

Virgins?

When we come across a word in the Bible that seems inappropriate, or difficult to comprehend, it may be being used in a symbolic way. Then, it is best to look for the solution in the Bible itself. Let the Bible explain the Bible, especially if it comes from a similar context or era.

Many Bible students and even scholars have puzzled over the use of the word 'virgin' in some New Testament scriptures, accepting it in its literal sense of physical virginity, where it is not appropriate in the context. Jesus Christ uses the word 'virgin' in his parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-10. This parable obviously pictures our Lord as the Bridegroom, and from other New Testament sources we understand that he is returning for His Bride, eg. Revelation 19:7-8, *'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 to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'*

Half of those here who look forward to that marriage – to become those Christians who will marry Christ, find themselves unprepared when Christ returns, and by the time they are, their opportunity has passed – 'the door was shut'.

It is interesting to note that all of the virgins were sleepy. Here are pictured God's people, His Church. They are not the churches of this world – those who reject His word, His example and his Commandments. They may not be physical virgins, for many of them are married and parents, but metaphorically they are virgins - having turned from this world to follow what they believe to be God's way of life, but they are sleepy virgins, not as diligent as Christ would hope for in their study of His word. Some indeed, have very little oil left - they have almost quenched God's Holy Spirit through neglect of their prayer and bible study.

Consequently, in their sleepy condition, half are not even aware that their oil is running out or almost gone. When their Lord arrives they are unprepared, and only those whose lamps are still alight go in to the wedding.

So, Christ left us this warning. Stay close to my word. Don't neglect prayer – keep that conduit open by which God's Holy Spirit flows into us, lest the flow be quenched and our entry into His Kingdom be lost.

The other puzzling metaphorical use of the word 'virgins' appears in Revelation 14:4, a scripture neglected by most of the Church of God because it may awaken God's people to that which is wrong within the Church they attend. *'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.'*

First, in looking at this scripture, let us remember that verses 1-5 here pictures events which are taking place in Mount Zion, not Mount Zion, - Jerusalem on earth. Hebrews 12:22, *'But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.'* Bullinger's 'Bible Companion' points out that the Book of Revelation alternates between visions of heaven and visions on earth, all of them seen by the apostle John, so there is a discontinuity after verse five.

In this vision, John sees the future. Here are pictured those who will take part in the first resurrection. They are not the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7, for they were only sealed with God's Holy Spirit after the resurrection, at the 6th Seal, and so have to experience the Great tribulation, Revelation 7:14, *'And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'*

This 144,000, in Revelation 14:1, received their sealing with the Holy Spirit *before* the resurrection, Ephesians 4:30, *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.....And grieve not the holy Spirit of God,*

whereby ye are[already] sealed unto the day of redemption.’ Their Father’s name is now written in their foreheads because they have married Jesus Christ after their resurrection and become part of God’s family, sharing the family name.

These are from all nations, not just Israel, as we read in verse three, *‘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.’*

Then we come to verse four and the use of the word ‘virgin’ again. Notice that first, it tells us that they were not defiled. We can become defiled by infidelity to our espoused - Jesus Christ, ‘2 Corinthians 11:2, *‘For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.’* How do we become defiled? By accepting another gospel, other than the teaching of Jesus Christ, verse 4, *‘For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.’*

Like John the Baptist, Jesus Christ came bringing the gospel of the Kingdom of God, Mark 1:14-15, *‘Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.’* If your Church fails to emphasise the coming Kingdom of God here on this earth, and our need to repent, instead delivering only a message about Jesus, then look elsewhere! Isaiah 11:6,9, and Acts 2:38. *‘The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. ...38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’*

Jesus also came as our example and pattern, 1 Peter 2:21, *‘For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.’* He became the greatest servant of mankind by giving His life to cover our sins, and taught that we too should have an attitude of service to others, not a desire to be served or to have dominion over others, Matthew 20:25-28, *‘But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.’*

Any who attempt to rule over others now, or determine what others should believe within God’s Church, apart from the specific words of scripture, will not rule with Christ in His Kingdom. Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees because they took the position of authorities on God’s word and then twisted the scriptures to their own advantage, as we read throughout Matthew chapter 23.

Today, we still see men who defy Jesus Christ’s words, giving themselves grand titles and claiming authority over God’s people, controlling what they must believe or face the threat of excommunication from their organisation, and this they do by adding to the scriptures, taking advantage of mistranslations such as the King James version of Hebrews 13:17, *‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.’* The correct translation from the Greek here begins, *‘assent to the evidence of those that guide you ..’*

An example of their deceits is the application of that form of the Government of God which will only be appropriate in God’s Kingdom, to this era of God’s Church.

In the Kingdom of God, those who will rule with Christ are those who have *proved*, in this era that they have no lust for power, but only a desire to follow the teaching and example of Jesus Christ’s service. Their attitude of service is proven genuine, as it is seen throughout their life, and so God is enabled to trust them to

be given great power in His Kingdom which no man is qualified to handle now, for we cannot read the real motives in the minds of men, as could Jesus Christ. And as we know, power corrupts mortals and total power corrupts totally.

Another symptom of that corruption is that those who desire dominion will often be found quoting from literature – books, tracts, or magazines, to establish doctrines, whereas God’s servants look only to the Bible. Avoid such men, because their teaching will defile *anyone* who listens long enough, just like the fabled frog in the warming water, and they won’t even realise that they are being defiled.

That’s why the next word we will examine is, ‘women’ in Revelation 14:4, *‘are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins....’* This also is a symbolic or metaphoric word and we need to go to a nearby chapter to find its true meaning. That chapter is Revelation 17, where is pictured a great false or apostate church, verse 4-6, *‘And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.’*

This great false church is centred on a city of seven hills, is clothed in scarlet and purple and full of riches and blasphemy. Its liturgy stems from pagan Babylon and down the centuries it has persecuted and killed thousands of true Christians. It epitomises the dominion and idolatry Jesus Christ condemned in the government, or rulership of ranks of men over God’s people known as a hierarchy or in the case where a *group* of men rule, an oligarchy. So, we now know that knowingly attending ***an apostate church*** – listening to that which we recognise as false teaching, eventually defiles us and disqualifies us from the resurrection or rapture of God’s Saints, at Christ’s return for His Bride.

Finally, Revelation 14:4 concludes – *‘These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.’* The correct direct translation from the Greek here includes the words *‘these were bought from the men....’* Jesus Christ, through His teaching and example, freed us from the power and dominion of false teachers, if we will honour and respect His words, but only the firstfruits will do so.

Sadly, the majority of those who call themselves Christians remain trapped under the dominion of men who name themselves ‘popes’, ‘presidents’, ‘apostles’, ‘pastor generals’ or ‘prophets’, which mislead them into looking to a man’s words rather than Christ’s. This is actually idolatry! Now we understand why, ‘The Revelation of Jesus Christ’ (Revelation 1:1) insists that those who hope to become His bride must be virgins!

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