit with the task of preparing the church to be a worthy bride for Jesus. The Holy Spirit has a divine mandate to transform you and I to be a comparable partner for Jesus. He is determined and resolute and will without a doubt, fulfill the task the Father has sent Him to complete. Human history will culminate with a wedding and the Holy Spirit will make ready a bride for Jesus.

C. Because God has determined to qualify a Bride, making her a suitable partner for His Son, He is intentional to purify the hearts of His people. All of the dealings of God in your life are about making you a ready bride, worthy to marry the Son of Man. There is great zeal in the heart of our Bridegroom to destroy all that hinders His love in our lives (Pro 6:34).

D. God desires that we would experience the pleasures of loving Him and being loved by Him. Jesus declares to us in John 15:9 that He loves us as much as His Father loves Him. He also prophesies in John 17:26 that we will love Him as much as His Father loves Him.

John 15:9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. (Jesus loves us as much as the Father loves Him.)

John 17:26b "That the love with which you loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (We will love Jesus as much as the Father loves Him.)

E. God has orchestrated all of history to work for your good (Rom 8:28, Deut 8:16). His banner over your life is love (Song of Sol 2:4). The whole of this life becomes a romance to be experienced and enjoyed with God. Even now He is rejoicing over you and longing for the day when you are joined to Him forever.

Isaiah 62:5 NIV As a young man marries a young woman so your Builder will marry you, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride so will your God rejoice over you.

F. Paul had a deep desire for the church to experientially know the love of God. He prayed that we would see our lives in the context of the romance and know the depths of the love of God has for us.

Ephesians 3:16-19 “that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with the all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

III. In Love From the Beginning

John 1:1-2 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

A. In the beginning, we see God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in perfect relationship (Jn 1:1). We long for intimacy because it was in the image of perfect intimacy that we were created. Teeming with the liberality and the bliss that comes with the abundance of true love, God creates humans to be partakers of this joyous, Trinitarian union.

B. *“The story that is the Sacred Romance begins not with God alone, the Author at his desk, but God in relationship, intimacy beyond our wildest imagination, heroic intimacy. The Trinity is at the center of the universe; perfect relationship is the heart of all reality...Our story begins with the hero in love...God does not need the Creation in order to have something to love because within himself love happens...Real love creates a generous openness...The best things in life were meant to be shared. That is why married lovers want to increase their joy by having children. And so it is with God. “Father, Jesus says, “I want those you gave me to be with me, right where I am. I want them to be one heart and one mind with us” (John 17). Overflowing with the generosity that comes from the abundance of real love, he creates us to share in the joy of this heroic intimacy. One early mystic says we were created out of the laughter of the Trinity.”¹*

C. God’s original plan from eternity past was to raise up a bride for His Son (Eph 3:6-11). Before the foundations of the world, God desired we would join in the romance and love He shared with the Trinity. He destined us to be adopted into His family and to be fully accepted in His Beloved Son.

¹ Curtis, Brent & Eldredge, John, *The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997, p. 73-74.

Ephesians 1:4-6 “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, (5) having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

D. Since the onset of creation, God has set His affections upon the sons of men. In fact, Jesus said that all of His delight was wrapped up in humans. God created us out of the overflow of love in His heart and destined us to share in His love as a bride does with her husband.

Proverbs 8:30-31 Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, (31) Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight was with the sons of men.

IV. Created for Intimacy and Destined for Dominion

A. In Genesis 1, a pattern of creation is established as God creates everything “according to its kind.” Ten times God created an “original” then created a seed, or a counterpart, according to its own kind (Gen. 1:11, 12b, 12d, 21c, 21d, 24b, 24d, 25b, 25d). Within the first five days of creation, this pattern is clearly demonstrated as God creates grass, herbs, fruit trees, sea creatures, every living thing in the waters, birds, every living creature, cattle, creeping things, and beasts. God creates everything with a counterpart in order to generate life.

B. As God created an ascending order of glory, the angels observed His genius with great enthusiasm and joy (1 Pet 1:12, Job 38:7). After creating ten originals and their counterparts after their own kind, God does something different. To the dismay of the multitudes of onlooking angels, God breaks His clearly established pattern of creation.

C. In His eleventh act of creating, He creates one in the likeness of another, instead of creating an original. Rather than speaking and calling forth life, God forms man out of the dust of the earth. He created Adam from dust with a natural dimension and then breathed supernatural life into him (Gen 2:7). Suddenly the angels realize that man is not an original, but rather, the counterpart to One that already exists—God, Himself.

D. God created a new order of beings that was to be the counterpart of the pre-existent, uncreated Original, the second person of the Trinity. The counterpart, Adam, was created for union with Jesus, the Original. Undoubtedly this brought much astonishment to the angelic ranks. Why were these created ones given so much nobility? Why were humans exalted to such heights? Surely God's plans to glorify a creation made of dust seemed incomprehensible to them.

Genesis 1:26-28 “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.””

E. In these verses, God makes an unbelievable proclamation: “*Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over all...*” God is the only One with all dominion, and yet He imparts His authority to those made in His image, that they might serve as His representatives in the earth.

Psalms 8:4-6 “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? 5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, *[Elohim]* And You have crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet...”

F. God forever joined Himself to humanity when He created Adam as a counterpart to Himself. He designed an eternal union that would generate divine life through the rest of created order. We generate life throughout creation as we release the anointing of the Spirit in partnership with God.

G. The human spirit was designed in the likeness and image of God. This speaks of God's desire for intimate partnership with us. We were designed to experience intimacy with God throughout eternity. We were created to be the Bride of Jesus. No matter what we achieve or gain in this life, no man or woman can silence the original design of the human spirit to be the Bride of Jesus. By design, we can't be fully satisfied by experiencing only human love. We were created to experience the love of God as His eternal companion.

H. Our internal makeup is created in the likeness of God, which means we were designed for fellowship with God. We were created to live in supernatural unity with God and with one another (Jn 17:21-23).

1. Our spirit has the unique capacity to receive God's Spirit (1 Cor 6:17, Col 1:27).
2. Our soul is comprised of personality traits and abilities like God so that we can relate to Him.
 - a. Mind: Capacity for understanding, logic, creative genius, wisdom, reason, and revelation.
 - b. Emotions: Capacity for intense affection, joy, gladness, zeal, and holy anger. Ability to feel deeply, both sadness and delight.
 - c. Will: Free will with the capacity for dignified actions by making choices that have eternal consequences of being remembered, valued and rewarded by God forever. Ability to express voluntary love by being presented with the option to sin (Gen 2:16-17).
3. Our lowly body will one day be resurrected, transformed and fully glorified. We will be conformed to Jesus' glorious body and partake of His glory (Phil 3:21).

I. We were also created in God's image, which speaks of our official function. We are designed to rule and to reign, to govern with God.

1. We were created for dominion. While angels are servants (Heb 1:14), humans were equipped, according to our internal makeup, to rule and reign with God eternally (Gen 1:28, Psa 8:4-6, Heb 2:7-8). The bride will be crowned with glory and honor in being like Jesus forever (1 Jn 3:2). We have been predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son (Rm 8:29).
2. The Bride will hold a unique position of partnership with Jesus in God's eternal government (Rev 3:21, 5:10), as she shares His throne and reigns upon the earth. She will be exalted to the highest, most noble position among all of the created order.
3. As God's image-bearers, we resemble God and look like Him to others. We are His representatives in the earth, designed to reflect His personality and to represent Him to creation as kings and priests. We are qualified to be His ambassadors, who act and speak on His behalf (2 Cor 5:20).

J. God designed dominion to flow out of intimacy. The clearest depiction of this is in Genesis 2 when God planted a garden and gave Adam the responsibility of tending it. The garden was the place where God would come down and meet with Adam; it was the place of encounter. Adam's responsibility was to tend the garden for it was there that He would fellowship with God, be filled with the divine will, and be empowered to govern.

K. God commissioned Adam to enjoy and rule in paradise with complete authority. In that place, Adam is given the opportunity to choose disobedience or voluntary love (Gen 2:17). God's plan began and will end with His people ruling together with Him in a garden-paradise (Rev 21-22).

V. A Bride for Adam: A Prophetic Picture

Genesis 2:15-20 "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him...God formed every beast...and every bird...and brought them to Adam...Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds...and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him."

A. Before the fall, God created Adam with an inexpressible longing for a companion. He gave Adam the responsibility of ruling the garden and naming the animals without a companion (Gen 2:8-22). God observed that it was not good for man to be alone. He determined to make a suitable companion for Adam.

Genesis 2:21-25 "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

B. When that longing reached its climax, God put Adam to sleep, and out of his side brought forth a bride. He created them to experience the depths of intimacy without feeling any shame. When Adam awakes from his sleep, he is filled with delight as he beholds his bride. As Adam and Eve are joined in marriage, the prophetic declaration goes forth that man would leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and that the two would become one flesh.

C. Paul clarifies this prophetic declaration, 4,000 years later, in Ephesians 5, calling it a “great mystery.” This is referred to as a great mystery because it speaks of the hidden plan in the heart of God (Eph 3:3, 8-11), to provide a companion from the human race that would be exalted to the likeness of His Son, to rule over His empire forever. Through apostolic revelation, Paul gives us insight into this divine blueprint from which God was working from eternity past. Paul reveals to us that God was pointing to Jesus and the Church when He orchestrated the events around the creation of Eve and the union that she and Adam would share.

Ephesians 5:25-32 " Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

D. Paul clarifies that the marriage of Adam and Eve was always an archetype, pointing to the hidden plan of God from eternity to past, to raise up a bride for His Son.

1. Adam is a type of Christ (Rom 5:14).
2. Eve is a picture of the bride of Christ, the mother of all living (Gen 3:20, Gal 4:26).

E. Paul assures us that the prophecy of Adam is fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is the One who left His father's house and become one spirit with His bride (Phil 2:6-8, 1 Cor 6:17). In the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), Jesus became a Man. He was filled with longing for us His bride and when longing had reached its climax (John 17:24-26), the Father put His Son to sleep (crucifixion), and from His side (the blood that gushed forth), He brought forth a bride (holy and without shame before Him in love).

F. Paul reveals that Adam in His union with Eve is a picture of Jesus with His Bride. He reveals that Jesus is a Bridegroom who loves the church and gave Himself for her. He declares that Jesus nourishes and cherishes the church. He admonishes husbands to follow the example of Jesus in loving their wives that marriage might be a continual testimony of the way Jesus feels about His bride, the church.

VI. Abiding in Love

John 15:9 “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.”

A. We are each on a quest to “abide in this love” (Jn 15:9). If we are not intentional about abiding in the love of God, we will not live romanced and intoxicated on the love of God. Jesus warns us that though His love for us is matchless and unchanging, yet we have to fight to believe it and live in the reality of it. In John 15:9, the Greek word for “abide” is “meno.” This word means to “stay in a given state or relation, to be present, to remain, to be kept, to continue, to dwell, to endure, and to live. Jesus wants us to remain in His love, to make our home there, and to daily live in the experience of His affections for us.

B. *“But for many of us, the waves of first love ebbed away in the whirlwind of Christian service and activity, and we began to lose the Romance. Our faith began to feel more like a series of problems that needed to be solved or principles that had to be mastered before we could finally enter into the abundant life promised us by Christ...Far above all else, the Christian life is a love affair of the heart. It cannot be lived primarily as a set of principles or ethics. It cannot be managed with steps and programs. It cannot be lived exclusively as a moral code leading to righteousness...When we ignore this heart aspect of our faith and try to live our religion solely as correct doctrine or ethics, our passion is crippled, or perverted, and the divorce of our soul from the heart purposes of God toward us is deepened.”²*

C. As humans, one of our greatest weaknesses is simply our tendency to forget. We get so caught up in the day-to-day of life that we fail to remember God and His passionate love for us. We must, as Peter admonished, “stir ourselves up by way of reminder” (2 Pt 3:1). George MacDonald says, *“We who would be born again must wake our souls unnumbered times every day.”*

² Curtis, Brent & Eldredge, John, *The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997.