

Matthew 25:1-2 “*Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.*”

2 Corinthians 11:2 “*For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.*”

Revelation 19:7-8 ““Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready.**’ It was given to her to **clothe herself in fine linen**, bright and clean; for **the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**”

KINGDOM REWARDS AND THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

(FUTURE BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENT CHRISTIANS)

Including an excerpt from the book *THE BRIDE AND THE CITY*
by G. H. Lange

THE BRIDE

This is a figure of affection most personal, tender, and intimate, and of the special solicitude, care, and enrichment that results from this affection.

The Father has appointed over His kingdom a King, even the Lamb Who suffered in meekness, the Lion Who conquered by might. It is the perfect combination of these two that qualifies Him as the perfect Ruler. But a King desires a consort to share His glory and to satisfy and to display His love. In Rev. 19 the hour for the fulfillment of this desire has arrived: “the marriage of the Lamb is come,” and heaven rejoices with exceeding gladness and cries, Hallelujah!

1. *The Time.* The Lord has already descended as a thief and taken to Himself those who were looking for Him (Heb. 9:28). The armies of the Beast are now mustering for the last battle (Rev. 16:13-16); but it has not yet been fought: the Word of God and His armies have not yet rushed in irresistible might upon the Beast and his forces (Rev. 19:11-21). At this point before the Mighty One goes forth to war, He celebrates the nuptials with His now ready bride, so that when He shall be manifested she too shall be manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3:4; 1John 3:2-3).

2. *Anticipations.* From of old, the Father had designed for the Son of His love, this bliss of having as His own peculiar possession, and in His own proper realm, the heavens, a consort formed of ransomed sinners of the human race. They were given to Him by the Father (John 17:6) in a more special sense than the more general gift of universal heirship and ownership (Heb. 1:2; John 3:35; Matt. 11:27). He purchased them at the fabulous price of His own priceless blood: “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Eph. 5:25), “in order that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

This so ancient design had been intimated long in advance. Eve had been brought to Adam to be his joy and help in dominion over the earth (Gen. 2:18-25). Rebekah had been brought to Isaac, the son and heir (Gen. 24), and Ruth, the alien, to Boaz, the mighty and rich (Ruth 2:1), as if to intimate that Gentiles would be joined with Jews in the bridal blessing. In a quite special sense Israel, as a people, had been taken by Jehovah and associated with Himself in a privilege and nearness granted to no other people, a relationship often pictured by this same figure of husband and wife (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3; Ezek. 16). And though for unfaithfulness Israel has

been given a bill of divorcement; yet, as a people, shall she, on repentance, be again received into relationship. God does not change His mind as to His gifts and calling, though human folly and sin may defer the accomplishment of His call and the enjoyment of His gifts.

All this, however, was of earth as to its sphere, and but anticipatory of the higher joys and honours designed for realization in the heavenly portion of the one kingdom. From the time of Abraham, God had spoken to men of that world above, and men of faith had embraced the prospect and fixed upon it as their hope (Heb. 11:9-16). In this present age of Christ's rejection by the world, that has become the sole prospect of faith, for in this world the faithful are promised nothing but the bare necessities of a pilgrim and are exhorted to "set their hope perfectly [that is, undividedly and uninterruptedly] on the favour that is being brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pet. 1:13). This supreme favour is that of being associated with our glorified Lord in a fellowship so intimate, so tender, so glorious, and so useful, as is pictured by a bride and her husband.

This union will crown and complete the program of God for the universe. It will perfect the joy of the Son, for no union so intimate and sweet is known in creation. Then shall He "see of the travail of His soul and be *satisfied* (Isa. 53:11). And it is the highest honour that ever can be available for the redeemed, since the Bride sits with the Bridegroom on His throne.

3. *Who form the bride?* As to what persons will form this exalted company there have been differences of opinion. Some seem to include at last all the saved of all the ages. This is contrary to the figure used.

A bride is only one among the myriads of a king's subjects, though the most exalted of them in rank. If all were the bride, over whom would she and the king reign? Again, Rev. 21:12 will show Israel as associated with but not the same as the bride, and verse 24 of that chapter to 22:2 distinguishes the saved nations from the bride. None of us now appreciates fully what is in store.

But again, the school of teaching in question insists that all the saved of this age, without exception will certainly share this regal, bridal glory. That this is the present call, offer, and ideal of God is true. See Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 1:21,23; for God is calling us "into His kingdom and glory" (1Thess. 2:12), even "His eternal glory" (1Pet. 5:10), not to some creaturely glory. Such terms declare far more than forgiveness and the possession of eternal life, in which blessings all the saved share alike and

forever. But to share God's eternal glory is evidently far more and far higher than to partake in those initial mercies common to all the saved of all ages, without which indeed they would not be of the saved at all.

Yet it is too often overlooked that in no sphere does God *coerce* the subjects of His grace. He respects fully the gift of free will wherever He has granted this noble endowment. Hence the creature can "fall short of the grace of God" (Heb. 12:15). Let it be observed that:

a) It is God's desire (*thelo*, wish, longing, but not *fiat*) that all men should be saved. For this He has made provision in Christ Jesus, "Who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1Tim. 2:3-6). But not all are willing to be saved, and not all will be. **b)** It was the call of God that all who left Egypt with Moses should reach Canaan, and at the Red Sea the entrance of them all was celebrated in advance (Ex. 15:13-17). But only two of the adult men entered the land, **even though all were saved** (1 Cor. 10:1-6). **c)** It was the offer of God that all of that redeemed nation should be priests (Ex. 19:6). In fact, only one family had this honoured service (Ezek. 48:11). **d)** Of that family one branch secured the privilege in perpetuity on account of the faithfulness of its head (Num. 25:10-13); but... **e)** Of this family one branch, that of Eli, was deprived of the honour on account of unfaithfulness (1 Sam. 3:10-14). **f)** God would have gathered into safety all Jerusalem's children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they would not; and they had their own way to their undoing (Matt. 23:37-39).

Will it be affirmed that all of this has no lesson and warning for the heirs of the heavenly calling? Then were it the case that not all Scripture is written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10:11).

Because of this unvarying law, that God respects man's freedom of action, and holds each responsible for its use (**and otherwise how shall God judge man?**), it follows that the response of the heart of man is required to the offer of the heart of God, and without this response the privilege offered will not be secured. Every offer is open to all of the persons to whom it is made; it is realized by such only as those who embrace it; and moreover, it is "through faith and long-patience (*makrotbumia*)" that every boon promised is at last gained, in this age as in earlier times (Heb. 6:11-12). Hence arise the "its" and exhortations and warnings of the New Testament so very frequently addressed to believers and churches. It is greatly to be deplored that many parry the force of the mass of passages of

this order by transferring them to false professors, whereas they are so often plainly addressed to true believers, and sometimes to believers of quite noble quality, as for example, in Hebrews : see chs. 6:9-12; 10:32-36. We grieve for the responsibility they must carry at the judgment seat of Christ who have thus promoted laxity of life by encouraging believers to disregard the warnings God has multiplied.

4. *The Fitness of the Bride.* It was well indeed that nothing should lessen the effect upon the conscience of the treatment of the subject in this passage. The whole stress is laid upon the moral fitness of the bride for the grand occasion. “His wife hath **made herself ready**” for the union; “it was granted unto **her** that **she should** array herself.”

Her bridal attire is not that of the great harlot, purple and scarlet robes, glittering with gold, jewels, and pearls (Rev. 17:4), which did but conceal the hidden deformity and corruption.

The holy bride wears only fine linen, white and pure. Of old, such was the attire of the high priest when he entered annually into the Holy of Holies before the Presence (Lev. 16:4). That fine linen was spun by human hands (Ex. 35:25), and similarly the attire of the bride **is of her own making**: “the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev. 19:8).

There is a precision in the words of God corresponding exactly to the facts of things. The wife “*arrays herself*,” and yet it is “*given unto her*” to do this (it is her own act). If the Spirit of holiness had not made holiness possible; no member of the church could or would have done holy acts; but, though every holy deed is done by the grace of the Spirit, it is the saint who does them. It is God who works in us both to will and to work; but it is *we who must work out this salvation into a life of holy deeds* (Phil. 2:12,13); and if we grieve and quench the Spirit, and so frustrate the work of God within, then the fine linen will not be woven. And in no other attire will any one share in the bridal glory, though in the imputed righteousness every believer stands justified. But the pardon of a one-time rebel women is by no means the same as her becoming later the wife of her sovereign, nor does any necessity exist why the king should think of such an honour for her.

All this is illustrated in the history of Esther. From being a captive slave she is to be exalted to be queen. Everything of clothing and ornament that she needed was the gift of the king, for she had nothing suitable. But *she*

had *to put them on*, so as to approach the king, as it is written, “Esther put on her royal apparel” (Esther 5:1)

Eph. 5:25-27 is clear and weighty:

(1) “Christ also loved the church”: this is the divine origin of all her prospects.

(2) “and gave Himself up for her”: this is the amazing price that frees the slave-girl, or pardons the rebel, and by which the king acquires all rights in her. But though redemption has been effected once for all, she cannot pass straight from the slave market, or the condemned cell, to the royal palace and the throne. Much is required to fit her person for such total change of scenery and life; and so

(3) Christ purchased the church “that He might sanctify her,” might make her actually holy, even as she is already righteous by imputation. And this so indispensable work, He effects by “the laver [composed] of the water in the word”. Thus also Jesus took a basin, poured water thereunto, and proceeded to wash the feet of His followers, so as to impress heavily upon us that actual holiness is indispensable to fellowship with Him: “If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me” (John 13).

He did not say “in Me” that would have made final salvation to depend on daily states; but “with Me” as My companion and servant (I John 1:9).

The laver is here (Eph. 5) used as a picture of the Word of God: “water in the word.” The water (as always when a type) means the Spirit of God: “living water... this spoke He of the Spirit” (John 7:37-39).

Christ speaks to the redeemed believer: if obedience be at once rendered, the grace of the Spirit is at once experienced, making obedience possible this is the law of matters spiritual: “Go wash...he went, and came seeing”: “take up thy bed and walk”; and upon each obeying, doing at once what he could not do, the energy was given to do it. A father speaks to his boy about a disagreeable habit: if the boy gives heed, the word of the father cleanses that habit out of the boy’s life: if he disregards his father, he remains disfigured in character and life.

Justification is an initial benefit, granted once for all: sanctification is a lifelong process: the priest must wash his hands and his feet to the end of his course; and therefore;

Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,
All is accomplished, and the work is done:
Though with thy earliest dawn thou should'st begin it,
Scarce were it ended with thy setting sun.

This gracious and indispensable work in the believer is wrought by Christ to the church. Thus it is *given* unto her to become pure. But words must be obeyed or they remain inoperative, and thus “it is given unto her to *array herself*” by doing righteous acts directed by the Word of God.

All is of grace: but of grace used, not abused, of grace obeyed, not neglected. For the grace of God instructs us “to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present age,” and only so living are we truly “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”; for He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14). Therefore, *everyone that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure*’ (1 John 3:3).

(4) **Without blemish.** It is in view of the bridal day that Christ has loved, redeemed, and now is sanctifying the church, “in order that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

These terms, “spot, wrinkle, holy, without blemish” have reference to external appearance: the two former denote surface defects, the latter visible excellence. The last is a specially significant and priestly term.

The priest, too, had to be without physical defect, or he could not officiate in holy things. He was to keep himself scrupulously clean in walk and associations, and also he must be without blemish as to external form (Lev. 21). Now the persons pictured as a bride are also described as “priests unto God” (Rev. 1:6). Both figures demand the same moral condition: the one for priestly access and service, the other for intimate association with Him who “offered Himself without blemish unto God” (Heb. 9:14).

The standard is high, yet attainable by the Spirit through obedience to the Word. The histories of Joseph, Samuel, and Daniel are narrated at length and in detail. Each was surrounded with gross moral depravity, but God records nothing against them. This does not mean that they were actually

sinless ----only Christ was that; but it does mean that they walked before men without visible defilement and disfigurement of life. An animal to be dedicated to God, and accepted by Him, had to be without visible blemish, and sternly did the Holy One complain when blemished beasts were presented (Mal. 1:6ff.). And thus Paul wrote to believers in a wicked heathen city, “that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse heathen city,” (Phil. 2:12-16). It **IS** possible for the believer to “**keep himself unspotted from the world**” (Jas. 1:27), and he who thus walks in white garments here and now shall be permitted to array himself for fellowship with Christ as part of the bride at last (see Rev. 3:4-5 and consider 2 Cor. 7:1;11:2-3). It is for each to weave his own pure bridal attire, by the grace of God and solely to the praise of the glory of that grace. The Bride will thus be to the pleasure and honour of the Bridegroom.

The Marriage Feast. The union of Ahasuerus and Esther took place in the privacy of the royal palace: the wedding feast followed later (Esther 2:16-18). Thus here also (Rev. 19:9) there is simply an announcement of the honour of being one of the king’s guests: it is not stated that the marriage supper takes place at this precise moment. Inasmuch as it seems that the guests will include persons on earth when the Bridegroom returns here (Matt. 22:14; 25:1-13), it appears that the “feast” will take place on earth at the opening of the kingdom era. (See also Luke 22:18,30; Isaiah 25:6-9). Here, then, are three distinct ideas: (1) The guests are not the bride; (2) there is to be an interval between the “marriage” and the “feast”; (3) the latter is to be on earth.

Blessed are they who are guests, and unhappy are they who miss even this privilege, such as the guest without a wedding garment, or the foolish virgins, or the unfaithful steward (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Luke 16:1-14).

...All this is highly suggestive of the reality and variety that will mark those future days when heaven and earth will be conjoined, one Kingdom, in connexion with Him Who is Lord of *all!* It introduces a rich diversity which elevates the mind far beyond the fundamental but only initial distinction between saved and unsaved, which is the furthest that so many ever penetrate into the wondrous counsels of the Almighty.

Here is verily a fair field and no favour; yet “know ye that those running in a race *all* run, but *one* receives the prize: even so run that ye may attain” the prize (1Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-16).

Thus will be fulfilled those earlier intimations, given by John the Baptist and our Lord, of Christ becoming a Bridegroom (John 3:29; Matt. 9:15). The *Revelation* is rooted in the Gospels: its visions expand and complete the parables. *G.H. Lange*

BRIDE AND KINGDOM CONDITIONS

Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those [Christians] **who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.***

Since Kingdom rewards are *CONDITIONAL* to the deeds and good works that we do for Christ during our earthly lifetime (John 15:2-6; Gal. 6:7; Eph. 2:10; Col. 3:23-25; Rev. 22:12), there will be some Christians who will not attain to all of these Kingdom rewards or be part of the *BRIDE*. Study the following reward verses to learn these truths from God's Word.

1. Praise, honor and glory from God - 1 Peter 1:7
2. Those who have insight will shine brightly - Dan. 12:3
3. Those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars - Dan. 12:3
4. Dine at the banquet prepared by the Lord of hosts - Isa. 25:6
5. Recline at the table and be served by the Master - Luke 12:37
6. Honored by God - John 12:26; 1 Sam. 2:30
7. Honored before the angels of God - Luke 12:8; Rev. 3:5
8. Imperishable crown - 1 Cor. 9:25
9. Crown of righteousness - 2 Tim. 4:8
10. Crown of Life - James 1:12
11. Crown of Glory - 1 Peter 5:4
12. Crown of joy & exultation-those who you led to Christ - 1 Thess. 2:19
13. Eat from the tree of life - Rev. 2:7
14. Not hurt by the second death - Rev. 2:11
15. Receive hidden manna - Rev. 2:17
16. Receive a white stone with a new secret name - Rev. 2:17
17. Authority over the nations, rule with a rod of iron - Rev. 2:26,27
18. Receive the morning star - Rev. 2:28
19. Walk with the Lord in white linen - Rev. 3:4,5
20. Secured name in the book of life - Rev. 3:5
21. Become a pillar in the Temple of God and you won't go out - Rev. 3:12
22. Have the name of God, Christ's new name. The name of the Holy City,

New Jerusalem written upon you - Rev. 3:12

23. Dine with Christ - Rev. 3:20
24. Sit with Christ on His Throne - Rev. 3:21
25. Eternal weight of glory beyond comparison - 2 Cor. 4:17
26. Participation in 1000 year kingdom - 2 Peter 1:11, Matt. 5:1-12
27. Heir with Christ - Rom. 8:17
28. Comforted by God - Matt. 5:4
29. Satisfied by God - Matt. 5:6
30. Receive mercy from God at judgment seat of Christ - James 2:13; Matt. 5:7
31. See God - Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:16
32. Wedding gown, fine linen - Rev. 19:7,8
33. Marriage to the Lamb - 2 Cor. 11:2, Matt. 25:10-12
34. Return with Christ dressed in fine linen riding on a white horse - Rev. 19:14
35. Entrance into the Holy City, New Jerusalem - Rev. 21:27; Rev. 22:14
36. Rest - Heb.4:10-11
37. A better resurrection - Heb. 11:35
38. A mansion (a dwelling place) - John 14:2
39. Judge and reign with Christ - Matt. 19:28-29, 1 Cor. 6:1-8, 2 Tim. 2:12

Kingdom rewards are proportional to the quality of service done in **this life**. Good deeds done for Christ, e.g., ministering, discipling, winning souls, sharing sound doctrine, and obeying our authorities will be tested and rewarded accordingly. Even “careless words” will affect these rewards, Matt. 12:36. Being saved from the hell we deserve is not a reward; it is **free** through God’s grace!

CARNAL CONSEQUENCES

Is it possible to be a genuine Christian and to have few, if any, good works? The Bible teaches that true believers can:

- be carnal and act like unbelievers..... 1 Cor. 3:1-3
- be weak, sick, or die from sin ...Acts 5:1-11, 1 Cor. 11:30, 1 John. 5:16
- deny their Lord with cursing and swearing Matt. 26:74
- be involved in sin non-existent among unbelievers1 Cor. 5:1
- have all their works burned up and suffer loss1 Cor. 3:15
- be recompensed for wrong and bad done.....2 Cor. 5:10, Col. 3:25
- receive severe punishment from the Lord..... Heb. 6:4-8, 10:29-30, 12:6
- deny the faith, be worse than an unbeliever1Tim. 5:8
- become carnal and be disqualified.....1 Cor. 9:27
- lose their ministry and blessingAaron, Miriam, Moses, Eli, Saul
- practice continual idolatrySolomon, 1 Kings 11:4-11

SUFFERING ULTIMATE LOSS

The Bible teaches us in 1 Cor. 3:15 that carnal Christians will “**suffer loss**” at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But are we told what the ultimate loss will be? In Rev. 3:5 the Sardis believers are warned that those who do not “overcome” will have their name “erased from the book of life,” and will never be able to come into the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21:27. Both Old and New Testament saints whose names have been “erased” will be living “outside” the city, Rev. 22:15. They cannot have a nice place in the country with the kings of the earth, or a place in the city with the body of Christ, the Bride, because of their disobedient, carnal lifestyle. They have suffered the ultimate loss of rewards, Rev. 22:12-15.

TORMENTED WITH ULTIMATE AGONY

Those who refuse to seek the truth, or accept it when presented to them from the Bible, have never had their names in the book of life, Rev. 13:8, and 17:8. They may reject the knowledge of an unseen Creator, or reject that they have violated His laws and deserve to be punished in flames forever. Jesus is that Creator who became a man, to suffer on the cross and in hell in their place. The “free gift” of salvation is only received by those who know that they will NEVER be good enough to go to heaven. Those who have rejected their need of a Savior, or have polluted His suffering by the addition of sacraments or good works, are nowhere to be found on the new earth, but are in a place of “torment forever and ever,” called “the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” Rev. 14:11, 19:14-15, 21:8.

EXPERIENCING ULTIMATE JOY

Revelation 22:12-14 *“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My **reward** is with Me, to render to every man **according to what he has done**. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes [do His commandments, KJV], so that they may have **the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.**”*

In Rev. 22:14 we see the third group of people, obedient, born- again believers who still have their name in the book of life. By their faithful works they have earned “the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city,” along with other rewards. You may want to review the kingdom rewards listed earlier in this booklet.

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he [Christian] who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. (Col. 3:23-25).

If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he (the Christian) shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:14-15).

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