

# STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at [johnny@stoneharborchurch.org](mailto:johnny@stoneharborchurch.org).

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,  
Johnny

## ***Transformation Card***

*This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.*

Date: Feb 7, 2010  
 Series: The Church of God's Intention  
 Part: Part 1 – What God Intends the Church to Be  
 Section: The New People of God  
 Topic: The Church  
 Message Title: How the Church is the New People of God  
 Short Title: The Church, the New People of God  
 Text: Various  
 Key Words: Church, People of God, Estranged, Redeemed, Fulfilled

### ***Message Outline***

#### Series Setting

The Church of God's Intention  
 Part 1 What God Intends the Church to Be  
 God Intends the Church to Be The New People of God

#### **How the Church is the New People of God**

- I. The First Adam Anticipates the Last Adam
- II. Noah & His Family Anticipate Jesus & His Disciples
- III. Abraham & His Descendants Anticipate the New Community of Faith
- IV. Old Testament Israel Anticipates the New Testament Church

### ***Related Scripture***

1. 1 Peter 2:9-10
2. Gal 6:15
3. Heb 12 (esp. vv. 18-24, 29)
4. Heb 13 (esp. v.14)
5. Heb 10 (esp. vv. 19-25)
6. Col 3 (esp. vv. 1-4)
7. Eph 2 (3sp. V. 22)
8. 1 Cor 1:26-31

### ***Questions for Thought and Discussion***

1. How do God's dealings with His people in the Old Testament help us understand Him and His dealings with us in the church today?
2. Answer the above with respect to Noah
3. And with Abraham?
4. And with Israel?

### ***Memory and Meditation Verse***

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 1 Peter 2:9-10 NASB

We have seen God's purposes in creation and in particular those purposes as first manifested in the creational People of God (POG), i.e., Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve fell it created the context for God to redeem mankind so that in spite of their failures and resultant estrangement from God, His purposes would succeed. In this section of our study we will look at the next of 3 instances of God working redemptively with the Old Testament (OT) POG.

In our pursuit of God's intention for the church, what we are looking for is light on how God has worked in history that will contribute to our understanding of Him and how He is still working today. We are looking at the OT to discover first God's revelation of Himself and then how He worked in former times with the OT POG so that we can understand His current dealings with the New Testament (NT) POG that is, the church. For, God's character and purposes are unchanging. And the Scripture testifies that what He has done in the past in part, He has in Christ accomplished in full!

So let's look now at God's dealings with Noah and what He would have us see. One lesson I have had taught to me time and time again by the voice of the Scriptures is that when you give careful consideration to them, you find that what you knew was just the tip of the iceberg. I thought I knew Noah, but it turns out I knew him only as an acquaintance. I'm beginning to know him better and I am beginning to see that there is a lot more to this man than first meets the eye, and there is even more to him than that as we consider how God has worked with him to advance His purposes.

God used Noah in his day in significant ways. My hope this morning is that He would continue to use the life of Noah to accomplish His purposes in our lives in the church.

## ***(2) Noah and His Family Anticipate Jesus & His Disciples***

### **(a) Similarities**

#### **(i) God's Dealing with Noah**

When we look at Noah we understand that God judged those in whom He saw "only evil continually" (Gen 6:5-6) (flood). Yet, miraculously via an ark constructed of wood according to His plan, God delivered a very small remnant of the people and animals of His choosing and calling. They were delivered from that judgment because of their association with righteous Noah. Only his wife and his sons and their wives were delivered from God's judgment. Then through that remnant (the POG) God continued to pursue His original and unchanging intentions re-creating His first creation, reissuing His mandate to be fruitful, multiply, fill, and rule (by implication), receiving their worship and extending His promises (He would never flood the whole earth again) for the preservation of mankind. See Gen 5-9.

**(ii) God's Dealing with Jesus**

We can not help but see Jesus pictured in Noah: One righteous man delivering others from God's just judgment based on their association with Him via the wooden cross of God's design; and saving them into a new life purged of the sin of the past and commissioned to be His witnesses, worshipping Him, enjoying His promises.

As much as the similarities are impressive and help us understand the consistency of God's dealing with mankind, there are real differences – differences which highlight the partiality of the redemption wrought in the times of Noah and the fullness of that secured by Jesus. God has worked in a progressive way in His redemptive dealings with His people.

**(b) Progression****(i) From OT Part**

Noah prefigures Jesus, yet Noah was a man with deficiencies that would manifest in due time limiting the scope of the redemption worked through him. In contrast, Jesus is a man of proven perfection and unlimited and ultimate effectiveness in the redemption God worked through Him.

God delivered Noah and those associated with him from the judgment of the flood, saving them through the waters so that they might continue their earthly lives in a physically renewed creation. But God, in Christ, delivered those joined to Jesus by faith from His eternal judgment literally saving them from hell and releasing them from their bondage to sin which caused them to be dead spiritually. Jesus saved them causing them to be born again by the Spirit as new creatures (2 Cor 5:17) with transformed natures and God's Spirit dwelling within them. Now that's redemption – final, ultimate, redemption.

Do you see the escalation from physical to spiritual and from part to full?

**(ii) To NT Fulfillment, Inaugurated**

(To live into -- Fullness)

The POG in the days of Noah were saved from drowning in the flood, but they were not born again by the Spirit and transformed into new creatures with the Holy Spirit within

them. Their fallen humanness is evident in their quick return to evil.

- Drunkenness of Noah (Gen 9:20ff)
- Disrespect of Ham towards his father Noah (Gen 9:22)
- Disobedience of POG to “fill” the earth (9:1) choosing instead to gather in one place and build a tower for their own glory independent from God (see story of Babel, at Gen 11:1-9). Listen to Gen 11:3-4.

The redemption Jesus secured was not partial but full. The church, the new people of God are born again and given a new nature, we have the Holy Spirit, the very power and presence of God, within us (1 Cor 6:19). We have forgiveness of sins and communion with God. Thus, those redeemed by Christ have a far greater redemption than those redeemed by Noah.

But for most of us we would have to admit that it remains a redemption we must live into more fully if we are to enjoy what God has already laid hold of for us in Christ. We know the Scriptures regarding our new nature that we are:

- Born again
- New Creatures
- Indwelt by Holy Spirit
- No longer dead, but alive
- Seated with Christ in the heavenly places

Yet, we effectively live like the natural man of our first birth. For many of us we must stop understanding ourselves by a natural assessment of our spiritual condition as those who still need redemption, and start regarding ourselves by faith as those redeemed and reborn, truly alive in Christ!

The redemption Jesus has secured on our behalf is a true redemption into the inaugurated KOG. This is not to say that there is no more work to be done on us, for we are most certainly still in process. Our redemption is a redemption accompanied by ongoing spiritual transformation unto Christ-likeness (sanctification) whereby we are being reformed by the word of God and the Holy Spirit becoming increasingly like Jesus – who displays for us the ‘True Man’ – man according to God’s intention. But it is to say that we must not under-realize what Jesus has done!

How do we live aware of the fullness of that redemption? We will look at that in just a bit. But before we go there I want to point out what is still ahead in regards to our redemption.

**(iii) To NT Fulfillment, Consummated** (To hope for -- Ultimacy)

We still look to the future hoping for the return of Christ when all that He has secured by His sufficient and complete work on the cross will be fully realized in all of our lives. We don't hope for what He has already done in giving us new life in Christ, but we do hope for that glorious Day of the Lord when He comes, fearfully in final judgment, but hopefully in consummation when He will rule the KOG without resistance, when all will be as He designed it to be, when the Lion will lie down with the lamb.

That is hope for the future. Let me give you some action points for our lives now.

**(c) Action**

**(i) Understand Redemption in Relation**

**If we are to be the church of God's intention** we must first **understand that our redemption is found in our relationship with Christ**. Noah's family was saved in their relation to Him. We are saved in as much as we are related to Christ just as Noah's wife was related to him.

Now that I have taken a closer look at the life of Noah I can say, **expectedly**, Paul speaks of the NT church as the wife of Christ. In [2 Corinthians 11:2](#) speaking to the Corinthian church he says, **"For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."**

Then in his famous exhortation to husbands and wives that they should love and submit to each other Paul quotes Adam's exclamation in Genesis 2:24 when God presented Eve to Him, **"FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** (Eph 5:31). And then he continues, **"This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."** (Eph 5:32)

My point in all this is to draw attention to one of the many ways God's dealing with Noah prefigures God working

with Jesus. It was by relationship with Noah that any in his day were saved from the flood of judgment. Only his wife his sons and their wives were saved through the flood. Similarly it is only by our relationship with Jesus that God has delivered us through the judgment we deserved.

Do you understand that? So the first action point I lay before you is the action of understanding that only those related to Christ are redeemed. It is not about being good, or feeling the right feelings, or doing the right stuff or even believing the right doctrine. When it comes to our salvation, our redemption, it is about being rightly related to Jesus, the Righteous One. This leads into my second action point.

**(ii) Become the Bride of Christ**

**If we are to be the church of God's intention** we need next to **BECOME the bride of Christ**. In a very real sense we need to be 'married' to Christ. And we are so joined to Christ by God's grace through faith. We might think of His calling as His marriage proposal to us and our "Yes" as our response of faith and acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

Should you be hearing (or reading) these words and find yourself estranged from God, outside of the body of Christ, not in relationship with him, then know today that God is waiting for you. This is the season in the history of mankind when God is calling His people to Himself, gathering them into the church as He gathered His people into the ark in Noah's day.

Thankfully it has been a long season since God first built the ark of the cross of Christ. But it is a season that does come to an end and that end is when Christ comes a 2<sup>nd</sup> time. What is He waiting for? He is waiting for His people who still live in darkness to come into His marvelous light. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." And what is repentance but a right understanding of God and particularly of Jesus, His Son come as the fulfillment of all the OT promises of the Messiah.

The work of the final redemption is done! It was completed in the work of Christ on the cross followed by His resurrection and His sending of the Holy Spirit. What remains is the ingathering of the rest of the POG and the application of that work in our minds and hearts.

**(iii) Be the Bride of Christ**

**If we are to be the church of God's intention** we must **BE the bride of Christ** that He has redeemed us to be, i.e., we must live in the fullness of the relationship with God which God's redemption in Christ has already secured.

It is one thing to get married and say "I do" at a wedding ceremony. It is another thing all together to actually be the spouse you promised to be. This is the difference between the bride on her wedding day and the wife for the rest of her married life.



The latter requires you to embrace your new identity and live it out as your new life, your new reality. You no longer live independently of your spouse but in union with and love for them. For this reason a man will leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. Consequently you are no longer two but one flesh. What God has joined together let no man separate. (See Mat 19:4-6)

What can happen in human marriage relationships can happen in the divine human relationship as well. You get married in ceremony but never actually adopt your new identity as the bride/wife of Christ. You live effectively as independent and autonomous from Him. Your life is not characterized by submission to Him but you certainly still want all the benefits of the relationship. We can effectively become spiritual gold diggers mining our relationship with Christ for what it brings **us** that **we** want. And to the extent that we do this we prove the insincerity of our professed love and the disingenuousness of our promises to Him. What is the result? A relationship that is empty and hollow and lacking the joy and reward of the intimate communion and unconditional love that was and remains the relationship of God's intention. You are married, but you have lost sight of the value of that marriage, you drift away, you have stopped **being** the bride of Christ and you begin to live as if you were not His bride.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, He is a faithful husband and today is calling you into the fullness of the relationship of His design. He has not left you and indeed He never will. He has done all the work necessary for you to enjoy your relationship with Him. It is we who drift. We are the ones who drift into the doldrums of a ho-hum relationship with Jesus and begin to look forward to the future only – maybe it will be better when He comes again, maybe then I can have the great relationship I hear people talk about but that I don't actually experience myself.

In human marriage relationships that drift into something less or something painfully different than marriage at its best we always have our spouse to share the blame. Not so as the bride of Christ, is it? We can not accuse Jesus of being a crummy husband, in some way insensitive or unloving can we? He has fully proven His perfect love. "Greater love has no man than this..." (John 15:13).

If we are to be the bride of God's intention, we must recognize the fullness of God's redemptive work in Christ in our own lives. We are not individually nor are we collectively fallen sinners waiting for the future redemption of God. Rather we are the NPOG, the community of those **already redeemed** by Christ, we are the bride of Christ **now**. Yes, we await His return and the final consummation of His Kingdom, but that hope of the future should not preclude our full enjoyment of and participation in the redemption He has secured already.

“Wait a second here,” you say. “Nothing I see when I look around me looks like the final purpose of God.” I see pain and suffering and hardship and death. Then again we remember the principle of the already but not yet. Jesus already inaugurated the KOG but it is not yet fully consummated. That remains for the time of His second coming that is still future to us. He has already effected the new creation, but it has not yet been consummately realized. He has done all the work of redemption that needs to be done -- that was finished on Calvary's cross, proved out by His resurrection, moved forward at Pentecost when He sent His Spirit to His church. But what remains in regards to His existing church is our full apprehension of what He has already laid hold of for us – our being the bride of His intentions.

This is where the word and the Spirit come to bear on us – We must allow ourselves to be washed in the word of God. God chooses to increase our faith as we listen to His word and His Spirit leads us and guides us into truth that we can't see with our natural eyes or minds. Be transformed, brothers and sisters so that you may apprehend the redemption already secured for you by Christ! How? In dependence upon the Holy Spirit, lean in with focused attention and listen carefully to God's word – listen as if your life depended on it. Surely your apprehension, your awareness of your true life (the life God has intended you to live in intimate communion with Him) does!

You are the bride of Christ. Be the bride of Christ.

Now in regards to those outside the church, those who have not discerned God's “proposal”, His calling them to Himself in relation to Christ, we the existing church have an obligation.

**(iv) Participate in the Ingathering**

**If we are to be the church of God's intention we must participate in the ingathering** of all who corporately are to be the bride of Christ. We are like those who have already boarded the ark and should now be cheering on the rest who God is still calling to Himself. Come on you guys, this way. You can do it! His love is sweet. He wants you on board. Come! The ramp has been laid, the ark has been built. The way is Jesus. Come the Way! Come, we cheer to the world in word and in the witness of our transformed lives.

Somehow we need to be participating with God in the ingathering of the complete number of all who are to be the bride of Christ. That means this little church needs to welcome those God is calling on board. This means we each need to be living in such a way that we are living testimonies of our Lord Jesus.

I've given you a lot.

**(v) Point of Focus**

**I'd like to give you a point of focus.** As much as I love the sound of JFK's "And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country;" when it comes to us (the church) and God we would be better exhorted, "And so, my fellow believers in Jesus, ask not what you can do for God, but **what God HAS DONE for you.**"

Think NOT about all that you do that you shouldn't, neither think about all that you don't do that you should; rather apply yourselves to understanding yourselves as God has redeemed you to be. You may even jot this down on your Transformation Card (TC): **Understand yourselves as God has redeemed you to be!**

Like Noah's wife and his sons and their wives, you are redeemed because God has taken you to be the bride of Christ. And because you are so joined to God's final Christ your redemption is also final, spiritual, ultimate, eternal.

**(vi)** As we prepare to participate in the Lord's supper this morning will you please hold two images in your mind. First the image of yourself as Christ's bride. Second the image of the church corporately as His bride. Both are true. Neither stand on their own. Your personal relationship with

Jesus in absolutely essential, but it does not express the fullness of who you are. You are also a part of the larger community of Christ's redeemed. It is only when you come to the table genuinely BOTH personally and in community with the other members of the community of the redeemed that you can properly celebrate the Lord's supper as He intended. Holding your identity as an individual much loved child of God the object of His saving grace and love extended to you in Christ, AND as a member of the corporate body of others so loved, come to the table!

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<sup>i</sup> SIDEBAR -- An added take away you might glean here is that the husband-wife relationship and the Christ-Church relationship give witness to each other. We come to understand the Christ-Church relationship by what we know of the Husband-Wife relationship especially as it is held before us in creation as we have read in Gen 2:24. John Piper points out that in the Eph 5 passage we read, Paul sees, "...that the husband and wife become one flesh... and that Christ and the church become one body."<sup>i</sup> But we will look more at that later in this series. More in line with our topic this morning, we see that the...

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