

His Wife Has Made Herself Ready

Feast of Tabernacles

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Throughout the Bible there is duality and parallels. Sometimes there is dual or more than dual fulfillment of prophecy. In a lot of duality, there is a physical side and a spiritual counterpart. We know there is the physical Zion and Jerusalem. There is the heavenly Zion and Jerusalem. There is the physical temple and tabernacle which were models of the heavenly, spiritually temple.

Paul speaks of a duality that we don't often think of in Romans 5:14.

Romans 5:14. *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (NKJV)*

Paul was telling us here that Adam was a type of Christ. Also in 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul is writing and says,

1 Corinthians 15:45. *And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (NKJV)*

So we have the physical Adam and the spiritual Adam which is Christ. Adam, the first physical man, and Christ being the first physical man to be born into the spiritual family of God.

With that in mind, let's look at a future event that will be happening in Revelation 19. This is a special spiritual event concerning the second Adam that parallels something that started with the first Adam.

Revelation 19:1. *After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!*

...

5) *Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"*

6) *And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*

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."*

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.*

9) *Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (NKJV)*

So here we have a wedding that is to occur in the future and God and Christ are preparing a wife for Christ. This is a spiritual marriage which parallels the original marriage of Adam and Eve. God instituted marriage at the creation of Adam and Eve and has given us instructions for marriage throughout the Bible and these instructions are also very relevant for those preparing to be the Bride of Christ.

Today let's look at our preparations that we are making to prepare ourselves for our marriage to Christ and we will particularly look at the wife's role from the perspective of the firstfruits becoming the Bride of Christ. Looking at the role of the wife may be a little bit more difficult for the men or for those that aren't married, but the principals really apply to any and all relationships. It takes much effort for all of us to be making ourselves ready. If you want a title, it is

His Wife Has Made Herself Ready

A bride anticipating her upcoming marriage puts much effort into having everything perfect for that wedding. Her total focus is the preparation for that wedding as our total focus should be on our preparation and making ourselves ready for the marriage to Christ.

Let's start at the very beginning in Genesis 1:26. We're going to look at some things here.

Genesis 1:26. *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

27) *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

28) *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (NKJV)*

Now Genesis 2:7.

Genesis 2:7. *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (NKJV)*

Adam was formed, literally a hands-on forming. The Hebrew word literally means *to mold* like a potter making a mold or *to fashion*, that Adam was fashioned. Up to this

point, everything had been created by the command of God, just simply by the spoken word. In Psalms 148:5 it says:

Psalms 148:5. *Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. (NKJV)*

If you go through the account in Genesis, God said, "Let there be..." But it was not so with Adam. Adam was a hands-on creation.

Genesis 2:18. *And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

19) Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.

20) So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

21) And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

22) Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23) And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24) Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (NKJV)

The process of creating Eve was different than the process of creating Adam. In fact in verse 22 it says He made the woman and it literally means He built her. Adam was formed and molded and God built Eve around Adam's rib.

By building Eve out of Adam, Adam saw that she was basically the same nature, she was identical flesh and blood, of the same basic constitution in all respects. Basically having equal powers and faculties and rights. Eve was created as the perfect mate for Adam. Verse 18 says she was created to be Adam's helper.

Elohiym built a wife for Adam and since then, He has been building a wife for Christ, literally since the creation of Adam and Eve. In verse 18 of Genesis 2 it says:

Genesis 2:18. *And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." (NKJV)*

The King James Version uses the word "meet" where the New King James uses the word "comparable." The New International Version says it best:

Genesis 2:18. *And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." (NIV)*

I think that gives the best meaning. It literally means *a help or an aid*; Eve was created to help or to aid Adam.

Eve was created so she would be compatible with Adam and the parallel, of course, to the building of Eve is the building of the bride that is being built for Christ and that she should be making herself ready as a suitable help or aid for Christ as He rules. The wife that is being built for Christ will be perfectly compatible with Christ.

In the marriage that God had with Israel that happened at Sinai described in Ezekiel 16, we find that marriage ended in divorce because Israel proved to be incompatible with Christ. They wanted to do their own thing and in the process pushed God farther and farther away.

Through the years there have been many lonely people in the church thinking that any two converted people could get married and be compatible simply because they had God's holy spirit. That alone doesn't do it. They very soon discovered that there are worse things than loneliness. Some are happy endurances, some are unhappy endurances, and some are total disasters. Those chosen to be the wife of Christ will have to be compatible with Christ so that marriage is not an endurance and not a disaster. It will not be a dysfunctional marriage.

We'll look quickly at the starting material that God used to build that wife.

1 Corinthians 26. *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28) and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29) that no flesh should glory in His presence. (NKJV)*

We find here the starting material is the foolish, the lowly, etc. of the world. That is the beginning point, but not the ending point. In Matthew 5:48 it says *you shall be perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect*. And that is the goal that we are all working for and that is what is required to be a functioning bride or wife of Christ.

Two dysfunctional people can have a good marriage if their dysfunctions are compatible. The problem then is that we often don't even realize that we're dysfunctional in one way or another.

A few years ago I was at a seminar and one of the speakers did family and marriage counseling and he mentioned an incident. He said that they were invited over to someone's house and they noticed in the living room there was a big i-hook that was screwed into the ceiling in the living room and they thought that was kind of strange. In the course of the evening, there was a picture of his parents in their own living room and

here was this i-hook screwed into the ceiling. A little while later he sees a picture of her parents in their living room and there's an i-hook in the ceiling. And finally out of curiosity he asked why there was that i-hook in the ceiling. And they said that it was to hang the Christmas tree. It was because whenever someone is drunk and falls into the tree, they won't knock it over – it'll just bob around. They both grew up in families that it just wouldn't be a good Christmas if somebody didn't fall into that tree. They were very compatible. They got along very well.

The challenge for us is becoming perfect that we can be perfectly compatible with Christ as His wife and he will not have a dysfunctional wife.

We know in the future the wife will be given great responsibility.

Revelation 20:4. *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

5) *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

6) *Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

To be priests of God and Christ and reigning with Him means we will have responsibilities and we will have to be trustworthy to fulfil those responsibilities.

Now we'll begin looking at the instructions that God has given to the fleshly humans for marriage from the perspective of becoming the Bride of Christ. And try to put yourself into the perspective of being the Bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:22. *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

23) *For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.*

24) *Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. (NKJV)*

Now God's marriage to Israel went bad because they would not submit to God or allow themselves to be subject to God. For us today we are a variety of individuals. There are males and females that are very headstrong and it's very difficult for them to submit. There are women in and out of the church that if they don't get their way, can make life very difficult and miserable for their husbands. There are men who can do the same to their wives because they want everything their way. There are people who are very manipulative in their marriages so they can get their way or very subtle. There are individuals, male and female, that are total controllers, and then there are some that are forced to take charge simply because their mate doesn't live up to their responsibilities.

There are men that are brutal, controlling dictators and make life miserable for their wives. For all of us: How willing are we to submit to Christ as the husband, the one in charge?

*25) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,
26) that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
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.
(NKJV)*

Here again, the bride is to be without blemish, and I'm sure we all look at ourselves and find we have a few blemishes.

28) So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

At least two of the men that died in the recent shooting in Las Vegas died protecting their wives, literally shielding their wives' bodies with their own. In both cases the wives were unharmed but the husbands were dead. That is an example of how the relationship ought to be.

Let's turn over to 1 Peter 3 and we'll begin in verse 1.

***1 Peter 3:1.** Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, (NKJV)*

So the relationship between Christ and His wife will be a model for the people and the marriages in the Millennium.

*2) when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.
3) Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—
4) rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (NKJV)*

Here the important factor is humility, not being the center of attention. We all need to be wearing humility and I will be addressing that a little bit more later in the sermon.

*5) For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,
6) as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. (NKJV)*

Then in verse 7 it says:

7) Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (NKJV)

And, of course, the good supporting husband will encourage his wife to develop and to blossom into what she should be. Christ will always deal with His wife knowing that she is inferior in wisdom, knowledge and understanding and definitely in experience and the wife of Christ will definitely be the weaker vessel.

In Proverbs 12:4, the first part of the verse, it says:

Proverbs 12:4. *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband ... (NKJV)*

This is the goal that we all should be striving for.

There is a section of scripture that we probably don't look at very often or don't read very often. It's read more by the single people in anticipation of marriage or looking for a mate and we're usually looking for the perfect wife in the flesh. I want to look at those scriptures today from the perspective of what Christ is looking for in a wife.

Proverbs 31:1. *The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him: (NKJV)*

Lemuel here is a name for Solomon. It's the only place in the Bible where this name is used and only in this chapter. But it was Solomon that wrote this. Lemuel was Solomon. Note that it says *the utterance which his mother taught him* and his mother was Bathsheba. The words that follow are the words of Bathsheba.

Verses 2 through 9 are instructions for a king, which was all need to take note of just in general for a king ruling. But these instructions are very appropriate for us today.

*2) What, my son? And what, son of my womb? And what, son of my vows?
3) Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings.*

We know Solomon did the opposite here and the end result was losing rulership over ten tribes.

*4) It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink;
5) Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.
(NKJV)*

We all know alcohol can weaken the resistance to sin and take, in this case, the focus off the needs of the people.

6) *Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart.*

7) *Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. (NKJV)*

Simply saying there are some that are suffering and that alcohol does give the temporary relief but it should not be used as a non-stop means of quenching the suffering.

8) *Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die.*

9) *Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. (NKJV)*

Today we can't do lot in this world and in our society for the poor and the needy or plead their cause in a very corrupt world that we live in but all we can do is pray that God's kingdom come so this can be done. But the point here is to be righteous judges and not respecter of persons.

Now we'll look at the Proverbs 31 wife beginning with verse 10. Verses 10 through 31, a total of 22 verses, are what is called an acrostic in the Hebrew. It's a poem that was written and each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, starting with the first letter. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The first verse starts with the first letter and so on, all the way through.

Remember, again, these are the words of Bathsheba to the future king. They are God-inspired words describing the desired, appropriate qualities and characteristics of the wife of the future king. When written, that king was Solomon but for in the future it is words for us regarding the future King, Jesus Christ.

10) *Who can find a virtuous wife? ... (NKJV)*

I'll stop here. The New King James margin says *woman of valor in the sense of all forms of excellence*. The Hebrew word means several things here. It can mean *an army, wealth, valor, strength*. It is also translated as *able*. Who can find a wife that is able. It is the same word that is used to describe Ruth in Ruth 3:11. It is the same Hebrew word that was used when Jethro instructed Moses to appoint men for different positions and it was able men, exactly the same word translated here as virtuous.

10b) *... For her worth is far above rubies. (NKJV)*

Of course, the Bride of Christ will be very precious, beyond any precious stones or metals.

11) *The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. (NKJV)*

The Bride of Christ will have some awesome responsibilities in ruling in the Millennium. The bride will have to be trustworthy to function on her own without having to be closely monitored or told everything that she must do.

12) She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. (NKJV)

Of course the Bride of Christ will be doing Him good throughout eternity. She is seeking to please Him and she has proved that she will never go the way of evil. That will have been proven in this life.

13) She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. (NKJV)

She is an ambitious, hard worker, providing the necessary materials for making her own clothing in this case.

14) She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar.

15) She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. (NKJV)

Here we see she is self-sacrificing with the biggest concern being for others. She provides well for her servants. Overall, it's a pretty good description for God's agape love.

16) She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard. (NKJV)

So she is capable of making wise decisions on her own. She educates herself to make wise choices, considering all the options; the positives, the negatives and obviously would be willing to seek wise counsel.

17) She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms. (NKJV)

This means she's not a pushover and she's not a wimp.

18) She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night. (NKJV)

The root of "merchandise" is *profit from trade*. So she's functioning here. She puts a long day in and does what it takes to get the job done.

19) She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle. (NKJV)

The distaff and spindle are used for spinning wool and the word “distaff” *also means a woman’s work or domain*. She takes care of her domain. Here again we will all have our responsibilities of our domains that we will be required to take care of.

20) She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. (NKJV)

She has a generous concern for her fellowman.

21) She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet. (NKJV)

This means she is preparing ahead for the future. She isn’t thinking of just today but she is also preparing ahead for the future.

22) She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. (NKJV)

If you remember the description in Ezekiel, God said he clothed Israel in fine purple and linen.

23) Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. (NKJV)

She continues to make her husband look good and to stand out among others. It is known that her husband has a remarkable wife and, of course, the firstfruits will be pointing the people to Christ and not taking credit for themselves in the Millennium and on into the future.

24) She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants.

25) Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. (NKJV)

It is her character that makes her look good, it’s not what she wears. Her honor is in her inner character.

26) She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. (NKJV)

She knows the word of God and the law and how to apply it wisely. That definitely is going to be a requirement for those dealing with people in the Millennium and beyond.

27) She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. (NKJV)

She is not lazy but is a hard worker.

28) Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: (NKJV)

She is rewarded for her efforts and, of course, we all want to hear “Well done thou good and faithful servant.” The Bride of Christ will definitely be highly regarded in the Millennium.

29) "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all."

30) Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. (NKJV)

Here again, it is the inner character and the inner beauty that matters. Of course, we know that God looks on the heart and the motives.

31) Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates. (NKJV)

She doesn't have to blow her own horn. Her works and actions will be recognized and her reputation will be praised by her works.

What God and Christ are building is a wife of noble character. We tend to think of the wife in the days that these proverbs were written as the stay at home, uneducated, keep the house, raise the kids while the father supports the family situation. However, we see that definitely is not the case in this proverb. In this case, we see that it is the wife along with the husband, both contributing in their area of responsibility, to the wellbeing of the entire family. In the future, that family will be all that are alive and living on the earth and the wife will have the same role as the husband in her own area of responsibility.

Looking back now at the proverbs that we have read from the perspective of the Bride of Christ, there are several things we can learn. The wife has a work ethic. She doesn't expect others to do everything for her, but jumps in and does whatever it takes. Some tasks she does in everyday life aren't necessarily the most pleasant. In our country today, our welfare system has robbed the people of that. It has made them lazy and there is no work ethic there.

The wife is expected to use all of her abilities and some of us have been given more talents than others. We are being judged on what we do with what we have.

The wife has several areas of great responsibility and, of course, the wife of Christ will be given heavy responsibility for ruling with Christ. How do we handle the responsibilities we have now?

The wife is given a great deal of personal freedom and independence to use her talents and her abilities and she is independent without being rebellious. Independent, but yet working as a team.

In our marriages today, are men giving their wives the appropriate personal freedom to develop and blossom? Are we encouraging them to help develop their own independence in the appropriate areas? There have been many situations where one or the other spouse has died and the surviving spouse has no idea how to handle the finances or what the financial condition is when that is suddenly dumped on them. Hopefully, both spouses equally know what their financial situation is. It is the duty of the husband to encourage and help the wife to develop.

The wife in the proverb is a worker, a manager, a buyer and a seller and she is not lazy. Christ will not have a lazy wife. Today there are women that expect their husbands to do all of the work. I have a relative that does his job and on the way home stops at the grocery store, buys the food, goes home, prepares the food, feeds the kids and takes care of everything there while his princess wife is doing her own thing. Such a wife is not acceptable to Christ. Christ will not have a wife that wants to be pampered and expects Him to do everything for her.

A few years ago there was a fellow I worked with. We were consultants and we lived in different places for long periods of time on these different consulting jobs. And this fellow was there but he would go home every weekend. He was engaged and his fiancé was living in his house. He said that she did not wash a dish and did not wash any clothes while he was gone during the week. He did all of it when he got home on weekends. And she told him she would do that all after they got married. Needless to say, they did get married and that marriage didn't last very long. Because nothing changed.

It's the same with our marriage to Christ. Our actions today show us what we would do, how we would react and how ambitious we would be in future.

The wife has and uses all the material and intellectual capacities that make for success. The wife educates herself, researches and seeks wise counsel. In the Millennium, the wife will definitely be seeking counsel of others in ruling. None of us will have all of the answers. There will be situations that we will seek counsel from one another for and in some situations we will have to go to Christ. Are we willing to do that? Are we willing to seek the counsel of others?

The wife also has to be very resourceful. One of the ways that Satan has put a curse on this country is driving the people off the land and into the cities. I grew up on a dairy farm in Northern Michigan and I'll say getting up at 5:30 in the morning to milk cows when the temperature is minus 10 and there is a 20 mile an hour wind blowing – I decided I wanted no part of being a farmer. That is also one of the reasons I live in the desert today. But when I went to college I was kind of the dumb farm kid among all these hotshot, sophisticated city kids. Initially I felt I was at quite a disadvantage and

then I learned to appreciate very much growing up on the farm. When something goes wrong, you don't have the luxury of throwing your hands up in the air, sitting down and saying, "What do I do now?" and waiting for someone to come along and fix the problem. You've got to take action yourself. I learned very quickly that the hotshot city kids never learned to be resourceful. It has robbed them of resourcefulness and it was comical sometimes that they would come to the dumb farm kid when they needed something fixed because they were not capable. Growing up on the farm or ranch, you learn to be very responsible and resourceful and you learn a work ethic. You have no other choice. Unfortunately, that is something that very few of our young people are learning today.

Getting back to the wife, she sticks to it and doesn't give up when encountering challenges or roadblocks. She is obviously clothed with humility. She is totally unselfish and is very giving. Turn over now to Matthew 25 beginning in verse 14. This is the Parable of the Talents.

Matthew 25:14. *For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.*

15) And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. (NKJV)

Let's pause here and remember, not everyone receives the same talents or abilities. That's one of the reasons why we shouldn't be comparing ourselves among ourselves. We do not know the talents that are given to one another, we do not know anyone else's starting point. So we cannot compare ourselves among ourselves.

16) Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.

17) And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.

18) But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

We know the story here of how those that increased their talents got the "well done."
Let's drop down to verse 24.

24) Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25) And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

26) "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

27) So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. (NKJV)

Again, not everyone receives the same number of talents and some have a lot more to overcome than others. But verse 25 says that the one with only one talent was afraid. Revelation 21:7-8 says:

Revelation 21:7. *He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.*

8) But the cowardly [KJV: fearful], unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (NKJV)

Again, the Bride of Christ will not be a coward or fearful. Basically, the Greek word means *timid, fearful or cowardly*.

Luke 19:11-27 says the reward for those who multiply their talents is having authority over cities or ruling with Christ. In John 14:1-3 it says:

John 14:1. *Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

2) In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (NKJV)

There is a reward out there waiting for us and a place being prepared for the bride, for each one individually according to what they do with what they've been given.

Many years ago I worked with a man that literally had to call his wife several times a day to tell her what to do during the course of the day. This was not a matter of him being a control freak. I met his wife and I soon realized that she just was not a person that was blessed with many talents. She was basically doing the best she could. She was not lazy or taking advantage of him but she was a burden to her husband in many ways. She was definitely not a suitable help in the real sense of the term and he had to be constantly concerned not only about doing his own work but he had to be concerned about what she was doing too. A suitable help should not be a burden to her husband. Christ indicated in the Parable of the Talents that he will not have a wife that is a burden.

There are people in the church today that want the minister or church leaders to tell them what to do. They don't want to take responsibility for themselves. There are times when we definitely need to seek counsel and should be doing that, but someone that has been in the church for 30, 40, 50 years or more should have studied and learned enough that they should be capable of making at least some of their own wise decisions. How does one expect to rule with Christ if they cannot make a decision for themselves today?

Is Christ going to have someone for a wife that He has to tell her everything that she has to do? Would that be a suitable help or would that be a burden?

Yes, sometimes we will make mistakes in judgment, but we learn from that and move on. After all we've been through in the church, it would be scary to put our salvation in the hands of some church leader. Just because someone is in the church and fills the seat and is basically learning to keep the law and maybe even growing in Bible knowledge, does not mean that they are qualifying to be a suitable wife for Christ.

Philippians 2:12. *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; (NKJV)*

That means being responsible and at times making pretty tough decisions on our own. Are we like the Bereans that we are searching the scriptures daily to help make such decisions? This is especially important in an age where we've lived through so many church splits. It's not easy but it does have its rewards.

13) for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (NKJV)

All the things we go through in the process, it is God's great pleasure to be building the Bride of Christ, a suitable bride. He deals with us individually. We have different talents, different trials, and we are put into different situations to mold and to shape us to prepare us to be the Bride of Christ. Making ourselves ready takes a lot of effort and a lot of work. It is not an easy ride and at times we definitely get weary. But just supporting a work alone, especially financially supporting a work alone, definitely does not accomplish what we need to be doing.

We have looked at the Proverbs 31 qualities and characteristics that God is looking for in the wife of Christ, but I want also to look at some other requirements that God has for the saints. Micah 6:6.

Micah 6:6. *With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7) Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8) He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (NKJV)*

Here He is saying that offerings and giving all we want doesn't fulfill the requirements that God has placed on us. We can make all the sacrifices and serve all we want but if we don't have these qualities, we're not going to gain much. There are three requirements.

Doing justly is the first. We are living in a world where there is very little justice. Justice has been corrupted as a result of bribes, the lust for power and the lust for control. For us, doing justly for us at this time is basically keeping the law.

Let's move on to loving mercy. Notice that it doesn't say "be merciful," it says to love mercy. We are to embrace mercy. Loving mercy is part of having the mind of God. James 2:13 says:

James 2:13. *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (NKJV)*

There are different elements of our society today that we find pretty disgusting and more than once I've heard individuals in the church say that there are certain groups or certain people that go directly to the lake of fire. Like the Monopoly game – go directly to jail, do not pass go, do not collect your \$200. This is – go directly to the lake of fire, do not go to the white throne judgment. I've often heard that. As I said, we are in a society today that is getting worse by the day and I personally have a little bit of a problem with these people who are a little confused as to what gender they are, but we've got to learn to be merciful to those people in the future. One of the things to consider is: How did they get that way? Chances are the parents are as confused as the kids are. Consider the environment they are in, and there are a lot of things to take into consideration here, we do need to learn to be merciful.

We are in a generation today where kids are being trashed and corrupted. A few years ago I was discussing a situation with a lady in the church concerning her grandson. The boy's father, her son, was either dead or in jail (I do not remember which it was at that time). The mother was trashing the kid since he was little kid, exposing him to drugs, sex, everything bad that you can imagine. And the grandmother made the comment to me that the mother can't do more damage to that kid than God can fix. Now think about that. There is no human being that can have more damage done to them than God can fix – ultimately in the future.

Moving on next to walking humbly with God. This is a requirement that we all need to be very concerned about. Pride, conceit and arrogance are at the very core of our human nature. Something we all battle daily. Of course, we know from Ezekiel 28 that pride was Satan's first sin, the very first sin.

Ezekiel 28:17. *"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; ... (NKJV)*

The one that became Satan was perfect and beautiful and at one point, inwardly perfect and beautiful and it was pride that started him on his way to ultimately total destruction. The result of that pride was corrupted wisdom. What is corrupted wisdom? It's foolishness. He became a fool in the process. He was blinded by pride.

Isaiah 14:14. *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.* (NKJV)

Satan's pride blinded him to the point that he thought that he was greater than the creator. In Psalms 36, we'll look at the first three verses. I will be reading this from the New International Version because it says it better than any other translation

Psalms 36:1. *An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: there is no fear of God before his eyes.*

2) *For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his own sin.*

3) *The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good.* (NIV)

Basically what he is saying here in verse 2 is that pride blinds us. It blinds us to our own weaknesses and our own sins. People can start out humble but pride, conceit and arrogance creeps in and as they creep in, the blindness becomes more progressive. In verse 3 it says *he has ceased to be wise and to do good* and that means that he did have wisdom that was corrupted by his pride.

Let's go to Revelation 3 and we'll look at a people that are blinded with pride.

Revelation 3:14. *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:*

15) *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*

16) *So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

17) *Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

18) *I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.* (NKJV)

Unfortunately, that is the state of the world today and that is the state of the church as a whole today. If anyone says or thinks that they are Philadelphian, what are they really saying? "I'm Philadelphian; I've got it all together – they don't. I am rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing." What does Christ say to that group? That they are proud and they are blind. Those two characteristics. It's interesting that the Greek word that is translated as proud in the New Testament literally is *I shine above*. I am better. I shine above.

Last March there was an Ambassador College reunion for those that attended between 1947 and 1977, a four-day event in Las Vegas. There were primarily students that went

to Pasadena but also students that went to Bricket Wood and Big Sandy. There were several hundred people there and out of those, I would say 90% are not in a church of God today. This was not an exercise in bashing the church or the college. There were a lot of positives of what people said that they learned at college, learned from the church, how it helped them in their careers, etc. But the thing that came up over and over and over was they said they left because of the arrogance of the leadership. That was the number one factor in people leaving. If we take a good look, an honest look at every church split that has happened since Worldwide, we will find probably the primary cause was the arrogance of the leadership.

We are in a world where knowledge is available like it never has been before. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 8:1 (the context is things offered to idols):

1 Corinthians 8:1. *Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. (NKJV)*

We have to be extremely careful that we don't confuse knowledge for righteousness. In college they told us to be careful because you can literally study your way right out of the church. And many have, unfortunately, with intense study.

Philippians 2:5. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6) who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (NKJV)*

Christ set an example for us of humility and I don't think we can grasp what He did in totally emptying Himself of the power He had as one of the two beings; the spokesman that said, "Let there be" and it was, to become a physical man limited by the strength and abilities that each and every one of us have, the limitations that we have today. I don't think we grasp the humility it took for Him to empty Himself of that vast power to become a man. He set the example of humility for us and with absolutely no selfishness whatsoever.

1 Peter 5:6. *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, (NKJV)*

He says humble yourselves. It's a lot easier if we humble ourselves than if God brings some catastrophic or drastic event to humble us in areas where we are not humbling ourselves. I personally know that conceit and arrogance are my biggest problem and the one thing I try to ask every morning is that God helps me to humble myself and I suggest that to everyone. Ask God to help us to humble ourselves through the day and see how we do.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us a description of the antithesis of a Laodicean. In just a few verses, we see everything that a Laodicean is not.

Matthew 5:1. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.*

2) *Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

3) *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4) *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

5) *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

6) *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

7) *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

8) *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

9) *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

10) *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11) *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*

12) *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NKJV)*

These attitudes are the antithesis of a Laodicean. And these are the attitudes we all need to be striving for. There is power available to us to help us to achieve these attitudes, to be working on these attitudes. Of course, the reward is in Revelation 3:21.

Revelation 3:21. *To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

22) *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." " " (NKJV)*

Those that qualify, that is the reward, to be the wife of the King, to be sitting next to the King on His throne. That is what is before us if we strive for it.

As we go forward from this feast this year, let us all be constantly examining ourselves. Let's ask ourselves: How are we doing at becoming a virtuous wife? Go back and look at what is expected of the wife of a king and take a good look at Proverbs 31 again. Let us not just beat ourselves up over our failures but strive to become a perfect, virtuous wife for the future coming King. Of course, we can't do it on our own, but there is a power available to us.

Philippians 4:13. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (NKJV)*

That power is available to us to do the overcoming so that we can make ourselves ready to be the Proverbs 31 wife that God is trying to build. Let's use that power so we can become the perfect, compatible, suitable wife for Christ.