

# Preparing for the Marriage

*“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*

**THE CONSECRATED CHILDREN** of God are now living in a most important time during the present harvest period of the Gospel Age. It is the time of the church's final testing which takes place just prior to the intro-

duction of the faithful members of the bride of Christ into the marriage feast. At that time, they will be married to our dear Lord Jesus, their heavenly bridegroom, the Son of our loving Heavenly Father who is the king of the whole universe. Following the words of our opening text, John the Revelator further wrote concerning the bride of Christ: “To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”—Rev 19:8,9

The faithful bride class will become part of “the Christ” and share in the great work of restoring the human family to obedience to the divine law and the resulting life everlasting on the earth. The Apostle Paul wrote, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed. So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” (Gal. 3:8,9, *English Standard Version*) It is by faith that we thus look forward with great desire and anticipation to this wonderful scene of splendor and blessing that will be made available for all mankind.

## **A PROPHETIC VISION**

The psalmist also spoke of this marriage in heaven, saying, “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.” (Ps. 45:13,14) Our attention is drawn to one of the beautiful figures by which the close and very precious relationship between our dear Lord Jesus and his elect bride has been scripturally portrayed. This may also be seen in the illustration of the captain and his soldiers, the shepherd and his sheep, the master and his servants or, as in this case, the bridegroom and the bride. In each of these instances Christ’s relationship to his true followers teaches a particular and valuable lesson.

The picture under consideration is very important because it brings to our mental vision the fact that Jesus has been highly exalted to the Heavenly Father’s right hand in his throne on high. Faithful

Christians, the church triumphant, will be associated with their Lord and Master in his glorious Messianic kingdom reign, and for the ages to come. These, and many other scriptural illustrations of heavenly hopes, lift the minds of the faithful members of Jesus' bride from that of earthly desires, aims, and ambitions, to those of heavenly blessings.—Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21

In his letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul pointed this out to the brethren. Partially quoting Isaiah 64:4, he wrote: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."—I Cor. 2:9-12

## **A HEAVENLY INHERITANCE**

A heavenly inheritance is the promise of God for the bride of Christ—"the Lamb's wife." (Rev. 21:9) Those who enter into this indescribable scene and glorious spiritual inheritance are inspired by the words of God that have been revealed to them. Thus the psalmist has directed us, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."—Ps. 45:10

The centuries since Pentecost have been especially set apart in the divine program for the calling,

developing, testing, and proving of the bride of Christ. Rulership in God's promised kingdom is the great honor which has been bestowed upon his beloved Son, and this he is to share with his glorified bride. Thus, together they will comprise "the Christ," one body with many members.—I Cor. 12:12-14,27

## **SELECTION OF A BRIDE**

The Scriptures reveal that God is selecting a bride for his Son during this present time. This was shown by Abraham choosing a bride for his son Isaac, through his "eldest servant," thought to be Eliezer. (Gen. 24:1-67; 15:2) In this illustration, Abraham is representative of the Heavenly Father, Isaac pictures our Lord Jesus, and Eliezer symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Rebekah, the one chosen to be the wife of Isaac, represents the bride of Christ. Jesus indicated this special relationship between himself, his prospective bride, and the Father when he said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."—John 6:44,45

This Christ does through the power of God's Holy Spirit, operating in connection with the Scriptures. (I Thess. 1:5, *ESV*; II Cor. 6:7) Through this holy influence, we have been "betrothed ... to one husband," that we may be presented as a "chaste virgin to Christ." (II Cor. 11:2, *New King James Version*) We must have great appreciation in connection with this betrothal and maintain our purity. Only thus

are we to be ultimately presented to the glorious bridegroom and be associated with him in the administration of his glorious kingdom and its ultimate purpose of bringing reconciliation for all people.

## **A JEWISH WEDDING**

The act of betrothal under the established Jewish custom was celebrated by a feast, at which time the bridegroom placed a ring on the finger of the bride-to-be. A ring is the symbol of endless faithfulness, and being placed on the finger indicated that the contract was a binding one. It could not be violated without grave consequences to the offending person. Faithfulness was to be maintained at all costs.

When the Heavenly Father calls us to fully dedicate ourselves to him and become the betrothed bride of our Lord Jesus, we respond by entering into a marriage covenant. God then seals it with the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 1:12,13) This signifies our consecration and acceptance of his dear Son, and binds us to faithfulness to our covenant even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) Under the Jewish custom an interval elapsed, usually about a year, between the betrothal and the marriage. During this period, the bride would embroider her wedding robe, and do other preparations to make herself ready. This represents how the betrothed bride of Christ must build the necessary character and develop the required fruitage of the Holy Spirit.—Gal. 5:22,23; II Pet. 1:5-7

During this period of time, the Jewish bride continued to live at the house of her father even as does the prospective bride of Christ, all communications being carried on through a friend of the bridegroom, which pictures God's Holy Spirit or

influence. The bride was then regarded as the betrothed wife of her future husband, and her faithfulness to him was of vital importance. The arrangement also consisted in the final removal of the bride-elect from her father's house to the home of the bridegroom's father. This shows how the betrothed bride of Christ will be taken from her father's house, the earthly temporary house of Adam, to the home of her bridegroom's father, the Heavenly Father, and her permanent spiritual abode in heaven.—II Cor. 5:1

This is shown in the inspiring words which were spoken by Jesus, our heavenly bridegroom, when he proclaimed, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:1-3

## **THE BRIDE'S ROBE**

The robe which the bride wore covered her entire body, and it was a most beautiful and distinctive feature of her attire. Isaiah's prophetic words describe the bride's attention to her garment. "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

The bride's robe was made of white linen which represented purity and righteousness. (Rev. 19:8;

I Thess. 4:7) It was “embroidered with gold thread,” which is symbolic of the promise of the divine nature. (Ps. 45:13, *International Standard Version*; II Pet. 1:4) It was scented with exquisite perfume, of which the psalmist spoke, saying, “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” (Ps. 45:8) The Revelator also spoke of the bride and her preparation for the marriage. “I 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

## **THE DIVINE ARRANGEMENT**

The Scriptures reveal to us the specific requirements whereby we might be privileged to enter into this exceeding great honor of becoming the bride of the only begotten Son of God. It is made clear that we could not in any sense attain to such an invitation by way of our own ability or position in life. “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”—Isa. 64:6

Our loving Heavenly Father devised a way in which he could call from among the sinful race of mankind a select people for his name. The Apostle Paul addresses this special invitation by saying, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his

righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”—Rom. 3:24-26

These have had their sins covered by the symbolic “robe” of Christ’s righteousness. (Isa. 61:10) The merit of Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice is imputed to them, and by wholehearted acceptance and belief in this divine arrangement, they have been made acceptable to the Heavenly Father. (Eph. 1:6,7) The Apostle Paul explains, “Not having mine own righteousness, ... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”—Phil. 3:9

## **KINGDOM GLORY**

The inspired psalmist has given us a glimpse of the grandeur and majesty of our heavenly bridegroom, Christ Jesus. We read, “Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.” (Ps. 45:2) Because he loved righteousness and Truth, and was meek and lowly, the Heavenly Father highly exalted him as proclaimed by Paul. “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”—Eph. 1:19-21

During the closing years of this Gospel Age, the church is not yet the bride of the King’s Son in glorious garments. During her present earthly



pilgrimage, she is the betrothed virgin living “in earthen vessels.” (II Cor. 4:7) If faithful, she shall be given a divine body in the first resurrection. Then the bride will be all beautiful within and without, clothed with glory and honor. As indicated by the psalmist, “Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.”—Ps. 45:9

### **INCLINE THINE EAR**

From the psalmist’s wonderful words, we further read, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” (Ps. 45:10,11) These delicate and beautiful thoughts convey the sublime scene in all its heavenly glory. The bride is asked to hearken and consider that the Heavenly Father has set his wonderful favor and affection upon the specially called of his earthly creation. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

In response to the words, “Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house,” we observe that during the present time there are many voices that are calling to those who are betrothed to Christ. These earthly callings may come from the home, job, friends, pleasure, a desire for wealth and popularity, or other self-interests. We are not ignorant of some of the ways this may occur, either from the flesh, the world, or the workings of the great Adversary, Satan. Any of these devices may be used to subtly draw us away from the prize of our heavenly calling in Christ Jesus, or in cooperating with

earthly interests and influences. As the betrothed virgin listens, she hears the voice of her bridegroom, saying, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.”—John 14:15; Rev. 3:21

While the world invites us to be absorbed with its attractions and ambitions, the Lord tells us to consider that the things of the present life are, at best, only “temporary.” (II Cor. 4:18, *NKJV*) We have an opportunity to sacrifice these now and to gain the very highest of all blessings, “glory and honour and immortality,” and to become the bride of Christ.—Rom. 2:7

The worldly-wise do not hearken to this invitation because they are generally absorbed with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. (Matt. 13:22) They do not fully appreciate the instructions that come from our dear Lord. Those who eventually will constitute the bride in glory, do hearken and consider, and are guided by the counsel from on high. They thus press with vigor along the narrow way of sacrifice which, by divine grace, leads to a place in Christ’s glorious kingdom.

## **PRESENTED TO THE BRIDEGROOM**

Soon, we believe, all of the faithful members of the body of Christ will be brought together for the marriage to the glorious heavenly bridegroom. She will then be clothed with the divine nature, and will take her place in the presence of the king. We catch a glimpse of this beautiful scene, quoting again the words of the psalmist. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.”—Ps. 45:13,14

## RAIMENT OF NEEDLEWORK

The “raiment of needlework” of which the psalmist spoke points to the white robe which the Lord furnished us for the occasion—the robe of righteousness. This is the robe upon which painstaking effort has been made by the betrothed bride in readiness and anticipation for this most wonderful event. With much patience and carefulness, she has woven on her robe the beautiful adornments of the Christian graces during her consecrated “walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4) This scene depicts great rejoicing in both heaven and in earth, and is associated with her glorious and abundant entrance into the king’s palace.

The Psalmist David has written, “Thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” (Ps. 139:13-15) The bride has been fashioned from among fallen mankind, but, “Your eyes looked upon my embryo, and everything was recorded in your book. The days scheduled for my formation were inscribed, even though not one of them had come yet.”—vs.16, *International Standard Version*

These brief glimpses given to us long ago reveal the power of the Heavenly Father to fashion the bride of Christ, who will receive her heavenly inheritance. This is also expressed by the Apostle Peter, who wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance

incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”—I Pet. 1:3,4

## **THE GREAT FUTURE WORK**

We read, “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” (Rev. 21:9-11) “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”—vss. 22-26

When this heavenly marriage is consummated, the bride of Christ will together share in the great work of Christ’s kingdom. It will include the setting up of a new and better covenant especially designed for the blessings of all the families of earth. (Jer. 31:31-34) God’s long-prayed-for kingdom “in earth” will be established. (Matt. 6:10) At that time the wonderful words of the Revelator will be accomplished. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17 ■