

The Bride of Christ

For many years after I believed myself to be a Christian, I was quite ignorant about my future as the Bride of Christ. It is not the most obvious doctrine in the Bible, and maybe a little hard for us males to grasp, but it is vitally significant if we wish to serve God as resurrected Christians in the coming Kingdom of God.

As always, it is a matter of putting the scriptures together. Here a little there a little – Isaiah 28:10, *‘For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.’* A good place to start is Matthew 25:1-10, Christ’s parable about the ten virgins. Here we find a picture of Christ’s return for the Saints or true Christians, who are to become His Bride, Matthew 25: 1-10, *“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, **and the door was shut.**”*

Of course, many who will make up the Bride of Christ may have lived and died long ago, but this parable warns us who *are* living, that we must be fully prepared and not let our oil (God’s Holy Spirit) run low. Notice that all of us ‘slumbered and slept’ because we just don’t know when Christ’s return is due, and we are not as diligent in our prayer and study of His word, as God would wish. Remember, that it is through contact with God in our prayer and study of His word that our conduit to God, through which His Holy Spirit flows to us, is developed, and grows.

This marriage was prophesied in Isaiah 62:5, though the King James Version mangles this verse. So, setting the context, go back to the previous chapter where we see God referring to His elect in His Church and their future in His Kingdom, verse 5-6, and 9 *‘Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; ‘but you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.’ ‘Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.’*

The last verse in chapter 61 and the first 5 in 62 continue to describe the righteousness of His future Bride. Verse 5 is wrongly translated in the King James version and other versions, though some avoid the mistake and, instead of *‘thy sons’*, they ignore the jots and tittles of the Hebrew which have no authority, and then, the verse becomes, *‘The builder or restorer’*, so that the verse is then, *‘so shall your builder/restorer wed you’*, as in the NIV, which provides, *‘So will your builder marry you’*.

Thus the restorer is the Bridegroom and the restored are those who have been restored to righteousness through Christ, and to eternal life in the first resurrection. They will, in the future End-

Time, play the role described in verse 6. *'On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest.'* They are described again in verses 11 and 12, *'Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.'*

God's elect are again mentioned as virgins in 2 Corinthians 11:2, *'For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.'* Here Paul explains that, as baptised Christians, we are engaged to our future husband and He hopes to present a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ. It's important that we recognise that point. Not only are God's chosen called virgins, but chaste virgins. Here, Paul is talking spiritually of course. We are virginal because our loyalty and faithfulness is to Jesus Christ alone, but to be presented, we must remain chaste; that is, we must have no consistent spiritual intercourse with a false church because such communion would taint and corrupt our chastity.

False churches will not be found looking only to Jesus Christ and His word, but rather to their physical leader/leaders be it man or woman, who determine the beliefs of their followers. This is of course idolatry, and should be anathema to God's people.

Jesus Christ again spoke of His marriage in a parable in Matthew 22:1-14. Here Christ says that many in Israel were called but failed to respond, verse 5, *'But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.'* Some even slew the prophets who brought the invitation, so finally God extended His invitation to the Gentile nations of the world, who, even today, are often more receptive to God's word than the descendants of Israel. Verse 9, *'Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.'*

When the wedding comes, one is found who is not clothed in repentance, the wedding garment of righteousness required of the chosen, verses 12-14, *'And he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'*

So, the qualifications we need to become Christ's Bride, are strict, and include keeping God's laws, Matthew 19:17, *'And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments."* In fact, more than that is required as can be seen from Revelation 12:17, where, after the resurrection, Satan turns to attack those Christians left behind. *'Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood by on the sand of the sea.'* Here, those unprepared, who did not make it into the first resurrection, but keep the Commandments, remain behind to face the Great Tribulation.

So we see that those who do make it into the first resurrection and become the Bride of Christ, are very special indeed, and this is brought out in the description of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. Here is displayed diligence and faithfulness which should be our wholehearted dedication to our calling. 1 Peter 2:21, Mark 16:15, *'For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.'* ...And he said unto them, *Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to everyone.'*

If we are truly committed to our calling, we will be personally witnessing to Jesus Christ's sacrifice and carrying forward the gospel He brought, so that others may be introduced into God's Church. Romans 7:4, *'Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, **that we should bring forth fruit unto God.**'* King James Version, or

*'In the same way, my brethren, you also were made dead to the **marriage law of the Old Covenant** by the body of Christ in order for you to be married to another, Who was raised from **the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God.**'* (The Holy Bible in its Original Order – Fred Coulter)

It is a mistake to think that we can totally hand over this responsibility to others and remain silent, when, by our words and example we may produce spiritual fruit for God's firstfruit harvest, while at the same time ensuring that the witness we provide is faithful to God's word. In this practical way we will prove ourselves to be faithful to serve Christ in carrying forth the gospel to the world in *His Kingdom*. Revelation 5:10, *'And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.'*

We will have shown ourselves to be both diligent and devoted to our calling, having tried our best to prepare ourselves for our future roles, Revelation 19:7, Revelation 17:14, *'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath **made herself ready.**'* And then on Christ's final return with His Bride, *'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, **and faithful.**'*

By our faithfulness and diligence we will become qualified to join the rest of the 144,000 who together will become the Bride of Jesus Christ in the marriage ceremony which will take place in heaven before the Father's throne on the Sea of Glass, Revelation 15:2, 14:1-5, *'And I saw what looked like a **sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God.**'* NIV.

*'And I looked, and, lo, a **Lamb stood on the mount Sion,** (The heavenly Mount Sion) **and with him an hundred forty and four thousand,** having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song **before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.** These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were **redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.** And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.'*

Here they are pictured as already married, having the family name written in their foreheads. These are the firstfruits of God, being prepared in heaven for 3 ½ years after their resurrection for their role in assisting Christ to rule on the earth after He and they return, Revelation 12:14, 20:4, *'And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly **into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.**'* (See our article, 'Revelation 12:14')

'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not

worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.'

We have seen then, that Christ is very selective of His future Bride. No one else, even in the future, will ever have such a close relationship with both Christ and His Father. The description we have read in God's word of Christ's Bride, does not match that of most who call themselves Christians. It behoves us then, who wish to become that Bride, to apply ourselves to overcome our human nature and take on the character and purpose of our Saviour, that we might be prepared for a glorious future, 2 Timothy 2:2, *'Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonourable, he will be a vessel for honourable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.'*

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