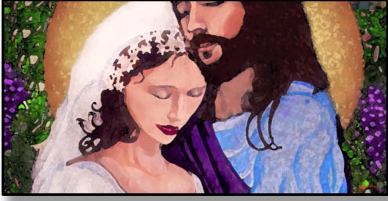


Who is the Bride of Christ, Introduction

September 3, 2014



You know world events are shaping of very, very quickly. We really do have a false prophet that has been exposed now. Obviously the time is now when things are coming to a head. The Lord has asked me to be very clear and straight with you about certain things. Especially, your identity as His Bride.

Who is the Bride of Christ? Who is going to be taken in the Rapture, which we firmly believe in. Just a note on that, the early church for the first 300 years, the sign of orthodoxy amongst the brothers and the apostles was the belief that there would be a pre-tribulation rapture and that was before Augustine and before all the political posturing and situations came into being. So, for the first 300 years you were not an orthodox Christian if you didn't believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. That's pretty clear at the start.

Now the Lord has asked me to define more clearly who His Bride is. Who is He looking for? What are the characteristics of His Bride? How can you recognize the true Bride of Christ? This is so important because there are standards. The Lord is not going to marry a harlot. He has some very important and intentional standards by which He chooses His Bride, His spouse. We want to be chosen by Him, we want to assured that we are going to be his Bride. There are some things we need to take a hard look at.

If we just lightly skip along and say, "Well I'm a Christian, I received the Lord, He's my Lord and Savior, I'm going to be raptured," then we are kidding ourselves. We really don't want to have our heads in the sand right now. We really want to know where we are at with the Lord. Are we the bride of the world or the Lord's Bride? So, what I want to talk here is how can we recognize the Bride of Christ, the true Bride of Christ.

The first thing I want to say, which is very important I believe, is that the Bride of Christ is not the beautiful people. The Bride of Christ is not the financially successful, well dressed, well-heeled Christian people. There could be a Bride of Christ amongst those people, but that is not what He is looking for. That is not the sign of the Bride.

The sign of a Bride is really the crown of thorns. The Lord is looking for someone who resembles Him. Think about it for a minute: isn't it true that when you're looking for a spouse, you are looking for someone who has the same values that you have? They will have the same agenda in life, the same goals, a compatible personality, and a heart that will be totally in love with you and no one else. An uncompromising and faithful heart. These are some of the things the Lord wants in His bride.

And there are some people who are beautiful on the outside and financially well off who are His Bride and the Lord recognizes their crown of thorns and that circumcision from the world to God and the holiness in their hearts. I'm afraid right now in the Christian church, the Bride of Christ is more pointed at being the successful, dynamic, ground-taking people rather than the meek, humble, and lowly.

You read the Beatitudes and immediately you get a clear picture of who His Bride truly resembles. Let me read that for you.

In Matthew 5:1-12 the Beatitudes read, Now when Jesus saw the crowds He went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him and He began to teach them. He said, Blessed are the poor in spirit for those is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those that mourn for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God and blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So, here the Lord was giving us quite a teaching on who He considered blessed on this Earth. And that's really a different picture than the successful, beautiful, wealthy, and prosperous dynamic church. It's a way different picture.

Going through each one: The first one is Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Well, I don't know how you are, but I know when I had an excess or an abundance of money when I received an inheritance, the "poorness of spirit" just changed a little bit. I found myself doing really stupid things, like looking at someone else's car and saying, "Wow that car is not as nice as my car". Just things I never thought about doing before. Absolutely outrageous for me. And I looked and I thought, 'What has gotten into your head? What is a matter with your thinking that you should think like that?'

I became more impatient and less tolerant of people, more judgmental, and I realized that having this kind of money in this situation was actually very toxic to my spirit. It led to a certain kind of pride and arrogance that was just totally disgusting. Thank the Lord that situation passed quickly. I really couldn't understand it. To be honest with you, the Lord told me to basically dispose of it all as quickly as possible, because it was toxic. So we did the best we could with it.

There's the illustration of being poor in spirit. It's very difficult for wealthy people and self-sufficient people to be poor in spirit. It's much more common for someone who is wealthy to feel exalted in the spirit and to look down upon those that don't have. I'm not saying it is impossible, because there are those that are wealthy who are extremely meek. You would never think that looking at them that they are as wealthy as they are. I think the more common problem is when people gain wealth, they start looking down upon those who don't have it.

There was a show years and years and years ago (I'm showing my age...) called the *Millionaire*. Oh my goodness. I believe that was the name of the show on television... and every week there was a different episode of someone receiving a million dollars and what happened in their life. The life was just turned upside down. It was so revealing. Anyone who has seen that show or aware of situations like that, you know that people change. Things that were important before become less important. Even the scriptures say, "A man's wealth gives him no rest" because you're always thinking what you can buy next, because you've gone without for so long that now you have a chance to have it. You research day and night finding the best of the best of the best. There's no end to the distractions that having an endless amount of money or supposedly an endless amount of money can offer you.

The next Beatitude is Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the Earth. This is beautiful. When we think of landowners, meekness is the *last* thing in the world we think of. Landlords, people who own property, ranches and so on...meekness is the last trait that we associate with a landowner. But here the Lord is saying they (the meek) are the ones who will inherit the Earth. I can't help but think that when He returns, it will be the meek that are entrusted with the great wealth of the land because they'll be looking out for others.

Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness. My goodness, not hunger and thirst for the beautiful things of this world but for righteousness, for they will be filled. I believe that if you're hungering and thirsting for more things and nicer things: The latest Iphone, the latest Ipad, the latest computer programs, and latest upgrades, you're not hunger and thirsting for righteousness, you're hunger and thirsting for the latest goodies and what a terrible distraction that is. It does leave you empty. Here He is saying, "Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." I would like to propose that cursed are those that hunger and thirst for more bigger and better things, because they'll never be filled, they'll never have enough. At least that's been my experience.

Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy. How many times people in positions of power, authority with money and power and influence don't feel the necessity for being merciful sometimes? I'm not saying everyone is like that. The more independent you are, the more you think that there is not a need for mercy. You're stricter. The more judgmental, the more confining you are in what you expect of other people. There's not an amount of mercy that there is for someone who is merciful. In the world money, influence, and power put you in that place of feeling independent and you have less of a tendency to be merciful to others, because you feel like you don't need mercy. Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

And blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. I think that's the biggest complaint, the biggest desire, and the biggest prayer of many Christian's hearts... "I want to see God. I want to see you Lord. I want to gaze upon you Lord." Here the Lord is saying what the prerequisites are; He is asking us to be pure in heart. In other words, not to be attached to the passing things of this world and the passing fancies, not to be looking out for ourselves and our own agenda...constantly climbing higher and grasping for more, but to have our hearts set on God and to have our agendas set on the things of God - not the things of the world. I believe those are the pure in heart and they will see God. I found that to be true in my own life. It's more difficult for me to communicate with the Lord and to see Him when I'm wrapped up in the world. My whole Christian life has been a process of cutting the tentacles to the world and putting my heart and mind more on Him and purifying motives. The vision of Him has become so much clearer. It's a beautiful thing. It's something I encourage in everyone.

Blessed are the peace makers for they will be called the children of God. When you're in the world and you have agendas, you have things that you want. And whatever you're involved in with the worldly affairs, making peace is not the top priority. The top priority is getting your own way. Having things go the way you need them to go. You're own blessing for your own sake or the sake of your family.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness. For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. So, how many have turned away from the agendas of the world and are looked down upon, are marginalized, are not chosen for positions in the church but are over-looked because they are not wealthy and they're not well-heeled? They chose a simple, pure life, turning away from the lures of the world and they're not interested in impressing anyone but the Lord and making Him happy. Many times they are overlooked and persecuted. Then there're many who are persecuted in their families and that goes for wealthy and poor alike, because of our devotion to the Lord, because of the standards that we set to please Him, we're persecuted and put down.

Blessed are you when people insult and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice because they persecuted the prophets who were before you in the very same way. I believe that the Lord has given us a look into His heart of what He is expecting in His Bride. What kind of person she is going to be.

In short, I believe the Lord is looking for someone who bears His image in their heart. He is looking to the man or woman who internally is wearing that crown of thorns, who is meek and humble in heart, and who looks after the needs of others. I have to say I don't see that in the modern church. I see it in some people but it's not the thing that is applauded. It's not the gross national product of Christianity. It just seems the GNP of Christianity is success, prosperity, good health, and all the things that come with it. Those who don't have those things don't measure up to the standards of the successful Christians so they're looked down upon.

Who do we want to please? Who do we want to be with? Do we want to be left behind with the world or do we want to be chosen by Christ as His Bride because we resemble Him. This is the time right now for us to get really serious about who we are before the Lord and who we are not and how deep our attachments to the world go in our lives... how much we're controlled by the world.

I entreat you, take time and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the areas of your life that are not circumcised, the ways in which you don't resemble the Lord. Truly, it's time for us to be very serious about finding out whether or not we're going to be taken in the Rapture, because it can happen at any time, any moment.

I know a pastor in town here (and who's now with the Lord). He had a very intimate relationship with the Lord in his last year and the Lord had told him the very same thing he had told me, "I am at the door and it can happen any moment...Any moment."

So we want to be ready. We want to be chosen to be His Bride. We want to be worthy to be His Bride. I'm not saying we have to be perfect but we have to be worthy in the sense that we've accomplished everything. If our hearts are riveted on Him and on pleasing Him, He'll make up the difference. If our hearts are still attached to the world we're going to be tethered. We're going to see other people going and leaving and we'll be left behind tethered to our earthly agendas.

Seriously, is that what you want? Are you sure you are living for God and for God alone? Or are there questions in your heart? Has the Holy Spirit been dealing with you and bringing up metaphors to you like the wise and foolish virgins? Has the Holy Spirit been nudging you that you're not ready?

If we don't get ourselves together and get ready quickly, we stand the risk to be left behind in the most horrendous time in history, the most horrible, horrible time that this Earth will ever see. Is it worth it? Is it worth it? That is the choice you have to make and that I have to make.

I can feel the Holy Spirit grieving when I make foolish choices with my time, with my money, with my thoughts, and my prayers or lack of prayers. I feel that grief and I know that time is very short and I don't want to be left behind, so I have to look at these things about myself every single day and measure my intention, examine my heart, examine my conscious and see that I'm truly crucified with Christ.

I pray you'll do that same and we'll all meet in the air. The Lord bless you.