

Praising the Savior, Knowing Him, Rendering to Him All We Are and Have, and Cleaving to the Lord until He Receives His Victorious Bride

- 1 Praise the Savior, ye who know Him!
Who can tell how much we owe Him?
Gladly let us render to Him
All we are and have.
- 2 Jesus is the name that charms us;
He for conflicts fits and arms us;
Nothing moves and nothing harms us
When we trust in Him.
- 3 Trust in Him, ye saints, forever;
He is faithful, changing never;
Neither force nor guile can sever
Those He loves from Him.
- 4 Keep us, Lord, oh, keep us cleaving
To Thyself and still believing,
Till the hour of Thy receiving
The victorious bride.
- 5 Then we shall be where we would be;
Then we shall be what we should be;
Things which are not now, nor could be,
Then shall be our own. (*Hymns*, #161)

In the history of the church, hymns have occupied a vital role in both the believers' understanding of the divine revelation and its subjective impact on the growth and development of those believers. We who have believed into Christ should never consider hymns merely as a means of uplifting our emotions with our feelings of worship and praise. Hymns are also meant to be much more than ceremonial rituals in so-called worship services. The apostle Paul points out that hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs are a means of being filled in spirit (Eph. 5:18-19) and of allowing the word of Christ to dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). In order to help us to fully join with the burden of Christ as revealed in His word, we should know both the content and the connotation of the hymns that we sing. Paul also urges the believers to use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs not only to sing but also as a means of teaching and admonishing one another (v. 16). The New Testament believers enjoy singing and psalming with grace in their hearts to the Lord, indicating that the singing of hymns is very effective in the development and experience of intimate fellowship with the Lord. As we sing the hymns and fellowship over

the hymns, our hearts should focus on the riches of the grace of the Lord, and our singing should be the overflowing from our hearts to the Lord out of the rich enjoyment of the grace that we have received.

The contents of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs can be very powerful in our teaching and admonishing of one another. In most Christian congregations today, however, speaking to one another and teaching and admonishing one another from the hymns are virtually unheard of, let alone practiced, by the members. As we review the above hymn, our goal is to reveal the thoughts contained and implied in the hymn—thoughts that unveil God's eternal purpose for our mutual understanding and blessing. We can then, through this and other hymns, apply such thoughts to our speaking and teaching of our faith and to our practice.

We have titled this article "Praising the Savior, Knowing Him, Rendering to Him All We Are and Have, and Cleaving to the Lord until He Receives His Victorious Bride." The writer of the hymn above, Thomas Kelly, may not have recognized such a title to be a description of the burden of the hymn that he authored; the title reflects the very significant change made in the fourth stanza by Living Stream Ministry when adapting this hymn for inclusion in *Hymns*. The final two lines in stanza four as written by Kelly read, "Till the hour of our receiving / Promised joys with Thee" (*Spiritual Songs*). In contrast, the version in *Hymns*, published by Living Stream Ministry, declares, "Till the hour of Thy receiving / The victorious bride."

This seemingly small modification revolutionizes the impression of the hymn by turning it from the common thoughts that have been held by many believers throughout the history of Christianity to the divine revelation of the economy of God as unveiled in the Bible. The familiar thought in Christian folklore is that being rescued from perdition and obtaining an entrance into heaven, where Christians will enjoy various crowns for their personal satisfaction and glory, is the reward that Christians will receive for believing and practicing faith in Christ as the unique Savior. Such a concept also anticipates living an idyllic life in an atmosphere of sinless perfection without strife and

difficulty, a utopia full of joy and personal satisfaction. These “rewards,” which are mainly self-centered and individualistic, are, regrettably, an extension of our fleshly ambitions and imaginations. Although sometimes accompanied by the ordinary thoughts of worshipping God and Christ with the bowing of the knees and the confessing with the tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord, this view is still far short of that which will bring glory and satisfaction to God as depicted in the Bible. We would not say that these anticipated prizes are devoid of any biblical basis, but they fail to reflect the desire and intention of God in His economy. God could never be satisfied to have merely redeemed and cleansed sinners worshipping Him in the divine realm, simply having been restored to sinless innocence, becoming like Adam before the fall.

Instead, God desires matured sons, regenerated and transformed to be the new creation, the reproduction of His firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29-30). These many sons will be headed up by Christ to be the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23). The built-up church is also the bride of Christ being prepared under Christ’s sanctifying care—that He might present her to Himself “glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things” (5:27). The church will be the warrior to defeat God’s enemies, as revealed in Ephesians 6. She will thus become the “victorious bride,” whom the Lord will marry at His coming back (Rev. 19:7-9). Following the wedding feast, she will accompany Christ to the war at Armageddon for the defeat and the expulsion from the earth of Antichrist and the false prophet, sending them to perdition (vv. 11-21). Hallelujah for Christ and His victorious bride who terminate Satan’s usurping of the earth and who bring in the kingdom of God (cf. 12:10-11)!

“Praise the Savior, Ye Who Know Him!”

The hymn begins with an exhortation and encouragement to all who know the Lord Jesus: “Praise the Savior, ye who know Him!” This summons to praise recalls the words of the writer to the Hebrew believers: “Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name” (Heb. 13:15). We, the redeemed and sanctified believers, surely ought to be always full of praise to our God for His indescribable love and grace to us.

In Revelation 5 the praises to God, the One seated on the throne, expand to include the wonderful Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), because He has been found worthy to open the scroll of the divine economy. The heavenly scene described by John unveils the One who sits upon the throne, having in His hand a scroll

sealed with seven seals (Rev. 5:1). (The scroll with its seals indicates the eternal purpose of God for His whole creation, including the church, Israel, the world, and the universe.) God on His throne seeks someone who is worthy to open the scroll. But a search of the whole creation—in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth—fails to find even one who is worthy. John broke down into tears at the absence of anyone in the entire universe who was worthy to open the scroll. But suddenly, one of the angelic elders around the throne proclaimed to John, “Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals” (v. 5). When John turned to look, he saw a Lamb standing as having just been slain (v. 6). The Lamb came and took the scroll out of the right hand of the One seated upon the throne (v. 7), and the multitude of angels and living creatures surrounding the throne burst into singing praises to the worthy Lion-Lamb (v. 8):

And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth. And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and of the living creatures and of the elders, and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who has been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever. (vv. 9-13)

Hallelujah! The exalted Lion-Lamb, who was slaughtered for the sins of all fallen mankind and was triumphantly raised from the dead, has with His own blood purchased men for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation; He is worthy to open the scroll of God’s history with man! He is fully worthy of eternal praise! We join in to praise and exult Him here today!

Knowing Him according to His Revealed Purpose

The charge to praise in stanza 1 of this hymn is directed to “ye who know Him.” To know the Savior is a blessing and gift from the Father. In Matthew 11 the Lord told His disciples, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one fully knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone fully know the Father except the Son and him to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (v. 27). The Greek

word related to knowing in this verse denotes not merely a casual knowing but full knowledge, an intimate knowing, a thorough subjective acquaintance with. Only the Father and the Son can impart such rich knowing of God into others. Only from the divine source are we empowered to know Him experientially in an intimate relationship, that is, a love relationship.

Knowing Him by Loving Him

Our deep and indispensable knowing of the Lord must be through a loving relationship with Him as our coming Bridegroom. We observe here a particular impact of the change of the wording in stanza 4 from the natural human thought concerning our receiving expected promises of personal rewards (“Till the hour of our receiving / Promised joys with Thee”) to the revelation of the Lord’s receiving His long-awaited overcoming counterpart (“Till the hour of Thy receiving / The victorious bride”). God’s economy consummates with the Lord coming for His bride, she who is prepared and victorious. The thought of Christ’s receiving of the victorious bride focuses the entire hymn on the center of God’s eternal purpose in His creation of man, which includes the Savior’s incarnation as a man and His atoning sacrifice of Himself—abandoning His glory as God and with God, humbling Himself to be a man, and willingly submitting to the shameful death on a cross—in order to purchase for God redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified humanity. It further alludes to the Triune God’s remarkable desire that human beings would become the organic reproduction of Christ. According to the divine revelation, the Holy Spirit is operating in the redeemed and regenerated sons of God to mature and build them together, thus constituting them to be His church, His corporate Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all. The Body of Christ is also the one new man and consummates in the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem—the mingling of God with man and man with God (Eph. 1:22-23; Rom. 8:29-30; Rev. 21:9; 22:17). What a vast difference between the anticlimactic human assumptions concerning promised joys and the consummate divine revelation of the Savior’s longed-for reception of His victorious bride!

The view of the victorious bride as the ultimate climax and goal of our salvation uplifts the poetic utterances in this hymn with refreshing insights and imbues it with a sense of aspiration regarding God’s ultimate purpose for us

as His many begotten sons (Rom. 8:29-30). We must know Him in the way of His eternal economy, that is, His plan to fill His people on the earth with Himself so that they may be one with Him to express Him and to carry out His divine administration under the heading up of all things in His firstborn Son (Eph. 1:9-11). Apart from knowing Him according to the divine goal of His return for the prepared and overcoming bride, any speaking regarding His coming again is vanity. He is coming not only to establish His kingdom on earth; He is coming for His victorious bride. Having this vision of His purpose will motivate and energize us to be the wise virgins, who have prepared oil in their vessels together with their burning lamps so that they are ready to hear the midnight cry: “Behold, the bridegroom! Go forth to meet him!” (Matt. 25:6). Our having oil in our vessels implies our having received the divine dispensing of the Spirit of God into our human spirit; the Spirit fills us with the divine life, making us burning and shining lamps for His glory and satisfaction (Eph. 3:16-21; 5:8; Matt. 5:14).

CHRIST’S RECEIVING OF
THE VICTORIOUS BRIDE FOCUSES
THE ENTIRE HYMN ON THE
CENTER OF GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE,
INCLUDING HIS INCARNATION
AND HIS ATONING SACRIFICE.

Only those who really know Him in such a complete and affectionate way are qualified and able to render genuine praise to Him. We, the redeemed and regenerated sinners, should make it our priority to know this exalted God-man Savior and to be found in Him (cf. Phil. 2:7-9; 3:9). We should join the apostle in his prayer to the Father: “That

He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:16-17). As Christ makes His home in our hearts, we are made “full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ” (vv. 18-19). We need to make it our most urgent necessity to pursue Him in the riches of His resurrection life and in the depths of His suffering experiences, having the purpose of being conformed to His death (cf. Phil. 3:10). In Him we have become a new creation—the old things have passed away, and now they have all become new (2 Cor. 5:17). When we enjoy the transforming grace of our Savior, we are constrained by the love of Christ (v. 14). Then our singing and praising will be characterized by an intimate, fresh, and loving appreciation of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. Phil. 3:8). “Praise the Savior, ye who know Him!”

In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul exults in the “things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and

which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (2:9). Witness Lee's note on this verse is helpful to our understanding of what it is to love God.

To realize and participate in the deep and hidden things God has ordained and prepared for us requires us not only to believe in Him but also to love Him. To fear God, to worship God, and to believe in God (that is, to receive God) are all inadequate; to love Him is the indispensable requirement. To love God means to set our entire being—spirit, soul, and body, with the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)—absolutely on Him, that is, to let our entire being be occupied by Him and lost in Him, so that He becomes everything to us and we are one with Him practically in our daily life. In this way we have the closest and most intimate fellowship with God, and we are able to enter into His heart and apprehend all its secrets (Psa. 73:25; 25:14). Thus, we not only realize but also experience, enjoy, and fully participate in these deep and hidden things of God. (*Recovery Version*, 1 Cor. 2:9, note 3)

When we learn Him through such intimate experiences, we will gladly put off the old man and put on the new man; thus, we will be renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:20-24). We will experience His death, being freed from the old creation, and we will match Him in His resurrection life and living through redemption, regeneration, and transformation. When we love Him and know Him according to His eternal economy, we will praise Him as we ought.

Knowing Him in an Organic Union

The apostle John begins his first Epistle by declaring, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life" (1:1). The Greek word translated "beheld" means "to view attentively," "to contemplate," and "to consider from an earnest, more sustained perspective"; this indicates that John and his fellow apostles were learning to know Jesus Christ as the eternal "Word of life" when they sojourned with Him for three and a half years. They observed His person and works, and they came to an irrefutable conclusion—this person is "the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us" (v. 2).

Jesus Christ, who came as the Son of God, is God incarnated to be a man, the human embodiment of the only true God; to behold Him intimately is to know the true God. The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Therefore, as we behold

Him, a divinely imparted capacity to know Him is transmitted into us. We receive this capability through the Triune God embodied in Christ, who in resurrection became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). He as the Spirit has entered our human spirit, making our spirit one with Him (6:17); we are mingled with Him as one spirit in our spirit. Then, our renewed mind, enlightened and empowered by the Spirit of reality (John 16:12-15), through the living and operating word of God (Heb. 4:12), unveils this wonderful Savior to us in our understanding. The divine reality in the God-man Jesus, which has been divinely dispensed into our spirit through regeneration, becomes clearly known to our mind. This understanding is the ability of the divine life, which has been born into us, to know the true God in our regenerated spirit and to be enlightened by the Spirit of reality in our renewed mind. We not only *know* the true God; we are also *in* the true God because we are in His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 5:19-20). Thus, we know Him through an organic union with Him. It is only by means of this organic union that we can genuinely know Him. And because of this precious union, we can sing to Him with uplifted and exalted praises: "Praise the Savior, ye who know Him!"

Rendering to Him All We Are and Have

Today the Lord Jesus is not visible to us as He was to the disciples. Yet, in our spirit we do behold and reflect Him (2 Cor. 3:18). The apostle Paul testifies, "Now we see in a mirror obscurely, but at that time face to face; now I know in part, but at that time I will fully know even as also I was fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Although our knowing of Him is somewhat obscure, as in a mirror (or an opaque window-pane), we are learning to use our regenerated spirit to gaze upon Him intently, to muse on the unsurpassed and indescribable riches in His status as the resurrected, ascended, and enthroned man whom God has made both Lord and Christ; He now is seated on the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

As God, the Lord was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43; John 11:21; 20:28). But as man, He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection. And as God's sent and anointed One, He was Christ from the time that He was born (Luke 2:11; Matt. 1:16; John 1:41; Matt. 16:16). But as such a One, He was also officially made the very Christ of God in His ascension.

The Lord was made Lord, the Lord of all, to possess all; and He was made Christ, God's Anointed (Heb. 1:9), to carry out God's commission. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Acts 2:36, note 1)

Through His incarnation as the only begotten Son of God, He is the unique One “who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 1:3-4). We need to consider and muse upon His person as One who is both a genuine man, yet without sin, in His humanity, and also the only true God in His divinity. We follow the pattern of the apostle John, who testifies, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality” (John 1:14). By exercising our regenerated spirit together with our enlightened and renewed mind, we will gain a fresh comprehension and a fine-tuned consciousness of the attributes of this wonderful God-man Savior. Spontaneously, there will be both a welling up within us of the question in stanza 1: “Who can tell how much we owe Him?” and the deep conviction to gladly render to Him all we are and have. When we see Him through our inner awareness of all that He is and has, we will spontaneously cast at His feet everything that we are and have.

“Jesus Is the Name that Charms us”

The Father has given Him a name that is above every name. As we inwardly comprehend our wonderful Savior as the God-man, Jesus Christ, His name becomes so charming to us. We have never seen Him, yet we love Him. The Gospels reveal that Jesus Christ was such an attracting person. He drew crowds to hear the wisdom with which He spoke and to see the things that He did in the name of the Father. But it is as the indwelling Spirit that He becomes to us an extraordinarily charming person—attractive, pleasing, appealing, engaging, lovely, delightful, irresistible, captivating, and glorious. We can never exhaust our appreciation of this extraordinarily precious person. We love Him, and we treasure Him above all else! Jesus is the name that charms us!

In the eyes of the people, Jesus is not the name of a great man; it is the name of a small man, a carpenter from the despised town of Nazareth in Galilee. The Jewish religious leaders considered Him to be an upstart who needed to be stopped lest He become a source of trouble in Israel both religiously and politically. They reasoned among themselves: “Search and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee” (John 7:52). But it is in this name that salvation is proclaimed to all who believe. And we who believe testify to everyone

that when we call upon this name, we experience what the Scripture says: “The same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him; for ‘whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (Rom. 10:12-13).

The Word of God reveals that Christ Jesus existed in eternity in the “form of God” (Phil. 2:6), implying that He existed in the nature and expression of the only true God. However, although He was thus equal with God, He did not consider that status “a treasure to be grasped” (v. 6). Rather, He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of a man; that is, He became a genuine man (v. 7). The One who was the only true God, the embodiment of the Triune God, became a genuine man. After becoming a man, He humbled Himself even to the point of being crucified to fulfill God’s plan of redemption and to initiate God’s purpose for man through regeneration. Because of His lowering Himself by being incarnated as a man, His humble human living, and His

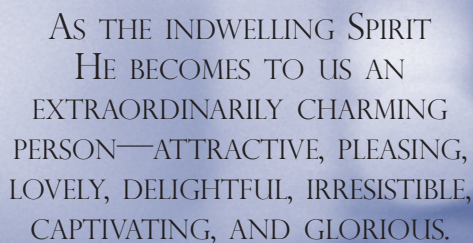
being put to a dishonorable death on the cross on behalf of all things (cf. Heb. 2:9), “God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the

Father” (Phil. 2:9-11). Hallelujah! Jesus is the name that charms us!

“He for Conflicts Fits and Arms Us”

Although the name of Jesus is charming and life changing to His redeemed and regenerated people, this name is hated and feared by many unbelievers, especially among fanatical non-Christian religious leaders and vehement self-exalting individuals in political, educational, and governmental circles. These opposers have cultivated unreasonable, unwarranted, and unflagging antagonism against this dear name, but we know that underlying the fierce attacks of these enemies of Christ and His church is the rebellion of Satan with the spiritual forces who have aligned themselves with Satan against both God and man.

The Bible warns us that behind the scenes on earth are these powerful and vicious forces in the heavenlies, that is, in the air, the atmosphere surrounding the earth. Because we wrestle against these principalities and powers, the Lord fits and arms us for battle (Eph. 6:12-18). These forces are



AS THE INDWELLING SPIRIT
HE BECOMES TO US AN
EXTRAORDINARILY CHARMING
PERSON—ATTRACTIVE, PLEASING,
LOVELY, DELIGHTFUL, IRRESISTIBLE,
CAPTIVATING, AND GLORIOUS.

not only violent and powerful, but they are also very subtle and crafty. These are the accomplices of the pernicious one, Satan, in whom the whole world lies (1 John 5:19). But the Epistle to the Romans assures us that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:35-39).

The foes are not united against only the Lord Jesus; they are also aligned intensely against the bride of Christ, His chosen people, who will overcome the world and Satan, the ruler of the world. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that He would build His church on the earth; He also hinted that intense warfare would ensue over this building of His church. As He and His disciples were passing through the area of Caesarea Philippi, He asked them to tell Him who men were speculating that He was (v. 13). They responded, "Some, John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (v. 14). Then He turned the question of His identity to them, asking them, "But you, who do you say that I am?" (v. 15). Simon Peter succinctly declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). The Lord was delighted with Peter's word and told him that his comprehension of Christ's identity and purpose was the result of a revelation from God the Father (v. 17). Then the Lord continued to enlighten His disciples concerning the unique purpose for which the Father had sent Him: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (v. 18). The Lord unveiled not only the goal of building the church but also the attacks of the "gates of Hades" against that entity.

Wherever and whenever there is a group of believers gathered into the name of Jesus, shepherding one another, praying for one another, and occupied with the Lord in the building up of His church, the Lord Jesus Christ will be in their midst (18:15-20). Eventually, the Scriptures show us that the church is the Body of Christ, the house of the living God, and a living composition of the believers as living stones built up into a spiritual house (Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5). These believers are all being fitted together and growing into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21). Clearly, wherever and whenever the church is being built up by the Lord, there will be antagonism and fierce resistance from the forces that oppose God. For this reason we need to be prepared by the Lord Jesus for the mounting warfare against His church. Because we love His name, we are ready to fight against all rule and power that mount up against us. Yet we quickly discover that we are unable to defeat the enemy by our own strength or authority; we need the power of Jesus and the authority of Jesus. "He for conflicts fits and arms us."

"Trust in Him and...Keep Us Cleaving"

Because of the intense contention that entangles us, the hymn urges the believing saints to trust in the Savior forever and assures us that nothing moves and nothing harms us when we trust in Him. Trust is a simple concept, but it is not easy to build. Without trust, nothing lasting can be established among human beings. The hymn identifies two major factors needed to build a trusting relationship—faithfulness and consistency: "He is faithful, changing never." The Lord Jesus is unequalled in dependability. But for us to build up trust in Him requires that we spend time with Him, bring our issues to Him and rely on Him. In our experience trust develops by means of testing. The apostle Peter, who developed a deep trust in the Lord Jesus, recommends that we learn to trust in Him in this way: "Casting all your anxiety on Him because it matters to Him concerning you" (1 Pet. 5:7). The apostle Paul admonishes the saints in Rome: "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" (Rom. 12:2). His exhortation suggests that the way to build trust is by testing out God's will day by day in order to prove that the Lord is reliable, trustworthy, and faithful.

When we come to the fourth stanza, we should join in to pray that the Lord will keep us cleaving to and still believing in Him. Perhaps we can say that cleaving is trusting that has fully developed into an intimate and thorough commitment. Genesis 2:24 uses the word *cleave* in relation to a man leaving his father and mother and cleaving to his wife to the extent that "they shall become one flesh." The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word for *cleave* into the Greek word προσκολληθήσεται, which indicates "to be joined to" (8). It depicts a complete union, an organic joining of two to become one. We need to learn in all things to trust in, rely on, be joined to, and cleave to the Lord's unchanging love, knowing that "neither force nor guile can sever / Those He loves from Him."

"Till the Hour of Thy Receiving the Victorious Bride"

As we have seen, the hymn as published by Living Stream Ministry establishes the goal of the believers' cleaving: "Keep us, Lord, oh, keep us cleaving / To Thyself and still believing, / Till the hour of Thy receiving / The victorious bride." The Scriptures give us ample reason to conclude this hymn with the anticipated return of the Lord for and with His triumphant bride.

For example, John the Baptist responded to the urgent concern of his disciples regarding the rising popularity of the

Lord Jesus by saying, “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. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:29-30). The Bridegroom is seeking His bride; Lee’s footnote on John 3:30 affirms:

The increase in this verse is the bride in v. 29, and the bride there is a living composition of all the regenerated people. This means, in this chapter on regeneration, that regeneration not only brings the divine life into the believers and annuls the satanic nature in their flesh, but it also makes them the corporate bride for Christ’s increase. The last two points, the annulling of the serpentine nature in the believers and the believers’ being made the bride of Christ, are fully developed in John’s Revelation. The book of Revelation reveals mainly how Satan as the old serpent will be fully eliminated (Rev. 20:2, 10) and how Christ’s bride, the New Jerusalem, will be fully produced (Rev. 21:2, 10-27). (*Recovery Version*, John 3:30, note 1)

The entire Bible is a romance of a universal couple. God in Christ is the Husband, and God’s corporate, redeemed, and regenerated people constitute the bride. Both the Old Testament—in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea—and the New Testament—in Matthew, John, Ephesians, 2 Corinthians, and Revelation—clearly reveal God’s yearning to be the Husband to His people. Adam and Eve are a type of Christ and the church (cf. Eph. 5:29-32). The bride comes out of the groom; both have one source, one nature, one life, and one living. The organic Body of Christ becomes the corporate bride of Christ as the issue of three major actions of the Triune God regarding His chosen people: God’s creation of man in His own image and according to His likeness; Christ’s incarnation to become a man and His crucifixion with His resurrection to accomplish the judicial redemption and organic salvation of His selected people; and the Spirit’s transforming and building work in and upon God’s chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people. Thus, the Bible progressively presents man and God as developing and growing into a universal couple. The Song of Songs is an abridged allegory in the Bible portraying the process and development of the romance between Christ and an individual believer. It is a portrait of the love relationship between the Beloved and His lover. The Beloved is Christ, and the lover is His loving and overcoming seeker. It is clearly a love story focused on the preparation of the human/divine bride who will be fully joined

WHERE WOULD WE BE?
WE WOULD BE WITH CHRIST
IN THE FATHER AS THE ABODE
AND DWELLING PLACE
OF THE FATHER WITH THE SON
FOR ETERNITY.

to her divine/human Spouse. In the New Testament the Triune God, embodied in Christ and consummated as the life-giving Spirit, operates to build the individual overcoming seekers together into the corporate bride. The Triune God dispenses Himself as the divine life into them, making them one with Himself and one with each other.

God created man in His image, according to His likeness (Gen. 1:26-28), with the goal that man and God could develop and mingle within a romantic relationship like that of a husband to his wife. For this reason the Bible is a romance. Through His word God courts His loving seekers; according to His revelation, His goal is not simply to redeem people but to espouse to Himself those whom He has redeemed that they may become His corporate lover and His bride. That corporate bride is the church, which becomes the New Jerusalem adorned as a bride for her husband (Rev. 21:2, 9-11). If we would be a part of this corporate bride, we need to respond to the courtship of God in His word

with love and affection. We simply love the Lord and seek after Him in our daily walk; in this way we will experience continual growth and ongoing change by the Spirit’s transforming work in us to constitute us in His image and according to His likeness that we may match Him (2 Cor. 3:18). We just love Him, open to Him, and give Him the freedom to enter and possess our

entire being. We need to come to the clear realization that our individual personal growth in life is for the corporate building of the Body of Christ. As we pursue Christ and grow up into Him in all things, the Body of Christ is being built up as a corporate building. First, we personally grow up into Him, who is the Head, Christ (Eph. 4:15). Then we function in the Body to perfect one another by focusing on Christ living and growing in us. We grow unto maturity through the process of the Triune God dispensing Himself into us, by receiving and enjoying the love of the Father, the grace of Christ, and the flow, the fellowship, of the Holy Spirit, which flow transmits the Father’s love and Christ’s grace into us (2 Cor. 13:14). In the eyes of God we are becoming the New Jerusalem, the bride for Christ His Son.

Being Where We Would Be and What We Should Be

Stanza 5 speaks of “where we should be” and “what we should be.” Where do we want to be? Many genuine Christians have only a vague idea of God’s purpose as it relates to their destiny. Most consider going to heaven and being

glorified outwardly as God's goal for their salvation. Thus, many would say that they want to be in heaven. The natural man sometimes has strange thoughts about heaven, thinking that it is the location of their eternal destiny and that believers will be sitting on a cloud and playing a golden harp or walking on golden streets. Such thoughts reflect a limited understanding concerning God's economy. There are other natural concepts about our eternal destiny: that we will be reuniting with loved ones, dwelling in mansions in the sky, and living an ecstatic life in a world very much like our present environment but without sin, sickness, or problems. There is little or no thought of checking what the Bible unveils concerning our coming inheritance. The Lord Jesus told us, "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Where would we be? Our aspiration should be that we would be in the mingling of the Triune God with His chosen people, joined to God, filled with God, and incorporated into God in spirit. Such a mingling consummates in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem, not heaven, is our eternal abode.

The phrase *then we shall be what we should be* raises corollary considerations. What should we be? A significant percentage of people believe in heaven (where, supposedly, people who have lived good lives go) and a lesser percentage believe in hell (where people who have lived bad lives go). Most of these feel that they will probably go to heaven, and only a very small percentage expect to go to hell. So, the common thought is that we want to be good people in order to be qualified to enter that "promised land." But what is a "bad life" and what is a "good life"? The widespread thought is that a good life is a living that follows an imagined model of the Ten Commandments: you do not lie ("white lies don't count"), steal ("but you don't need to sweat the little things that wind up in your possession"), commit adultery ("unless you are really in love with the person involved"), or kill. According to such a mistaken concept, the remaining commandments do not matter so much, and if you do your best to be a good person, the Lord will probably be satisfied with you anyway.

These opinions are absolute vanity. The genuine Christian faith stands solely on the Word of God. A "Christian" society may conduct itself and teach its members to observe certain practices without giving heed to the Bible as their only standard of faith and practice. A standard that is based on the natural concepts of man, of course, is not Christian at all. Such a group of religious people have no principle or guideline to govern how they live, even though their intentions may be very "good." Their views are dependent upon what they recognize as their model for proper human living, and that model is dependent mainly on the societal norms at any particular time.

God's standard, however, is Christ—not the imitation of Christ but the reality of Christ dwelling in us and living

Himself out through us. Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, is operating in the believers as the life-giving Spirit (Col. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 15:45b) to perfect the saints "unto the building up of the Body of Christ, 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" (Eph. 4:12-13). The Epistle to the Ephesians goes on to show us that the church is the one new man (2:15), that the church is the bride of Christ under His sanctifying care with a view to present her to Himself glorious without spot or wrinkle (5:26-27), and that the church is a warrior bride to withstand Satan with his rulers and authorities in the heavenlies (6:10-18; Rev. 17:14; 19:19-20).

The genuine church, the Body of Christ, is growing with the growth of God (Col. 2:19) through the metabolic operation of the Spirit of God within each believer (John 6:56-58, 63). The members of the Body grow up into the Head in all things, and each one functions out from the Head for the mutual building up in love (Eph. 4:15-16). The building produces the Body of Christ, which becomes the corporate bride of Christ for His satisfaction. Ephesians 6 shows us that this bride is the victorious warrior to defeat God's enemy through the empowering of the Lord within, the covering of the armor of God without, and the Spirit's two-edged sword, the word of God, to deal with God's enemy both within and without.

Where would we be? And what should we be? As proper Christians, we would be with Christ in the Father as the abode and dwelling place of the Father with the Son for eternity (John 14:3-6, 23). As transformed and matured believers, we should be members of the corporate consummation of the New Jerusalem as the eternal dwelling place of God with His chosen and glorified people (Rev. 21:12, 14, 22) and the constituents of the victorious bride following Christ to defeat God's enemy and bring in His kingdom to fill the whole earth (12:5, 7-11; 19:7-9, 11-16; 11:15). May the Lord grace us to forget the things which are behind and stretch forward to the things which are before and to pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called us upward (Phil. 3:13-14).

by Gary Kaiser

Works Cited

- Hymns*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1980.
- Kelly, Thomas. "PRAISE the Saviour, ye who know Him." *Spiritual Songs*, Stem Publishing, 1978. <https://www.stem-publishing.com/hymns/ss/476>.
- Lee, Witness. Footnotes. *Recovery Version of the Bible*, Living Stream Ministry, 2003.
- Septuagint. <https://archive.org/details/InterlinearGreekEnglishSeptuagintOldTestamentPrint>.