

010: Here Comes the Bride

(based on Ch. 9 from *The End of the Pilgrimage*)

Imagine a bride and groom coming together at the wedding altar on their long-awaited day of marriage

- the bride-to-be is in a traditional, white wedding garment
- and the groom, of course, is decked out in his tuxedo
- The officiating minister say, “If there is any reason why this man and this woman should not be wed, let him speak now.”
- The bride’s beloved father stands and, with tears streaming down his face, says: “I am so sorry to have to report this, but my daughter has been unfaithful in a physical relationship with another young man even this very week.”
- “I just now confirmed it and didn’t have the opportunity to let the groom know before now.”
- “I cannot give her away to you as a chaste virgin.”
- the groom is devastated and calls off the wedding
- the allegation is found to be true
- the bride is ashamed

now imagine a believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ

- he or she is expecting to receive crowns and white robes of righteousness and given a place of ruling as the bride and co-ruler of Jesus in the millennial kingdom
- but the Father speaks up and says, “My Son, this child of mine is not worthy to rule with you ...
- “for they have not lived faithfully to you throughout their life
- “they have not denied self, or taken up their cross, or followed you
- “I cannot present this child of mine to you as a chaste virgin”

- and so Jesus deems that one unworthy to become His bride and co-ruler
- no crowns or robes of righteousness are given
- that believer stands ashamed before Jesus –
- saved, yet so as through fire, as all their works burn up

some may wonder: Aren’t all saints given white robes of righteousness because of their position as children of God?

- no, as we shall see, that may be traditional teaching, but it’s not biblical
- listen to these verses – Rev. 19:7-9
- **Rev. 19:7** Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- **Rev. 19:8** And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
- **Rev. 19:9** Then he said to me, “Write: Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”

As we shall see in this study, when you meet Jesus at the Judgment Seat, you will receive a white garment only to the extent that He deems you worthy.

- Furthermore, a white garment of righteousness is the proper attire for the wedding festivities.
- Those who are not granted white garments at the Judgment Seat will not attend the wedding festivities.
- Thus, I ask you an important question: Will you be at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?
- “Oh yes,” you may reply, “I am a child of God; I have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ.”
- The temptation is to think we automatically possess such garments because of our position in Christ, as righteous ones, justified in our spirit.

- However — and this is critically important to understand — the pure, untainted garments granted to the saints here in v. 8 are not based on our position, that is, Christ’s righteousness.

What does the end of the verse say?

- The garment is granted contingent on the righteous act of saints.
- The KJV says “the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”
- that is somewhat confusing, and has led to the interpretation that the wedding garment is given to saints who are righteous because they possess Christ’s righteousness
- but as I mentioned in a previous study, Christ’s righteousness is His provision of Christ living within, enabling saints to live righteously – TO THE EXTENT they choose to cooperate with God in the sanctification process
- so many saints spurn God’s grace and live according to their own strength – they do not cooperate with God and, consequently, don’t live righteously
- one has to live righteously by appropriating Christ’s provision, in order to receive a wedding garment
- that is made clear in this verse, Rev. 19:8

In fact, in the Greek, the word *righteous* is actually plural.

- The fine linen is the “righteousnesses (plural) of saints” — or, we could say, the righteous acts of the saints.
- The acts are righteous because the saint has lived in accordance with the Word of God by cooperating with Jesus in the sanctification process

- Thus, from the grammar one must conclude that white robes are awarded based on the righteous behavior of individual saints.
- What does this mean?
- let me put it bluntly
- Your lifestyle choices here and now are determining the type of garment you will be given at the Judgment Seat.
- **Rev. 3:4** You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.
- **Rev. 3:5a** He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments.

Clean, white, pure linen garments will only be granted to overcomers, that is, to those who live righteously

- If you choose to live for yourself, unfaithful to Christ, you will not receive righteous garments.
- Unlike modern day brides, you will not be able to fool anyone — and certainly not Jesus — by putting on a false garment.
- Your works will be made manifest at the Judgment Seat.
- Your true colors will be revealed, and a garment will be appointed to you based on who you really are.
- If your garment is not pure and white, you will not participate in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.
- While Christ’s righteousness is your PROVISION for living righteously, it does not ensure your inclusion at the Marriage Supper.
- you have to CHOOSE to APPROPRIATE the provision
- That is a humbling thought.
- If you do not get ready, you will not qualify to be His bride and will not participate in the wedding festivities that launch the millennial kingdom.

I believe the Scriptures teach that the bride of Christ is not comprised of the entire church ...

- but only a subset of the church that Jesus, the bridegroom, deems faithful and worthy to be His bride.
- God has given us a beautiful TYPE of this in the OT
- How did God create Eve, the bride and co-ruler of Adam?
- Did he take Adam's entire body and duplicate it?
- NO! God took PART of Adam's body and, from it, He formed Eve
- so it is with Jesus, the second Adam, whose bride will co-rule with Him in His kingdom
- God will not form the bride from the ENTIRE body of Christ, which is the Church
- rather, He will form the bride from a SMALL PART OF Christ's body – and that small part is the FAITHFUL church, FAITHFUL saints

what a beautiful picture we have of Christ and His bride in the Genesis account of Adam and Eve

- The king will not have an impure, unfaithful wife to rule at His side as queen.
- Qualifying to be the bride of Christ is equivalent to qualifying as a first-born son and qualifying to be a co-heir with Christ.
- They are all synonymous terms, and they all relate to ruling and reigning with Christ, not to eternal security.
- Some may object that Paul's discussion of husbands and wives in the book of Ephesians is a picture of Christ and His church, namely, that all saints will be sanctified, cleansed, and presented as glorious.

But that is not what Paul is teaching.

- listen carefully to Eph. 5:25-27

- **Eph. 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,
- **Eph. 5:26** that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
- **Eph. 5:27** that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Notice that Christ desires to present the church to Himself as spotless, holy, and unblemished — that He MIGHT sanctify and cleanse it;

- that He MIGHT present it a glorious church — but it is by no means guaranteed.
- it will only happen to the extent that saints live pure, untainted lives.
- He never forces anyone to obey Him.
- notice the agent of washing is the Word, so this is practical, behavioral cleansing
- A biblical marriage — involving a husband loving his wife with a purifying, cleansing love and a wife submitting to her loving husband — is a beautiful picture of this.
- However, how many Christian marriages are less than biblical in the way they operate?
- In like manner, multitudes of saints are not prepared to be the bride of Christ.
- They are less than biblical in behavior and have thereby excluded themselves from co-rulership with Jesus.

The parallel passage in Colossians also demonstrates that presentation of saints as chaste is conditional.

- **Col. 1:21-23** And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in

His sight—IF indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast.

- Christ wants to present the saints as *holy and blameless*.
- But this does not happen automatically.
- It is conditional — IF *you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast*.
- The Scriptures are clear: Your salvation in Jesus Christ does NOT guarantee a bridal relationship with Christ.
- Reward is based on the righteous behavior of saints.
- we also see this in Paul's letter to the Corinthians:
- **2 Cor. 11:2** For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.
- **2 Cor. 11:3** But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Paul's intent was to be able to present the church at Corinth to Christ as a chaste (pure) virgin, a worthy bride.

- But it's not automatic; it's conditional, and that is evidenced by Paul's use of the word *may* in v. 2 — *that I may present you*.
- In v. 3 we find the prospect of believers not submitting to the sanctification process and therefore not being deemed worthy.
- In fact, that is Satan's goal
- Yet another conditional passage is found in Romans:
- **Rom. 7:4** Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

The first part of the verse is unconditional — You have become dead to the law through the body of Christ.

- But the second part of the verse is conditional, requiring that conditions be met
- it says: *that you MAY BE married to another ... that we SHOULD bear fruit to God*.
- This doesn't always happen.
- Many Christians do not yield themselves to the Lord and so do not become espoused to Christ — which is akin to abiding in Him —
- and therefore, do not bear fruit.

We now turn our attention to the teaching of Christ, where we see this principle illustrated in parabolic form.

- **Matt. 25:1** The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
- **Matt. 25:2** Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.
- Parables are metaphors that use everyday situations to illustrate spiritual truths.
- In this case, Jesus uses the concept of virgins getting ready for marriage in their culture to get across the utter importance of being ready to be His bride.
- We must not read our western cultural traditions regarding marriage into the passage.
- Rather, we must interpret according to the marriage customs prevalent during Bible times.

I am now going to explain the five aspects of marriage during the first century in Israel so we can understand this picture the first aspect is ...

- **1. Betrothal.** The bridegroom-to-be would meet with the father of the bride-to-be and agree to marry his daughter.

- The result, if they could come to an agreement, was a legally binding marriage transaction.
- The couple was considered married at that point, but they would live apart for a year or so while the bride prepared for the wedding and the groom prepared the home.
- **2. Processional.** At the conclusion of the waiting period, the bride would be transferred from her father's house to the house of her new husband.
- This would typically happen at night in a torch-lit procession, involving guests.
- The bride would not know what night the groom would appear, so she had to be prepared for his arrival.
- A town crier of sorts would come by a little in advance to warn the bride of the groom's arrival.

3. Festivities. Sometimes, an entire week of feasting and celebrating with friends would precede the wedding ceremony.

- **4. Ceremony.** The actual wedding observance would be held toward the end of the week of celebration.
- **5. Marriage Supper.** A large concluding supper would be held at the end of the celebration, after which the groom and his bride would be ushered off to their home to start their lives.
- It is important to keep this custom in mind when studying the parable, for it was vivid in the psyche of the audience Jesus was addressing.
- The moral of this story is simple: those who are faithful and ready (i.e., spiritually prepared) to meet Christ will be allowed to participate in the wedding festivities that inaugurate the millennium, to be held in the heavenly city of reward.

- Those who are unfaithful will be excluded from the celebrations.
- This does not mean they are unbelievers; rather, they are believers who have not lived righteously.
- They are *saved; yet so as through fire*, 1 Cor. 3:15.
- Accordingly, they do not qualify to rule and reign with Jesus in the heavenly realm of His kingdom.

The necessary preparation for attending the wedding festivities is a proper wedding garment.

- As we have already seen, Rev. 19:8 specifies a garment of *fine linen, clean and bright* granted to wedding participants, which *is the righteous acts of the saints*.
- Some would have us believe the parable of the virgins is referring to saved and unsaved.
- The five ready virgins are those who are saved, they say, and the five unprepared virgins are those who are unsaved.
- However, despite the popularity of that interpretation, it is not consistent with the text, as we shall see.
- First, the whole group is comprised of ten.
- The number ten appears to be the number of completion in the Scriptures, and so in this case would be a reference to the entire church, comprised entirely of saved people.

Second, all ten women in the parable are virgins.

- The natural man is never compared to a virgin, which is a picture of positional righteousness and purity.
- That imagery would be inappropriate for unbelievers, who are dead in trespasses and sins and enemies of God.
- Furthermore, the apostle Paul said in 2 Cor. 11:2, *I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

- He was speaking to saints at the church of Corinth, not to the lost.
- His intent was to be able to present them as chaste (pure) virgins, a prospect which is possible for believers because of our position as in Christ.
- However, presentation as a pure virgin at the Judgment Seat is not a given, for it is conditional, based on one's lifestyle.
- Some insist this kingdom parable refers to the Jews rather than the church.
- That is incorrect, for in Matt. 21:43 Jesus had pronounced that the kingdom would be taken from the Jewish nation and given to a "nation" bearing the fruits of the kingdom.
- We understand that "nation" to be the church of Jesus Christ.
- Thus, in this parable, Jesus is illustrating the necessity of qualifying to enter the ruling realm of the coming kingdom.
- now listen as I read vs. 3-10 of Matt. 25

Matt. 25:3-4 Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

- **Matt. 25:5** But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.
- **Matt. 25:6** And at midnight a cry was *heard*: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!"
- **Matt. 25:7** Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.
- **Matt. 25:8** And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out."

- **Matt. 25:9** But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves."
- **Matt. 25:10** And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

The storyline is simple.

- The ten virgins are preparing for the coming of the bridegroom, but according to the marriage customs outlined earlier, they don't know when that will be.
- Since the bridegroom will come at night, they have lamps, filled with oil, and the wise virgins have vessels of surplus oil besides.
- The foolish virgins do not have the extra oil.
- Oil in the Scriptures is typically a picture of the Holy Spirit.
- Another indication that these virgins are all saved is that they all have oil in their lamps, representing the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Those who have surplus oil, we could say, not only have the Spirit's indwelling, they also are filled with the Spirit.
- They are walking in the Spirit, living the Christ-life as faithful disciples of Jesus.

The wise virgins are like Christians who have renounced the self-life and have let go of worldly pleasures.

- They are regularly appropriating God's grace by faith to let Jesus live His life through them.
- They are fruit-bearing, victorious Christians.
- In contrast, the unfaithful are living for themselves, captivated by the world, indifferent to the Lord's return, not walking in the Spirit.
- Since the hour is late, all of these virgins go to sleep.

- Soon they are awakened by the crier at midnight, who says, “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!”
- Notice the emphasis on readiness to meet the bridegroom — in our case, readiness to meet Jesus at the Judgment Seat.
- They all get up and trim their lamps to meet the bridegroom, which is very likely indicative of Christ’s returning to gather up His saints.
- A picture of the Judgment Seat follows, for while five of the virgins are faithful, being filled with the Spirit and therefore ready to meet the bride-groom ...
- the other five are unfaithful, not being filled with the Spirit and therefore not ready to meet the bridegroom.

In the parable, the unprepared virgins don't have enough oil, so they must go and buy some for themselves.

- The wise virgins cannot give any of their own, since every person will stand before Christ, accountable only for him or her self.
- Spirit-filling is a personal thing and cannot be shared with others.
- Every man (or woman in this case) must be filled, independent of others.
- The wise virgins are wise because they have been living for Jesus; the foolish virgins are foolish because they have been living for self.
- While the foolish virgins are off trying to obtain more oil for their lamps, the bridegroom comes.
- The wise virgins enter the wedding banquet hall, and the door is shut.
- The unprepared miss their opportunity to attend the marriage and related festivities.

Incidentally, what door is shut? Is it the door to Heaven?

- Absolutely not! Jesus is not talking about eternal life.
- He is talking about the coming kingdom, in particular, the marriage of Christ and His church that inaugurates the millennium.
- In like manner, unfaithful Christians are excluded from the marriage festivities, indicating disinheritance from the kingdom of the heavens, the ruling realm of the Messianic kingdom.
- They are given no opportunity to rule and reign with Jesus.
- What will happen to them? We will discuss that in a future study
- Think of it! Jesus will be the King of the kingdom, and His bride will be the queen, so to speak.
- The queen will rule and reign with the King in His kingdom.
- That is why the unfaithful church is not included in the marriage festivities or the marriage itself — because they will not be ruling as Christ’s bride (His queen) in the kingdom.

What becomes of the five foolish virgins (or we could say the unfaithful Christians)?

- **Matt. 25:11** Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’
- **Matt. 25:12** But he answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.”
- The statement of Christ, *I do not know you*, tends to confuse some into thinking these virgins cannot possibly represent Christians.
- However, a brief explanation of the Greek wording used can clear up any potential misunderstanding.

- Jesus is omniscient, and obviously knows everybody, so His statement *I do not know you* cannot refer to intelligent comprehension.
- He is using the term relative to the context.
- The Greek word translated *know* in v. 12 is the idea of *intimate* knowledge.
- Vine says Christ's statement suggests, "You stand in no relation to me."
- That doesn't mean they are lost and condemned.

Relative to the parable and the context, it means they are not fit to be His bride.

- They are not closely related to Jesus, because of their unrighteous lifestyle that has resulted in broken fellowship.
- Thus, they are not allowed entrance to the wedding festivities and the marriage, for they do not qualify to enter the banquet hall.
- It is as if Jesus is saying, "You five foolish, unfaithful virgins are not worthy to be my bride; my relationship to you is not close.
- "You will not rule and reign in my kingdom as my queen."
- Immediately following Christ's pronouncement — *I do not know you* — He admonishes His disciples:
- **Matt. 25:13** Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Many Christians assume that *all* believers will inherit the coming kingdom —

- *all* will rule and reign with Christ in some degree,
- *all* will inherit the promises for overcomers,
- *all* will live happily-ever-after, and ...
- *all* will live without sorrow in the millennium.

- But it seems that such theology is not only inconsistent with the Scriptures, but also contributes unwittingly to licentious behavior.
- It is important that we not be ashamed at His coming (1 John 2:28) and that we do not lose our reward (2 John 8).
- Thankfully, every child of God can earn robes of righteousness, because every saint has been given the provision of Christ living within, and He is the righteous One.
- If you are appropriating His grace by faith (Rom. 5:2) to perform His will on Earth, then you are a candidate for the wedding garment.
- It is high time that saints prepare to be the bride!
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS