

COURSE 12

THE MESSIANIC FEAST, THE BRIDE, AND THE BEAST

To transition from the joys of God's love in the final feast to the workings of the beast system can be a little disconcerting, and yet the scriptures show these two events happening in the same time frame. In this Course, we will first touch on the Messianic feast and the bride, then in more detail examine the scriptural warnings concerning the coming global beast empire. Then we will finish this Course with the open door into God's presence that awaits us.

The Messianic feast or banquet is the spiritual feast that will prepare and make ready the spiritual bride (those who fulfill God's calling):

^{NAS} Revelation 19:7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready.**"

^{NAB} Revelation 19:9 Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the **wedding feast** of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These words are true; they come from God."

In the Song of Solomon, we see a prefiguring of the Messiah and the last-days spiritual bride. All people are called to this banqueting table to feast on God's love:

^{KJV} Song of Solomon 2:3–4 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so *is* my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit *was* sweet to my taste. He brought me to the **banqueting house**, and **his banner over me was love.**

As the Song of Solomon continues, it shows that this bride will have two aspects to her nature. She'll be a warrior in the sense of battling spiritually against encroaching darkness, yet a bride because of her great love for God, for the Messiah, and for one another. Below we see these two aspects of this last-days bride: She is as *beautiful* as Jerusalem and yet *terrible* as an army, not in terms of a wild temper but because of her spiritual power with God:

^{KJV} Song of Solomon 6:4 Thou *art* **beautiful**, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, **terrible** as *an army* with banners.

^{DBY} Song of Solomon 6:9 My dove, mine undefiled, is but one; She is the only one of her mother, She is **the choice one of her that bore her**. The daughters saw her, and they called her blessed; The queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

^{NJB} Song of Solomon 6:10 ‘Who is this arising like the dawn, fair as the moon, **resplendent as the sun, formidable as an army?**’

Thus, the Lord is preparing a table before us in the presence of many enemies, just as God prepared a table and a cup for David:

^{NAS} Psalm 23:5 Thou dost prepare **a table** before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

The enemies we face are spiritual forces working within the last-days beast empire, of which God informed Daniel (Daniel 2:40–45; 7:7–28) and which was also pictured by John in the book of Revelation (chapters 12, 13, 17, and elsewhere). When all of these prophecies are combined, it becomes clear that the bride will be perfected in the midst of troublesome times. The Messiah was perfected (completed) by the things that he suffered (Hebrews 2:10), and this may apply to us as well, for in this world we will have tribulation (John 16:33; 1 Peter 5:10).

This last-days world empire is the final one in a series of world empires that have warred against those who love God. John pictures all seven of these empires together as a seven-headed dragon (also called a “beast,” Revelation 12 and 13).

These seven world empires all have a common thread. Here they are in order:

1. Egypt, where Pharaoh kept Israel in slavery until the Passover.
2. Assyria with Sennacherib, during which the ten tribes of Israel were taken captive.
3. Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar, which leveled Israel and destroyed the Temple.
4. Medo-Persia during which Haman lived, who tried to kill all the Jews.
5. Greece, which ruled Israel and in Daniel’s visions extended to Antiochus Epiphanes, attacker of the Jews.

6. Rome, which destroyed Israel and demolished the rebuilt Temple.
7. And the final world empire²²⁷ that is building now.

Israel itself could also have been considered a world empire under David and Solomon, but this seven-headed dragon represents only empires that Satan uses to attack God's people, which is what all seven heads have in common. Why does the beast keep amassing empires to war against Israel? Is Satan anti-Semitic? No, he is actually an equal opportunity employer, and all who give over to the dark side of evil are accepted. He may even prefer to place Israelites in high positions in his system, partly so he can subtly mock God and say "See, those who you called follow me now." One reason he attacks the Jewish people is that Israel was prophesied to bring forth the Messiah, something the devil did not want. There are many scriptural promises of Israel returning to God in the last days, and the seventh empire will fight to resist this.

Some of the following symbolism may be difficult, or even bizarre for new students of prophecy, but we'll get through this section shortly and then on to more positive scriptures and events.

The Soon-Coming Seventh Head of the Beast

This final seventh empire will be no different from its predecessors in that it also makes war with anyone who loves God. In the following scriptures, it is pictured as the seventh head of the dragon with a crown, ready to devour the collective group of people who fulfill God's calling. In Course 8 we saw that these believers are made into the image and likeness that God has called us to (Genesis 1:26). They are pictured symbolically as the "man child," the nation of people to whom the woman (the visible church) gives birth:

^{KJV} Revelation 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

^{KJV} Revelation 12:2 And **she being with child cried, travailing in birth**, and pained to be delivered.

^{KJV} Revelation 12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and **seven crowns upon his heads**.

²²⁷ Daniel lived during the captivity in Babylon (which was the third empire). Looking forward, he wrote of four future empires, and called the final empire the "fourth beast" (from his time frame). John pictures all seven world empires combined as a seven-headed dragon that includes Egypt and Assyria, which came before Babylon.

^{KJV} Revelation 12:4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and **the dragon stood before the woman** which was ready to be delivered, for **to devour her child** as soon as it was born.

Notice that the dragon (also called “the beast”) stands menacingly before the woman, focused on devouring the man child (or nation of people, Isaiah 66:6–8) that is about to come forth from her. The woman is in travail and discomfort because of what is being birthed out of her, and because this child causes her to be uncomfortably close to the dragon’s focus. But this child/nation that is born, who is indwelt by the lion of the tribe of Judah, does not shrink back, for it knows it has God’s will to accomplish, and that this plan will indeed be completed. Just as David ran to meet Goliath and hurled the stone into his head, so will the spiritual David come forth (when the time is right and not sooner) to deliver a spiritual death wound to this seventh head of the beast.

This man child²²⁸ will come forth out of the woman and will eventually—after its ministry is accomplished—be caught up to God:

^{KJV} Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth **a man child**, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and **her child was caught up unto God**, and *to* his throne.

This man child born of the woman depicts the spiritual warrior aspect of the bride. This promise of being caught up is also seen in other scriptures:

^{YLT} Revelation 3:10 ‘Because thou didst keep the word of my endurance, **I also will keep thee from the hour of the trial** that is about to come upon all the world, to try those dwelling upon the earth.

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

^{YLT} 1 Thessalonians 4:16 because the Lord himself, in a shout, in the voice of a chief-messenger, and in the trump of God, shall come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first,

228 This man child is not Jesus as some suppose, for this all takes place during the final seventh world empire (Revelation 12:3 pictures the seventh head with a crown and thus that this seventh empire is now in effect).

^{YLT} 1 Thessalonians 4:17 then we who are living, who are remaining over, together with them **shall be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in air**, and so always with the Lord we shall be;

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Course 8 contained many examples of Noah, Moses, King David, and others that pointed to a pattern and plan that God desires for His people. In that Course, we saw Jesus explaining Noah's Ark as an example of the spiritual ark (the bride/man child) that will be erected in the last days to safely lift up and catch away many in the rapture.

Isaiah also spoke of this group of people who would fulfill God's plan of coming into His image and likeness, with God saying they would provide the place of His rest by being "humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:1–2). Then Isaiah continued:

^{KJV} Isaiah 66:6–8 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, **she was delivered of a man child**. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? *or shall a nation be born at once?* for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

It is this man child/nation group of people who delivers the death wound to the dragon's seventh head with God's word, which is called the *sword* of the spirit in scripture.²²⁹ Below, we see this seventh head having received a death blow from this sword:

^{NAS} Revelation 13:3 And *I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain*, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast;

^{NAS} Revelation 13:14 And **he deceives those who dwell on the earth** because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast **who had the wound of the sword** and has come to life.

229 Ephesians 6:17.

Verse 14 above shows that this beast *deceives* those on the earth. Daniel also warned of deception with this beast (Daniel 11:21, 23, 32). His prophecy initially referred to Antiochus Epiphanes, then moved to the Antichrist. The Messiah also warns of this last-days deception in Luke 21:8 with the words, “Watch out, that you are not deceived . . .” Timothy mentions a similar last-days deception (2 Timothy 3:1, 13), and finally, John states the deception involved in this final empire several times (Revelation 12:9, 13:14, 19:20, etc.). John also shows that the last-days deception will include *pharmakia*, using the Greek word for pharmaceuticals and drugs, which has various applications in our day with the proliferation of such items (Revelation 18:23). The scripture shows that in order to avoid this deception, one must receive a love for the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12).

The beast crushes many nations (Daniel 2:40, 7:7), and part of its deception is its pretense of actually protecting people, for how else could it persuade enough people on its side to attain global control? This could be considered “phase one” of this world empire, the supposedly kinder, gentler phase.

However, shortly after the beast’s seventh head receives this death wound, and the man-child group of people (the bride) is caught up to God, the beast’s fatal wound is healed. Then the mask comes off, revealing its true nature, and “phase two” begins. This beast no longer remains hidden in the sea because of the complete power it now has, and it emerges for all to behold. The Antichrist also takes his position as world leader. At this point in John’s picture, no one on earth can oppose the beast (Revelation 13:4).²³⁰ When it rises up from the water (which represents peoples and nations, Revelation 17:5), it is confident and unafraid:

^{KJV} Revelation 13:1a And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a **beast rise up out of the sea**, having seven heads . . .

^{KJV} Revelation 13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, **saying**, Who *is* like unto the beast? **who is able to make war with him?**

The dragon here is Satan (Revelation 12:9), and the beast is the powerful world-control system that he has labored to put in place, and that is essentially a manifestation of his nature. These prophecies are coming true in our modern day, when tremendous power and control are wielded over the nations’ money supplies through their debts. It’s not much of a stretch to consider whether this control would include

230 After the death wound (from the sword of the spirit, Revelation 13:3, 14) and after the rapture, the world system quickly revives (“his fatal wound was healed,” Revelation 13:3). It is then pictured by John as an eighth head of the beast (see Revelation 17:9–14 for more on this).

all regulatory agencies as well as politicians (left or right), the military, police forces, not to mention the world's food supplies. When big banks control the state, you have fascism. Most large corporations, which are controlled by the same money powers, would also be in lockstep with the beast. The beast-owned and complicit media would bring forth “programming” to dumb down and corrupt the people, for a dumbed-down and corrupted people are more easily led and deceived, and are less likely to be covered by God’s protection.

Whether right or left, this mainstream media would seek to shepherd the people into agreeing with the beast’s policies on war, as well as giving up their constitutional rights. Truth can still be found in alternative media, but the powers that be will seek to shut down these outlets, declaring that it’s for our safety. These are some possible things to be alert for, as John says often in the book of Revelation “he that hath an ear, let him hear . . .”

It’s not necessarily that all these people are in cahoots and communicating with one another, but it’s the same spirit of darkness that is working within them that guides things along:

^{NAS} Ephesians 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of **the spirit that is now working** in the sons of disobedience.

^{NIV} 2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.



When we first saw the man child ready to come forth from the woman, the seventh head of the beast had a crown, but at that earlier point the ten horns had no crowns (Revelation 12:3). However in Revelation 13, when the beast is out of the water for all to see, the beast’s ten horns now have their ten crowns:

^{KJV} Revelation 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and **upon his horns ten crowns**, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Both Daniel (7:24) and John (in Revelation 17:12) say that these ten horns represent ten kings, and John adds that they have *no kingdom as yet* but will rule for a certain period with the beast (i.e., when they receive their crowns). Whoever heard of a king with no kingdom? Certainly in the first century when John lived, kings had

kingdoms over which they ruled. But these ten “kings” are now ruling the nations with financial power²³¹ given by the dark side, and their crowns symbolize outward authority as the new world leaders under the Antichrist.²³²

The devil tempted the Messiah by offering him control over the nations if the Messiah would only worship him:

^{NAS} Luke 4:5 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

^{NAS} Luke 4:6 And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

^{NAS} Luke 4:7 “Therefore **if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.**”

Thankfully for us, the Messiah did not succumb to this temptation to worship Satan for the glory of his kingdoms. Other men, however, when tempted with great wealth and power, not only yield to the beast but also worship the dragon in exchange for the massive riches and authority they receive. Many American presidents and politicians of long ago actually resisted these powerful forces seeking to take control, as Andrew Jackson’s farewell address in 1837 warned:

It is one of the serious evils of our present system of banking that it enables one class of society—and that by no means a numerous one—by its control over the currency, to act injuriously upon the interests of all the others and to exercise more than its just proportion of influence in political affairs.²³³



The Jewish prophet Daniel pictured the final kingdom and these same ten horns as John (in Revelation 13:1), but with another horn coming up in the midst of them:

231 As the prime minister of Britain, Benjamin Disraeli wrote in his novel *Coningsby*, “... the world is governed by very different personages to what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.”

232 For more information on the history of those building out this seventh head system, I recommend the following two books: *Wall Street and the Rise of Hitler*, by Antony C. Sutton, and *Illuminati, the Cult that Hijacked the World*, by Henry Makow, PhD.

233 Jackson, *Farewell Address*, online at The American Presidency Project.

^{NAS} Daniel 7:8 “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, **another horn, a little one, came up among them**, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great *boasts*.

^{DBY} Daniel 7:20 and concerning the ten horns that were in its head, and the other that came up, and before which three fell: even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth speaking great things, and **whose look was more imposing** than its fellows.

Daniel said that this little horn had a look “more imposing” than even the ten kings. This is because the little horn is the Antichrist. So, just as Christ was indwelt by God and was the express image of His nature, so will the Antichrist be indwelt by and manifest Satan. The Messiah was called to bring God’s light and love to the nations as we saw in Course 10, but the “Anti-Messiah” brings war and death under the guise of keeping us all safe:

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 5:3 While **they** are saying, “**Peace and safety!**” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Unlike the true Messiah, this false Messiah will not be a light to the nations, nor will he bring in the promised New Covenant. After the man child²³⁴ has been caught up to God, the Antichrist outwardly blasphemes God and His tabernacle (i.e., those who were caught away to God), then pictured in heaven:

^{NAS} Revelation 13:6 And he opened his mouth in **blasphemies against God**, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven.

Why is the Antichrist so angry here? You would think that with this centuries-old plan now fulfilled—with him in place as the world’s ruler supported by the ten crowned kings—that this would be a time of celebration for him and those working with him.

I believe the answer for this anger is that by this point in time, God’s latter rain has poured down upon His willing people, preparing them with a Messianic feast to

²³⁴ The man child is one picture, and the bride made ready is another picture of the same group of people who yield to God and fulfill the pattern and plan that He has called us to.

be made ready as the bride, and this spiritual revival among the people is enough to temporarily put a death wound to the seventh-head system. The devil is especially angry that Jewish believers are a major part of this last-days revival, for he knows that Jacob had referred to Judah's tribe as strong and lion-like (Genesis 49:9), and he did not want to have to deal with them. He preferred the time when he was able to veil their eyes, but those days are over (2 Corinthians 3:15, 16).

After the catching away of the bride (man child), this seventh head quickly comes back to life. If the long history of the other six beast heads teaches us anything, it is that when Satan has control over the nations' governments, we will see Israel and all who love God come under attack. Although the beast is set up under the guise of being "pro-Israel," things quickly change once it has gained its needed police-state control. It should be clear that the beast first portrayed the Muslims as the enemy, but this was only to control resources and attain world domination.

Instead of the dragon thanking those Christians and Jews who unknowingly supported him in his global warfare (believing they were fighting for freedom), he now shows that these two groups are, in fact, his next target. In our day the term "Israel" also extends to those who are *spiritual* Israel—those who believe in the Messiah. Once world domination is achieved, they will be portrayed as the new enemy. We saw that his focus was on the man child (Revelation 12:4, 5), but this group of people escapes by being caught up to God. He now attacks the remaining Christians (the seed of the woman, church)—those believers who had refused to become part of the bride and remained behind (Isaiah 66:5; Revelation 12:17).

He (the Antichrist) knows that all are commanded in scripture to refuse the mark of the beast, and the scriptures show he uses this to put them to death when they refuse to take the mark and join him (Revelation 20:4).

The Antichrist moves quickly to install the beast's control system, so that no one can buy or sell without joining his ungodly system and accepting his mark (whether a literal mark like a computer chip, or a figurative mark as in joining with and assenting to the beast system, Revelation 13:7–18). As part of his continuing deceit, he probably accomplishes this under the guise of keeping everyone safe, such as going cashless and paperless to lovingly protect the environment, or keeping all the people united and on the same team. Whatever ruse is put forth, the true reason will be *complete control* over the nations and the destruction of those on the beast's enemy list, beginning with the remaining believers.

The dragon then turns its focus to the final enemy on his list—Israel itself. Finally, he feels that his long-desired destruction for this nation is coming to pass. Around the same time that this system of control is fully implemented, the Antichrist and his ten financial "kings" establish a presence in Israel to show they are "pro-Israel." As this deception continues, the Antichrist seeks to be seen as the true Messiah. The scripture below says he will even enter the Temple in hopes of being

pictured as God. Paul shows that the rapture (our gathering together unto the Lord) will not occur until the apostasy comes (when the devil's tail takes down a third of the stars, representing the believers, Revelation 12:4) and this Antichrist is revealed:

^{YLT} 2 Thessalonians 2:1 And we ask you, brethren, in regard to the **presence** of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of **our gathering together unto him**,

^{NAS} 2 Thessalonians 2:3 **Let no one in any way deceive you**, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, **and the man of lawlessness is revealed**, the son of destruction,

^{NAS} 2 Thessalonians 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, **so that he takes his seat in the temple of God**, displaying himself as being God.

It appears that verse 3 is a first revealing for those who have their spiritual eyes open to see. And then, after the rapture ("he who now restrains is taken away"), the Anti-Messiah is revealed again, but this time openly for all the world to see:

^{NAS} 2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way**.

^{NAS} 2 Thessalonians 2:8 And **then that lawless one will be revealed** whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

At about this same time, this beast's mask has come off further, showing that in reality it is like the previous six beast systems before it, only more powerful. John then shows that these demon spirits under Satan's direction are working within the kings, causing them to bring war upon Israel (Armageddon):

^{NAS} Revelation 16:14 for **they are spirits of demons**, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, **to gather them together for the war** of the great day of God, the Almighty.

^{NIV} Revelation 16:16 Then **they gathered the kings together** to the place that in Hebrew is called **Armageddon**.

It is very possible that these nations gathered together by the demons are attacking Israel in retaliation for events instigated by the Antichrist, under Satan's direction. The devil whips up the people into a rage over events that *he* actually caused, resulting in war on Israel. The prophet Zechariah (chapter 12) spoke of this time as did many others, such as Ezekiel (chapters 38, 39) and Jeremiah (chapter 30), who refers to it as the time of Jacob's trouble. As many scriptures foretell, a charade of lies and deception will be on constant parade, and God's people will have to be on guard to "be not deceived."

The sons of Israel followed the ark of God's presence, miraculously crossing the Jordan river (on dry land) into the Promised Land under Joshua (Yeshua). They were to cross over about "2,000 cubits behind the ark" (Joshua 3:4). So will it be with the spiritual sons of Israel (the bride/man child) who will cross over spiritual Jordan (into the Promised Land at the rapture) without touching death. If this type is accurate, this will occur about 2,000 years after the true ark of God's presence (the Messiah) spiritually passed over Jordan into the Promised Land (in 30 AD). This catching away would then occur about 2030 AD, give or take several years. We do not know the day or the hour, but if we look at the signs we will know the season (1 Thessalonians 5:4).

The Bride Keeps Her Focus on God's Leading

As this seventh empire is forming, the bride does not fixate on the beast, for her focus is on preparing to be what God wants and yielding to Him as He leads her. Yet she is not ignorant of Satan's schemes and devices (2 Corinthians 2:11).

As this world empire gains more power and control over the people, things may not look good in the natural sense. This was also true for Noah building the Ark, Moses facing the Red Sea, and David facing Goliath. But as we keep our focus on God's leading and those truths He reveals in His word, we will accomplish His work.

The Song of Solomon pictures the bride leaning on her beloved, she who came forth out of her mother who had labored to give birth. In this same context, he mentions the great strength,²³⁵ power, and fierceness of God's *agape*²³⁶ love:

^{NAS} Song of Solomon 8:5–6 "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, Leaning on her beloved?" "Beneath the apple tree I awakened you; There your mother was in labor with you, There she was in labor *and* gave you birth. "Put me like a seal over your heart,

235 The Hebrew word translated as "strength" can also mean "power" or "fierceness."

236 The Septuagint uses the Greek word *agape* here for "love," a word with which first-century Jewish believers were very familiar.

Like a seal on your arm. **For love is as strong as death**, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; **Its flashes are flashes of fire, The *very* flame of the LORD.**

We must keep the *agape* love burning, for the Messiah warned that lawlessness in the last days would cause the love (*agape*) of the many to grow cold:

^{YLT} Matthew 24:12 and because of the abounding of the lawlessness, the love of the many shall become cold;

Daniel shows that none of the wicked will understand what is really going on, which probably includes most who are serving the beast:

^{NAS} Daniel 12:10 “Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

Some of this may be as it was with Elijah, where at first many sons of Israel were deceived into serving the wicked King Ahab (1 Kings 21:25) and his occultist wife Jezebel. Some even fought against Elijah and sought to kill other Jewish prophets (1 Kings 19:10), thinking they were fighting for God and country. The scripture shows some of these prophets were hidden away in caves (1 Kings 18:4). However, in bringing forth His power through His people in these last days, God will show many which side He is really on, just as had occurred with Elijah:

^{NAS} 1 Kings 18:37 “Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God, and *that* Thou hast turned their heart back again.”

^{NAS} 1 Kings 18:38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

^{NAS} 1 Kings 18:39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.”

Throughout Israel’s history a picture existed of a coming battle between the sons of darkness and the sons of light:

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief;

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 5:5 for **you are all sons of light** and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

Judaic scholar Lawrence Schiffman explains that the Dead Sea Scrolls picture this battle as a Messianic war that (in their belief) presumably precedes the ultimate Messianic banquet²³⁷ for the victorious sons of light:

This new community would then gather together for the messianic banquet, presumably in the aftermath of the great war between the sons of light and the sons of darkness.²³⁸

The Dead Sea Sect held these beliefs as a result of putting together all the biblical events and prophecies for Israel in the end of days. I believe that the Messianic banquet²³⁹ will be partaken of in the midst of battle, just as a table was prepared before David in the presence of his enemies (Psalm 23:5).

Some will take up natural weapons and attempt to fight the beast using natural force, but they will quickly be crushed, for the beast defeats entire nations under its feet (Daniel 2:40; 7:7). God wants us to put on *spiritual* armor, for this will be a spiritual battle with spiritual enemies (2 Corinthians 10:3, 4) and we will overcome by His spirit:

^{NAS} Romans 13:12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

^{NAS} Ephesians 6:11–17 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, **against the world forces of this darkness**, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the

237 Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 333–335.

238 Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 331.

239 The *Agape* feasts were preenactments of this heavenly feast, as seen in Courses 5 and 6.

breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil *one*. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

^{KJV} Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

The beast may act like Goliath and arrogantly challenge the people who dare to stand with God. He will outwardly mock God's people, but this will be a sign of the soon-coming spiritual death wound to the beast's seventh head.

When Israel was captive in Babylon (the beast's third head), a time came when King Belshazzar overstepped his bounds. The king was throwing a big feast and when he tasted the wine, he decided to bring out the gold and silver vessels of the Lord that had been removed from the Temple when Jerusalem was taken and use them in his own ungodly feast. This was a big mistake, and the scriptures relate what happened:

Daniel 5:5–6 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. Then the king's face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; and his hip joints went slack, and his knees began knocking together.

The words "*Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin*" that the hand of God wrote essentially meant "God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it, and you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting" (Daniel 5:25–28). Kings and rulers may be confident to the point of arrogance; yet when God's presence comes forth, these most powerful rulers tremble.

The Lord Provides an Open Door

In the midst of all this, God provides a way of escape, just as He did with Noah and the Ark:

^{NAS} Revelation 3:8 'I know your deeds. Behold, **I have put before you an open door** which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

^{NAS} Revelation 3:10 “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, **I also will keep you from the hour of testing**, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.

^{NAS} Malachi 3:16–17 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. “And they will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”

The open door is the promise of a bride made ready; it is the promise of being caught up to be with the Lord forever:

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

^{NAS} 1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

A great move of God is coming that will perfect us into what He desires for His people:

^{NAS} Psalm 132:14 “This is My resting place forever; **Here I will dwell**, for I have desired it.

^{NIV} Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “**I have loved you** with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

^{NAS} Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; **In Thy presence is fulness of joy**; In Thy right hand there are **pleasures forever**.

God desires a bride, and in Jeremiah he referred to Israel as his bride in the making:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 2:2 “Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, “Thus says the LORD, “I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, **The love of your betrothals**, Your following after Me in the wilderness, Through a land not sown.

God said he was a husband to the Israelites:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 31:32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, **although I was a husband to them,**” declares the LORD.

Some may wonder why Israel was pictured in the Old Covenant as being betrothed to God, with God saying He was a husband to Israel (Jeremiah 2:2; 31:32), yet in the New Covenant spiritual Israel is pictured as the bride of Christ (the Messiah). These images of the people as a bride are only natural pictures that point forward to the spiritual fulfillment. The Messiah gives us an example of how to love God, for he is a visible expression of God’s nature. This example further enables us to love God, whom we cannot see.

In one sense we are the Messiah’s spiritual bride. In another sense, after we are caught up to meet the Messiah in the air, he then gives up the whole kingdom to God, that God might be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24). We will then be spiritually one with God, one with the Messiah, and one with each other in the spiritual realm for all eternity (John 17:20–26).

This powerful move of God’s spirit is coming to all who are willing to enter into it. Many Messianic fellowships and many churches will enter in; we’ll all be one in the Messiah. We need to prepare ourselves to allow God’s *agape* love to flow, yet keep all things pure before Him. This moving of God’s spirit will cause the assembly to grow into the bride, without spot or wrinkle:

^{YLT} Ephesians 5:27 that he might present it to himself **the assembly in glory**, not having spot or wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it may be holy and unblemished;

The (mostly Jewish) scripture writers of the New Testament all came to understand that the festivals and communal meals from the Old Covenant pointed forward to the promised New Covenant in which they now found themselves. Thus the spiritual banqueting that they were experiencing was the sharing of God’s love (*agape*).

For example, Paul shows below that the giving and receiving (“every joint supplies”) of the individual members of the body causes the body to be built up in love:

^{NAS} Ephesians 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which **every joint supplies**, according to the proper working of each individual part, **causes the growth** of the body for the building up of itself **in love**.

Along similar lines, Peter refers to *spiritual* “living stones” being built up to become the house of God, where His spirit will dwell:

^{NAS} 1 Peter 2:5 **you also**, as living stones, **are being built up as a spiritual house** for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The final ingathering of the harvest that God seeks is the fruit of the spirit being manifest in His people, and the first and most important of this spiritual fruit is love:

^{NAS} Galatians 5:22–23 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{NAS} John 15:5 “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

The scriptures warn that in the last days, perilous times will come (1 Timothy 3:1–5), yet at the same time the Lord is preparing a table for all who love God. The table from which we partake will fulfill the plan as seen in the Showbread. The Lord’s table will also fulfill the third and final Feast of Ingathering, whereby the spiritual fruit is ripened within God’s people and we become ready as a bride to be caught away to God.

Courses 5 and 6 showed that this feast can be entered into today, as we share God’s *agape* love and feast on His word, taking great delight in His spiritual instruction. This is the Messianic feast that all people are called to—filled with unspeakable joy and glory. It is up to us to enter this Promised Land and receive all that God has for us, and the time to enter in is now!

^{NAS} Isaiah 25:1 O lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name; For Thou hast worked wonders, Plans *formed* long ago, with perfect faithfulness.

^{NAS} Isaiah 25:6 And the LORD of hosts will prepare **a lavish banquet for all peoples** on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, *And* refined, aged wine.

^{NAS} Isaiah 25:7 And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.

^{NAS} Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.