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LOVE AND MARRIAGE

A DREAM- This dream melted my heart; I might have shared it previously but feel the need to bring it back again at this time. *"I was walking alone on a long long lonely journey. At one point I realized that someone had been holding my hand and had never let go. I could feel the love of that man for me and although I kept walking, it seems that I stood very still. Then the time came when He brought me face to face with himself, and intensely looked at me as he tenderly said, "I love you! My heart pounded and I was flooded with love for that man, so I told him without hesitation, 'I am free; meaning that I was free to marry him. Indeed, I was free to marry Him; I had left all that is attached to man's organized religious ways. I thought He would quickly answer, "Marry Me," but He did not answer as I had hoped He would. Instead He held me there and waited for me, until I told Him what He wanted to hear. Then, from the depth of my heart I uttered, "And I love you too!"*

As I write this today, I realize that the message of this dream is solemn and sobering. It brings me to John's vision in the book of Revelation where the Lord visits the church at Ephesus. They had done so much right, yet they lacked something of great value; they had lost their first love. The dream is a call for me and for all who are called, to return to our First Love! Over time, we might have left all the fellowships we thought would last forever. We left our traditions and even our cherished doctrines; we have moved on to follow the Lamb. But for the most part, our hearts have remained behind; we have not found our first love. This is why so many among us have felt the need to re-group, we have felt alone and lonely. In the dream, the Lord's waiting for an answer is a call to love. In the dream He is saying, "I have given you my love, and now I want your love."

Our Bridegroom desires a loving bride, one who loves Him and loves the things He loves. One who is in love with the truth. One who trusts Him and will follow Him away from the things she once loved. Until His bride makes this commitment, He will hold back His proposal. When we were lost, He called us as we were, He extended His full forgiveness to us, and worked with us to turn us around. He loved us and cared for us. He cleansed us and showed us His love. But now it is time to marry, and He desires for His bride to be adorned and ready to be forever true to Him.

Ephesus was a wealthy and prosperous, Greco-Roman center in what is now Turkey. There were many magnificent temples there and the worship of false gods was continuous; this was a hot bed of black magic and superstitions. At Ephesus, Paul said that he fought with beasts, strong demonic forces working through men whose hatred and animosity against him and against God so enraged them, that they had become as dangerous and deadly wild beasts. We see this kind of violent force coming from some who harbor hatred and animosity against the truth.

It was in the midst of such a turbulent atmosphere that Paul established the little group of Christ followers at Ephesus. Later, when the Spirit of the resurrected Lord visited her, this church had already overcome a great deal. She must have rejoiced when she heard the good words that Jesus had for her. Keep in mind that the vision of the seven churches visited by the Spirit on the Isle of Patmos, are

symbolic of the church that continued to grow until it became the church of the Firstborn, the Body of Christ that it is today, The number seven denotes completion, and the seven churches as they were in John's vision, are symbolic of the complete church at the end of the age.

The Lord Jesus was gentle when He spoke to this church; He lovingly said, *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars."* (Rev. 2:2) Even in that day, impostors with false doctrines were pressing her on all sides, and Jesus commended her for her keen discernment. These were very comforting and reassuring words. Jesus continued, *"...and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name sake and have not become weary."* (Vs.3) The church at Ephesus was a fine church. She was a church that did not compromise with evil at any price; she upheld the Law. But there was a problem, a flaw that needed to be dealt with. And so the Lord told His beloved bride, *"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent."* (Rev. 2:4-5) The two words that stand out in this, are, "First love," and "Repent!" Or "Turn around and return to the One you first loved."

OUR AUSTERE, UNBENDING HUSBAND--THE LAW- We teach our children to obey. Even if a child pitches a tantrum, he must still obey his parents or tutors. A soldier must obey his commanding officers, whether he feels like it or not. We must obey the laws of the land or possibly go to jail. Obedience to the Law makes us good citizens. Paul says that the Law is holy, and it is because it tames the wild human nature by submission. It also teaches us to respect others and to eventually submit to God. We all begin our lives under the Law. Paul says that we are married to the Law, but when the Law of Christ becomes our husband, the former Law dies. *"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then, if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so she is no longer an adulteress, though she is married to another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another- to him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit unto God."* (Rom.7:2-4) If we continue to offer up the works of the Law when Christ has made us free from the Law, we cannot give life to the new creature in His image. Most Christians are still married or attached to doing the works of the Law, even many who have walked in this truth, have yet to eat it and digest it. Offering our good works as sacrifices to God is like offering the sacrifices of Cain, while the voice of Abel's blood cries out from the ground. Jesus Christ wants us to obey Him because we love Him. We will do works, but they will be prompted by love and not by duty. The Spirit of the Son says, "Abba Father!" This is an expression of love, like "my dear Papa." Leaving the works of the Law is the most difficult thing to do, because it is part of the death of the cross.

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?- As individuals or as the corporate church, we have been married to the Law. We have faithfully served the Law, and we have been proud of our works. The repentance that Jesus is asking for, is not so much for the sins we commit, as it is for the works of righteousness that we keep offering to Him. Jesus is our example in this too. He came to earth, *"...made of a woman, made under the law."* (Gal.4:4) He was raised according to the old covenant Law of commandments. Jesus was taught the Scriptures, and as a young boy, His knowledge and wisdom amazed the doctors in the temple. When Jesus came to John's baptism of repentance, John first refused, knowing that Jesus had no sin; nevertheless, Jesus explained, they had to *"fulfill all righteousness."* (Matt.3:15) On that day, Jesus was no longer a man under the Law, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"* thundered the Father's voice from above. Jesus had repented, (turned away), from the works of the Law,

and begun His walk as the Son, ready to embrace the will of His Father. The Law brings us to repentance, but the works of the Law feed our pride and bring more death to us. If we turn to Christ and still continue in the works of the Law, we become arrogant Christians, sitting ourselves above others. Jesus loved a young man who said he had kept the Law completely, but He admonished, "If you would be perfect, sell all your goods, take up your cross and follow me." Paul, (Saul of Tarsus), held a highly esteemed position, with much knowledge of the Scriptures, yet, he counted all things but loss, for the excellency of knowing Christ, "...and do count them as dung, that I may win Christ." (Phil.3:8)

THE MULTI-FACETED CHRIST- A diamond has no light of its own; it sparkles as it reflects the light of its own facets. The more facets a diamond has, the more it shines and sparkles. This is a phenomenon. Christ is like a most precious diamond, reflecting the Light of its many facets, back to those who keep their hearts and minds on Him. Christ is the reflection of God the Father. Jesus declared, "...whoever has seen me, has seen the Father..." (Jn.14:9) Christ is multi-faceted and He is forever the same, "*Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.*" (Heb.13:8) He is the Savior of all who died before His resurrection, He is the Savior of those who came and died after His resurrection, and He continues to be the Savior of the whole world, throughout the ages of eternity. As we grow in Christ, we see Jesus on the level of our new understanding, and as we mature, He appears more real and clearer to us. John writes that "...it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear; we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." (I Jn.3:2) The moment that we clearly see Him as He is, we will appear as Him to the world.

THE SEED OF CHRIST- A very important clue concerning Christ is given by the apostle Paul, "*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ.*" (Gal. 3:16) Here, Christ is called a Seed. A seed is the part that holds the power of reproduction. In other words, it holds within its form, the potential of becoming a full being, and of multiplying its life. Within the Christ is contained the Seed of the Son of God and that life is the life of God. The Christ Seed holds the potential of multiplying the life of God into many sons after His likeness and image. It was to Abraham and his Seed, that God promised, "*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*" (Gen. 22:18) God's promise of blessing all the nations of the earth is not only to Abraham, but to all of us who are his seed; God is fulfilling this promise.

WE WOULD SEE JESUS- There was a day when certain Greeks came to Philip requesting to see Jesus. When Jesus received these visitors, He said something that must have sounded strange to them. These men came to see Jesus, and this is what He said to them. "*The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*" (Jn.12: 23-24). This was very deep, and we don't know whether these men who wanted to see Jesus, grasped the meaning of it. In essence, by the Spirit, Jesus was saying, to see Jesus, you must see, not only me, but the entire harvest of "Jesuses" that will be formed from the corn of wheat that the Son of man is sowing in the earth. Jesus was telling His Greek visitors, to truly see Me, you must see a Seed, a corn of wheat dying in the ground and growing into new life, into an entire Body of sons arising from that single Seed. At first we see Jesus as the man He was when He walked this earth. But as He reveals Himself to us each day, we see Him to the degree that we experience Him; we see Him to the degree that we are like Him, so now we only see Him in part. Paul writes, "*For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known.*" (I Cor.13:12)

The mystery of Christ being hid among the Gentiles is indeed astounding, but the mystery that this Christ is a copious Seed which is multiplying into the likeness of Jesus Christ, in the spiritual womb of a many-membered company, is even more stunning! Paul wrote, *"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery** which was kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandments of the everlasting God, **for obedience to the faith**-"* (Rom. 16:25-26 NKJ) Jesus is the Christ which was made manifest, and now the whole world is groaning and travailing for the complete Christ harvest of sons to appear, and to gather the world unto Him. Jesus did not change the world by taking down the Roman rule of that time, although this is what the disciples and the people were expecting from Him; Jesus revealed the glory of the Father, dwelling within a flesh and blood Man.

THE LANGUAGE OF TYPES AND SYMBOLS- Much of what Christians have been taught, is the literal letter of the words. Paul said that *"...the letter kills..."* (II Cor. 3:6). Jesus said, *"...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."* (Jn. 6:63) If the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then the words that we read are not literal, they are spirit and they are life. The question is, "how can we understand or see the invisible things of spirit?" The first answer is faith, we understand them by faith, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Heb. 11:1) It takes faith to see the invisible things of the Spirit, but God has also provided a way through types and symbols. When Jesus was speaking in parables, He was using types and symbols. The sower and the soil, are not an actual man planting seeds in the actual, physical earth; it is a picture of the Son of God, spreading the Word into the hearts and souls of earthly humanity. The city with a street of gold, is not an actual brick and stone city in space, but a gathering of souls who are raised to a higher level of life, and gathered together, each working according to its own aptitude and craft, as they walk in the nontarnishable gold of God's nature. With symbols, the Spirit teaches us a new language, and trains and renews our minds. In this way, a wider window onto spiritual things, is open to our understanding, giving us a new vision of Christ. Paul teaches that *"...we are transformed by the renewing of our minds."* (Rom. 12:2)

Some may think that learning through symbols is too simplistic, but in reality, they are missing the power of such teaching. Many Christians try hard to "renew" their minds by their own will power, by introspection, self-discipline, and by much learning. Indeed, these things are tools to train our mind, and give us direction, but they lack the power to renew our minds and transform our souls. Some trust only the teachings of men with charisma, academic credentials or doctoral degrees after their names. Jesus, had all knowledge and wisdom at His disposal, taught the deep things of God through simple parables. He chose mere fishermen to be the disciples with whom He would build His church. Paul was a learned man, but he left behind all his learning and counted it as dung. *"For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks. Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."* (I Cor. 1:19, 22-24) The wisdom of the world is not the answer to the renewing of our minds. God's holy Spirit, leads us into all truths by using the things of this earthly creation, as symbols of spiritual realities. *"...and a little child shall lead them."* (Isa. 11:6)

May the revelations of the mysteries find fertile ground to grow and develop in us. May the lights of the multi-faceted Christ fill us with Himself.

Because He is love, *Angèle Caporaso (Jackie)*