

CHAPTER 4

A SPIRITUALLY MATURE BRIDE

It is a traditional teaching within Christianity that all those who receive Jesus as personal Lord and Savior is the Bride of Christ. While it is true that all those who accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior as outlined in Chapter 1 will be in heaven, the Bible makes a distinction between those believers who are "babes in Christ" or "carnal Christians" and those believers who are "spiritually mature" Christians and have an intimate relationship with God. Jesus told us that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. In *Matthew 22:36-38* it is written:

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law (Torah)? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

GROWING IN A LOVING RELATIONSHIP UNTO GOD

Why is loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength the greatest commandment? How do we love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength? When you are initially in love with another person, your mind becomes consumed in thinking about them. You think about that special person from morning until evening. You dream of ways how you can show your love to them. Nothing is like the joy you experience spending time with that person. You have entered the courting stage of love.

By spending time with that person, you get to know them better and better. Meanwhile, your loving desire for each other grows and grows until finally you get married. After you are married, you continue to grow in love and understanding for each other. Once married, you

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experience together both the hard times as well as the joyous times of life. In time, you know each other so well that you know how that person will think or respond to any question you ask or any situation that arises before it even happens. At this point, you have reached a mature point in your relationship. A personal relationship with another person is a process of growing in love and understanding toward each other as well as developing a deeper and deeper intimacy.

Spiritually, our love and devotion for God should develop and grow according to the same pattern as our model example between a male and female. When we are first saved, many Christians experience a consuming love for God in their heart. Spiritually, they have entered into betrothal and a loving courting relationship with God. During this time, we think about the goodness of God, His lovingkindness and the special way He worked in our life to save us.

After we become saved, our relationship with God begins to go through life's trials and tribulations. During this time, we also experience many more of God's blessings and provision in our lives and we rejoice in them. It is through these times that our love toward God should grow closer and closer and deeper and deeper.

As we spend time with God in prayer, as we spend time with God reading and studying the Bible and as we seek to follow the will of God for our lives, we should begin to understand the heart and ways of God better and better. During this time, God will begin to reveal Himself in a greater and greater capacity and your personal relationship with God will grow into a closer and closer intimacy just as the ideal and model relationship between a man and a woman. This is an example of the life of a "spiritually mature" Christian. This is the way of the Bride of Christ. The Bride is an example of the "greatest" in the Kingdom of Heaven (*Matthew 5:19*).

However, just as in real life many husbands and wives begin to lose their first love after they become married and they are not able to make it through the trials and tribulations in life because they don't spend the time that is needed to develop their relationship with each other, their love for each other begins to be robbed from them and many get a divorce.

Spiritually, this is what happens in the lives of many Christians in their relationship toward God AFTER they are saved. They don't take the time to develop their relationship with God and their initial love for Him grows cold. They are not able to make it through the many problems in life by trusting in God. Instead, they become bitter toward God and blame Him and return to living in the world. Many other Christians live with one foot in the world and one foot in the church door. However, this type of relationship is not the will of God. This is an example of the life of a spiritually immature and "carnal Christian." The carnal or baby Christian is an example of the "least" in the kingdom of Heaven (*Matthew 5:19*).

Spiritually, God desires for our personal relationship with Him to grow and develop in the same way as the ideal love between a man and a woman grows and develops from the initial consuming love in the heart during the courting stage to a deeper and deeper walk and personal intimacy after they are married. This is the calling of the Bride of Christ. This is the characteristic of her spiritual maturity.

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THE TWO STAGES OF THE BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

There are two stages to the Biblical marriage. The first stage is betrothal. In Hebrew, this is called, "erusin". During betrothal you are legally married to your spouse but you do not physically dwell with them. The second stage of marriage is when you physically dwell with your spouse and consummate the marriage. The second stage of marriage is called in Hebrew "nesu'in". As we saw in Chapter 3, the Biblical wedding takes place under a wedding canopy called in Hebrew a "chuppah". As we also discussed in Chapter 3, heaven is seen as being a type of "chuppah". Therefore, the Biblical marriage will be consummated in heaven.

The Bible tells us that God betrothed Himself to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. In *Jeremiah 2:2-3* it is written:

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousal (betrothal), when thou went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

Even though you do not dwell with your mate whenever you are betrothed, betrothal is so legally binding that you cannot get out of it without a divorce. When Jesus was born to Mary, Joseph and Mary were betrothed to each other. While they did not live with each other and have marital relations, they were legally married. For this reason, when Joseph initially heard that Mary was pregnant with child he sought to "put her away" or divorce her. However, the angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit coming upon her and not to divorce her. This story is told in *Matthew 1:18-20* as it is written:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away (get a divorce) privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream; saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

When we first accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior by repenting of our sins and trusting in His shed blood on the cross for the remission of our sins, we are saved and will go to heaven.

Spiritually, when we are saved, we are betrothed (legally married to but do not physically dwell with) God. However, God desires to enter into that second stage of marriage with those who believe on Him. This second stage of the marriage is the consummation of the marriage.

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In Chapter 3, we saw how Zion is a term for God's people. More specifically it is a term for God's Bride. Spiritually, Mount Zion is a term for the heavenly Jerusalem. We can see this truth in *Hebrews 12:22-23* as it is written:

"But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn ..."

Upon the consummation of the second stage in the Biblical marriage, God will physically dwell with all believers. The fulfillment of this is seen in *Revelation 21:1-3*. In these verses we can see that the new (heavenly) Jerusalem is compared to a bride. When this event happens, God will dwell with His Bride. We can see this in *Revelation 21:1-3* as it is written:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

At this point, we can understand two things. First, our personal relationship with God needs to grow and develop from a consuming love whenever we are first saved to a deeper and deeper spiritual knowledge and intimacy of God. Secondly, there are two stages to the Biblical marriage and when we become saved we spiritually enter into that first stage of marriage called betrothal. However, God is desiring to enter into the second stage of marriage and live and dwell with His Bride.

Therefore, the goal of a Christian should NOT be salvation. When you are saved, you are only spiritually betrothed to God. The goal of a Christian should be salvation PLUS developing a deeper and deeper love and spiritual intimacy with God. This is the fulfillment of God's requirement to enter into the second stage of marriage and become the Bride of Christ.

A HOLY AND SANCTIFIED BRIDE

The term for marriage in Hebrew is "kiddushin". The Hebrew term for marriage, "kiddushin", comes from the Hebrew word for Holy which is "kodesh". It is the Strong's word (6944). The Hebrew word for sanctified is "kadash". It is the Strong's word (6942). Hebrew is the pure language of God (*Zephaniah 3:9*). The Hebrew word for marriage, "kiddushin", the Hebrew word for sanctified, "kadash", and the Hebrew word for holy, "kodesh", all contain the same three Hebrew root letters. These letters are the "k" kaf, the "d" dalet, and the "sh" shin.

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Therefore, God is communicating to us through the pure language of Hebrew (*Zephaniah 3:9*), that marriage is spiritually linked with being sanctified and holy.

God always desired to have a holy people. The Hebrew word for holy, "kodesh" which is the Strong's word (6944) means "to be set apart". Religiously, Christians think that being holy means that you never sin. However, Biblically it means that you have grown to spiritual maturity and you have an intimate spiritual relationship with God and you are "set apart" unto Him for His service. It also means that you have spiritually separated yourself unto God and His ways. In addition, you are set apart unto God and from the influences and ways of the world and from being dominated and controlled by the sin nature of your flesh.

The holy people which God is going to marry is His Bride. Just as God is holy (*Leviticus 11:44*), He desires for those who believe on Him to be holy as well. In *1 Peter 1:15-16* it is written:

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation (behavior/lifestyle); because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Jesus is returning to the earth at His Second Coming to marry a sanctified Bride who is without blemish. This can be seen in *Ephesians 5:26-27* as it is written:

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it (the Bride) to himself a glorious church ("ekklesia" = a set apart assembly of people), not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish. "

Therefore, just as the Hebrew words for sanctified ("kadash"), holy ("kodesh"), and marriage ("kiddushin") are related to each other in the Hebrew language, we can see in *Ephesians 5:26-27* that Jesus is going to return for a "sanctified, holy Bride who is without blemish". This sanctified, holy Bride who is without blemish will have grown in love and fellowship with God and will have a personal intimacy with God. She will be a spiritually mature Bride.

GROWING IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

God has always desired for His children to grow up spiritually. Growing up spiritually is acquiring a deeper knowledge and understanding of God, His Word and His ways. God has always desired for His children to know his ways (like Moses) and not just His acts (like the children of Israel) (*Psalms 103:7*).

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As children of God, we are called to grow up spiritually. We grow spiritually by knowing and understanding God's Word and God's ways. In *1 Peter 2:2* it is written:

"As newborn babes (baby Christians) desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."

In *2 Peter 3:18*, Peter exhorts believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of God as it is written:

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"

Jesus told a parable in *Mark 4:30-32* that the Kingdom of God was like a seed that grew up into maturity as it is written:

"And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becomes greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. "

When Christians become saved, they are called by God to feed on the milk (elementary) things of God's Word so that they may grow in knowledge and understanding of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. However, it is not the will of God that Christians remain spiritual babies. The Bible tells us that we are to leave the elementary things of God and grow to spiritual maturity. This truth can be seen in *Hebrews 6:1* as it is written:

"Therefore, leaving the (elementary) principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection (5047) ..."

The Greek word for perfection is "teliotace." It is the Strong's word (5047). This word, perfection, translated as "teliotace" comes from the Greek word, "telios," which means "completeness, full grown, adult, full age, mature." The Greek word, "telios," is the Strong's word (5046). The word, perfection, translated as "teliotace" means "completeness or full maturity."

The greatest desire of a Christian should be to grow in knowledge and understanding of God after they are saved so that they can have a deep, intimate relationship with God, they can have a deeper knowledge of God's Word and know God's ways. This is the message of *Jeremiah 9:23-24* as it is written:

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise

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lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

HOW DO WE GROW IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY?

In *Isaiah 28:9-10* it tells us how we are to grow spiritually. Just like a model relationship between a man and a woman grows over time, we grow in our knowledge and understanding of God over time as well while living our Christian life and walking in a deeper knowledge and understanding of God and His ways. This can be seen in *Isaiah 28:9-10* as it is written:

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

Therefore, we are instructed by God to grow in knowledge and understanding of God, His Word, and His ways, and we are to do it gradually over time, "line upon line, precept upon precept."

In *Romans 1:17*, it tells us that we grow from "faith to faith" as it is written:

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

Even as we grow in the Lord "line upon line, precept upon precept" and we grow from "faith to faith," as we do so, we are changed from "glory to glory." In *2 Corinthians 3:18* it is written:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Therefore, by growing in the knowledge and understanding of God's Word and God's ways "line upon line and precept upon precept" and desiring to know God in a deeper and more intimate personal relationship from "faith to faith," we are changed into the image of God from "glory to glory." In doing so, Jesus will return for this Body of believers and she will be a sanctified, holy, and glorious Bride unto Him who is without blemish before His eyes. (*Ephesians 5:26-27*)

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HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS WHICH COMMUNICATE SPIRITUAL MATURITY

So far, we have seen how God desires for His people to grow in knowledge and understanding of Him while developing a deeper and more intimate personal relationship with Him. Spiritual maturity is expressed by the Greek word, "telios." It is the Strong's word (5046). The Greek word, "telios" is translated in the New Testament as "full age, perfect man, and perfect." The Strong's dictionary defines "telios" to mean "complete in growth, complete in mental or moral character." The Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines "telios" to mean "completeness, full grown, adult, full age, mature." Therefore, the Greek word, "telios" is a word used in the New Testament to describe the spiritual maturity of God's Bride.

In the Thayer's Greek Lexicon, it tells us that the corresponding Hebrew word for "telios" as used in the Septuagint (LXX), "The Hebrew Old Testament translated into Greek," is the Hebrew word, "tamim." The Hebrew word, "tamim," is the Strong's word (8549). It is translated in the Old Testament as "without blemish, perfect, upright, without spot, whole, sincere and complete." The Hebrew word, "tamim," is a word which conveys the spiritual concept of "spiritual maturity" in the Old Testament.

Let us examine the Hebrew word, "tamim" in the Old Testament and the Greek word, "telios" in the New Testament to give us a better understanding of the spiritual concept that God desires His Bride to grow in knowledge and understanding of Him and by doing so become spiritually mature.

SPIRITUAL BABES VERSUS SPIRITUAL MATURITY

In *Hebrews 5:12-14*, God's Word tells us that we are to grow in the knowledge of God's Word. By doing so, we are to grow from spiritual babies to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is described using the Greek word, "telios," which is translated as "full age." In *Hebrews 5:12-14* it is written:

"For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe (a spiritual child) but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age (spiritually mature) even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

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In these verses, there is a distinction made between baby Christians who can only digest milk and mature Christians who can eat the strong meat of God's Word. The word babe is the Greek word, "naypios." It is the Strong's word (3516). Strong's defines the Greek word, "naypios" to mean "an infant, a simple-minded person, an immature Christian." The Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines the Greek word, "naypios" to mean "a little child, childish, untaught, unskillful."

The corresponding Hebrew word for the Greek word, "naypios," is the word "p'tee." It is the Strong's word (6612). The Hebrew word, "p'tee" is translated in the Old Testament as "simple." Therefore, the Bible is making a clear distinction between those who are simple and childlike in their faith (the immature or carnal Christian) and those who are of full age, complete and mature in their faith (the mature Christian and God's Bride).

The Biblical principle of growing up from spiritual children unto spiritual maturity is further seen in *Ephesians 4:11-15* as it is written:

"And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect ("telios" - spiritually mature) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children ("naypios" - spiritual babies and immature Christians) tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

God tells us the characteristics of a carnal and spiritual baby Christian in *1 Corinthians 3:1-4*. A carnal Christian is somebody who is still controlled by and practices the ways of the flesh. We can see this truth in *1 Corinthians 3:1-4* as it is written:

"And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual (on a spiritual mature level) but as unto carnal even as babes ("naypios") in Christ. I have fed with milk (characteristic of a baby Christian - Hebrews 5:12-14) and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"

Therefore, we can see from these verses in (*Ephesians 4:11-15*), that God desires for Christians to grow in the knowledge of God and become spiritually mature "telios" and be no more spiritual children ("naypios"). Carnal Christians practice envying and strife and divisions and claim to follow one Christian leader while putting down others (*1 Corinthians 3:1-4*). God desires to have a spiritually mature Bride and her reward is being the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. The spiritually immature Christian will be in heaven but will be least in the Kingdom of Heaven (*Matthew 5:19*).

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A BRIDE WITHOUT SPOT AND BLEMISH

In *Ephesians 5:27*, the Bride of Christ is described as being "holy and without blemish." The Hebrew word for "without blemish" is the word "tamim." Let us examine the Hebrew word, "tamim" to establish that this word communicates to us the Biblical principle of "spiritual maturity" as well.

In *Exodus 12:5*, God declared that the Passover Lamb that was killed was to be "without blemish" as it is written:

"Your male shall be without blemish ("tamim") a male of the first year ..."

Therefore, we can see that the Bride of Christ will be "without blemish" and the Passover Lamb was to be "without blemish." Once again, the Hebrew word in *Exodus 12:5* which describes the Passover Lamb that is translated as "without blemish" is the word, "tamim." It is the Strong's word (8549).

GOD WANTED ABRAHAM TO WALK WITHOUT BLEMISH

In order to further develop this Biblical principle of being spiritually mature ("without blemish") which is communicated by the Hebrew word, "tamim," let's examine a few other scripture references which uses the Hebrew word, "tamim." In *Genesis 17:1*, God asked Abraham to walk (serve God as a lifestyle) "tamim" before Him as it is written:

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."

In most people's minds reading this in English, the word "perfect," means "to never sin." However the word translated in the King James Bible as "perfect" is the Hebrew word, "tamim." As we saw earlier, the Hebrew word "tamim" was translated as "without blemish" in *Exodus 12:5*. In *Genesis 17:1*, it is translated as "perfect." Therefore, we could interpret the verse in *Genesis 17:1* to read as follows:

"... I am Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou without blemish."

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From this, we can see that God was offering Abraham (and His descendants) the opportunity to be "His Bride."

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST WILL BE A NATION OF KINGS AND PRIESTS

In *Genesis 17*, God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham. In this everlasting covenant, God promised Abraham that "nations" and "kings" shall come from Him. In *Genesis 17:6-7* it is written:

"And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee, And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

Christians are heirs of this covenant that God made with Abraham through Jesus Christ. This can be seen in *Galatians 3:16, 29* as it is written:

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made (Genesis 17:7), He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ ... And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Just as God promised Abraham that nations would come from Him, the Bride of Christ is described as being, "a royal nation." In *1 Peter 2:9* it is written:

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into marvelous light."

Since this covenant that God made with Abraham was made with Jesus at the same time and we are heirs of this covenant (*Galatians 3:16, 29*), God is asking Christians to walk (live our Christian lives) "without blemish" also. If Christians will do this, God will make us His Bride as well. We can be sure of this truth because the covenant that God made with Abraham was an "everlasting covenant." Because Jesus is not yet married to His Bride and this was a part of the everlasting covenant that God made with Abraham, this covenant is still in existence today!

We will examine the further Biblical significance of the covenant that God made with Abraham including how the destiny of God's Bride is related to God's covenant with Abraham later in this book. For now, we need to understand that God asked Abraham to walk "without

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blemish" before God and this is a characteristic of God's Bride (*Ephesians 5:27*).

JOSHUA DESIRED TO BE WITHOUT BLEMISH

Let us examine two other scriptures which uses the Hebrew word, "tamim," which means "to be without blemish" and is a characteristic of God's Bride (*Ephesians 5:27*). The next example is found in *Joshua 24:14*. In Joshua 24, Joshua gathered the children of Israel together after he gave them his farewell address at Shechem. At this point, Joshua had spent many years leading the people in conquering the land of Canaan which God promised Abraham (*Genesis 15:18-21*). This address is given by Joshua before he died (*Joshua 24:29*). In *Joshua 24:14* it is written:

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth ..."

The word translated as "sincerity" in the King James Bible is the Hebrew word, "tamim," which means "without blemish." Once again, God is commissioning His people through Joshua to serve God in sincerity ("tamim = without blemish") and truth.

From these things, we are beginning to understand that God has desired from the beginning of time to not only live and dwell with His Bride for all eternity (we saw this truth in Chapter 2) but God has always desired that His Bride walk in "spiritual maturity" before Him and be "tamim = without blemish."

In *Joshua 24:14*, it not only specifies that we are to serve God in sincerity ("tamim = without blemish") but also in truth.

THE BRIDE WILL SERVE THE LORD IN TRUTH

The Hebrew word translated as "truth" is the Hebrew word, "emmet." The word, "emmet" is spelled with the Hebrew letters, "Aleph, Mem, and Tav. These are the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In this, God is highlighting the Hebrew language and the Hebrew alphabet as a tool to understand the deeper things of God's Word.

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Jesus referred to Himself as the "Alpha and Omega" (*Revelation 22:13*). Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In Hebrew, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet are "Aleph and Tav." This can be seen in (*Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, 48:12*).

Once again, God specifies through Joshua that we are to serve Him in "sincerity and truth." What is Biblical truth? The Bible defines what truth is in *Psalm 119:142* as it is written:

"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law (Torah) is the truth."

Jesus quoted *Psalm 119:142* in *John 17:17* as it is written:

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word (Torah) is truth."

Earlier in this book, we saw that the Hebrew word for "sanctify" is "kadash." It is the Strong's word (6942). The word, "sanctify" which is the Hebrew word, "kadash" means "to make clean, to be holy."

In *John 15:3*, Jesus tells us that we are made clean (sanctified) by the word (Torah) as it is written:

"Now you are clean through the word (Torah) which I have spoken unto you."

Jesus is going to marry a Bride who is not only spiritually mature and "without blemish" but also a "sanctified" Bride who is cleansed by the truth (Torah) of God. In *Ephesians 5:26-27* without the deeds of the law is extremely clear as it is written:

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified (saved) in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Because of this Biblical truth that we are saved (will go to heaven) by the grace of God through faith without the deeds of the law, Christianity has completely ignored and discarded the role of the Torah of God in our Christian lives. However, the Apostle Paul makes it explicitly clear in a few verses down from what was, just quoted (*Romans 3:20, 28*) that AFTER we are saved, we do not throw away (make void) the law through faith. In *Romans 3:31* it is written:

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish (keep) the law."

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WHY DO CHRISTIANS NEED TO KEEP THE LAW?

Why do Christians need to keep the law (Torah) of God AFTER we are saved? There are several reasons:

1. In Psalm 119:1, the undefiled, ("tamim" = spiritually mature) walk in the Torah of God. Being undefiled is a priestly term that is associated with being "sanctified and clean" before God. The Bride of Christ is a priest before God (*I Peter 2:5,9*).
2. Since the law (Torah) is truth (*Psalm 119:142, Malachi 2:1, 6-7*), Jesus prayed that we would be "sanctified through truth" (*John 17:17*).
3. The Bride of Christ is "sanctified and cleansed" by the washing of water by the word (Torah) and is spiritually mature and "without blemish" (*Ephesians 5:26-27*)

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF TORAH?

Many Christians have the understanding that the "Word of God" is the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation (which it is) but they only view the Torah as being the first five books of the Bible.

However, the Hebrew word, "Torah" which is the Strong's word (8451) translated as "law" does not mean "do's and don'ts." This is how the law (Torah) is most commonly understood in Christianity. Instead the Torah means in Hebrew "instruction." The Hebrew word, "torah," which is the Strong's word (8451) comes from the Hebrew root word, "yarah" which means, "to teach, to point out as aiming the finger."

Therefore, the law (Torah) was NEVER INTENDED for salvation but rather for "INSTRUCTION" AFTER we are saved so that we might live our Christian lives in a way pleasing to God. Therefore, the Torah should Biblically be seen as God's INSTRUCTION TOOL to His children concerning how they should live their lives AFTER they are saved so that they may grow from spiritual babies to spiritual maturity. Because of this truth, David wrote in Psalm 119:1 that those who are "undefiled" (spiritually mature = without blemish) walk in the law (Torah) of God.

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THE WORD OF GOD IS THE TORAH

To the Jewish people, the "Torah" and the "Word of God" are interchangeable terms. David wrote Psalm 119. In this entire Psalm, David gives praise to God for His Torah. In Psalm 119, David will use the word "Torah" in one verse and the next verse, he will use the "Word." From this, we can see how the term, "Torah," and the term, "Word" are used interchangeably. The Biblical truth that the word, "Torah," is used interchangeably with the "Word" along with the Biblical truth that God gave the Torah to His people to cleanse their lives AFTER they are saved can be seen in *Psalm 119:9-11, 17-18* it is written:

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments (Torah), Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee ... Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word. Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

In summary, we can see how the Torah was given by God to not only "make clean or sanctify" God's people, (*Psalm 119:9-11,17-19, John 15:3, John 17:7*) but God's Torah is "truth" (*Psalm 119:142, Malachi 2:1, 6-7*) and by walking in God's Torah, His people become "undefiled" (*Psalm 119:1*) which is the Hebrew word, "tamim = without blemish"). Through this, we can understand what is being spoken in *Ephesians 5:26-27* when it tells us that the Bride of Christ will be "sanctified and without blemish."

The role of the Torah in the calling, commissioning and eternal destiny of God's Bride will be reviewed in greater detail later in this book.

GOD'S BRIDE IS UNDEFILED (WITHOUT BLEMISH)

Even as it tells us in *Psalm 119:1*, that those who are undefiled, ("tamim = spiritually mature") walk in the Torah of the Lord, spiritually, the Song of Solomon is a poetic poem between God and His Bride. In *Song of Solomon 5:2* and *6:9*, it tells us that the Bride is "undefiled." This is the same Biblical truth which was communicated in *Psalm 119:1*. In *Song of Solomon 5:2* and *6:9* it is written:

"... Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled ... My dove, my undefiled is but one ..."

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In these verses, the Hebrew word for "undefiled" is "tam." It is the Strong's word (8535). Both the Hebrew words, "tam" (8535) and the Hebrew word, "tamim" (8549) come from the Hebrew root word, "tamam" (8552) which means "to be complete, whole." Therefore, we can see once again, that the Bride is "spiritually mature" before God which Biblically means "to be without blemish."

THE ROLE OF TORAH IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Earlier in this chapter, we saw in *Hebrews 5:12-14* and *Ephesians 4:11-15*, that Christians are meant by God to grow from being "babes" to "full age" or spiritual maturity. We saw that the Greek word, "telios" which is the Strong's word (5046) is translated as "full age" in *Hebrews 5:14* and "perfect man" in *Ephesians 4:13*. We have also discussed that the corresponding word for the Greek word, "telios" is the Hebrew word, "tamim". Both these words mean, "to be complete or to be spiritually mature."

It was also mentioned earlier that in *Hebrews 5:13*, the Greek word for "babe" is "naypios." It is the Strong's word (3516). In *Ephesians 4:14*, the Greek word, "naypios" is translated as "children." In *1 Corinthians 3:1*, the "babe" in Christ is called a "carnal Christian" which means "spiritually immature, childish, untaught, unskillful or simple-minded." Furthermore, we saw that the corresponding word for the Greek word, "naypios" which means "babe/child" is the Hebrew word, "p'tee." The Hebrew word, "p'tee" is the Strong's word (6612). The Hebrew word, "p'tee" is most commonly translated as "simple" in the Old Testament.

In *Psalms 19:7*, God tells us through the inspiration of His Holy Spirit (*2 Timothy 3:16*), that the Torah is perfect ("tamim = spiritually complete/mature") and it makes wise (spiritually mature) the simple ("p'tee - a baby/child unskilled, untaught Christian) as it is written:

"The law (Torah) of the Lord is perfect ("tamim") converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure making wise (spiritually mature) the simple (p'tee)."

To most Christians, this is a shocking truth. God calls His Torah ("tamim" - spiritually complete/mature)!!! Some Christian commentators mistakenly interpret *Psalms 19:7* to mean that the Torah, "converts the soul" meaning bringing people to the knowledge of salvation. While the Torah does define what is sin (*1 John 3:4*, "Sin is the transgression of the law") and does give us a knowledge of sin (*Romans 3:20*) which, therefore, should allow us to understand that we need Jesus as our Savior, the context of the text regarding the role of the Torah in *Psalms 19:7* is not ("bring salvation to a sinner - converting the soul") but "converting the soul" of the simple (spiritually immature Christian who has accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior) to become wise (a spiritually mature bride).

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The truth that the Torah is perfect ("tamim") to bring a "simple/babe/child Christian" to become a "full age/without blemish bride" is consistent with the understanding that the word, "Torah," means "instruction" and comes from the Hebrew word, "yarah," which means, "to teach, to point out as aiming the finger."

GOD IS OUR FATHER AND WE ARE HIS SONS

God is addressed in the Bible as "Father" (*Matthew 6:9, Galatians 4:6*). When we receive Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior and become, saved, thereby, going to heaven, we are called "children" in the Kingdom of Heaven. The TOOL that God the Father uses to bring His spiritual children to a deeper and deeper knowledge and understanding of Him is His Word/Torah. God the Father teaches His children "line upon line, precept upon precept" so that we can grow from spiritual children to spiritual maturity. By doing so, we are spiritually qualified to become the Bride of Christ. To become the Bride of Christ is the highest calling that Christians have as believers in Jesus as Messiah.

PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHO WERE SPIRITUALLY MATURE

The Biblical principal of walking "tamim" (spiritually mature) before God is a significant theme in the Bible. God describes various individuals who were spiritually mature. These include the following:

1. Noah was perfect ("tamim") in all his generations (*Genesis 6:9*)
2. God asked Abraham to walk perfect ("tamim") before Him (*Genesis 17:1*)
3. David was upright (8549) before God (*II Samuel 22:1, 24*)
4. God required that the priests who came before Him to be without blemish (*Leviticus 21:17-23*)

We know that Noah, Abraham, and David committed sins against God. Noah was found drunk from wine (*Genesis 9:20-21*), Abraham struggled with God's promise to him and birthed Ishmael (*Genesis 16:1-11*), and David committed adultery with Bathsheba (*II Samuel 11:2-5*). While Noah, Abraham, and David committed some very memorable sins, Noah, Abraham, and

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David were all used by God in a mighty, mighty, way and God still considered them ("tamim") or spiritually mature. Therefore, being spiritually mature and being "without blemish" does not mean that you never sin, it simply means that you are spiritually mature and you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and seek to follow and grow in the ways of God as the lifestyle of your heart. If we, like these great men of God, sin and fall, God has promised that He will forgive and restore us so that we can continue to go forward and grow in the knowledge of Him.

THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS WERE TO BE WITHOUT BLEMISH

God required the offerings that the priests made before Him were to be "without blemish." These offerings included the following:

1. The red heifer was to be brought without spot (8549) and blemish (*Numbers 19:2*)
2. The burnt offering was to be without blemish (*Leviticus 1:3,1:10, 9:3, Numbers 28:11*) The burnt offering is a spiritual picture of the believer completely yielding our lives over to God by being living sacrifices to Him (*Romans 12:1-2*)
3. The freewill offering was to be a burnt offering without blemish (*Leviticus 22:18-20*)
4. The wave offering for firstfruits was to be a burnt offering without blemish (*Leviticus 23:12*)
5. The peace offering was to be without blemish (*Leviticus 3:6*)
6. The sin offering was to be without blemish (*Leviticus 4:3, 23, 28, 32, 9:2*)
7. The trespass offering was to be without blemish (*Leviticus 5:15,18, 6:6*)
8. The bread (meat) offering was to be without blemish (*Leviticus 14:10, Numbers 28:31*)

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

God has always desired for his people to walk without spot and blemish before Him. How does the believer walk in spiritual maturity before God and what are the characteristics of spiritual maturity? Some of these characteristics are listed below:

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1. It is an attitude of the heart to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (*Psalm 119:1-3,10 = Mark 12:28-30 = Deuteronomy 6:4-9*).
2. We become cleansed by adhering to (doing) God's Word (Torah) and keeping His commandments (*John 15:3, John 14:15 = Psalm 119:9-11, John 17:17 = Psalm 119:142*).
3. God teaches us His ways and we yield our hearts to follow after the ways of God (*Psalm 119:11-12*).
4. By allowing and yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the Holy Spirit teaches, trains, and instructs us in the ways of God so that we can grow into spiritual maturity.
5. Overcoming the flesh and yielding to the Spirit of God is a lifestyle and an attitude of the heart. In doing this, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome the stronghold of the sin nature in our lives. Some things we overcome quickly, other things take more time. This is a lifestyle and process of dying to our sin nature by yielding to the Holy Spirit to direct our lives.
6. Our heart's attitude is to do the will of God in every area of our lives just like Abraham (*Hebrews 11:8-10,13-16*).
7. The desires of our heart are not focused on the ways of the world (*Psalm 119:19*).

GOD'S PROMISES TO THE SPIRITUALLY MATURE

God makes many promises to those who will seek to live spiritually mature lives before God. Among them are the following:

1. We are to serve the Lord in sincerity (8549) and truth (*Joshua 24:14*)
2. He that walks in a perfect (8549) way, he shall serve Me (*Psalm 101:6*)
3. The days and the inheritance of the upright (8549) shall be forever (*Psalm 37:18*)
4. The upright (8549) is the Lord's delight (*Proverbs 11:20, Psalm 18:2, 23*) and he keeps himself from iniquity
5. It is wisdom to walk in a perfect (8549) way (*Psalm 101:2*)
6. God will not withhold any good thing from those that walk uprightly (8549) (*Psalm 84:11*)
7. God wants our hearts to be sound (8549) in His statutes (*Psalm 119:80*)
8. The faithful in the land that walk in the perfect (8549) way shall dwell with God (*Psalm 101:6, Revelation 21:1-3*)
9. The upright shall dwell in the land and the perfect (8549) shall remain in it (*Proverbs 2:21*)
10. The upright (8549) shall have good things in possession (*Proverbs 28:10*)
11. The righteousness of the perfect (8549) shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness (*Proverbs 11:5*)
12. Whosoever walks uprightly (8549) shall be saved but the perverse shall fall (*Proverbs 28:18*)

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- 13. God will show Himself upright (8549) to the upright (8552) (*Psalm 18:25*)**
- 14. He that walks upright (8549) shall ascend to the hill of the Lord (Mount Zion) (*Psalm 15:1-2*)**
- 15. We are to be diligent that we are found without spot and blameless before God (*2 Peter 3:13-14*)**
- 16. God's people are to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness and keep these commandments without spot and unrebukeable until the appearing of Jesus (*I Timothy 6:11,14*)**
- 17. God's Bride is without spot (*Song of Solomon 4:7, Revelation 21:9-10, 27*)**

CONCLUSION

Just as a bride is hidden and is veiled until the time of the wedding, in like manner, this Biblical truth of walking in spiritual maturity before God has been hidden from the teachings of the Christian church. The Christian church teaches the goal of a Christian is "being saved" and getting to heaven by asking Jesus into your heart and life and allowing Him to be your personal Lord and Savior. However, the Bible teaches the principle that God is desiring not only a saved people but also a people who are "saved and spiritually mature." Those who are saved and spiritually mature ("without blemish") will be the Bride of Christ because Jesus is coming for a Bride who will be spiritually mature and "without blemish" (*Galatians 5:27*). This is the high calling of God for every believer in Jesus as Messiah.

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