

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

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

LESSON 363 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "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" (Revelation 19:7).

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
selles it; and delivereth girdles
unto the merchant.
²⁵ Strength and honour *are* her
clothing; and she shall rejoice in
time to come.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Bride of Christ Like a Virtuous Woman

1. She is trustworthy, Proverbs 31:10-12;

Matthew 24:45-47

⁴⁵ Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord
hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in
due season?

⁴⁶ Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh
shall find so doing.

⁴⁷ Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over
all his goods.

2. She is a willing worker, Proverbs 31:13-19, 22-25;

Genesis 24:18-20

¹⁸ And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let
down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

¹⁹ And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will
draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done
drinking.

²⁰ And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough,
and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all
his camels.

3. She helps the needy and is kind, Proverbs 31:20, 26;

Psalms 112:9

⁹ He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his
righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted
with honour.

James 1:27

²⁷ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is
this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and*
to keep himself unspotted from the world.

4. She is not guilty of idleness or neglect, Proverbs 31:21, 27;

Hebrews 2:3

³ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which
at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was
confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;

5. The fear of the Lord causes her to bear this praiseworthy fruit,
Proverbs 31:28-31;

Psalms 111:10

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good
understanding have all they that do *his commandments*: his
praise endureth for ever.

Proverbs 22:4

⁴ By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and
honour, and life.

Isaiah 11:2

² And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit
of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and
might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

II The Parable of the Ten Virgins

1. Ten virgins await the coming of the bridegroom, Matthew 25:1-9.

2. The bridegroom comes and a separation is made, Matthew 25:10-13.

III The Parable of the Talents

1. The talents are distributed and used, Matthew 25:14-18.

2. The lord returns and a separation is made, Matthew 25:19-30.

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.

IV The Message to the Church of Ephesus

1. The church is commended for many things, Revelation 2:1-3.
2. Nevertheless she had left her first love, Revelation 2:4.

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The Spotless Bride

The Bride of Christ is described as being a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27). She is a "chaste virgin" (II Corinthians 11:2), "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" (Revelation 19:8). Sanctification — purity of heart — is a virtue she has obtained through the Blood of the One who gave His life for her. She must keep herself unspotted from the world and walk in holiness all the days of her life. How carefully she must walk to be one of those who are "called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14). Yet the invitation is open for the "whosoever will" to be the Bride of Christ.

Trustworthiness

Let us consider those who comprise the Bride as the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31:10-31. She is of rare value with a price far above rubies. What makes her so? "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." If He tarries a year, if He tarries ten years, she will not grow tired and weary and begin to flirt with the world and to take on some of the things of the world. No! Her heart is attached to Christ, and He can trust His Bride. She is not affected by the fashions of this world to the extent that she is found with lipstick, bobbed hair, or immodest dress. Let them call her an old fogey or old-fashioned; her heart is fixed on Him.

The Adultery of Worldliness

James saw many who had let the world alienate their affections, and he cried out: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). The modern church has committed adultery with the world, but they are not the Bride of Christ.

Sad was the picture during the war when many a man left his wife whom he loved and went away to fight for his country; and while he was gone, another stepped in and won her affections, and he was left to mourn. Many people are doing that with the Son of God. Those who should be true to Christ have let the world slip in and take their affections. They enter into the same amusements as worldly people do. They go to the theatre at night, to the card parties, and to worldly things. Others have become overcharged with business worries and are drunken on the cares of this life, and have let the love of Christ slip out of their heart. Jesus knows the heart that He can trust, and He is trusting His Bride.

Diligence

The Bride of Christ is more than just a virgin, cleansed and decked in fine linen, who sits with folded arms in a delicate manner on a pillow to await the coming of her Lord. She must, like the wise virgins, have that supply of oil in her vessel that is typical of the Holy Spirit. When one receives the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God enters the life to dwell there for the purpose of directing that life, and granting power and boldness to that one in the work of the Lord. Thus the Bride of Christ "worketh willingly with her hands" (Proverbs 31:13). She is diligent in the work that God has called her to do.

In the Parable of the Talents Jesus illustrates the necessity of active and faithful service. God supplies the opportunity for

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:

service according to our ability to work. No sooner had the talents been bestowed by the loving Heavenly Father than the Bride, motivated by love, began to put them to use. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness" (Proverbs 31:27). At first perhaps her work seems limited to those of her household, but soon "she stretcheth out her hand to the poor" (Proverbs 31:20). She discovers a needy family and soon "layeth her hands to the spindle." Making clothes for the children, feeding the hungry mouths, and visiting a sick mother.

As her deeds of love and kindness are known she finds her services more and more in demand. Perhaps she is called upon to visit the hospitals, or tell the story of salvation to those in prison or those who have lost their way on the skid roads of some of our cities.

The Fear of the Lord

She has a deep regard for the reputation of her absent Lord, and these praiseworthy works of righteousness spring from a reverential fear in her heart. She desires that His great name shall be honoured in every detail of her life.

Oil

"She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar." How well the Bride knows that she cannot be sustained on the husks of the world, but in her closet she communes with God and there gains the strength and grace for her many duties, and brings her "food" from afar. Her prayer-life keeps that supply of oil flowing into her vessel so that "her candle goeth not out by night."

No Oil

The importance of keeping the Oil of the Spirit is illustrated by the contrast in the wise and the foolish virgins. The wise entered into the joy of the wedding feast, but what about the foolish? One minister of old described them thus: "Surely the unalleviated darkness of a hopeless exclusion settles down on these sad five, standing, huddled together, at the door, with the extinguished lamps hanging in their despairing hands. The wedding bell has become a funeral knell. They were not enemies of the bridegroom -- they thought themselves his friends. They let time ebb without securing the one thing needful, and the neglect was irremediable."

What was it that made such a vast difference between these two groups? They were all waiting for the bridegroom; they all arose at the cry and trimmed their lamps to go out to meet him. Then five discovered they had neglected to have sufficient oil. Oil is typical of the Spirit of God. They had neglected to maintain the close communion with God that keeps the Spirit dwelling within the soul.

Neglect

The foolish virgins were guilty of spiritual neglect and were thus excluded from the marriage feast. The church at Ephesus had left her first love and was in need of repentance. Its works, labour, and patience were profiting nothing so long as that first love was neglected. The man who had one talent had it taken from him and he was cast into outer darkness because he neglected to put it to use. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

Vision

Some people will do what they are told to do, but fail to see the great need that lies all around them. "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white

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.

already to harvest" (John 4:35). The Bride of Christ sees, in the masses of humanity, God's great harvest field; sin and distress, sickness and poverty, imprisonment and loneliness, are a challenge to her. Her deeds are deeds of mercy, and her works are works of love, and "in her tongue is the law of kindness."

Reward

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." What a glorious reward it will be when the King shall say unto her, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). In that moment the trials of a crowded, busy life will fade from her vision, and her answer will be, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" He will reply: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

QUESTIONS

1. Who will comprise the Bride of Christ?
2. Name some of the virtues of the Bride.
3. What is the spiritual significance of virginity?
4. What made the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins?
5. What does oil typify in the Scriptures?
6. What is the main lesson to be gleaned from the parable of the virgins?
7. What is a talent?
8. Upon what basis were the talents distributed?
9. What did the lord expect of the servants at his coming?