

**Mr. Roy Holladay**

**Sermon Transcript**

**August 4, 2001**

## **Preparing the Bride of Christ**

Well good afternoon to everyone. It is a privilege to be here today on this occasion. I would certainly like to thank the ABC choir - that was beautiful. It is amazing how much music so few people can put out. It is really delightful. They sang last night also, and very inspiring on both occasions. It certainly adds a great deal to the services.

I would also like to extend a welcome to all of our visitors, our guests who are here with us. This is obviously a special weekend, and one that I know you have been looking forward to. We are here to honor the ABC graduates, the class of 2001. Many sacrifices have been made. I know many of the students have made a great deal of sacrifices to be here, giving up jobs, opportunities, to be able to take advantage of the privileges that they have here. Many of their families and friends also have participated in that. And I am sure there have been many lessons learned over the last seven months by the ABC students. And these will be lessons that will last a lifetime, lessons that actually will go on for eternity. I believe we all understand that this is a training ground that we are experiencing presently. And God is teaching us so that we can live with him forever, and we can experience life on a higher plane. And that was brought out very well by Mr. Harmon.

God wants us to be able to live on the God level. And we are here to learn how to do that. What you have experienced for the last seven months is tremendous. As we used to say at Ambassador College, the word of God is the foundation of knowledge. And you have been given that foundation over these last seven months. A foundation is what you build on. We are going to have a building going up here shortly. A foundation is going to be laid, and the rest of the building is going to be erected on that foundation. So you have been given a foundation to build on, that you can continue your growth, your development in the future. Now, considering all of this I was thinking about what would be an appropriate topic to speak on today. I thought about speaking about the future, about service, about courage, , new opportunities, new beginnings. I settled on a topic that seemed to be very appropriate. I thought I would talk about marriage today. Somehow this just seemed to ring a bell, hit a chord, hit the mark.

Actually, I would like to touch on that, as well as almost all the other topics that I threw out to begin with. I want to take a look at two very important points of our calling that apply to all of us. How God is preparing us, preparing his family to assist him in the kingdom of God, and why is God preparing us? Not only that he is doing it, but why is he doing it? And along the way we will discover that God does things in a certain manner, a certain way. You will find that the plan of God was revealed in Genesis 2. Genesis 2 reveals a lot about the plan of God. Mr. Armstrong used to talk about the two trees quite a bit. I am not going to talk about the two trees today, just incidentally. God has a purpose for everything he does. God doesn't do things capriciously, happenstance, second thoughts, wonder why I did this. God has a plan, a purpose, and he has thought it out.

Let's go to Genesis 2:7. We will spend a little time in Genesis 2, back and forth today. But notice chapter 2, verse 7. Notice what we read here. It says, *The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. Or, man became a living soul.* So you find that God created man. He created Adam out of the dust, and man became a living soul. The word is *nephesh* in the Hebrew. Now notice verse 19, because it says almost the same thing, but about the animals. Verse 19. *Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the air. So I want you to take note that they were created out of the ground, out of the ground just like Adam. And he brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam calle living creature, that was its name.* Living creature in the Hebrew is *nephesh*. So every living soul, or *nephesh*, referring to the animals and to the birds.

So again in verse 19 you find that God created the beasts and the fowls also out of the ground. And they became living souls likewise. Now I don't know if you have ever stopped to think about it, but Eve was the only one not created directly out of the ground. Now the question is, why? Why would God go through a process where he creates all of these animals out of ground, he creates Adam out of the ground, breathes into their nostrils, they are breathing air now, they are alive. But Eve was not created in that way. Why would God go through a different process for her? Is there a reason? I contend that God does everything for a reason, that there is a purpose God has. There are lessons that God wants us to learn. Why did God wait to create Eve as the last of his physical creation?

Well let's continue on here in chapter 2, and we will pick it up here in verse 18. Chapter 2, verse 18. We find that *the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone.* Apparently several have read this scripture this year and have honed in on this. *It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helper comparable to him.* So I want you to notice. Adam could not find anyone comparable to him.

Going on here in verse 19, the scripture we read where God created all of the animals, the birds, so in verse 20, *Adam gave names to all of the cattle, the birds of the air, to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.* Now, Adam looked around and here was Mr. & Mrs. Dog, Mr. & Mrs. Chicken, Mr. & Mrs. Horse, Mr. & Mrs. Monkey. And he said, well, am I going to climb in bed with the horse? Am I going to live with a cow forever? He looked around and there was nobody like him. Nobody he could talk to. Nobody he could confide in. Nobody who was going to be a helpmeet who was really on his level.

Actually, if you will read in chapter 1, verse 25, just a reference here, when God created the beasts of the earth, *he created the beasts of the earth according to their kind, the cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was so.* So when God created the animals he created the male and the female, and they were to reproduce after their kind. But when Adam looked around, even though there was a monkey who might go hoo, hoo, hoo, still it was not somebody who was after his kind that he could marry, that he would want to be with.

Now notice in verse 21, there was a lesson that God was trying to teach Adam out of all of this. *So 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. And then the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man, see I said Adam was created out of the ground, so the other beasts, or others, I shouldn't say other beasts, other animals were, that the Lord God then took a rib and he made a woman. He made the woman out of the rib and the flesh that he took from the man, and brought her to the man. As a result of this, notice what Adam said. This is now bone of my bones, see she is part of me. God took a bone and created her. Flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.* Now again, why did God do it this way? I mean, why go to the trouble of taking a rib and creating the woman? Why didn't God, when he created Adam, why didn't he create the woman right there with him? Again, there is a lesson that God wants us to learn.

I think it is interesting when you read the Jamieson, Fawcett, and Brown Commentary, they bring out a very interesting point in verse 23. Jamieson, Fawcett, and Brown states that the literal translation of verse 23 is, *this is the hit.* When Eve was presented to him, he said, this is it! This is what I have been looking for! This is a hit! This is the very thing that hits the mark. This reaches what was desired. You see, none of the animals hit the mark. When Adam looked around, none of them hit the mark. When he looked at the woman he said, oo la la! She hits the mark. She is the one. She looks like me. We are compatible. There was no being who had been created who was human or comparable to him who could help or who could assist him.

Now brethren, God has looked around, and he has not found anyone, at least at that time, who was comparable to his son Jesus Christ. No one who was on the same level, or the same plane, no one who was comparable to him, compatible with him. At that time there was no one who hit the mark. No one who had hit the mark.

Now keep that in mind. Because let's go back to 1 Corinthians 15:45. We are all familiar with this section of the scripture dealing with the resurrection. But notice that Paul brings out here something very interesting. *So it is written that the first man Adam became a living being.* He became a living, breathing nephesh. Living being. *The last man Adam became a life giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural. And afterwards the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust. The second man is the Lord from heaven. And as was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust. We are all human. We all return to the dust. And it says, And as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man.* Adam was a type of Jesus Christ. There was the first Adam, and there was the second Adam.

Brethren, God is in the process of preparing a bride that will be a helpmeet for his son, that will be made comparable to Jesus Christ. And you and I have a part in that. God created Eve as a helpmeet, or one who was perfectly compatible to Adam. They became partners. Marriage has been given to us as human beings to teach us that lesson. To see how it is accomplished. And we are going to see as we proceed through the sermon today how God is doing this.

I think this is one reason Satan has tried to destroy the family. He has tried to destroy marriage. You see that today he seems to be doing a very good job. Because most human beings don't really fully understand outside of just physical pleasures of marriage, why God has given us marriage. They don't learn the spiritual lesson or understand that. And when marriages dissolve, break up, and couples are fighting, there is animosity and violence, they are not learning the lesson that God is trying to teach. But you see, we have a unique opportunity. We can. Because God is dealing with us in a different way.

Notice again how the woman was created. I won't read this. But Genesis 2:21 again. She was taken out of the man, from his rib. And verse 23. This is why Adam said, *She is bone of my bone, she is flesh of my flesh.* The Hebrew just means that she was taken out of the side of the man. God took bone and flesh from Adam to create Eve. Now the question is, how is the church being created? How is the bride being created that God is working with?

Let's go to Ephesians 5:28, where we will begin to see how God is working with the church today, with the bride. Verse 28. *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever*

*hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of his body.* Notice. You and I today are members of his body, *of his flesh, and of his bones*, just as Eve was of Adam. She came from Adam, so we come from Christ. We are part of his body, of his flesh, of his bones.

Now you might ask, how is that possible? You know, Jesus Christ slept the sleep of death. Adam literally was put to sleep, but Christ died as we know. Prior to that his side was ripped open, and he shed his blood. And it is through his blood and his sacrifice that you and I have the opportunity to become a part of Christ, part of the body of Christ. Adam slept and God took a rib to create Eve. God is creating a bride through Jesus Christ through his sacrifice, because of that sacrifice. You and I are to become one flesh with him.

In Genesis 2:24, notice the instructions that are given concerning marriage. It says, *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife. And they shall become one flesh.* In marriage a couple is to become one flesh. They are to leave all, as it says father and mother, those that might be the dearest to you, you are to leave your father and mother and you are to be joined together.

Luke 14:26, you might remember is a scripture I am sure was read to all of us when we were baptized. It says if you are going to become a Christian, a disciple of Christ, that you have got to be willing to forsake all. You have to be willing to give up everything. You have got to love God more than you love your own life, your wife, your family, whatever it might be. There has to be a total and complete commitment to God, to go God's way when we are baptized.

You will find that marriage helps to teach that lesson. It is a physical plane thing, but it is to teach a spiritual lesson. In the Hebrew you will notice here in verse 24, it says he is to *leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife*. The word *joined*, or as it is in the King James Version *cleave*, in the Hebrew means simply to cling, to stay close, to cleave, to keep close, to follow closely, to join to. So when a couple gets married God says they are supposed to be like this. They are supposed to stick as close as they possibly can. And that nothing would be able to pry them apart. Nothing would be able to separate them. We see that a couple is to stay close and to cling to one another. Be close in their intimate relationship and marriage, to be close in their desires and plans and their working together. There should be no one else. Husbands, there should be no one else you would rather be with. And the same thing would be true of the wife with her husband. When I look at my wife, there is not another human being that I can think of that I would rather be with, spend time with, and share my life with. There is just simply nobody else that I have those feelings and those desires for. And when it comes to the Christian area, there should be no other way of life that you and I would want to live. We should want to live God's way and not want to go

any other way. Not want to live any other way except God's law, his way of life, and seeking to please him.

Let's notice in 1 Corinthians 6:13, we begin to see, and Paul explains very clearly, what we are talking about here. Verse 13. *Foods for the stomach, and stomach for foods.* Okay, God created the human body with a digestive system, and then he has created foods that we can eat that can go into that digestive system. So you have the stomach for foods, and foods for the stomach, as it says. But we find that God will destroy both it and them. We are human, we are physical, we will finally die. So we don't continue to live forever in the flesh. But notice it says, *God will destroy it and them, but now the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* So the body was created for the Lord. It was made to be the temple of God's Holy Spirit, where God himself would come and dwell within us. So our bodies were made for the Lord. They were not made, as it says here, for immorality. They were not made for lusts. They were not made for inordinate and wrong purposes. They were made for a temple to receive God's Spirit, so that God could perfect himself in us, that God could develop his character. In verse 15 it says, *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?* So again, we become a part of Christ. We are members of Christ. *Shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not, he says.*

So our bodies are members of Christ. Christ is the head. We are a part of the body. Now verse 16. *Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, he says, shall become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord, now notice, we are to be joined to the Lord, is one spirit.* Not one flesh, but one spirit with him. So we are to become one with God, one spirit. In the human realm, in marriage, we become one flesh. In the spiritual realm, we are to become one spirit. In the Greek the word *joined* here means to glue, or to glue together, to cement, or to fasten together. Have you ever heard of epoxy glue where you have two different types of elements, and by themselves they are really nothing, but when you mix them together they become so strong they become like cement or an extremely strong glue. This is exactly what God is talking about when it comes to a man and a woman. You take the two, you mix them together, they become one flesh, and they should have the same desires and work together, be on the same level. Well, when it comes to the spiritual level, we are to become one spirit. God is looking for his sons and daughters, he is looking for the bride that he is creating, that we will have one spirit, one attitude, one approach. That we are not going to have our own ideas, our own thoughts, that we are not going to just simply go our own way, but we are led and directed by the spirit of God to do what God says. And that we are to become, as it says here, joined to the Lord, and nothing should be able to separate us from God.

I don't have time, but remember Romans 8. Paul says, *can anything separate us from the love of God? Can life or death? Can trials, tests, problems, difficulties, whatever it might be?* He gave a whole list there. And he asks, *Can anything separate us from God?* Once we have the spirit of God which glues us to God, that gives us the mind of God, then nothing should be able to separate us.

So brethren, how are we being made comparable to Jesus Christ? How are we being made a helper to Jesus Christ? Go back to Genesis 2:18 again. And notice what God said here originally when he instituted marriage. *The Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him.* So God said, I am going to make someone who will be a helper, who will be comparable to him. Literally, this could be translated *a helper corresponding to him, or a corresponding helper.* The Theological Workbook Of The Old Testament states this about the word helper. "While this word designates assistance, it is more frequently used in a concrete sense to designate the assistant." Helper is not a demeaning term. When God said that he created the woman to be a helper, that is not a demeaning term. This word is used quite frequently, probably as often for God as it is used in any other way. You go back and read through the Psalms where David says, *The Lord is my helper, my shield, my protector, my high tower.* He says, God is my helper. He is there to help. And so you find that God created the woman to be a corresponding helper. And, as I said, it is not a demeaning term.

So when we look at it, let's see how God is making the bride comparable to the son, to Jesus Christ. In Colossians 1:24 we find the first way. Actually you could give sermon after sermon after sermon dealing with this particular aspect that I am going to try to cover here just very quickly for you. Colossians 1:24. Notice, Paul says, *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is his church.* Now notice very carefully what Paul said. He said, *I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.* So there was something lacking in the afflictions that Christ suffered, and he is doing it for the sake of the body, for the sake of the church, which he says here is the church. What was lacking in the afflictions of Jesus Christ?

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 1, and I want you to notice in verse 3 here, it describes the very nature of God and what God is like, how God approaches us. We are told here in verse 3, *Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.* So God is a God who shows mercy. Mercy is a part of God's nature. And he is a God who gives comfort, who encourages us, *who comforts us in all of our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble.* So why does God comfort us? So that we might turn around and help others, and comfort others. If you have gone through a particular trial, such as losing your job because of the Sabbath, and there is someone who comes into God's church who is going through the same thing, you

can put your arm around that person and say, I know what you're going through. I can help you. And you can encourage them, because you have experienced the same thing. In verse 5 it says, *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, Jesus Christ when he was on this earth was persecuted, he did go through sufferings. So will we as Christians, those who follow him as his bride, for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.* So brethren, we are able, we are learning how to have compassion on others.

I have used the example before of childbearing or childbirth. I don't know of any other better example than this. I have five sons. So does my wife. I should say we have five sons. And I have been at the birth of all of them. And I have seen my wife go through childbirth. I have held her hand. I have coached her. I have said, breathe, pant. She has grunted. I have grunted. But you know what? I never had a baby. I don't care how much I observed, how much I watched, how much I held her hand, she gave birth to those children. Our fifth son was a frank breech birth, which means the baby is turned around like this and coming out backwards, which was very difficult. And you know, she did fine. I almost passed out. That's the way those things go. But when a woman goes through childbirth like that, any other woman who is going through childbirth, and especially if she is having difficulty, you can have compassion on them. You understand. You know what they are going through, because you have experienced it. You have lived it. And so it is with us, brethren, that God is allowing us to go through trials and tribulations. Wouldn't it be great that you come into the church, and all at once, no more problems, no more trials, no more tests. Everything is just great, and you just fly into the kingdom. But sometimes I think we find we have more trials and problems and difficulties afterwards. God wants to know, will we obey him no matter what? Are we going to stick with him? It is the same type of thing in a marriage. We find when a couple gets married it is for good or bad, in sickness and health, poor times, rich times. So we have said that we will stick with one another. We make a commitment to be with one another. And that we are not just going to bail out when the first difficulty or trouble or problem comes along.

In Philippians 3:10 we read again the scripture that simply backs up what I just said here. It says, *That I may know him, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being conformed to his death.* So brethren, we are looking forward to the power of the resurrection when these bodies will be changed. But before that time there is also the fellowship of his suffering. Christ suffered and was persecuted, and so will we. We learn to have compassion for others in God's church now, and for the world. I think many, I hope all of us, are able to look around, and we see what society is going through and human suffering, and our hearts ache, and we wish that God's kingdom were here. We can learn to have compassion for them. As the bride of Christ, we are being made comparable to our future husband in this area.

Notice Hebrews 4. Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer? Why did Christ go through some of the difficulties that he did? Hebrews 4:14. *Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest - notice Christ is our high priest - who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, and yet without sin.* Jesus Christ was tempted like we are. He knows what it is like to be a human being, to walk in the flesh, to get tired. He knows what it is like to fast, to be thirsty, to go without food, to be tempted, and yet Jesus Christ never sinned. So he can have compassion. He can have sympathy for us. You and I are being prepared as a compassionate servant of humanity in the world tomorrow. There is going to be someone in the bride of Christ who has gone through the trials, the difficulties, that all human beings have experienced, who are going to be able to help and relate to people at that time.

Let's just read one scripture in Isaiah 61:1, that Jesus Christ wants a wife who will respond to others the same way he does, that will have the same mind that he does, the same approach he does, the same love, concern, compassion, mercy. Isaiah 61:1. It says, *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the day of vengeance of our God, and to comfort all who mourn.* You see, when Christ comes back, he is going to comfort humanity. Humanity has just been through the tribulation and suffering and anguish, mentally, emotionally, and physically, that no human being should have to go through. And you and I are going to be there with him as the bride. Verse 3, it says, *to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.*

So Christ wants a wife who will be comparable to him, who will be a helpmeet to him, who will help him in helping humanity as they come out of the tribulation and the world tomorrow is set up. So brethren, that is an attitude, that's an approach that you and I are to be learning today. And God is working with us in that way.

Let's go back to Ephesians 5 again, and I want you to notice that is only one thing that God is working on. You and I are to become comparable in many ways. Ephesians 5, we will begin this time in verse 30. Ephesians 5:30. It says, *We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, which we have already read. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery.* Now all that Paul has been writing about here in marriage, he says, is a great mystery, but he says, *I speak concerning Christ and the church.* So what he is speaking about here is Christ and the church. We are to become one in mind and approach with Jesus Christ. I have already touched on that. We become one flesh, as a type of

us becoming one spirit with Christ. It takes the spirit of God to make the bride, just as God took a rib and flesh to make Eve.

Now you stop and think, in marriage you have two people who come from completely, totally different backgrounds. You can have someone from Louisiana marry somebody, if I remember, from Massachusetts, or somewhere up there. These are different cultures, different backgrounds. My oldest son married a young lady from South Africa. I will guarantee you, those are different cultures, different backgrounds. Now you take two people who have grown up in different families, and they have had different sets of values, they have done things differently. Some don't squeeze their toothpaste from the end. Others squeeze it in the middle. You find there are all kinds of little different things that different families do. All at once you get married. You have got these two from diverse backgrounds, and all at once they are supposed to become one. And there is a lot of learning that goes on, especially in the first few years of how to accommodate each other, what is important, what is not important, and you learn to become one in your thinking and your approach. Well, what God is doing, he is taking us, we have all come from a human background, Jesus Christ came from a heavenly background - he was God in the flesh. He came to this earth. He is God presently. And there is a wedding out in the future that is going to take place. But the bride is being prepared. The bride is getting ready. That is what we are supposed to be doing right now. Getting ready. And we come from different backgrounds. We come from a totally different background. And we have to learn how the God family lives, how they operate, how they do things, how they think, what is their approach. Because it is not going to be a matter of us bringing our way, our thinking, our way of doing things to the marriage. In this case no, we have to reconcile totally to God. You know, the word reconciliation means that we change from one standard to another standard. We are changing from the human standard to the God standard, and in order for us to be a part of that bride we have to become one with God.

Notice Romans 12:4. We will begin in verse 4 here. *For as we have many members, notice, in one body, all the members do not have the same function.* So we are all a part of one body, but we don't all have the same jobs, the same functions, the same responsibility. *Verse 5. So we being many are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another, having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.* And it goes on to talk about those particular gifts.

God has given everyone who is a part of his body gifts. We have at least one gift that God has given to us. Listening to these ABC students, it is obvious that they have many gifts. And you see them when you talk to them. God has given us all gifts. And those gifts are given to profit the whole, the whole body. Not for our vanity or our pride. We all have various functions within the body. My foot has a

function. It carries the body around. This arm, this hand has a function. The eyes have a function. My eyes are not envious of my feet. And my feet aren't envious of my eyes. I could put my feet up on the top of my head and they wouldn't see a thing, I don't care how long they are up there. They function very well where they are. If I put my eyes on the bottom of my feet, it wouldn't help me in any way. God has put the body together as he sees fit. He has put us all in the body to function. He has given us gifts, and all of the composite gifts that God gives us help to make the bride comparable to the son. Because these gifts are given to us through the Spirit. And you find that God has these gifts, and he shares them with us. But he gives to each one of us, some individually.

We are to become as Christ said here in John 17:20, notice, we are to become like he and the Father. Christ said, *I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who believe in me through their word.* And that is all of us. We have their word written down. We believe through them. *That they all may be one.* You see, God's desire for us is that we become one, that we have that unity and that harmony. Going on here in verse 21, *That they all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you. That they may be one in us.* That's a tall order. The Father and the Son are one. They want us to become one just as they are one. Now can you picture Christ saying, okay Father, I've had it! I'm just tired of you telling me what to do all the time. I'm going to take my marbles and I'm going over here to the back solar system, and leave me alone. Jesus Christ doesn't talk that way. He is perfectly in harmony with the Father. They are one with one another. This is what we are to become. And notice going on in verse 22. It says, *The glory which you gave me,* Christ says, *I have given them.* So God gave Christ glory. That glory has been given to us, the bride. We are to share in the glory, *that they may be one just as we are one. I in them, you in me, that they may be perfect in one, that the world may know that you have sent me and d them as you d me.* Verse 23 says that one way the world knows that Christ has been sent is by our example of oneness, of harmony and unity. That they can see Christ in us.

So, as the bride of Christ we are to become one with one another as the Father and Jesus Christ are one. Jesus is not going to marry a warring bride. We have to learn to love one another, get along with one another, have harmony with each other. Our relationships in the church are to teach us this lesson. There is to be unity, and harmony, and love, a cohesiveness. You see, commitment is what holds a marriage together. We must be committed to Jesus Christ and to one another. The reason why I say that there are those today who don't want to be committed to anything, and aren't committed to anything. And they are not learning the lessons of relationships with one another. You can't just sort of be off out here on your own and never fellowshiping and being around others of like mind and learn the same lessons. Loving relationships are built upon commitment. If you and your wife have a loving relationship, there is a commitment there to one another. And there has to be that commitment.

So brethren, we are here to model and to learn how people live in peace, and unity, and harmony. We are to learn how to cooperate. We are to have the mind of God. We are to have the approach of God.

Now Genesis 3:1 also reveals another aspect that God is looking for. Christ is looking for a wife who will make the right choices. God created Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:1-7. What happened when the serpent approached the woman? He said, look, the tree is good for knowledge. Let's read just a little of this. *The serpent (in verse 4) said to the woman, you're not going to die.* In other words, if you eat of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you won't die. *For God knows in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* I want you to notice the contrast here. When God calls us, what does he do?

Doesn't he open our eyes - to what? To spiritual knowledge. Here their eyes were opened to what? To the knowledge of good and evil. To wrong knowledge. A mixture of good and evil. So the woman reasoned and she took of the wrong tree. God wants a bride who will choose the tree of life, who will choose the right way, who will not choose the wrong tree as Eve and Adam did. Jesus Christ chose the right way when he was here. He never sinned. He never compromised. We as the bride must do the same. We are being made comparable to Jesus Christ in this way. And what is that called, when you choose the right way? You resist the wrong, you go the right way. Isn't that called character? You and I are developing Godly character so that we can be comparable to Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:15. We read this particular scripture. It says, *But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all of your conduct.* So you and I are to be holy as God is. Verse 6. *As it is written, be holy for I am holy.* Verse 18. *Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* Notice, Christ was without blemish and without spot, and you and I are told to become holy.

With that in mind, let's read Ephesians 5 again. Ephesians 5 talks about how God is making the church the bride. Begin this time in verse 25. We are told here, *Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her. That he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the water by the word.* We know that the word of God cleans us up. We read the word of God, study it, and through the spirit of God it begins to cleanse our minds of wrong attitudes and approaches. Why? Why is this process going on? Why is God working with us in this way? *That he might present her (the wife) to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle.* So when the bride comes down the aisle she is not going to be wearing a gunnysack. She is going to be arrayed in what? White raiment. And there are not going to be spots and wrinkles. It is not going to be like she has been wearing this for two months and going to sleep in it,

and it is all wrinkled. It will be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. *That she should be holy, and without blemish.* So Christ, you find, was a lamb without blemish, without spot. You and I are to become without spot, without blemish, and we are to become holy. What does that mean? That means that God is working with us to bring us to be like the son, so that there can be a marriage that can take place. You could put it this way. Jesus Christ is not going to marry a dirty bride. He is going to marry a bride that has been cleaned up, and that gotten herself ready.

In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul writing about the bride says, *For I am jealous for you with a Godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* So we are to become as a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ. We are betrothed. This word is only used once in the New Testament, and it means to join or fit together. It is used of a carpenter who fastens together beams and planks to build a house or to join oneself such as in marriage. So what it is talking about, we are going to be betrothed with Christ. We are going to be put together just like taking planks, a floor that you might walk on, tongue and groove, and you put those together so that you have a solid piece. And this is the way we are going to become with Christ. We are to be a chaste virgin, emphasis here on virgin. It is interesting that in the Old Testament a high priest could only marry a virgin. Jesus Christ today is our high priest. We are going to marry him in the future, but he is our high priest.

Leviticus 21. Let's just notice this. It is an interesting sidebar, but it fits in with what we are talking about here. Verse 10. It says, *He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head anointing oil was poured, and who is consecrated to wear the garments shall not uncover his head, nor tear his clothes.* And then notice verse 13. *And he shall take a wife in her virginity. So as a high priest he was to marry a virgin. A widow, or a divorced woman, or a defiled woman, or a harlot, these he shall not marry. But he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife.* So she had to be of his own people, and she had to be a virgin.

Remember Adam could not find a mate who was comparable to him, who was suitable to him, who was of his kind. Well, Jesus Christ in looking around has not totally found that mate. But she is being perfected.

In 1 John 3:2 I want you to notice that at the resurrection at the return of Christ to the earth, notice what the Bible says we will become. It says, *Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know what when he is revealed, when Christ is revealed, he comes back, we shall be like him.* We are going to be exactly like him. *For we shall see him as he is.* So you and I, brethren, are going to be like him. The word *like* in the Greek means *corresponding to a thing, resemble, or to be similar.* You and I are going to be a member of the God family. We are going to be elevated from the human plane to the divine. Remember when the animals were created they were told to

what? Produce after their kind. So cats produced cats, and dogs, dogs, and chickens, chickens. Christ will marry his own kind. He will marry one who has been perfected, who has been elevated to become a part of the God family. We will be a part of that family.

Now why did God institute marriage? There are many reasons why, and I have been covering some of these for you today. But in Genesis 1:27-28 God told the man and the woman, *be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*. This is certainly one reason. They were to be holy, and they were to have children. And they were to bring their children up in the way of God.

Did you ever ask yourself why does God make man and woman one in marriage? Why did God say that we are become one? Malachi 2:14 tells you. Notice here, talking about marriage, and Israel and their corrupting of the marriage covenant. He says, *Then you say for what reason? Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth with whom you have dealt treacherously. She is your companion, and your wife by covenant*. Brethren, we have entered into a covenant with God also. But notice, *And did he not make them one? Didn't God make man one, having a remnant of the spirit? And why one? Why did God do this? Why did he make them one? Because he seeks Godly offspring*. That is why. God seeks Godly offspring. *Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth*.

In the world tomorrow, the millennium, and the great White Throne Judgment, we will be a helper to Jesus Christ. We will have been made comparable to him, a member of the family of God. And we will help him, assist him in bringing billions into the family, into the kingdom. We will take that position to assist and to help. And Jesus Christ is not going to give that responsibility, that duty to a wife who doesn't agree with him, who is not of the same mind and the same attitude, who has not been made comparable to him.

In Genesis 3:20, you can just jot that down, Genesis 3:20, it states that *Eve was the mother of all living*. The word *Eve* means *living*. All human beings sprang from Adam and Eve. You and I will help to bring all into the family of God in the millennium, in the White Throne Judgment. We will have that opportunity. You see, this is what God is doing with the firstfruits. We are being prepared in a special way to assist, to help, to be made comparable, to assist Jesus Christ.

In Revelation 22:17, one last scripture here has this to say about the job of the bride. *The spirit and the bride say come*. You see, at that time blindness will be removed. All will be given an opportunity for salvation. And we will be there. We will be telling them, *Come, drink of the waters of life. Take of the right tree*. You notice here that there is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There is just the tree of life. They will be asked, humanity will be asked to eat of the tree of life and live forever. And we will be there, and we say come, this is the way. And then

it says, *let him who hears say come. And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely.* So the book of Revelation clearly shows that the bride has made herself ready. And that is something else that we could get into. But brethren, we are in the process of being made ready, being prepared. This is part of the reason why we are here at services today. This is part of the reason why God has called us into his church. We are to be made ready. We are to be prepared. And when we are, and the resurrection takes place, we will be made comparable. And we will be there to assist and to help Jesus Christ forever.