

# Prepared and Waiting

(One Man's Opinion)

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Covenant Support Network

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*Revelation 22:17 AMP The [Holy] Spirit and the bride (the church, the true Christians) say, Come! And let him who is listening say, Come! And let everyone come who is thirsty [who is painfully conscious of his need of those things by which the soul is refreshed, supported, and strengthened]; and whoever [earnestly] desires to do it, let him come, take, appropriate, and drink the water of Life without cost.*

## Chapter 1

The sound of the digital alarm clock, proclaiming the start of a new day, was somehow a refreshing relief from the previous night of worry and fitful sleep. “I don’t think I slept more than two hours all night,” Adam reflected, as he lethargically pushed aside the covers, sat up slowly, swung his legs over the side of the bed; and deposited his feet in a pair of warmly lined moccasins. He stared blankly at the clock radio as it poured out more dark information than he cared to take in.

“Just what I need,” he said out loud, as he stretched forth his hand to hit the OFF button. The intrusive banter between the morning drive team was far from entertaining. Their interaction had changed in the last months. Too much was happening for them to remain in their usual light-hearted, trivial format, so they overcompensated and concentrated on ridiculing anyone who didn’t share their point of view on any given topic, or attempted to fill the time with off color innuendo or pseudo intellectual ramblings.

Everything was speedily changing all over the world, and with it came challenges unheard of even months ago. Life screamed for solutions that no one seemed to have. The unthinkable - a world seemingly reeling out of control - had become a reality that invaded his days and intruded upon his nights.

For many years, Adam had heard of the kinds of days that those living in the end times would face. Not even in his wildest imagination did he think that he would see them unfolding in his lifetime, if indeed that was what the world was now experiencing. Warily he trudged to the bathroom mirror, which would reveal only too clearly the long night in which he had unwillingly participated. Unfortunately, long nights and even longer days had become part of his routine since the faltering economy, global bank failures, and the prospect of an imminent recession had forced him to close his business. “I wonder why I even get out of bed,” he commented moments later to the small television on the kitchen counter while stirring his coffee.

Adam had many questions. It was bad enough that things were changing so fast, but his troubles were compounded by a crippling self realization that he was scared, really scared. For the first time in his life, he had no viable answers and no direction, with few prospects on the horizon for either. He wanted to run and hide from life, but there was no place to go. Even his morning devotions, something to which he usually looked forward, had become cold and dry. It seemed that the Lord was purposefully silent. Put it all together and Adam was ripe for a scream fest. Yelling at the TV was certainly unfulfilling, so he remained silent. In frustration, he made the morning talk show host disappear with the push of a button, snatched his keys off the kitchen counter; and headed out the back door.

About a month ago, when he’d finally accepted the cold truth that his business had failed, Adam contacted his friend and mentor, Bill Carter. Bill - the man who had introduced Adam to the Lord and walked him through a messy divorce that dropped him to his knees – had retired to the foothills of the mountains with his wife, Charlotte, five years ago. Since her recent death, he devoted most of his days to seeking the Lord. Bill was a man who knew how to wait on God, which Adam had always envied. Since his friend did little other than spend time in prayer, Adam really needed his insight on what was happening all around him. Besides, the six hour drive to the mountains was a welcome break from the gray monotony of his worry-infested, pressure-filled days.

“Wild Bill” Carter had spent the morning waiting on his Father in heaven as usual. This particular morning was especially sweet for Bill. Not only was the presence of his Master and Lord wonderfully intimate, but his good friend was coming to visit him for several days. Bill was thrilled. He loved Adam like a son, and marveled at how far the man had come since giving his life to the Lord over ten years ago.

“Boy, Father, it was pretty touch and go there for a while. Thank you for being so faithful,” Bill remarked, remembering the many times Adam fell in the early years as he was learning to know God. Although he chuckled to himself, he found Adam to be a wonderful testimony for two very good reasons – first, his life exhibited the faithfulness of God, followed by the fact that his walk with the Lord also demonstrated that it’s not about how many times you fall, but how many times you get up. Adam exercised his spiritual muscles a lot as he continually repented and moved back toward God.

The drive seemed unusually short, yet particularly beneficial in helping Adam to forget some of his concerns as he became lost in the magnificent scenery that surrounded him. Even though he had only stopped three times along the way for gas – twice for the car and once at a drive through – Adam felt quite refreshed as he pulled into Bill’s driveway. It delighted his heart to see his friend relaxing on the porch with Quality, his golden lab, sitting next to him. As he stopped his car in front of the garage, both bounded in his direction.

“Man, it’s good to see you!” the two men greeted each other simultaneously, as they laughed and shared a bear hug. Quality, getting in the spirit of the occasion, pressed in until Adam bent down to pet her. In turn, she shared her favorite, squeaky throw toy and dropped it at Adam’s feet, waiting for the obligatory first throw. The two friends exchanged pleasantries as Adam threw Quality’s squeaky toy across the yard several times.

Then Bill helped Adam carry his luggage to the guest bedroom. Adam decided to unpack later, so they made their way to the kitchen. He made a beeline for the stools in front of the kitchen counter and plopped down on the one closest to the stove. Over the last five years, he’d spent quite a few hours in that very spot as Bill explained the deep things of God while busying himself with one culinary concoction or another, which they would enjoy immensely at the proper time. Today was no exception. Some very special spaghetti sauce simmered on the burner and the smell made Adam anxious to savor the meal that was being prepared.

As Bill unobtrusively studied Adam and prayed, he gathered that a lot was churning inside Adam. A large pot of water was boiling on the stove and Bill added a box of angel hair pasta in the midst of a sea of dancing bubbles. He remained silent and concentrated on pulling salad ingredients from the refrigerator.

Adam stared out the kitchen window for a while as he collected some of the thoughts that were swirling around in his head. A short time later, he reached his boiling point, much like the pot of water on the stove. He was more than ready to converse.

“I’m really confused about a lot of things,” he erupted. Bill busied himself preparing the salads, allowing Adam to continue. “I know that something pretty important is happening in our world. I know that God is still in charge of all things; but somehow...” He hesitated, carefully choosing his next words. “Somehow I get this feeling that very soon we’re going to reach a point of no return, like there’s no going back. I have this really heavy feeling in my heart that our way of life is going to change forever, and we’ll never get back to what we consider a normal way of life. It’s almost too much for me to take in some days.

“In fact, most of my days are filled with so much fear, that I have difficulty even seeking God. Sometimes I want to run away from whatever it is that I’m feeling, but there seems to be no place to go. Other times I want to fight against the ignorance and injustice that seems to be gripping the heart of this land. There is so much happening on so many fronts that I find myself scattered in attempting to deal with everything. I don’t know what to do first to stabilize my life!”

Adam stopped abruptly. He looked at Bill, not expecting him to clarify anything; but just grateful that he had the opportunity to say out loud to another human being what had been on his heart for many weeks.

The dinner table behind them was already set. Bill carried the salads and placed them to the left of where each dinner plate would go. He returned to the stove, drained the noodles; and while he prepared a plate for both of them, eased Adam into some friendly conversation that allowed them to catch up on certain aspects of each other’s lives without Bill having to respond immediately to Adam’s outpouring. After praying for the food, they enjoyed one another’s company throughout the meal and subsequent clean up, knowing that an in depth conversation was not far off. All the while Bill prayed in the Spirit, waiting for the opportune moment to share what God wanted him to tell Adam.

After dinner, both men moved to the living area just off the kitchen. After lighting a fire to take the chill off the evening, Bill settled into his favorite chair - Quality nearby on a small braided rug - and set his bible on his lap in the ready position. Adam got up from the couch and went back to the guestroom to retrieve his own bible and a note pad. By the time he returned, Bill had gathered his thoughts and

gotten a green light from the Lord to proceed. He knew what the response would be to his first question, but he asked it anyway.

“How straight do you want me to get?” he said with a grin. Adam gave him a “you know better than that” look and they settled in for what the Lord had in store for the evening.

“The best way for me to explain what you are experiencing is to tell you that about a year ago, the Lord revealed to me that a page had been turned in the heavenlies.” Bill paused for a moment so those words could have their full impact. “At that time, God graciously showed me several strategies He would use, which would cause the world to reel in turmoil, setting it on a path to monumental change as He implements those strategies and they have their desired effect.

“First, He has given the world over to a reprobate mind. The thinking of those who do not follow Him will become so clouded that laws, objectives, issues - actually every form of so-called wisdom and logic - will make little sense to those who have the mind of Christ. Wrong will be praised as right, good will be labeled bad, et cetera. Second, the believing church will go through continually intensifying refiner’s fires to prepare them as overcomers for all that lies ahead; and third, all nations are being aligned into their end-time position. This will have a great impact on those living in the United States, as this nation is brought to minimal influence status in world politics.

“Every element of society in every corner of the world will be swept into the tide of these plans as they unfold.” He paused thoughtfully. “You need only read the daily headlines to already see these strategies in effect. Then talk to those members of the body of Christ who are selling out to Him. You’ll find that they’re experiencing intense challenges. And you’re right. Because His plans affect so many fronts on so many levels, nothing will ever be as it once was.”

Adam unconsciously dug his fingernails deep into the arm rest of the couch in response to his friend’s words. Throughout the time he was preparing for this trip and even on the drive up, he expected Bill to comfort him as he had done so many times before. He thought Bill would tell him that he was just overdramatizing the impact of global news events - threats of war, increasing terrorist activity, global bank and corporate failures, the saber rattling of irrational world leaders, and a myriad of other unreasonable actions taking place at all levels of society, that it was all simply a time of adjustment, that everything would fall back in order and life in general would return to some form of reasonableness. He did not plan for this.

“You look like a deer in headlights,” Bill said, acknowledging the stunned look on Adam’s face.

“I, I,” Adam stammered, “I guess I was expecting something other than what I just heard.” For the next few minutes, he went on to explain his thoughts to Bill.

“I’m afraid that your perspective on what’s happening needs a little adjustment. You need to see all of this from God’s perspective,” Bill asserted, after Adam expressed his fears once again. “I’m really glad that you’re here for a couple of days. We’ll cover these things in detail, and I have a whole lot to share with you. There are also some people I want you to meet tomorrow, but let’s start with the spiritual part of what’s happening.”

Bill took a sip of his coffee. Adam picked up his note pad and pulled a pen from the loop in the pad’s binder, ready to learn all he could so that things would start to make sense.

“Why don’t we begin by calling things as they really are? Above everything that you and I see happening in this country and around the world is the fact that Jesus is getting ready to come for the overcomers in His church, those who have prepared themselves as a bride would prepare her heart for union with her husband. As His followers, that must be our main, underlying focus. That event, whether in the very near future or many years off, is far more important than anything else we see around us. Everything else should not be of major concern to us, even though I believe that things as we know them are going to fall apart pretty fast. Since everything that’s happening will be used to help us prepare for His coming for us, we are not to devote our time to anything that takes place unless specifically directed by the Lord. Most of it is simply a playing out of the plans that Father God determined long ago.”

“Wait a minute,” Adam interrupted. “You mean that what we’re seeing, even the news events of the day, is all about the rapture of the church?”

“Well, sort of,” Bill responded.

“What do you mean by sort of?” Adam was leaning forward, waiting in anticipation for Bill’s answer. What Bill replied was not what he expected to hear.

“Before we get into that, let’s talk about the character of God, His plans for all mankind from the beginning, and His mercy.”

“Is *that* all?” Adam said with a slight grin on his face.

Bill returned the smile as he got up and went back to the kitchen to refill their coffee cups, knowing that what he said covered a lot of territory. Adam settled back in the couch.

“Let me ask you something,” Bill continued, as he entered the living room and handed Adam a fresh cup of coffee. Once he sat down, he reached for his bible and held it up. “What is the content of this incredible book all about?”

Adam contemplated for a moment. Questions like this from Bill were not meant to bring a frivolous response. He thought for several moments.

“I believe that the Bible is the story of mankind, and how the God Who created everything chooses to deal with them.”

Bill smiled. “That was a pretty loaded question. I’m sure that given enough time you could have written several pages as an answer. In fact, there are probably many terrific answers that would be absolutely true. I basically set you up.”

Adam carefully sipped his coffee and waited for Bill’s answer to his own question.

“What if it’s all about God’s requirement of holiness for those He’s created and His mercy to those who don’t choose to go that far with Him?”

“I’m not getting that, Bill.”

“OK, let’s back up a bit. What if the words, ‘be holy for I am holy,’ are the golden thread of life in all God’s dealings with mankind? Beyond His desire that none should perish, what if those are the pivotal words that express His goal for those who have chosen to know Him? That we are to experience holiness through the Holy Spirit’s power.”

Bill paused to give Adam time to reflect. Another green light from the Lord and he continued.

“Let’s take just one incredible example of the way He set up every generation to seek His heart of holiness. I’m referring to the return of Jesus for His bride. For many years, it made no sense to me that those living in the final generation would be the only ones to have the privilege of being part of the marriage supper of the Lamb as the bride of Christ. That is just not in the flow of the character of God.

“Assuming that Jesus is coming back for those who think and act like Him, those who have the same heart desires and relationship with the Father that He has, it simply is not like Him to limit that opportunity to those He planted in the final generation. He is no respecter of persons. He holds no one person in higher esteem than another. You can’t tell me that Paul, or John, or Mary, or Peter are not part of the bridal banquet. That means to me that everyone in every generation since the cross...” Bill paused to entertain a new thought. “And possibly even those who were after God’s heart before Jesus died on the cross were given the opportunity to be at the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

He stopped again to ponder his last statement.

“I’m not sure about those who lived prior to the cross. I’d better pray about that some more. Regardless, my point is that people from the first generation and every succeeding generation since the cross thought that Jesus would come back in their life time. That conviction caused many to head in the direction of preparing as a bride who is waiting for her Bridegroom, in the very same way that He is asking us to prepare in this generation. That thought alone makes me want to fall on my face in awe of God’s incredible mercy.”

“I’m not getting this.” Adam looked up intently from his notes. “First of all, are you telling me that only those who allow the Holy Spirit to prepare their hearts as a bride would prepare for her groom will leave with Jesus when He comes back for them? And then are you saying that everyone whose hearts were prepared in that same way, no matter what generation they lived in after the cross, will meet at the marriage supper with Jesus?”

“It’s only my opinion; but after a whole lot of prayer and study, I believe that would profile the heart of God,” Bill said with confidence.

“What if this time on earth is truly a time to test the hearts of everyone who lives, to see how deep we desire to go with God? What if He has places for us to function in eternity that are determined by how completely we choose to surrender our lives to Him and become like Jesus? What if all that has ever occurred on earth has taken place as a platform to test our hearts, allowing us to continually make choices to serve Jesus or not, and lovingly refine us if we truly choose Him as Lord, all leading us toward what we will be doing in eternity? It’s almost like being in one long dress rehearsal for what is to come. What if after we initially choose Jesus, Father God desires that the pursuit of absolute holiness - to actually be like Him, to be separate from the world - should be the only reason we breathe?”

“Wouldn’t that mean that everything else that occupies our time could be classified as a distraction by God?” Adam offered what came to mind.

“Looks that way to me,” Bill confirmed. “But what if the church has watered down the Gospel to the point that walking every day exactly as Jesus walked is not even thought of as a purposeful goal? The Bible does say in I John that if we say we abide in Him, if we say we are followers of His ways, we are to walk and conduct ourselves in the same way that He walked and conducted Himself. What if God really does mean that as a command to be obeyed, rather than an option to pursue if we feel like it? What if that really should be our only goal in life and everything else is secondary? What if all the situations, challenges, and appointments that fill our days are only the means God uses to provide opportunities to attain that goal?”

“Nobody I know, including my pastor, even remotely thinks like that,” Adam stated matter-of-factly, as he scratched his head in amazement at the words that just escaped his lips. Bill waited quietly for Adam to continue.

“That would mean that much of the church has fallen far short of the intent God has for the work of the cross. It would mean that many believers, including myself, have focused on everything but what the Lord really wants us to pursue.”

Bill could tell that Adam was short circuiting. “All of this is pretty heavy this late in the evening, especially after the long drive,” Bill commented, picking up the coffee cups and taking them to the sink. “Let’s walk through all these ideas again tomorrow. I’m pretty tired myself. I really need to get with my Father before I go to sleep. I’d better be ready for all the questions you’ll formulate throughout the night. This is some pretty important territory we’re covering, to say the least.” A bright smile accompanied his words, which gave Adam comfort and reassurance.

“Bless you, man,” Bill said as he got up and headed for his bedroom.

“I’m going to sit here and pray a bit before I go to sleep,” Adam responded. He felt the Holy Spirit wooing him to a time of quiet communion with his Father.

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