

"I will set a Plumbline among my people..." Amos 7:8



# The Plumbline

Assessing Current Teachings, Issues and Events with Scripture

## The Bridal Paradigm

"Let the King Bring Me into His Chamber"

The focus of this issue will be what is being called the "Bridal Paradigm" promoted by Mike Bickle and his ministry called "International House of Prayer" IHOP (contra, the pancake chain of restaurants). The Bridal Paradigm is actually Bickle's third major ministry emphasis. Initially he was noted for his promotion of what was then called the Kansas City Prophets. The KCP during their heady days were led by two famous prophets, namely Paul Cain, a resurrected Latter-Rain prophet who eventually was outed as a homosexual, and Bob Jones. Cain in his youth had ministered with William Branham exhibiting the same clairvoyant gifts. But after the demise of Branham, Cain fell into obscurity until resurfacing at Kansas city and became the ultimate prophet and seer as was his mentor Branham in the 50's. The Other KC prophet was Bob Jones who was sidelined because of his prophetic sexual abuse with women. He has recently been recycled and both he and Cain were promoted at the recent Todd Bentley meetings. Currently, Jones stock in trade is teaching people to make daily trips to the third heaven. During the heyday of the KCP, Ernie Gruen, a charismatic local pastor, became a famous whistle-blower outlining an assortment of extreme practices and teachings at the Kansas City Metro Vineyard. Gruen's printed work is still instructive and is available on the net.

After the waning of the Kansas City Prophets, Bickle's next spiritual enterprise was IHOP and its foundational teaching was prophetic praise around the clock 24/7 based on the Latter-Rain teaching called the "Tabernacle of David." Its expression is that of singers and musicians released to lead corporate intercession. This model of David's Tabernacle is seen as an end time worship/warfare scheme that the elite will use to stimulate God to move so that the church can take dominion of the earth. TOD teaching is not new at all but was clearly a part of the of the restoration teaching of the Latter-Rain teachers. George Warnock writing during the hey day of the LR (early 50's) often referred to the TOD. TOD teaching asserts that David's tent pitched for the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem is meant to be a model for the last day's church. Conversely, the temple of Moses is viewed as a model of dead spiritual ritual. All other worship than TOD is viewed as powerless in these last days.

Mike Bickle has in recent years introduced the "Bridal Paradigm" as a new world view. It is a paradigm saved by God for the last day's church. Bickle states that in July 88, "the Lord began to lead me to see the Kingdom of God through the eyes of a cherished bride who is fascinated with the beauty of Jesus as the Bridegroom God." Bickle employs the Song of Solomon with its sensual emotions and affections as the interpretive key for an intimate Bridal intimacy and identity. Bickle promotes Jesus as an emotional lover of individual Christians. Individual Christians are urged to aspire to enter into a spiritual dimension with Christ as a Bridegroom.

This last days Bride will co-rule with the Bridegroom in intimate relationship forever. This teaching can only be sustained by exaggeration and misapplication of the NT metaphor of the Bride of Christ. This intimacy teaching of the Bridegroom/Bride is based on a purely allegorical treatment of Song of Solomon. I will not take the time to refute this allegorical treatment and application to individual believers. Bob DeWaay in his article on IHOP and the bridal paradigm has done this job well as have most other responsible commentators. ( Mike Bickle and the International House of Prayer - The Latter-Rain Redivivus, Issue 107, July/Aug, 2008).

Although our narrow focus today is regarding the Bridal Paradigm and its effects among Christians, IHOP engages in the teachings and practices very common in circles seen on GODTV. A former IHOP student and blogger called "exihoper," tells of a wide range of teaching and practice at IHOP such as: (1) exorcising demons from Christians, (2) full assortment of bizarre manifestations - holy laughter, animal sounds, seizures, shaking, people trying to give birth etc. Exihoper also tells of a bizarre practice of which I have never heard. Someone named Nesbit tells of a practice called "River Flush." People also associated with Wagner's New Apostolic Roundtable sent out folks to flush out demons from the Mississippi river system and break the power of principalities from the second heaven, who have power over rivers which are a power source and which form a network for the demonic. "River Flush" was designed to prepare the way for Lou Engle/Bickle at the "Call" event on 7.7.7 in Nashville fulfilling a Bob Jones prophesy. (F.A.C.T. net)

Not everyone promoting an end time revival however has resonated with Bickle's Bridal Paradigm. Andrew Strom, originally from New Zealand, has some very cautionary words: "What does the term 'Passion for Jesus' mean to you? Would it surprise you to learn that whole Christian movements are now using it to mean a kind of 'eros' for Jesus - 'passion' similar to what an earthly husband and wife have for each other. (From the word 'eros' we get the word 'erotic'). And what does the term 'intimacy with Jesus' mean to you? Would it surprise you to learn that many are now using it to mean sensual 'eros' type encounters. You may think that such unscriptural practices must be out on the 'fringe' somewhere. Surely they cannot be part of mainstream Christianity? Well, look around you, because this stuff is now everywhere. I live very close to one of the world's largest and most influential prayer centers here in Kansas City - and it has been a major source of this type of teaching for many years. And now it is all around the world. At this center young men and women will tell you about being 'ravished'... 'swooning in His arms' etc." (Andrew Strom, "Jesus As Your Lover")

Bickle and other proponents are quick to dismiss many of the reports of "romance" experiences. Bickle denies vehemently that the kiss of the Son is "not on the lips." But the teaching which wants to limit these bridal metaphors to non-sensual experiences is often not sufficient for those who adopt these teachings whole heartily. Furthermore, the experiences of many students at IHOP and in other places suggest that these attempts to restrict highly emotional and even romantic experiences have many times failed. "From a book that is required reading at the Kansas City Prayer Center we read: '[He God] has given Himself to both the exhilarations and the woundings of a lovesick heart. When He gazes on me, He sees through the eyes of love and desire. He comes before me and says, 'I am a Man in love. I am a God that burns with desire, and I have set My affections on you. I am an all-consuming fire of love. And you are the inheritance that My Father has promised me. Will you receive my love? (Pg. 57)... She lifted her arms wide to the Lord and said with all her strength and her love, 'Enjoy me. right here, right now, in my absolute weakness, enjoy me.' (Pg. 84)... We remind you that this is an officially recommended publication at the Kansas City prayer center, with a foreword by the leader of the movement. It is

required reading for the young people at this ministry school... [a former ihoper blogger writes:

‘I moved here to KC 2 years ago to attend the Prayer Center... I have been so confused by the whole sweep of the ‘Bridal Paradigm’ and ravished heart of Jesus and Song of Solomon. I cannot relate to Jesus as romantic lover, nor do I want to! I am trying to have clean thoughts and a pure heart. I want a godly husband to be that for me, to model Christ’s love and headship. All my friends tell me, ‘Jesus is your husband - let Him be your first love and your provider.’ As if I should shun men and give up on the idea of marriage.” “ D-- writes: I ran into this a few weeks ago at our home fellowship. A woman whom I see to be very Spirit filled, was talking to us at the dinner table about being taken into the ‘upper chambers’ where Jesus laid her down on a bed of roses (because He is the Rose of Sharon He can do that, she said), and that He made love to her. She described to me this whole scene as if it were out of a romance novel. The thought of Jesus actually making love to me made me sick... I was actually disheartened, grieved and shocked that she was talking about this. What gets me is that her friends who were with her all agreed as if this were sound biblical doctrine.” (Replies to ‘Jesus AS Lover article).

### **Embarrassing Intimacy Lyrics**

Bridal Identity teachings are a strong influence for an abundance of intimacy worship songs. I could fill these pages with pages of examples. Here are the lyrics from one worship song:

“You are my everything, my hearts delight  
You are my obsession; I wait for you through the night  
In the morning when I rise I ache for you.”  
(from “Obsession” by Nathan Shaver and Eldon Stump).

Heather Clark is a very popular charismatic singer made famous for her “worship warfare dance at Todd Bentley’s meetings in Florida. Here from her album “Kisses of your Mouth” we encounter these lyrics:

“Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth  
Your love is better than wine  
Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfume  
No wonder the maidens love you  
Take me away with you, let’s hurry  
Let the king bring me into His chamber”

Other tracks include: “All Night Long,” “My Lover,” “Faint with Love.”

### **Wal-Mart rejects ‘racy’ worship CD**

“ANAHEIM - The latest Vineyard Music worship CD “Intimacy, Vol. 2,” has raced to the top of Christian sales charts, but Wal-Mart is refusing to stock the album without slapping on a parental warning sticker. The ground-breaking - some say risqué - album includes edgy worship songs such as “ My Lover, My God,” “Touch Me All Over,” “Naked Before You,” “I’ll Do Anything You Want,” “Deeper” and “You make me Hot with Desire.” Vineyard is considering issuing a censored version of the album. (Lark News).

This Bridal Intimacy theme has been percolating for some time now. Back in January 6, 2002 at the "The Call" thousands of young people took public marriage vows to Jesus. With Lou Engle, the older head bobbing jeans clad cheerleader exhorting the youth, many were married in mass.

Wendy Griffith CBN News Reporter filed the following:

"Some 20,000 mostly young people packed the Kansas Convention Center on New Year's Eve for a wedding ceremony unlike any other... as each person who came embarked on a marriage covenant with the Bridegroom of Heaven... From noon until midnight they danced and sang, fasted and prayed, and got ready to get married to Jesus. 'There's going to be a wedding and God is rising up friends of the Bridegroom to prepare the church, there's going to be a wedding!' One by one, thousands of men and women, young and old - made their vows and walked under the prayer shawl symbolizing their commitment to Jesus."

A Commentator noted: "The Jewish "huppah" is in fact an integral part of a binding Wedding Ceremony between a man and women; Therefore what these young people were doing was getting married - but to whom? The Bible tells us that the Marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven and only at the Day of Redemption when all believers are gathered in. It does not take place on earth as a preparation for the Lord's coming." But here on earth serious young women are having "dates" with Jesus, and even dressing up for the event. Kairos Jewelry has marketed special Bridal Jewelry for those young women wanting to be dressed properly. Kairos makes their pitch stating: "While wearing your bridal jewels, may you receive all God has for you as The Bridegroom shifts you to a deeper place with Him." Apparently, older Christian women are also getting involved. There are reports of women digging out their wedding dresses and having Bridal Teas.

Finally an avid ihopper has decided that Jesus actually died on the cross in order to pay a "bride price" so she can be with her bridegroom. It seems that the Bridal Identity knows now bounds. Doesn't it seem like this biblical metaphor which has its fulfillment in heaven and is designed for the corporate body of Christ and not individuals, has taken Christianity into the absurd and has introduced the erotic into intimacy with Christ? I am not suggesting they are not Christians but they have mishandled biblical texts (especially Song of Solomon) to promote a false view of intimacy with Christ. One will search in vain at IHOP to find any serious teaching of foundational biblical truths such as: the fall, sin and grace, the resurrection, and the trinity. In fact, Bickle's only reference to the trinity glosses over the trinity in order to endorse Branham who denied the trinity. Rather, in the IHOP bookstore, there is a whole wall devoted to Catholic mystics, modern prophesies, spiritual warfare techniques and spiritual mapping. Bickle also claims John G. Lake as the most important influence in his life next to Christ, and the greatest intercessor in history. This despite Lake's little gods teaching, communication with the dead and being arrested for fraud. AT IHOP THE MAIN THINGS ARE NOT THE MAIN THING.

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