Let’s Talk About Jesus: Jesus, a Bridegroom

I. THE NATURE OF GOD: LOVE

A. The nature of God is love. Love by definition is relational. We can only properly understand God’s eternal purposes and how He views us in the context of a *relational paradigm of God.*

   1 Jn. 4:16 *God is love, and he who abides in [lives in] love abides in God, and God in him.*

B. The nature of God’s kingdom is love—in deep relationship and partnership with Jesus.

C. God dwells forever in a deeply satisfying relationship of love in the fellowship of the Trinity. The Son loves the Father and the Spirit and the Father loves the Son and the Spirit and the Spirit loves the Father and the Son (Jn. 3:35; 5:20; 14:31). They deeply delight in using their authority to freely serve and honor each other (Jn. 5:23; 8:49-54; 12:26; 13:31-32; 14:12; 17:1, 4-5, 22, 24). Each is equally yoked in mutual love and wholehearted commitment. They are each fully involved, fully focused, and fully committed to one another.

   Jn. 5:20 *The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does...*

   Jn. 14:31 *I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do.*

D. Love is God’s eternal nature and personality. It is not something He does, but it is something that He is. **He is an eternal overflowing fountain of desire for His people.** Desire implies want, but not lack. God desires to share the joy of His love. Love must have an expression to be love.

E. Jesus’ love and desire for us is **infinite in measure** and **eternal in duration.** He always loves effortlessly and in fullness. He never grows in love nor diminishes in it when He gives it away. It is sustained forever with intensity. His love is like a volcanic explosion of holy desire.

F. We were created in God’s likeness for the purpose of relating to God. God designed the human spirit for partnership with Himself because He had plans to share so much with us forever.

   Gen. 1:26 *God said, “Let Us make man in **Our image,** according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over...all the earth...”*

   1. That God created us in His likeness gives us insight into His eternal nature. We were not created in the likeness of the angels who only serve God (Heb. 1:14).

   2. We were created in God’s image to be loved and to love. The capacity to deeply love is unique to the human spirit, because we are created in the image of the God who is love. The reason we enjoy being loved and loving is because we were made in the image of God, who enjoys loving and being loved.

   3. God created the human spirit with a longing for the assurance that God enjoys us and for deep partnership with God. These cravings were strategically given to us by God. They will never leave.
G. God loves us in the way that God loves God (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). This foundational truth gives us insight into the nature of God and His kingdom. Jesus feels the same intensity of love for us that the Father feels for Him. The Father has delighted in His fellowship with Jesus from all eternity.

*Jn. 15:9* As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

1. Love finds pleasure in others and in relating to them. When we love somebody we want them to feel loved. By the nature of love, Jesus desires a deep relationship with us.

2. Jesus’ desire is to make us feel loved and desires that we would celebrate our dignity and value. He finds pleasure in us, in sharing His heart with us, and in relating to us. He wants to partner with us in the work that His Father has entrusted to Him.

3. What we do matters in our interaction with God. What we do moves His heart. Our love for Him has a real impact on Him. He delights in us, our personality, gifts, and callings.

*Song of Solomon 4:9* “You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride; You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes, With a single strand of your necklace.

H. God’s plan is that love would abound on the earth forever. Love is more than just a key thread in the tapestry of the salvation story. It is the main purpose in God’s storyline that He communicated to Abraham, Moses, David, and all the prophets. It is the fulfillment of the law and prophets.

*Matthew 22:37–40* And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ 38 “This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 “The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ 40 “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

I. Love is the greatest virtue, our greatest response to God, and the core message of the kingdom. Loving relationship with God is foundational to every aspect of the kingdom. It is the primary grid through which we define theology, salvation, justice, the Great Commission, the glory of God, the supremacy of Jesus, eternal rewards, the millennial kingdom, judgment, the Body of Christ, worship, intercession, holiness, humility, faith, family life, economic prosperity, leadership, etc.

*1 Cor. 13:13* Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

J. The Spirit’s agenda is to establish the first commandment in first place in the Church forever. We are called to love Him with all our heart and mind because this is how He forever loves us.

*Mt. 22:37–38* You shall love the Lord...38 This is the first and great commandment.

K. We are a great part of Jesus’ story. The very existence of a Bride, equally yoked in voluntary love filling the earth, is a significant part of His glory and supremacy being manifest before all. We are the work of His hands (Eph. 2:10). We are one way He wants to be known.

L. Jesus does not want us disconnected from His story or glory. He loves us. He is not trying to dismiss us or minimize us. Our salvation and love for Him are a significant part of His work. He came up with the original relational plan to dwell with His people in the garden of Eden.
M. Salvation restores fellowship with the Trinity and the partnership with God that once occurred in Eden. Jesus, the last Adam, will be with His Bride in the garden, walking with the Father.

N. How we view God matters. Many see Jesus as if He were a great yet distant king, whose primary interest in us is to save us so that we will praise Him and work for Him. The gospel flourishes most when we understand the passion in God's personality for partnership with us. It is not enough to know what He has done for us. We need to know why He does what He does.

O. There is nothing more theologically accurate than Jesus' love. To sing descriptively about Jesus includes the truths about people who are deeply tied to His grand storyline. Worship songs with “I” and “me” express part of His story and glory, which involves us deeply. It sounds noble to never mention ourselves, but this misses a significant aspect of God's nature and story. Our worship songs will often include the glory of Jesus’ love and enjoyment of His Father and His Bride and will express our loyalty to Him and our cry for help to love and magnify Him more.

P. Jesus said so much in His High Priestly Prayer, asking that the Body of Christ would enter into deep participation with the fellowship of the Trinity as the way to transform the world.

\textit{Jn. 17:23} I in them, and \textit{You} in Me; that they may be made \textit{perfect in one}, and that the \textit{world may know} that You have sent Me, and have loved \textit{them} as You have loved Me.

Q. Experiencing God's love by receiving and responding to it is the only way to God's fullness. Our eternal participation with the indwelling Christ and being rooted and grounded in God's love that far exceeds human knowledge is the only way to experience the fullness of God's purposes.

\textit{Eph. 3:17-19} That Christ may \textit{dwell} in your hearts...that you, being \textit{rooted and grounded in love}, \textit{may be able to comprehend...the width and length and depth and height}-- \textit{to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge}; that you may be filled with all the \textit{fullness of God}.

II. JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM: GOD OF DESIRE AND RELATIONSHIP

A. Jesus is revealed as our Bridegroom, the One who loves us and shares all with us. He is called our husband (Isa. 45:5; Hos. 2:16; Jer. 31:32); He called Himself the Bridegroom (Mt. 9:14).

B. The term \textit{Bride} points to our calling to relate to Him in deep partnership (Rev. 19:7; 22:17). Our relationship is described as a betrothal and a marriage (Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 11:2), emphasizing a relationship between Jesus and His Bride that shares all in love. It is the level of covenant partnership He desires with us.

C. We have a “one-flesh” relationship with Jesus, which has significant implications (Eph. 5:30-32).

\textit{Eph 5:27-32} We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones...\textit{Two} [man and wife] shall become one flesh. \textit{This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.}

D. One reason that Jesus will be referred to as the Desire of All Nations (Hag. 2:7) is because He will reveal His desire for His people in a way that awakens desire for Him in all the nations.

\textit{Hag. 2:7} I will shake all nations, and the \textit{Desire of All Nations will come}
III. A LOVE PARADIGM OF SALVATION

A. Salvation is so more than escaping from hell with fire insurance. We are called to a relationship with Jesus forever in sharing His heart, being near Him, and doing the Father’s work. Jesus wants people to be awestruck at His transcendent power and majesty and to participate in His transcendent love forever. That is the kind of partnership Jesus cried out for in John 17:24.

**Jn. 17:24** Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me...

**Rev. 3:21** To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne...

B. The Father saved us to raise us up to sit with Jesus in partnership to demonstrate His kindness.

**Eph. 2:4-7** Because of His great love with which He loved us...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places...that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

IV. A LOVE PARADIGM OF HOLINESS

A. “Affection-based obedience” is the strongest type of obedience, because it flows from experiencing Jesus’ affection. It is the most consistent obedience because a lovesick person will endure anything for love. It is stronger than “duty-based obedience” (obedience when we do not feel God’s presence) or “fear-based obedience” (motivated by fear of negative consequences).

B. The gospel flourishes most when we understand the extravagant passions in God’s personality. It is essential to know what He has done for us on the cross and what He will do for us in eternity. Love reveals the why behind the what of creation and redemption. He wanted a family who would glorify Him and enjoy His glory and participate in the fellowship of the Trinity.

V. A LOVE PARADIGM OF SUCCESS AND SECURITY

A. God delivers His people from a self-centered view of life by revealing who He is to them and who they are to Him. We are transformed by seeing our true identity in our relationship with Jesus. Our success involves living in the New Jerusalem, participating in the fellowship of the Trinity, reigning with Him on earth, magnifying His supremacy, and proclaiming His majesty.

B. We were created to long for deep relationship with God based on the assurance that He enjoys and loves us. We are created by God to thrive on godly affirmation. We cannot repent away our God given longing for affirmation. We need to find it in our relationship with Jesus and His delight in us, and in our inclusion in His eternal plans as His Bride. We will not overcome our desire for affirmation and greatness in a vacuum by simply repenting of it without replacing it.

**2 Thes. 1:12** The name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him...

**1 Cor. 2:7-9** The hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory...Eye has not seen, nor ear heard...the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

C. Jesus called us to love our neighbor “as we love ourselves”; He also called us to hate our lives. Both statements are true and in no way conflict with each other. We love ourselves through the lens of the revelation of Jesus, His cross, and our great worth to Him. Jesus taught us to hate our life in the sense of finding our identity, pleasures, and life outside of relationship with Him.
D. We do this best by receiving and magnifying His supremacy in love. He is magnified in us as we more fully receive Him as the God of love (1 Jn. 4:16). We magnify God in His enjoyment of releasing His glory and love in and through us as His Bride and enjoying our delight in His exaltation. The glory of God in the identity of the Bride is God’s eternal plan, not man’s.

E. A man wants his wife and children to have everything he has. He is filled with joy in seeing his family observe his devotion and extravagance toward them (Lk. 11:13). “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him” (John Piper).

F. Bernard of Clairvaux called it loving ourselves for His sake—being jealous to have all that He wants in our lives for His sake. Jesus so enjoys watching us enjoying His love for us.

G. Jesus does not want us to walk in false humility that minimizes how “He loves loving us” and how He loves “us enjoying His love.” He is magnified when we boldly believe in His love.

VI. A LOVE PARADIGM OF ETERNAL REWARDS

A. Jesus taught on rewards and the way to greatness much more than any other man in Scripture. Eternal rewards express how Jesus feels about our love for Him in this life. Jesus will have great joy in giving us eternal rewards and we will have joy in receiving them (Mt. 25:21, 23).

Mt. 25:21 Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

B. Some see eternal rewards as a way to establish their honor and superiority before others. This is a secular view of authority that is based on the “pride of being over people.” A godly person obviously would not see any value in seeking this type of authority and reward in heaven.

C. Jesus will openly declare the way that He feels about the way that you loved Him in this life. In the age to come, you will wear the expressions of His love in your garments, in the glory of your resurrected body, and in many other ways. Rewards are not about being over people, but about our proximity to Jesus and our ability to be with Him where He is. Jesus is so moved by the way that we love Him that He wants to express how He feels in what we wear and do.

D. We do not need to choose between living for God’s glory and denying God’s plans for rewards or any other expression of Jesus’ goodness or glory because it “feels selfish.” We can be sure that God does not lose anything when we gain something in our relationship with Him. God does not lose any glory when we enjoy our participation in His glory. It is an expression of a religious spirit to draw back from Jesus’ blessings in fear that He will lose something in giving them.

VII. A LOVE PARADIGM OF MINISTRY

A. John the Baptist viewed his ministry as preparing a Bride for Jesus. The best man in a wedding does not seek to draw the bride’s attention and affections to himself, but to prepare her to receive the embrace of the bridegroom. A friend of the Bridegroom prepares the people to receive Jesus’ embrace as the Bridegroom God, empowering them to walk out the first commandment.

Jn. 3:29 The friend of the bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice.
B. Paul spoke of ministries who preached or showcased themselves (2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:19-21).

2 Cor. 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.

VIII. A LOVE PARADIGM OF THE GLORY OF GOD

A. Jesus wants His people to adore Him based on the revelation of His majesty and their partnership with His heart. He died that we might have boldness to draw near Him with great confidence. God is deeply relational. His glory has a significant relational aspect to it. The revelation of Jesus’ worth connects us deeply to His majesty and heart for us.

Heb. 10:19-22 Having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, so by a new and living way... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...

B. Paul compared the manifestation of God’s glory as seen in the two covenants (2 Cor. 3). The Old Covenant paradigm of glory was to stand at a distance and observe God’s glory (like the angels do). This is what Israel did (Ex. 19). The New Covenant paradigm of glory is to draw near with assurance and participate in God’s glory as His Bride, not as a servant (Heb. 10:19).

Jn. 17:24 Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold [participate in] My glory which You have given Me

C. The servant paradigm of the kingdom stands at a distance and affirms His transcendent power; this is how the angels relate to God. The relational paradigm draws close and participates with His transcendent love. The servant paradigm of the kingdom works for Him and exalts Him, but without participating with Him in a relationship of love.

D. We are to be both awestruck with His great power as the Most High God and to boldly draw near Him to participate with confidence. Jesus is the One who was so high (transcendence), but went so low (condescension), to bring us so near (partnership) because we are so dear to Him.

E. We magnify Jesus’ supremacy as the revelation of His transcendence and condescension touches our heart. His transcendence emphasizes His majestic power; His condescension emphasizes His deep love and humility in making a way for us to be near Him.

F. We magnify Jesus’ supremacy by fully receiving and returning His love in a deep relationship that forever involves worshiping and declaring His greatness, magnifying His supremacy, obeying His commands, and partnering with Him in filling the earth with the Father’s glory.