

8/18-24#3 **The Maturity of the Bride: I. The meaning of the word mature in Greek is "at the end point":** **A** To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life; to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us. Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation... Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect. **B** The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life. **C** A mature believer knows and cares for the Body of Christ, being Body-conscious and Body-centered. **II. As used in the New Testament, the word mature refers to the believers' being full-grown and perfected in the life of Christ, which they received at the time of regeneration:** **A** We should never be content with ourselves but pursue growth and maturity in the life of Christ. **B** We need to go on, to be brought on, to maturity by forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, pursuing toward the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ for the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom. Phil. 3:12 ...I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus... 13 One thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, 14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward. 15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind... **C** The prerequisite for maturity in the spiritual life is to grow continually in the divine life. **D** The ultimate issue of the believers' growth and maturity in the life of Christ is the full-grown man—the church as the Body of Christ growing into a mature man. **III. In his Epistle, James uses the illustration of a farmer awaiting with long-suffering the precious fruit of the earth:** James. 5:7 Therefore be long-suffering, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth, exercising long-suffering over it until it receives the early and late rain. **A** The Lord Jesus is actually the real Farmer, the unique Farmer. **B** While we are awaiting with long-suffering the Lord's coming, He, as the real Farmer, is awaiting with patience our maturity in life, as the firstfruits and harvest of His field. **C** If we pray, **"Lord, come back quickly,"** the Lord may say, "While you are awaiting My coming back, I am awaiting your maturity; only your maturity can hasten

My coming back." **D** It is a great help for us to realize that if we are serious about awaiting the Lord's coming back, we need to grow in life unto maturity. **IV. To be mature is to have Christ fully formed in us; it also means that we have been fully transformed into His image:** **A** Since the time of our regeneration, the Lord has been working in us so that we may have His image. **B** When the Lord has fully worked His image into us and is fully expressed through us, we will be mature in life. **V. Chapter 3 of Song of Songs shows us the maturity of the seeking one, and chapter 4 continues by explaining that such maturity is reached by the subduing of the will; the secret of the maturity of the seeking one is that her will has been completely subdued and resurrected:** S.S.4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, / Built for an armory: / A thousand bucklers hang on it, / All the shields of the mighty men. **A** The neck signifies the human will under God; the Lord considers the submission of our will a most beautiful thing. **B** If we have a submissive will, our will is expressed like the tower of David that holds all kinds of weapons. **1** First, our will must be subdued; then it will be strong in resurrection and like the tower of David, the armory for the spiritual warfare. **2** The weapons for spiritual warfare are kept in our subdued and resurrected will. **VI. The goal of Paul's ministry was to present every man mature, full-grown, in Christ for the one new man:** Col.1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; **A** The Greek word rendered "full-grown" in Colossians 1:28 may also be translated "perfect," "complete," or "mature." **B** Paul's ministry was to dispense Christ into others so that they would be perfect and complete by maturing in Christ unto full growth. **VII. Genesis 37—47 is a record of the process of Jacob's maturity:** **A** In Genesis 27 we see a supplanter; in chapter 37, a transformed man; and at the end of chapter 47, a mature person. **B** The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life: **1** God's eternal purpose can only be accomplished through our transformation and maturity. **2** Maturity is a matter of having the divine life imparted into us again and again until we have the fullness of life. **C** Maturity is a matter of the enlargement of capacity: **1** Maturity in life is the sum total of receiving the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Heb.12:10 For they disciplined for a few days as it seemed good to them; but He, for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness. **2** Others may see

a person who has matured in life, but they cannot see the accumulated discipline of the Holy Spirit which that person has received secretly day after day throughout the years. **D** God will sovereignly use persons, things, and events to empty us of everything that has filled us and to take away every preoccupation so that we may have an increased capacity to be filled with God. **E** The life of Jacob reveals that everything that happens to us is under God's sovereignty for our transformation and maturity; nothing is accidental: **1** In order to become mature, Jacob first had to suffer the loss of Joseph, the treasure of his heart. **2** A mature believer has learned that God is merciful and all-sufficient to meet his needs in every kind of situation. Gen.43:14 And may the All-sufficient God grant you mercy before the man, **3** His trust and rest are altogether in the mercy of his all-sufficient God, no longer in himself or in his ability. **4** The strongest sign of Jacob's maturity was his blessing others. Gen.48:15 And he blessed Joseph and said, / The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, / The God who has shepherded me all my life to this day, **16** The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; **VIII. The mature bride is the goal of God's will:** Rev.19:7 "the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." **9** "And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. **A** The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers. **B** The marriage of the Lamb is the issue of the completion of God's New Testament economy, which is to obtain for Christ a bride, the church, through His judicial redemption and by His organic salvation in His divine life. **C** In the Gospel of John, Christ is revealed both as the Lamb who came to take away sin and as the Bridegroom who came that He might have the bride. **D** Christ's goal is not to remove sin; it is to have the bride: **1** In the book of Revelation, we see that Christ is the Lamb and the coming Bridegroom; therefore, as the Bridegroom, He must have a wedding. **2** The wedding of the Lamb will be a universal wedding; it will be the marriage of the Redeemer and the redeemed. **3** Christ is coming as the Bridegroom, and we are going as the bride. **E** A very crucial matter is the readiness of the bride. **1** According to Revelation 19:8 and 9, the wife, the bride of Christ, here consists only of the overcoming believers during the millennium. **2** The readiness of the bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers, who are not separate individuals but the corporate bride. **3**

In Revelation 19:6 the voice of the great multitude proclaims, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns": **a** The reign of God, the kingdom, is related to the marriage of the Lamb. **b** The wedding will bring in the reign of the Lord, the kingdom, because all the guests called to the wedding will be both the corporate bride and the co-kings of the Bridegroom; all His co-kings will be His corporate bride. **c** To the overcomers, the thousand years of the millennial kingdom will be a wedding feast. **d** Everyone invited to the wedding feast will also participate in the thousand-year reign as kings. **e** For the overcomers, reigning with Christ in the kingdom will be the wedding feast. Rev.20:6 "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years." **Testimony** I would like to share my walk toward maturity, based on the following outline. **V. ...the secret of the maturity of the seeking one is that her will has been completely subdued and resurrected** The Lord has been continually dealing with me so that my will might be fully submissive to Him. In my experience, at first I was in a stage where I could not recognize that these dealings were from the Lord, and I murmured frequently. Later, I made some progress and came to realize that my circumstances were indeed the Lord's dealings, yet I still found it hard to accept them. At the age of 43, through the Lord's sovereign arrangement in my environment, I experienced a job change from a pharmaceutical company—a mature industry—to a medical device company that was in a growth phase. These environmental leadings from the Lord were completely different from my natural inclinations. Not understanding the Lord's leading, I even harbored resentment and tried hard to take another path. However, these stages were actually the Lord's dealings to prepare me—someone who lacked strong academic credentials—to eventually become an executive in the Japan branch of a major U.S. medical device company. I came to realize that without submission, I could not understand the Lord's will; that His leading is always the best; and that any path arising from my self is the worst. Furthermore, whenever I submitted to the Lord, my inner capacity was enlarged. I could only pray, "**Lord, not submitting to You makes me the most foolish person. I want to be fully submissive to You and walk the path You have appointed for me.**"