

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



Volume 35

December 2014

Number 5

Bride of Christ Responsibilities

By Brian R. Kenyon

The New Testament church is sometimes spoken of in bridal terminology. In the Book of Revelation, for example, John “saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2), and later, John was invited by one of “the seven angels,” who had “the seven vials full of the seven last plagues,” to “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9). In the same vein, Paul told the Corinthians, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). To be “espoused [betrothed, NKJ]” in first century Near Eastern culture was much more binding than present day “engagements.” It was really like the first stage of marriage, requiring divorce proceedings to undo (cf. Mt. 1:18-19). Paul was afraid that if the Corinthians fell for the false views of those (Judaizing teachers) who were attempting to undermine his apostleship, they would not be presentable as a chaste bride! When Paul taught about the roles and responsibilities of husband and wife in Ephesians 5, he concluded that section, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). In other words, Paul used the husband/wife relationship to illustrate Christ’s relationship to the church. With that relationship comes responsibility!

The Bride-City

As noted above, in Revelation 21:2, John spoke of the “holy city, new Jerusalem ... prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The idea of a bride-city did not originate with John on the isle of Patmos. Old Jerusalem was also referred to as a holy city and a bride. Isaiah wrote, “Awake,

awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (Isa. 52:1). Here, Zion, the spiritual city of God’s people, was to put on “beautiful garments,” which is reminiscent of wedding clothes (cf. Jer. 2:32). Again, Isaiah wrote,

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. (Isa. 61:10)

Old Jerusalem represented much more than mere inhabitants and their daily lives—it represented the covenant people of God! A bride-city captures something of God’s personal relationship to His people (the bride) as well as something of their life in communion with Him and with one another. A city, especially in antiquity, is not only represented by its people, but also by its relationships and social connotations. Thus, the city of God’s bride were people of special relationship (cf. Deut. 7:7-8), whose “social” life and connotation were to be characterized by constant communion with the Lord and the glorification of His name (cf. Isa. 46:13).

John always saw that city “coming down” (Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 10), but it never landed. Its constant source was

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“from heaven,” which is another way of saying “from God.” This was the ultimate city that Abraham (along with other patriarchs) sought, as stated by the Hebrews writer, “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). The fulfillment of this city is what John saw that was “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2, 9-10). While there is discussion among Bible students whether this city in Revelation is Christ’s church or heaven itself, this point is still the same—God’s people are His beautiful and precious bride-city!


Bride Responsibilities

As in any marriage, there are responsibilities a wife has to her husband. This is especially true in the spiritual sense of the church’s responsibilities to her “husband,” Jesus Christ! First, the church as the “bride” must be faithful to Christ. Spiritual adultery is to Christ (and even worse) what physical adultery is to husband and wife! Old Testament Israel committed “adultery” with God in the form of idolatry (Ezk. 16:1-19 cf. Jer. 3:1-2; Hos. 1:1-11). Christians commit spiritual adultery against Christ when they walk in sin by “messing around” with false doctrine (Lk. 6:46; 2 Jn. 9), by wearing denominational names, by taking on unscriptural beliefs and practices, and by seeking other things before God (Mt. 6:33 cf. Col. 3:5).

Second, the church as the “bride” must spend time with Christ. One of the dangers in a “long distance” earthly marriage is that the heart grows fonder ... for someone else! Husband and wife being separated was such a

concern for God that, in the Old Testament, He would not allow a newly married man to go to war for at least a year (Deut. 24:5), and, in the New Testament, He said husband and wife should not physically be apart “except it be with consent for a time ... that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency [lack of self-control]” (1 Cor. 7:5). That truth is even more heightened in the spiritual marriage! Christians cannot expect their relationship with Christ to be strong when they spend no or sparse time with Him. It was said of Peter and John that even the antagonistic Jews “realized that they [the apostles] had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Christians must spend all the time they can with the “husband” Jesus in prayer (cf. Lk. 18:1), in study of His word (cf. 1 Tim. 4:13), in praise (cf. Ps. 9:1-2), and in every day conduct (cf. 1 Jn. 1:7).

Third, the church as the “bride” must be of the same mind as Christ. It matters what earthly spouses think! Many earthly marriages fail because husband and wife are not on “the same page” concerning the sexual relationship, finances, and/or how the children should be reared. Being of the same mind as Christ is just as much (if not more) needed to have a proper relationship with Him. On what Christians focus really does matter! Pleasing God is impossible with the wrong focus (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-2)!

May the church (individually and collectively) take her role as Christ’s bride seriously! 

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Special Gifts: Atlantic Christian Fund; Melba Simons estate.

*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month’s financial statement.

The Harvester

Published Monthly
Florida School of Preaching
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Do You Understand Jesus' Sermon on the Mount?

40th Annual Lectureship **Jan. 19-22, 2015** Brian R. Kenyon, Director

MONDAY

9:00 "When He Was Set"—Who Is Jesus? Jackie M. Stearsman
 9:40 Historical Background of the Sermon Stephen Atnip
 10:20 BREAK

10:50 Character of the Kingdom Stephen Atnip
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Relationship Regulations

1:30 Murder Steven Walling
 2:00 Making Oaths David Stearsman
 2:30 Personal Retaliation Robert Williams
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Questions And Answers on Relationship Regulations
 4:30 DINNER

6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Jesus' Relationship to the Law Darrin Morehouse
 7:45 Character of the Kingdom's Effect on Others Michael Shepherd

TUESDAY

9:00 Completely Focusing on the Lord Kory Berry
 9:40 No Need to Worry Kevin Patterson
 10:20 BREAK

10:50 The Providence of God Solomon Quainoo
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Marital Matters

1:30 Adultery George F. Beals
 2:00 What Deut. 24:1-4 Actually Teaches Dewayne Bryant
 2:30 Divorce and Remarriage Brian R. Kenyon
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Questions And Answers on Marital Matters
 4:30 DINNER

6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Jesus' Teaching About Love Roderick "Rick" Evans
 7:45 Jesus' Warning Against False Teachers Jimmy Clark

WEDNESDAY

9:00 How "Social" Should the Gospel Be? Jack Pinckert
 9:40 OT Tithing Versus NT Giving David South
 10:20 BREAK

10:50 The Value of Heavenly Treasures Jimmy Clark
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Righteous Religion

1:30 Rendering Benevolence Sam Willcut
 2:00 Praying Eric Dawkins
 2:30 Fasting Jefferson Sole
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Questions And Answers on Righteous Religion
 4:30 DINNER

6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 The Strait Gate and Narrow Way Creston Frizzell
 7:45 God's Standard of Judgment Terry Frizzell

THURSDAY

9:00 Condemnatory Judgment Prohibited Glen Willcut
 9:40 Lax Judgment Prohibited Sam Willcut
 10:20 BREAK

10:50 Proper Judgment Requirements Melvin Otey
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: "Doing Unto Others..."

1:30 Was There Racism in the Bible? Larry Williams
 2:00 Race Relations in Restoration Movement B. Daugherty
 2:30 Practicing the "Golden Rule" Benjamin L. Radford, Sr.
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Questions And Answers on "Doing Unto Others..."
 4:30 DINNER

6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 The Wise and Foolish Builders Kyle L. Smith
 7:45 Jesus the Christ's Authority Melvin Otey



Creston Frizzell



Terry Frizzell



Brian Kenyon



Melvin Otey



Darrin Morehouse



Kevin Patterson



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Day	Time	Lakeland Classes	Instructor	Credit
Monday	__ 8:30-12:00	General Epistles (249)	Bauer	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Wisdom Literature (248)	Richardson	3
Tuesday	__ 8:30-12:00	Gospel of John (227)	Wheeler	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Church History: Restoration (242)	Wheeler	3
Wednesday	__ 8:30-12:00	Greek II (223)	Kenyon	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Ethics (285)	D. Stearsman	3
Thursday	__ 8:30-12:00	1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (238)	Kenyon	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Prison Epistles (136)	Dawkins	3
Friday	__ 8:30-12:00	Eschatology (276)	Franson	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Minor Prophets (246)	Elledge	3
Extension Classes				
Thursday	__ 6:00-8:30	Pentateuch (164) (Orange Street church of Christ, Auburndale)	Bauer	2.5
	__ 7:00-9:30	John: His Gospel and Epistles (294) (Wesconnett church of Christ, Jacksonville)	Atnip	2.5

Spring 2015 Semester Begins Jan. 5

Register on-line, by calling the office, or by selecting classes from this form and mailing it to the office with your name, address, and phone number!