

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

BIBLE TEXT : Proverbs 31:10-31; Matthew 25:1-30; Revelation 2:1-4

LESSON 363 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:42).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Proverbs 31:10-31

¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous woman?
for her price *is* far above rubies.

¹¹ The heart of her husband doth
safely trust in her, so that he shall
have no need of spoil.

¹² She will do him good and not evil
all the days of her life.

¹³ She seeketh wool, and flax, and
worketh willingly with her hands.

¹⁴ She is like the merchants' ships;
she bringeth her food from afar.

¹⁵ She riseth also while it is yet
night, and giveth meat to her
household, and a portion to her
maidens.

¹⁶ She considereth a field, and
buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands
she planteth a vineyard.

¹⁷ She girdeth her loins with
strength, and strengtheneth her
arms.

¹⁸ She perceiveth that her
merchandise *is* good: her candle
goeth not out by night.

¹⁹ She layeth her hands to the
spindle, and her hands hold the
distaff.

²⁰ She stretcheth out her hand to
the poor; yea, she reacheth forth
her hands to the needy.

²¹ She is not afraid of the snow for
her household: for all her household
are clothed with scarlet.

²² She maketh herself coverings of
tapestry; her clothing *is* silk and
purple.

²³ Her husband is known in the
gates, when he sitteth among the
elders of the land.

²⁴ She maketh fine linen, and
selleth *it*; and delivereth girdles
unto the merchant.

²⁵ Strength and honour *are* her
clothing; and she shall rejoice in
time to come.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

As a Thief in the Night

"But know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched" (Matthew 24:43). Of course a thief does not announce when he is going to rob, but if a person knew that he could expect someone to try to break into his house some night, he would call the police and have them hidden near to catch the culprit. To make such preparation would not be considered unreasonable. And as a thief might come any time, we keep our doors locked and take ordinary precautions. Common sense demands that a person prepare himself for whatever he knows may be ahead.

Jesus said that when He comes for His Bride He will come as a thief in the night. Every word that Jesus said is true and will come to pass. So if we are sensible we will prepare for the time that Jesus will call His people out of this world.

It might be in the morning when the sun is coming up in our part of the world, and we who are ready to meet Jesus will start the new day in the heavens above. In another part of the world it would be night, just time to go to bed. The people would have just said "good night" and then suddenly they would be awakened to the glory of the coming of Jesus, and would say "good morning" to the saints they would meet above. In other parts of the world people would just be sitting down to eat their lunch, and those whose ear was tuned to the call of Jesus would leave their meal to eat the Marriage Supper with Jesus in the heavens. One day we shall hear those words: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). What a day that will be! But we must be prepared for it.

Prepared

Just what does it mean to be prepared? Some will say: "Jesus saved me from my sins. I know my sins were all forgiven. I remember when Jesus sanctified me and made me holy. And what glory filled my life when Jesus baptised me with the Holy Ghost!" Those are wonderful experiences, and if we continue to pray and read the Bible, and to live as the Bible teaches after we have received them, we shall be ready when Jesus calls.

Do you still love everybody as you did when Jesus first saved you? Do you remember how different the people you once hated looked after Jesus came into your heart? Do you remember how much you wanted others to feel the same joy of salvation, which you felt? You prayed earnestly that others might be saved, and you did what you could to interest them in eternal things. Do you still have that zeal?

Jesus prayed for His disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"; and then He went on to say, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (John 17:17, 21). Do you remember how peaceable you felt when Jesus sanctified you? You did not want to argue. You enjoyed that unity of the faith, which comes with sanctification. Do you still have it?

When you were baptised with the Holy Ghost and fire, you felt

²⁶ She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.

²⁷ She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

²⁸ Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her.

²⁹ Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

³⁰ Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Matthew 25:1-30

¹ Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

² And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

³ They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

⁴ But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

⁵ While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

⁶ And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

⁷ Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

⁸ And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

⁹ But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

¹¹ Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

¹² But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

the Lord so close that you wished you could step right from earth into Heaven. You felt as if it would be but a short step. Does it still seem near? Jesus said that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, would come to tell us more about Him. He would tell us about the joys that await us in Heaven. The Holy Spirit comes to tell us things about His Home.

But how much interested are you today in hearing about the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for you? Do you talk about it as much as you do about the house in which you live here?

Do we live each day with the thought in mind that we are the Bride of Christ, and we must be worthy? Are we careful that there is nothing in our lives that would be displeasing to Jesus if He should call us today to the Marriage? A person might live a good life, have an earnest zeal to have other people live by the Golden Rule, and yet not have the love of Jesus in his own heart as he had when he was first saved.

Losing that First Love

When the Apostle John was on the Isle of Patmos, he was shown a vision of the true condition of the churches in Asia. This is what Jesus told him about the church of Ephesus: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:2-5).

These people had really been saved. Jesus said, "Remember . . . from whence thou art fallen." They had once had the love of God in their heart, but had backslidden. They had worked hard for Jesus, and were still working. They were patient, which is more than many people are who claim to be Christians. They sternly denounced the wickedness of others. They thought that what they were doing was being done for Jesus. But they had lost that first love, and were not fit to be the Bride of Christ.

The Word tells us that though we have faith to move mountains, and have not the love of God in our heart, we are nothing. We might give our body as a sacrifice, might give all our money to help the poor, but that would not make us the Bride of Christ. We must have the love of God in our hearts, and keep it there. "Above all things have fervent charity [or love] among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (I Peter 4:8).

The Foolish Virgins

In the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins we are told of a group of religious people, all of whom were expecting the Lord to come. They all thought they were ready, but five of them were like those in the church of Ephesus. They had lost their "first love." They acted much like the other five. They did the same work, but their hearts were not the same. Once they had had the love of God, but they had let it leak out until their lamps were empty. Not all who start out to be Christians will be ready when Jesus comes. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

The Bride of Christ

Just how should we live so that the oil will not leak out of our vessels, leaving us with empty lamps? In Proverbs 31 is described a virtuous woman, one like unto the Bride of Christ.

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (Proverbs 31:11). Jesus is the Husband. Can He safely trust you? He is

¹³ Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

¹⁴ For *the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*

¹⁵ And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

¹⁶ Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.

¹⁷ And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.

¹⁸ But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

²⁰ And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

²¹ His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

²² He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

²³ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

²⁴ Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

away now. Does He have to worry about how you are behaving while He is gone? All our actions should be with the thought in mind: Would Jesus want me to do this? If someone in the world is watching my life, will he recognise me as the Bride of Christ? Am I one with Him in character and reputation as husband and wife should be? "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

Kindness

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (verse 26). How many times people forget to be kind! "Charity suffereth long, and is kind" (I Corinthians 13:4). She is kind not only to her friends and close associates, and not only on some occasions. Kindness is a law with her. She is kind without thinking about it. She includes everyone in her kindness, even those who do not like her. She can pray for those who spitefully use her. "Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22, 23). And it is the will of God that we bear much fruit of that kind. That fruit will come only from a heart that is filled with the love of God.

Walking Worthy

The Apostle Paul tells us: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

If we say that we are Christians we must prove it by the life we live. The supreme desire in the heart of the child of God is to be ready when Jesus comes. He is trying to improve himself every day so that he will have all the needed qualifications. He is reading such verses as: "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:30, 31). He is asking God to help him to line his life to that Word. He is not looking for and talking about flaws in the character of others.

**"Do not look for the flaws as you go through life,
And even when you find them
It's wise and kind to be somewhat blind
And look for the virtues behind them."**

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies [or a heart of compassion], kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12). Such are the characteristics of the Bride of Christ.

The Bride's Work

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Revelation 22:17). That is the business of the Bride of Christ. She is working with the Spirit to call sinners to repentance. She is bringing "her food from afar" (Proverbs 31:14), feeding her soul on heavenly things. She is no more interested in the things of the world than is necessary to occupy until Jesus, the Bridegroom of her heart, will come.

QUESTIONS

1. What do we know about the time when Jesus will come?
2. What happens to us at justification?
3. What does sanctification do for us?
4. What did Jesus say that the Holy Ghost would tell us?
5. Now abide faith, hope, and charity; which is the greatest?
6. What did Jesus say was wrong with the church of Ephesus?

²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine.

²⁶ His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

²⁷ Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

²⁸ Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.

²⁹ For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

³⁰ And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Revelation 2:1-4

¹ Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

³ And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

⁴ Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

7. What did the wise man say about the kindness of the virtuous woman?

8. What are the fruits of the Spirit?

9. What is the business of the Bride of Christ?