

Sermon #232
Gen. 2:18-25; Rev. 19:6-9
January 14, 2018,

The Grand Blueprint, Part 2 “The Two Weddings”

Welcome back to my book room. I'm glad you returned. Last week we read the first chapter of the book, "The Grand Blueprint." The story began with the Grand Architect encouraging his worried helper, Scooter (a.k.a. Stuart William Bennet Cadbury the third) to stand firm on his blueprint, no matter the contradictory voices from society that were troubling him. Today, as we open the book to chapter two, we see that Scooter is attending his uncle Percy's wedding when someone he knows shows up. So, let's begin reading.

“What a beautiful, joyous wedding! Scooter stood in the church gathering area watching the reception line, which he had just passed through. His uncle and his new bride both looked so elegant and full of smiles. How proud he was of uncle Percy who had waited most all his life to find the right woman. He knew how faithful Percy had been to his commitment to the Grand Blueprint to maintain his purity, despite the intense pressures from society. What joy his uncle faced now! And yet, mixed in with his joy and happiness, was a sense of unease and dissatisfaction. Somehow the voices of society were pressing in on him again. ‘You should be married,’ they said.”

“Just then he was aware of a big and powerful presence standing just behind him. As he turned to look, he couldn't believe what he saw. There was the Grand Architect himself staring directly down at him. Suddenly the uneasiness was gone. In its place came a deeper sense of peace and contentment. The joy he felt in the Architect's presence was far greater than the happy wedding environment. He didn't have to run to the Grand Architect's room, because he came to Scooter, right in his moment of need.”

“Scooter blurted out, ‘O master, I didn't know that you came to weddings!’ Just as the words left his mouth, he realized how foolish that sounded.

“‘Oh, I'm present at all kinds of weddings, including the first and the last one,’ replied the Grand Architect. ‘Yes, I can see that,’ said Scooter. ‘How silly of me to forget that you would be here. You brought these two together to be one flesh. But what do you mean the first and the last wedding?’”

“‘The first wedding took place in a garden, where I made a suitable helper for Adam, who was all alone. I created Eve, a woman, who would be his equal in all ways and yet different as well. She would complement him as his partner for life. So, I created a man and a woman to leave their households and be joined together as one flesh.’ Scooter shook his head, saying, ‘Yes, I understand that. Thank you for the gift of marriage. And the last wedding?’”

“That will take place in a garden too, the garden of paradise. In that day, all heaven will rejoice for the wedding of the Lamb has come. His bride, the church, will be ready and prepared to meet their bridegroom on that day. Every wedding today, including your uncle’s, is a symbol or foreshadowing of that glorious union in heaven. I designed it that way in the Grand Blueprint. The enemy’s attempts to dramatically alter that in any way, will not prevail. Now it’s up to you to remain faithful and be prepared.”

“Scooter, once again nodded his head. He felt stronger now and much more at ease, knowing the great joy that was prepared for him and all who remained faithful to the Grand Blueprint and the Grand Architect. That also gave him courage to remain celibate and single. Even if he never married in this life, there was far greater joy awaiting him in the next. The voice of pleasure would not distract him from living faithfully to the Grand Blueprint. His vision of the Grand Architect faded, but his presence was still there as it always would be.”

Thus, ends chapter two: the first and the last weddings of the Grand Blueprint! Maybe you, like Scooter, have some deep concerns in this area. You feel unsatisfied either in your marriage or as a single person. You hear the voices of society strongly urging you to believe or practice something far different than what God originally designed life to be. These are some of the most pervasive issues of our times, so we need to know God’s Word and do what it says. Let’s begin with that first wedding.

I. The First Wedding: two equal yet different partners (Genesis 2:18-25)

A. Two partners created equal in every way

The first wedding does indeed take place in a garden – the Garden of Eden. There the Lord God made everything good. Only one thing was not good. Adam was alone. He had no helper like himself. So, God performed the first surgery recorded in history and created the woman, who was like him. The Hebrew word for “suitable helper” indicates likeness between the man and the woman.

This is one of the most dramatic moments in all of scripture. Adam had been naming all the animals, but nowhere was there anyone like himself. When God created the woman, by using one of his ribs, the woman was now “bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh,” as Adam exclaimed. The modern vernacular would probably put it, “Wow God, she’s amazing!” In this “amazing” woman, Adam would find someone like himself, not subordinate or inferior in any way. She was not created to be his servant, but his equal partner and companion. The man and woman were equal, but not the same.

B. Two different partners yet compatible

The story of the first wedding continues to also show us how different the man and the woman were. Our society today attempts to portray how men and women are interchangeable. But the man and woman were certainly created differently physically. Sexual procreation was part of the reason for the difference between the two. But the

woman was also created so that the man could be completed by her. As Adam says, “She shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” Thus, God created an equal person and yet different. Thus, she was a “suitable helper” who complemented him in every way. That’s one reason why it cannot be a man married to a man or a woman to a woman, because they do not complement each other in the same way. The biblical pattern from beginning to end is for two equal and yet different partners to be united together in holy matrimony. And that union (physical, emotional, and spiritual) must take place only within the bond of marriage, as is indicated in this first wedding and the rest of scripture. These words describe what the first wedding and all subsequent ones would be like.

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (v. 24). This is the design of the Grand Blueprint for all time. Two different and yet equal people come together in a bond of one flesh, which implies intimacy and companionship in a permanent bond.

Pastor and author, Ed Shaw affirms that this difference between the two sexes in marriage is the biblical pattern. “Marriage between a man and a woman – that complementary union of sexual difference – is central to the very wiring of God’s plan for the universe, from its beginning and into eternity.”

This one flesh bond of two different people coming together, also points to the final wedding – the wedding of the bride and the lamb. And everything else in scripture also points to that end.

II. The Last Wedding: the restoration of the bride to the lamb (Revelation 19:6-9)

A. The Lamb, Jesus wants to be united with his bride, the church. (Love for us)

The last wedding also takes place in a garden. Theologians refer to it as the garden of paradise, the final coming of God’s Kingdom to earth. At that moment, there will be another wedding. I can’t begin to image the breathtaking beauty and elegance of that wedding. In his vision, (Rev. 19) John heard a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory” (v. 7)!

Then it will be time for the wedding of the Lamb. “It has come,” says the voice, indicating its certainty. And to be certain, just who is the Lamb? When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him he said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” The sacrifice of lambs in the OT sacrificial system would symbolize God’s forgiveness of sin. Thus, the true Lamb of God, Jesus, God’s Son, would take away the sins of the world and prepare his bride for himself. And who is the bride? She is the church, God’s redeemed body.

B. The bride is prepared to be united with the Lamb, her bridegroom.

So, the wedding of the Lamb has come, and “his bride has made herself ready.” She was given fine linen, bright and clean to wear, which shows God’s grace given to her to cleanse her. That’s God’s grace and his love to human kind. That’s going to be some wedding. And now is the time of preparation for that wedding.

Why did God give us the first wedding? Ed Shaw sums up the biblical theme of marriage and how the first wedding leads up to the second. “The very first human marriage (and all those that follow) are there to point us to how things will end; with the eternal marriage of the divine bridegroom (God in Christ) to his chosen human bride (God’s people). All of human history is just the journey up the aisle.”

You, are part of God’s bride, his universal church. He is preparing you. You are engaged to Jesus Christ. Some day you and I will walk up that aisle to be married to our groom. Are you prepared for that moment?

Maybe you are saying at this point, “Pastor Randy, I’m not so sure that I am prepared.” That’s all right, God’s in the business of preparing you. He is preparing to give you fine, white, linen to wear, if you will let him. Yes, God does have a pattern, a blueprint plan for your life and it is the best, far better than your way or mine. Our ways end in destruction. His doesn’t. But there is hope for all, no matter how far you have strayed from God’s blueprint. He can heal you and put you on the right path if you confess your sin and repent.

Dennis Jernigan tells the story of how Christ is preparing him for that last wedding. He tells his story in the book and documentary, “Sing Over Me.” Dennis is a Christian singer and composer who has written and performed many popular Christian songs such as, “You are My All in All,” “Who Can Satisfy My Soul,” and many more.

Dennis grew up in a Christian home, attending church with his family in Muskogee, Oklahoma. But he grew up knowing that he was different than other little boys. Others seemed to know that too and took advantage of him or beat him up on the playground. He was called “Sissy” and many other worse names. He heard other “good Christian” men at church condemning homosexuals and he felt even worse. He said, “I felt so utterly alone with no way out. I considered myself lower than a worm.”

Dennis not only dealt with same-sex attraction, but with deeper issues such as low self-worth. He felt that he always had to perform by playing the piano so that others would accept and approve of him. Playing the piano and singing later in life would give him a way out to sing to God in his loneliness, but early on it became performance trap.

In high school and college, he developed intimate relationships with other men. He went through the cycle time and again of sexual failure, subsequent guilt and shame, which always led to more failure. He tried to stop on his own, but couldn’t. One man he thought would help him, betrayed his trust by using him sexually and leaving him deeply hurt and confused. Later, he and his partner in college bought into the lie

that says, “man is the utmost” and “whatever feels good, do it, as long as it hurts no one else.” But he says that they were making an idol of each other.

Finally, Dennis met a man who truly loved him and cared for him as he was. His name was Chuck. Chuck was a genuine Christian who cared for others and did not condemn them. Chuck figured out the main issue that was bothering Dennis. One day he confronted him and said, “Dennis, I honestly don’t know how to help you. But I know that Jesus is the answer, and I’m willing to walk toward Jesus with you for as long as it takes, whatever it takes. When you fall down, I’ll not kick you. I’ll not say I told you so. You know what I’ll do? I’ll help you up every time.” What a friend indeed.

Just a few months later, Dennis attended a Christian concert led by the music group, The Second Chapter of Acts. He said that it was not a performance but a true worship moment. Annie Herring and her siblings led thousands that night to the throne of God’s grace. It was there that Dennis poured his heart out in full surrender to God. Dennis died to his old self on that night. He gave all his fears, failures, attitudes, emotions, and body to God – including same-sex attraction. In the fall of 1981, Dennis was a new man. Dennis said, “There was no magical formula for freedom from same-sex attraction, but there is a way out... I would no longer allow my pasty failures or sexual temptations to define me.”

He also discovered that his true needs were much deeper than sexual temptations. He overcame the performance trap as he no longer had to perform for anyone. Later he learned a great secret, that his grandmother, who had taught him to play the piano, was the one who had prayed for him every day all his life. As an example of his complete healing, Dennis later married Melinda Hewitt, a friend of his in college. Their relationship in the bond of marriage was so beautiful that they went on to have nine children in ten years! Talk about healing.

Dennis today has a wonderful music ministry where he travels the country and shares his story with many people. One can see the joy in his face. Dennis says that he has seen thousands of people healed from same-sex attractions. We don’t hear too much of that today. However, we do need to be careful in saying that God heals all same sex-attraction people in the same way. Others, like Ed Shaw and Sam Alberry tell their stories of God’s healing, but they still have same-sex temptations. Both have chosen the celibate life that also gives them joy to know they are following the Lord’s blueprint. All three men, Dennis, Ed, and Sam are being prepared for the second wedding. How’s God preparing you? Are you standing firm on his blueprint?

Conclusion: Epilogue to chapter two

The wedding reception is over. Scooter has returned home. He reflects upon his encounters with the Grand Architect, he allows the voices of society to subside and a deeper peace takes over. He reflects on the first wedding leading to the last and begins writing down in song, the words that are filling his mind and soul... (Play the song.)

The tombstone scene:

The trailer for the Dennis Jernigan story:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6CPeW61alc>