



Who are we – our identity in Jesus

The question of what we derive our self-image from shapes our identity.

It is not possible for us to maintain the appearance of a solid identity in the long run if it is not based on unchangeable values that are deeply rooted within us. If the foundation of our identity is not stable, we are latently at risk of acting unstable ourselves.

The question of what our identity is based on determines our journey with Jesus.

No human being can behave in the long run in a way that does not correspond to his identity (his self-image, self-worth). The questions

of what I define myself by and what I feed my self-worth from must inevitably be answered. Do I define myself by recognition, success or position?

We cannot allow ourselves to derive our self-worth from unstable, externally changing influences.

Jesus lived in complete dependence on his unchanging Father. His father determined his identity. He said of himself: I cannot do anything by myself, I live through him, what I have spoken to you, that does not come from me, the Father, who is always in me, accomplishes his deeds through me.

As a result, it is necessary to consider:

- *What is God's truth about you?*
- *What self-image do you have about yourself, what do you think about yourself?*
- *Is this consistent with what God says about you in His Word?*
- *Do you think the thoughts of God about you or do you have to adapt your wrong thinking to the thoughts of God?*

God's solution is so simple and apparently too complicated for us humans.

He simply tells us: Give me your life, completely, then look away from you, look at my son, open your ears and listen to what I have to say about you and how I see you.

Being a Christian doesn't just mean getting something, it means being someone, namely:

- *I am a divine masterpiece*
- *I am a saint*
- *I am a spirit-born child of God*
- *I am His child and heir of God*
- *I am a citizen of heaven*

"I am" and not "I will"

God is my loving Father - I am a child of God, created in His image

- *I do not serve God to gain His acceptance and recognition – I am accepted and recognized, so I serve God.*
- *I don't follow God to be loved – I'm loved, so I follow Him.*

The divine truth is:

I am saved by grace of faith

Ephesians 2:8–10

For by grace you are saved by faith, and not by yourselves—God's gift is it; 9 not from works, lest anyone boast. 10 For we are his creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, that we may walk in them.

I am right, justified before God by Jesus

Romans 5:1–2

Now that we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 3 through whom we have also gained access in faith to the grace in which we stand, and we boast of the hope of the glory of God.

I am made alive, everything old is forgiven

Colossians 2:13–14

He also made you, who were dead in the transfigurations and the uncircumcised state of your flesh, alive with him, forgiving you all transgressions; 14 And he hath extinguished the schuldschrift directed against us, which stood against us by statutes, and hath removed it from the way by pinning it to the cross.

I am part of the divine nature

2.Peter 1:2-4

Grace and peace will come to you more and more in the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus! 3 Since his divine power has given us all that is for life and [to change in] the fear of God, through the knowledge of him who has called us by [his] glory and virtue, 4 by which he has given us the most great and precious promises, that you may become parting by the same divine nature after you

have escaped destruction, which reigns in the world through desire,

I am an heir

Colossians 1:12

by giving thanks to the Father, who has made us capable of participating in the heritage of the Saints in the Light.

I am a co-heir of Christ

Romans 8:16–17

The Spirit Himself, along with our Spirit, testifies that we are God's children. 16 But if we are children, we are also heirs, even heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ; if we truly suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him.

I am holy, impeccable and unpretentious before God

Colossians 1:20-21

and through him to reconcile everything to himself, by making peace through the blood of his cross—through him, both that which is on earth and that which is in heaven. 21 Even you who were once alienated and hostile in the evil works, he has now reconciled you.

I am perfect

Hebrews 10:14.

For with a single sacrifice he has forever completed those who are sanctified.

I am an imitator of God and walk in love

Ephesians 5:1.

Now become God's imitator as beloved children 2 and walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as an offering and sacrifice of battle, to a lovely smell for God.

The old life is over and gone

2. Corintheiens 5:17

Therefore, if one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone; behold, everything has become new!

Now it's my turn to present the ultimate goal of God, which contains

all the events of history and on which all of God's efforts were directed—the family of God and the bride of Jesus.

God's Ultimate Goal - The Bride of Jesus

1. John 3:1-3

1 Behold what a love the Father has given us, that we are to be called children of God! And we are. That is why the world does not recognize us, because it has not recognized him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be; we know that when it is revealed, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. 3 And whoever has this hope in him cleanses himself, even though that one is pure.

I want us to take a closer look at the final image of the church of God, the Bride of Christ. Paul's letter to the Ephesians tells us the most about the construction of the church. If we want to know what the construction of the church of Jesus should look like, we have to deal with the letter to the Ephesians.

This letter gives insight into seven images of God's people.

1. The Ecclesia, the Assembly of the Called.

Ephesians 1:22.

And he has subjected everything to his feet and given him as the head of all things of the church,

2. The Body of Christ.

Ephesians 1:23.

who is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in all.

3. God's creative masterpiece.

Ephesians 2:10.

10 For we are His formation, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has prepared beforehand for us to walk in them. ¹

¹ *The Masterpiece Poem* = means a creative masterpiece.

4. Family of God.

Ephesians 2:18–19

18 For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Thus you are no longer strangers and non-citizens, but you are fellow citizens of the saints and God's housemates.

5. The Temple of God.

Ephesians 2:20–22

20 You are built on the basis of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. 21 Put together in him, the whole building grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 and in him you too become a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

6. The Bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:22–24

22 women to their own men as the Lord! 23 For the man is the head of the woman, just as the Christ is the head of the church, he is the Savior of the body. 24 But just as the church submits to the Christ, so do women to men in all things.

7. The army of God.

Ephesians 6:10–18

10 Finally, become strong in the Lord and in the power of His strength! 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you can stand up to the devil's lists! 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers, against the worlds, the rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly world. 13 Therefore, take up all the armor of God, so that ye may resist on the evil day and, when you have aligned everything, may stand still! 14 So now stands, your loins girdled with truth, clothed in the breastplate of righteousness 15, and shoeed on your feet with the readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace! 16 In all this, seize the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the fiery arrows of evil! 17 Take also the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, this is God's Word! 18 With all prayer and supplication, pray in the Spirit at all times, and watch over in all stopping and pleading for all the saints.

So here's how to summarize: The Bride of Jesus is:

1. *The Assembly of Saints*
2. *The Body of Jesus*
3. *God's Creative Masterpiece*
4. *The Family of God*
5. *The Temple of God*
6. *The Army of God*

If we look at the statements as a whole, it gives us an idea of how unique and multi-layered the bride of Jesus is. Not only "*one picture*" presents itself to us, whereby the last two pictures are particularly significant. They can be applied to the end of the grace period. Into the period in which we live. The Bible places particular emphasis on two aspects: the bride and the army.

One can hardly imagine two more opposite life situations than the bride and the army. The bride is something sweet, delicate, tender and beautiful, the army, on the other hand, is something strong, violent, rough and warlike. Commonly spoken, the bride is a symbol of the building of a family and thus of society, while an army stands for exactly the opposite, namely destruction.

How can we connect the two images spiritually? Also in the spiritual sphere, the church of Jesus has violent adversaries, Satan and his helpers. This is particularly noticeable in spiritual warfare. The more we participate in it, the more we become part of the army of God and the bride of Christ. This is a paradox. But I think it works.

The bride of Jesus, dressed in a beautiful wedding dress bright white, but she wears combat boots. The boots ready to carry the gospel of the kingdom of God into the world. So I want to combine these two images of the bride and the army.

We will now talk about the bride. Everyone is somehow emotionally touched when he hears something about a bride, a bride is just something special. So special that it touches people and almost enchants them. In Revelation 19 we have the picture. But it's interesting, here we are presented with two different female beings.

The first is not the bride, but the whore. Only then does the bride emerge. We are dealing here with the difference between the whore and the bride. Every person has to make sure with whom he identifies, with the bride or the whore.

Revelation 19:1–2

After this I heard something like a loud voice of a large crowd in heaven saying: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power are our God! 2 For his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great whore, who spoiled the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his servants against her.

I have noticed that there is no fear of noise in heaven. This verse speaks of a loud voice in heaven. This is not according to earthly standards, but according to heavenly standards.

Why is there so much enthusiasm in heaven? Revelation 19:2 gives us the insight. Heaven rejoices in the judgment of the whore. One of the reasons for this is because she is the main persecutor of new Testament saints. More blood has been shed through them than through any other power on earth.

If we read on, there will be even more noise in the heaven in the next picture.

Revelation 19:6

And I heard something like a voice of a large crowd and like a murmur of many waters and like a roll of strong thunder saying: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God Almighty has taken over.

Why are they so enthusiastic here? Because of the bride.

Revelation 19:7.

Let us be joyful and rejoice and give him the honor; for the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his wife has prepared herself.

This is the day that all heaven has been waiting for since the beginning of time. The revelation of the bride of Jesus. Here a very important statement is made, it says:

... she has prepared herself.

This means that if we are a part of this bride, we have to prepare ourselves.

The bride of Christ must behave exactly as an earthly bride does. It must be her greatest desire how she prepares for her wedding day. In verse 8 we then get an explanation.

Revelation 19:8.²

... fine linen, shiny and pure, she was given to wear (the "fine linen" are the righteous deeds of the people of God)

What material is the bride's clothing made of? A special kind of linen shiny and pure, what does that represent?

The righteous deeds of the saints.

In other words, our wedding dress consists of the righteous deeds that the saints have done during our lifetime.

- *If we believe in Jesus, His righteousness will be given to you in the Attributed to faith. That is: attributed justice.*
- *But what the Bible is talking about here is not this attributed Justice but it is a righteousness consisting of works of the saints*

But what are just deeds. Not just anything that arises from our actionism, but God's works prepared for us that we find for us on his ways. These and only those have eternal value and will be attributed to us as a fine, shiny canvas.

Now I want us to do something about preparing.

2.Peter 3:11

Since all this is so dissolved, what kind of people do you have to be in holy

² NT David Stern; Young's Literal Translation

walk and godliness,³

In 2 Peter 3, Peter speaks mainly of the return of Jesus. He described all the destruction that occurs before and at the return of the Lord Jesus. Peter tells us as a quintessence:

... that we must prepare ourselves in sacred change and piety.

This is the bright linen we need to put on.

1. Corinthians 15:51–52 and 57–58

*51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, **but we shall all be transformed, 52 suddenly, in an instant, at the time of the last trumpet;** for the trumpet shall resound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be transformed. 57 But thank God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! 58 Wherefore, My beloved brethren, **be firm, unshakable, always increase in the work of the Lord, because you know that your work is not in vain in the Lord!***

1. John 3:1

*Behold, what a love the Father has shown us that we should be called children of God! That is why the world does not recognize us because it has not known Him. 2 Beloved, we are now children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be; but we know that we will be conformed to Him when He is revealed; for we will see him **as he is.** 3 **And whoever has this hope in him cleanses himself, even though He is pure.***

Paul says all of God's children are transformed. John speaks of the coming of the Lord in his first letter and says that we will see Him as He is. But at the same time, he adds a word of warning that we have to heed, namely:

*... everyone who carries this hope cleanses himself,
just as He, Jesus, is pure.*

The ultimate proof that you expect Jesus' return.

It is not what you say, but whether you clean yourself. Are you in the

³ *Gottseligkeit (Text from 1930) Gottseligkeit enthält Fear of God and love of God out of pleasure at its Laws. It is not a surrogate of virtue ...*

process of purifying yourself? Do you seek to become pure for your groom in every possible way?

Let us remember one thing, God has only one measure of purity:

... just as He, Jesus, is pure.

It is far from me to bring anyone under damnation, but it should be a warning to those who do not take God seriously. So for those who say to themselves:

"Somehow all this will be fine; after all, I converted once and since that time I have gone to church every week, financially supported the church and Christian works."

Amazingly, God won't ask you about it. His question will be:

... are you prepared by cleaning yourself again and again?

This is practical proof that you hope for and expect the Lord's return. Many people talk about it, but they don't do anything about it.

2. Peter 3:12

*... by **awaiting** and **accelerating** the arrival of the day of God, for whose sake the heavens will come on fire and dissolve and the elements will melt in the fire!*

In the first half of the text, Peter speaks of two things we should do.

- 1. That we look for the coming of the Lord. Various New Testament passages talk about it.*
- 2. Accelerating the Arrival of Jesus*

Titus 2,11-13

11 For the grace of God has appeared, salvific to all men, 12 and instructs us that we may deny godlessness and worldly desires, and live prudently, and live justly and God-fearingly in the present passage of time, 13 expecting the blissful hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

- *Have you noticed what grace does for us?*
- *Grace educates and teaches.*
- *We must be and remain teachable or instructive if we want to live and remain in the grace of God. We must internalize what we have been taught by the grace of God.*

Some Christians think, yes, grace, then it doesn't matter what we do, it's all in vain.

- *Grace is in vain, but it educates.*
- *You don't have to pay anything for the lessons, but you have to learn them.*

What does grace teach us? She teaches both positive and negative. We see this in Titus 2:12

- *... that we deny godlessness and worldly desires.*
- *Denial means ... that we "say "no" to something or distance ourselves from something".*
- *We must oppose worldliness and godless desires with a "no".*

We have to say "no" to many things. We cannot afford to compromise, we cannot and must not tolerate them we cannot excuse them, we simply have to say 'no' to them consistently.

The second half of verse 12 speaks of the positive:

- *... that we live prudently and justly and piously in the present world.*

The grace of God leads us to a very specific lifestyle. This lifestyle does not apply to the next, but to the present age. And the lifestyle is described as level-headed, just and righteous. God has told us to be level-headed and prudent. That said, you need to be careful about who you're getting involved with. This also means with which people's opinions, organizations, parties, even spiritual things etc. you identify. That is to live in sobriety, prudence. God is loving, consistent and educating (disciplining) did you know that? He warns us, draws our attention again and again, but he leaves it up to us to decide whether we want to live under his premises or not. If we don't

want to, he says:

"Well, then continue to live your life as you want, continue to hold on to your mistakes, but remember - it is you who has to bear the consequences."

God is not a theoretical teacher. He teaches through practice, he guides us through personal experiences. When you run tired and frustrated by the eternal penalty rounds, you may think about your actions, the lost time, so God's lessons unfold their effect. So be careful. In Titus 2:13 we see the motivation why we should live in this way.

Titus 2:13

It is quite clear that we are waiting for blessed hope and for the appearance of the glory of our great God, the Savior Jesus Christ.

We expect something, which is why we live this lifestyle: the revelation of Jesus. Have you noticed Paul calling Him? The great God and our Savior. Yes, we are waiting for Him. If this is really the case, our waiting should affect our lives in all areas.

Hebrews 9:27-28

27 And as it is destined for men to die once, but thereafter judgment, 28 so the Christ, after he has been sacrificed once to bear many sins, shall appear for salvation for the second time without relation to sin to those who await him.

We will all have to keep an appointment. You may miss any other here on earth, but you will have to keep one.

The judgment of God.

Paul writes that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things we have done. Whether they were good or evil.

Look, there are only two kinds of things, there is nothing neutral. Everything is either good or evil. And what is not good is evil.

Jesus said, whoever does not gather with Me scatters. You are either a collector or a disperser. You may waste your time or talents, but you either collect or disperse. Everything you do is either good or evil.

One day you will have to answer to Jesus personally.
Hebrews 9:28 for whom will He appear?

Hebrews 9:28.

... thus the Christ, having once offered himself as a sacrifice to take upon himself the sins of many, will appear for the second time to those who are waiting for him, not for sin, but for salvation⁴.

- *For whom does Jesus return?*
- *For those who eagerly await Him.*

I want to draw your attention to something: if we don't wait diligently for Him now, it could be that God makes things happen in your life, that you realize how much you need Him. And when all this comes upon you, realize that God's motive is for you to wait diligently.

Personally, I believe that the church of Jesus still has a lot to go through in order to become zealous. And I think a lot of that will happen here in Europe soon.

So when it starts to happen, don't complain to God, just tell Him: God, I thank You for loving me enough and for pushing me to this zeal, that I am waiting for Jesus' return and prepare myself. Much of what God makes happen in our lives is done for this purpose, so that we realize how much we need Jesus and that there is no substitute for Him.

2. Peter 3:12

by awaiting and accelerating the arrival of the day of God, for whose sake the heavens will come on fire and dissolve and the elements will melt in the fire!

⁴ In the original, a prefix is placed in front of the word wait, and therefore it means to wait with intensity

We have already dealt with this expectation a bit. But it also means that we should speed up this day. We are expected to bring about this day of God quickly. Not that we should be indifferent and passive, but that we do certain things to hasten the day of the Lord. I'll show you one thing we should do.

Matthew 24:3.

But as he sat on the Mount of Olives, his disciples came to him alone and said, Tell us, when will this be, and what is the sign of your arrival and the completion of the age?

What will be ***the sign*** of the end of the world? In the following verses, Jesus gave them an accurate answer. At first, he gave them various signs, such as: famines, plagues, earthquakes, great lawlessness and persecution of the body of Jesus. These are all signs, all birth pangs of the end times, but all this is not ***the sign***. Matthew 24:14 tells us ***the sign***, clear and very specific.

Matthew 24:14.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world, to all nations, to bear witness, and then the end will come.

This is the message proclaimed by the Bride of Jesus

So what needs to happen before the end will come? The gospel of the kingdom of God must be proclaimed to every people. The end will not come until that has happened.

Please note that this is the gospel of the kingdom of God. It is the gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached. When you study the records of the New Testament, it is a gospel of power; it is not a watered-down, soft-washed gospel, not a gospel of compromise, no, it is a gospel of loving confrontation, it is the message of the king.

It is interesting what the critics of the apostles said.

Acts 17:6-7

But when they did not find her, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the colonels of the city and shouted: These who have stirred up the earth have also come here, 7 who have accommodated Jason; and they all act against the

emperor's decrees, saying that another king is Jesus.

We learn how the critics understood the gospel. What are they complaining about? That the apostles put the earth in turmoil, they turned the order of that time upside down and they left a huge, unmistakable impression in society.

I think we should choose to proclaim the message of the kingdom of God in such a way that those who hear it have no choice but to accept it. If they don't want that, it should at least be a nudge for them. In any case, you should know that Jesus is Lord and King and his kingdom is inevitable.

The worst thing that can happen to us, the messengers of Jesus, is that they are not noticed. If people get angry, stinky and angry when they can't rejoice, at least they know we're there. This is how Acts 17:7 describes the ministry of the first Christians. The enemies of the gospel knew of their presence.

The message about the King of Kings. This is the gospel of the kingdom of God. The message of the kingdom of God will always threaten the established order. No rule here on earth wants to know that there is another king.

The apostles made no compromises. They never apologized for it, they didn't seek perks. They spoke of another king, represented their king, and said, "We have a message from Him and you'd better listen. Because if you don't want to hear, then you have to pay. Pay with your life"

This is the gospel of the kingdom of God and it must be proclaimed to all peoples before the end of the age will come. And who is responsible for executing it? The politicians in their parliaments and parties, the professors at their universities, scientists in their laboratories, the clergy in their churches, the military or business bosses in there companies?

No. None of the representatives of these groups, although there are also individuals from these groups who stand up for this message. But we little weak, insignificant people are responsible for proclaiming this message. As in Jesus' time, it was the fishermen, not the Jewish clergy, who were entrusted with the spread of the gospel. We little people are the most important population group on earth.

Not because of who we are, but because of who we represent. The future of nations depends on us. We cannot change the world system, but we can save people from the forlornness that threatens them by confronting them with the gospel of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, we can also delay the coming of God's day. By doing something now?

Nothing at all.

In Matthew 25, there are three groups of people who are condemned by God.

- *The unfaithful servant.*
- *The servant who does not use his talent.*
- *The Bock nations that showed no love for Israel.*

They were completely rejected by God. And if you ask, what do they have in common? They all did nothing. That's all you need to do to be rejected.

We no longer needed servants of God driven by selfishness, egocentricity, narcissism and self-infatuation. As you walk through our history, you'll realize that it was this spirit that dominated for centuries.

The great evangelist Moody once said: when I was a young preacher, I always thought that God had placed his gifts on shelves, and in order to get the best gift, I had to reach the highest shelf. But later I

learned the following: the best gifts are on the bottom shelf. I don't get them by sticking myself far up, I get them by bending down.

We have received too little of the Spirit of the Lamb in the Western world. Once you've realized it takes more than just being there, just say:

Lord Jesus, I worship you, You are my Savior, my Lord, the Lamb of God, and I want to bow before Your feet, lay down my life and surrender the whole thing to You and become a servant of the Body of Christ.

I think of Abigail, a woman in the life of King David. David sent messengers to her and asked her to become his wife, then she replied, "Let me become a servant to wash the feet of my Master's servants." Jesus is looking for people who lay down their lives without reservations. Think about it for a moment, because it's not a cheap decision. After that, decide which way you want to go. This is the attitude of the bride of Jesus, she is moved by what moves the bridegroom, his interests are her interests. This is how we will experience what Jesus prophesied to us in high priestly prayer:

... that they may see my glory...

Then it will be the case that we go from glory to glory. What a wonderful perspective that is opened up here. For this it is worthwhile to put everything on one card. To serve him unreservedly and to put our wishes, demands even our needs behind.