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## The Measure of Christ

### (No More Striving)

Today I want to try to tell you about a view of the Lord that has been unfolding in my heart for a month or so... It has to do with striving. You know what striving means don't you? Here are some good old dictionary definitions:

1. to exert oneself vigorously; try hard: *He strove to make himself understood.*
2. to make strenuous efforts toward any [goal](#): *to strive for success.*
3. to contend in opposition, battle, or any conflict; compete.
4. to struggle vigorously, as in opposition or resistance: *to strive against fate.*
5. to rival; vie.

Did you know there was a time when God strove? (I'm tempted to say "strived" but I know that's not right!) Well He did... the Bible says He strove, and He didn't like striving any more than you and I do, so He took action.

Suffice it to say, seeing the answer to the truth about striving had started to feel pretty necessary for me to see... And true to form, when we're desperate to see something, God will do everything within His power to show it to us.

And I'm sure it's not a surprise, because we've all been around the block a few times, but the place where striving stopped for God also happens to be the same place striving stops for us— at the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Not very long ago I had a very compelling dream about a flood. It was one of those dreams that felt so real, that when I woke up, I couldn't shake the feeling that I'd experienced a devastating flood... and my dream sparked in me a desire to read the greatest flood story of all time-- the story of Noah's ark... We've heard a lot of preaching about Noah recently, so I'm not really going to read the story to you or rehash what everyone else has already shared, except to point out a few things that struck me in a clearer way than ever before...

Remember, I was coming at this from a place of striving. I'd seen yet again that I wasn't who I thought I was supposed to be on the inside. That was my bottom line. I

had an expectation on myself, a misconception, an impossible goal that still seemed possible...

So when I read the story of Noah this time around, suddenly things looked so simple to me. I'll explain. Though there were several people in the story, I saw it was simply the story of two men—Adam and Christ... And the flood was the way God brought to an end the reign of one man, so another Man could live in his place, and reign and exist from that point forward.

And I could see that though God had a specific intention in mind when he created the earth, it wasn't long before Adam came on the scene, a man who practically *lived* to thumb his nose at God, challenge His authority, and resist God's purpose! And unfortunately Adam had lots of kids which meant soon the whole earth was full of people just like him!

But the problem wasn't that there were a lot of adamites on the earth. God's "beef" wasn't with individuals, per se...When I read Gen 6:3, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever..." I realized that in that statement, God had simply rolled up all of Adam's kind—all humanity-- into one man, and He was simply and clearly saying to that man that his day was over. God was tired of striving with him, and He was going to do something about it. He was going to bring an end to the struggle in such a lasting way that from that moment forward, peace would be the reigning reality because there'd no longer be a competing life.

Inherent in the words "striving" and "struggle" is the implication that more than one life is trying to exert power and influence, kind of like a very spiritual way of saying, "It takes two to tango" ☺ ... But to God, true peace is found in the number One, not two numbers agreeing to get along.

So when I read how God sealed righteous Noah and his sons inside an incredibly specifically-dimensioned ark, suddenly the ark became more than a boat full of animals, and Noah became more than a random guy trying to survive a coming storm. Suddenly Noah looked like Christ, and the ark became a picture of the Cross... Noah and his family inside the ark looked like the Son of God, together with everyone who would be born of His life, sloshing around in the cold, dark waters of death and judgment, immersed in a death so complete that nothing outside of the ark would survive it.

The flood completely swallowed up and destroyed everything, and the ark was swallowed up, too, but when the waters subsided, wonder of wonders, the ark was found to be resting on a high mountain. In fact, the flood actually left Noah and his family in a far better place than before the flood happened, because when the door was opened, they walked out into an entirely new creation....The ark didn't escape judgment and death, it went completely into it, yet death couldn't overcome it...

And that is exactly like what Jesus did on the cross. He gathered one whole creation into Himself, died, and was buried for three days... But death couldn't hold Him. He was raised up from the dead and now lives on high, and those who are in Christ are seated with Him in heavenly places.

The flood wasn't an end in itself, but it was what God used to bring an end to striving with man. The Cross will always be God's way of dealing with the adamic man, because in one fell swoop it brings an end to the man who lives to strive against Him, and it opens a door for anyone who wants to come into a brand new existence... a Creation where there's no room for striving.

So, yes, God wanted the striving to end, but it was for a very specific reason.....It wasn't simply like "Wow... I can't wait to get Adam out of the picture! Glad I don't have to put up with him anymore!" As I read, it became apparent to me that all along God had something in mind for Noah after the flood. And that's what started to intrigue me... I wanted to know more about life after the flood because I thought it might give me a clearer understanding of what God has in mind for us regarding life after the Cross.

The shadow-end of Adam happened a long time ago in the flood, and the fulfillment of it happened on the cross, captured in one moment in time. Yet the Cross of Christ is an eternal reality, and it's always trying to present itself to our hearts, to call us to know It as both the end of one man and creation, and our entrance into Another... Yet learning true facts about the work of the Cross won't make much of a difference to us because we'll never experience the end of our adamic struggle until we let the Cross become personal... until we begin to see God's point of view about exactly what happened to us when we were born again.

Have you noticed that a lot of times we say we believe things, but our actions and feelings speak louder than our words? That's what's been working in me lately—this profound awareness that the reason I have so many "little" misconceptions about life and God and what's real, is because there is one HUGE misconception that drives all of the others! And that misconception involves thinking I have "two men in my life" ☺ Christ and Adam, when after the Cross there is only One.

The flood judged flesh and removed it from God's sight, yet often we act as if flesh still exists, and we let it interfere and get in the way of relating to God, others, and ourselves... But Flesh is a dead issue to God, no pun intended....He's got it covered, as we quickly get to see in the story of naked Noah and his two sons who refuse to look upon his nakedness and provided a blanket to cover him... That's what happens in life after the Cross. Christ becomes our covering by administering everything He is to us.

And this is rather obvious, but failing to see things the way God does is the source of all of our problems. Every single human question and confusion and condemnation has a

misunderstanding at its root that causes us to fail to comprehend exactly what happened when God said, "the end of all flesh has come before Him."

God may no longer strive with flesh, but sadly we will still continue to strive with it (and God) to the measure we haven't seen the completeness of what God did on the cross..... The Cross completely took the adamic man out of the picture, as far as God is concerned, and opened a Way for us to be found in Christ... Noah and his family stepped out of the ark and into a new Day... They proceeded to live in a new creation, completely covered under a rainbow covenant that promised that God would never again destroy the earth. A perfect sacrifice had been made, a perfect life was offered to God, and a pleasing new fragrance now rose up from the earth...And instead of dead flesh, the Lord smelled a soothing aroma..... Judgment had done its perfect work and provided a death and a life, a sacrifice and a covering for Noah and his family to live within... There would be no need for God to strive with man ever again, or flood the earth all over again, because God had won the battle already with the adamic man, and there was only One Life that filled the new creation now...

That was a long introduction...ha... Listen, I know all of this is very familiar, and that I'm preaching to the choir... but we still need to hear it. And if that type and shadow of the Cross was good news for Noah, imagine how wonderful the *reality* of the Cross is for those of us who let ourselves be trained by it!

Can I just say something else here? I've always just kind of skimmed over the sevens and thousands, the cubits and shekels, etc., because while I believed they meant something, I never understood what they were referring to, so they seemed unimportant. And if I ever did pay attention to numbers, efforts to understand them quickly became a sort of religious numerology game to me.

But the more I saw the Life and work of Christ in the story of Noah and the ark, the more I felt like I had a new understanding about numbers appear in my heart. When Rod mapped out the dimensions of the ark for us on the board, and we discovered that it resembled a pitch-black, floating coffin, I could see that God used specific numbers when describing the ark, but all along what He really wanted us to see was that the dimensions of the ark were the same thing as the boundaries of the life of His Son... the ark was a bunch of perfectly constructed materials intended to capture in a shadowy way Christ's death and life, and the great work of the Cross... Which makes sense, when you think about it, because Christ is the only thing God is ever trying to communicate to our hearts, you know, not things about a boat!

Suddenly I felt like I'd been handed a new Bible because there were tons of verses where I'd read numbers and only seen numbers! Now it seemed like skipping over the numbers was the same thing as skipping over Christ! And though this doesn't logically "add up" to my natural mind (pun intended), now I knew Christ wasn't only in the

words on a page, He was in the numbers, too! The Spirit's ability to reveal Christ isn't confined to using letters of the alphabet. Selah... ☺

I was so excited to see Christ in the numbers, and not see numbers in the numbers, that I immediately wanted to test out my new theory by reading another portion of Scripture that contained measurements... So with thoughts of Noah stepping out of the ark into a new creation in mind, I remembered God's New Testament version of the New Creation-- Zion, which I knew was a perfect cube... And I thought that seemed like the perfect place to test my "Christ is in the numbers" theory, so I flipped to Rev 21, where it starts by saying:

*1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea no longer is.*

And I instantly thought it sounded like the same place Noah found himself walking in. He was in a new creation, one that was born out of judgment and death. And like Noah, the Cross has delivered us into a new creation, too, one that was born out of judgment and death.... For those of us who are in Christ, everything is new, too... and the sea is gone... the earth dried up after the flood, and in the new creation there's no more sea, which seems to say "death" doesn't have any place here...

*2 And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

The flood completely ended God's striving with man, but as the people of Noah's day soon proved, man could still strive with God if he wanted to. The new creation consists of only one Life, so God doesn't strive with them; He actually lives and dwells among them without enmity and without struggle. He is their God and they are His people... They "get along" and live in perfect peace because there is a boundary around the New Creation, so nothing of death, nothing of the old man can enter.. In fact, "in Christ" is the place God and man get to enjoy complete oneness and walk out a perfectly ordered relationship, which sounds like what God had in mind for man all along, doesn't it?....

There are a lot of little things we could talk about, but I want to get to where I am going, so let's pick up in verse 9:

*9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife  
10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. And its light was like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*

When I read that, the Lord highlighted the phrase “carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain” in my heart, and I suddenly knew that just like the new creation Noah beheld, there are some things that can only be seen from a great and high mountain... and the bride, the Lamb’s wife, is one of them. If you try to look for her with earthly eyes, you won’t see her. All you’ll see is you and me-- a bunch of imperfect people who say they are the bride, but who fall far short of the beautiful description we read here in Revelation.

What is it that took John’s breath away, and made the bride so beautiful? I think it’s found in the phrase “having the glory of God.”... Why was the bride beautiful? Because what John was beholding didn’t have an earthly origin. It ‘came down from heaven.’ And when he took one look at her, what He saw was a City...Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem... He saw the City whose builder and maker was God Himself.

He saw different elements in the City—things like stones and gates and streets—but everything the wife of the Lamb had was given to her by her builder, so in effect, HE (the Lord) was the Beauty in her midst. And she was beautiful only because she was manifesting Him.

It goes back to God’s understanding of marriage, and the two becoming one, and the unique union that exists between husband and wife, where the role of the wife is to put “on display” the life of her husband by submitting to him and bearing the increase of his seed...

The wife of the Lamb that John saw has been joined to the Lord in a unique relationship where there are no longer two lives on display, but One... Remember, God no longer strives with man because there is only one life on this side of the Cross (flood)... And as we grow in our understanding of the “One Life” covenant we’re in, our illusions that we have anything worthwhile to add to Christ, or anything valuable to lose, will disappear, because we will see that we lost everything we had in the flood! (at the Cross).. and seen in His light, even what we had wasn’t worth holding onto.

And if we’re ok with knowing that, suddenly we don’t have to strive anymore because when we let Him give us all He is in place of all we aren’t, we can finally rest... Losing our life to find His stops feeling like loss and becomes complete gain! And instead of fighting the process, we’ll gladly “submit,” just like a good wife does, ☺ because we’ll finally realize that we were created and joined to Christ to bear His increase and manifest His glory.

*12 And it had a great and high wall, with twelve gates. And on the gates were twelve angels, and having names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel:*

*13 From the east three gates, from the north three gates, from the south three gates, and from the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And he who talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city and its gates and its wall. 16 And the city lies four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand stadia. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. 17 And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. 18 And the foundation of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city had been adorned with every precious stone.*

And what I wanted to point out here was that when I heard those numbers, and pictured this perfectly cubed City-Wife of the Lord's, and saw how the wall around her was inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, at first I felt like what John was seeing was PEOPLE in the City... Like Peter was a man of faith, so his name got to be on the wall... and the same for the other guys... Kind of like how the Vietnam Wall in Washington DC lists all of those who died in the war... Almost like what was being displayed was a Who's Who of Old and New Testament individuals who played a big part in the history of Judaism and Christianity...And I pictured the rest of us walking on streets of gold inside the walls...

Just reading the list of names, and stones and gems, and pearls and gates, etc., caused me to picture many people and many things, you know?

But then I remembered the measurements of the ark... and the pitch... and the window.... and the family inside the ark, and how individually they each spoke of Christ and how taken all together as one they spoke of Him, too... then I read the word "foundation," I thought of the verse "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." (1Cor3:11)

And poof! Suddenly I saw that Christ is the foundation of the City, and He is every single other component in it, too! John may have listed THINGS, but he was really seeing the reality of Christ in every single thing he mentioned...

He was looking at the bride—the wife of the Lamb- who was perfectly putting the fullness of Christ on display—Christ's glory is what filled her... So everything that was true of Christ could be said to be true of her, too, but not because she brought any goodness or beauty into the equation... She didn't have any glory to add to what John was seeing. There's only one life in this covenant, remember? But when she was joined to the Lamb by covenant and became His wife, she became the place designed to bear His increase and glory. And along with Christ came all sorts of beautiful realities for her to enjoy and display..... Things like truth, righteousness, holiness, purity, etc., Her beauty was really a manifestation of Him. And her experience of the

reality of His life was personified in jewels and gems and all those gorgeous things mentioned in chapter 21.

CHRIST was the perfectly-squared dimensions of Zion that John was beholding! HE was both the wall around her, *and* the glory within her... And because she lived joined to Him, everything beautiful thing He possessed, she possessed too.

This means that when we see the Church, we won't see a bunch of individuals walking around in the City, because it's filled with One Life. We're there, of course, if we're in Christ, but we aren't what's known and seen...We are "hidden in Christ"... As a good Husband does, Christ will provide everything we lack by giving us all He has and IS, until we are perfectly covered by Him, just like Noah's nakedness was perfectly covered by that blanket.

Now all of that might be a no-brainer to the rest of you, but it rocked my world, because suddenly I saw with my heart that I have been looking in the wrong place to see the reality of the Church! I said it was Christ, but I don't think I'd seen it as Christ...And my failure to see Christ as the Church has caused all sorts of difficulties along the way!

Even the names of the twelve tribes and twelve apostles that were inscribed on the wall are Christ, too, because the twelve tribes weren't individual people to God, they were "Israel is My Son"... And God used Israel to form a type and shadow testimony and a fixed boundary on the earth (a wall) between what was Christ and what wasn't, so it makes perfect sense that John would see them in the walls of the New Jerusalem.

And the apostles became those who "carried the torch," so to speak, and through submitting to the sanctifying work of the Cross they became within themselves the same "boundary" of Christ that Israel had been testifying to for thousands of years... Only this time it wasn't a testimony of type and shadow, it was the actual Life of Christ that was at work within them, causing them to become *living* witnesses and expressions of the boundaries of Christ.

It's always difficult to end these things... but in summary, it's important for us to let the Lord deal with our hearts about our misconceptions, wherever they're hiding... and He will always deal with us through a confrontation with the cross, where we see again that our old man is dead and gone, put out of God's sight forever, and our new life is hidden with Christ in God... And that changes everything.

God has given us a great gift by requiring nothing of us *except* that we let Christ be the measure of everything. He doesn't want or need our perfection, our best effort, our



ideas, our talents; He doesn't want us to DO anything, except to let Christ be the Life of our soul. That IS everything...

And He's given us pictures of His view of the relationship we have with Him in the dimensions of the ark, in the height, depth and width of the City, His bride... in the oil that never ran dry that Ryan talked about last week, in the multiplying of the loaves and fishes Meghan talked about at the Rockside group... All of these number stories are pictures attempting to show us that the increase of Christ is what God's looking to find in us, and that is enough. We don't need to bring anything to Him other than a continual willingness to see Him increase and to see us decrease.

The measure of Christ is the boundary of the walls of the city, and He is the fullness of everything in between. But the miracle of it all is that though He somehow manages to fill up every single available space in the New Creation with Himself, through the work of the Cross He still makes a way for us to be found with Him in the New Creation, too.

*22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, even the Lamb. 23 And the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon, that they might shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 And the nations of those who are saved will walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 And its gates may not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. 27 And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, or any making an abomination or a lie; but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*