

THE GREAT REHEARSAL

Pastor Pat Kleitz

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Revelation 19:6–9 (NLT)

⁶ Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a vast crowd or the roar of mighty ocean waves or the crash of loud thunder:

"Praise the LORD!

For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

⁷ **Let us be glad and rejoice and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his Bride has prepared herself.** ⁸ **She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear." For the fine linen represents the good deeds of God's holy people.** ⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he added, "These are true words that come from God."

Here's what I think:

We, the church, are called the "Bride of Christ." This is a great rehearsal for the wedding of the Bride. What we are experiencing is all preparations for His second coming! The coming of the Bridegroom for His Bride, which is the church.

So, His Bride should take very seriously this time of preparation. How do we prepare?

WE ARE TO BE PEOPLE OF FAITH, NOT FEAR

What is happening is not an accident. We live in a fallen world. And God either causes things or allows them to happen. I am not saying He has caused this to happen, but He has allowed it, or He's not God and in control.

In the **Old Testament**, He allowed judgment to come. In fact, He even sent it:

- **Joel 2:25 (NLT)** ²⁵ The LORD says, "I will give you back what you lost to the swarming locusts, the hopping locusts, the stripping locusts, and the cutting locusts. **It was I who sent this great destroying army against you.**
- **In Exodus** He warns those coming out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses that if they don't obey Him (the Lord), then He would visit on them all the plagues of Egypt.

In the **New Testament**, it's the same; He sends judgment. Even sickness and disease.

- **1 Corinthians 11:28–32 (NLT)** ²⁸ That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. ²⁹ For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. ³¹ But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. ³² Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

PRINCIPLE: All God's acts are done in kindness and for His redemptive purposes. It all works for good—even tragedy.

So we don't live in fear/confusion; we instead walk by faith.

- **TOZER:** "While it looks like things are out of control behind the scenes, there is a God who hasn't surrendered His authority."

The disciples are in a boat on the Sea Galilee, and a storm hits them head on. They wake Jesus up and He said to the waves, "**be still." I think right now, God is saying to his Bride, "be still and know that I am God."**

PRINCIPLE: Where your focus is, there also is your faith. You either watch the waves or listen to Him. He doesn't scream. He speaks to us in a still small voice. While everyone else is screaming, He is whispering. The only way you will hear Him is to be still.

More than ever, we need to ENCOURAGE one another with these thoughts...

- **Exodus 17:12-14 Good News Translation (GNT)**¹² When Moses' arms grew tired, Aaron and Hur brought a stone for him to sit on, while they stood beside him and held up his arms, holding them steady until the sun went down. ¹³ In this way Joshua totally defeated the Amalekites.

We are in a BATTLE: So pull up a **ROCK (JESUS)**, sit down, and hold up one another's arms. Some of you are getting tired and scared.

- **Hebrews 10:23–25 (NLT)** ²³**Let us hold tightly** without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. ²⁴**Let us think of ways** to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. ²⁵**And let us not neglect** our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (**Christian salad...it's full of LETTUCE**)

How do we do this practically? Go to our WEB PAGE... www.eacrossroads.com

KEY: FOCUS on Faith. FAITH will drive out this VIRUS! God is testing our faith. No question about this! WHY? He is preparing His Bride.

Why does He test our faith? **It leads to WISDOM:**

- **James 1:2–5 (NLT)** ² Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³ For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴ **So let it grow,** for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. ⁵ **If you need wisdom,** ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

Wisdom is having God's perspective on life and applying it to your life. Wisdom is simply seeing the world way God sees it. It's a supernatural view of things not yet seen. It's knowing what God is doing or about to do even before it happens.

- **James 1:5–8 (NLT)** ⁵ **If you need wisdom**, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. ⁶ But when you ask him, (*for wisdom*) be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. (no stillness in your heart) ⁷ such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ **Their loyalty is divided** between God and the world, (loyalty is divided between the natural and supernatural) and they are unstable in everything they do.

So, here's how I see it:

- GOD is testing and building our faith and establishing our loyalty towards Him. It's all part of the **great rehearsal**. It all about preparing his Bride for His return. He desires our undivided LOYALTY.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- How would you like to be married to someone whose mind and heart and desires are not focused on you because they have wandering eyes and heart?
- Or, have you ever had one of your children looking all around in the middle of an important conversation? What do you do? Hold their face and say: "LOOK at me...focus on me...give me undivided attention. I am about to impart wisdom to you."

GOD is DOING that RIGHT NOW. He is testing your faith, and saying, *"give me your undivided attention!" Focus on me, give me your undivided attention, for I will teach you great and mighty things. I will provide you with wisdom!"*

BE PEOPLE OF PRAYER

Job 1:4–5 (NIV84)

⁴ His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning, he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was **Job's regular custom**.

Early in the morning, he would make a sacrifice for his family. It was his regular custom!

Job 1:6–11 (NIV84)

⁶ One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

⁸ Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is **blameless**, a man of **complete integrity**, a man who **fears God** and **shuns evil**."

⁹ "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. ¹⁰ "Have you not put a **hedge around** him and his household and everything he has? You **have blessed** the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

PRAYER OF JOB:

"Father, would you help myself and my family, friends, loved ones to walk blameless before you, with complete integrity, and fear of the Lord staying away from evil. Would you then place a hedge of protection around me and those I pray for and prosper us with everything we need!"

- **Zechariah 2:4–5 (NIV84)** ⁴ and said to him: "Run, tell that young man, 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it. ⁵ And I myself will be a **wall of fire around it, declares the LORD, and I will be its glory within.**'"