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The Preparation of the Bride.

Psalms. 45: 10-15 and Rev. 19: 7, 8.

(A Sermon by Chas. Ballard)

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Rev. 19: 7, 8.

I want in this sermon to notice the work the bride of Christ will have to do before she is ready to enter into the marriage relation with her husband.

In connection with this preparation of the bride I wish to call your attention to the 45th Psalm, from the 10th to the 15th verses inclusive.

"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.

"And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor.

"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; the virgins, her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

"With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace."

The oriental customs of marrying were different from the customs of today in our land. Here the groom and the bride make all arrangements themselves, although out of courtesy they usually consult the parents on both sides, but the arrangements between the interested parties usually stand, even though the parents object.

But not so in the countries of the eastern hemisphere in Bible times.

1st. The father of the groom or some one representing him, sees the father of the bride and makes all the necessary arrangements. Sometimes even against the wishes of the bride, although usually she was consulted in the matter.

2nd. The contracting parties were not permitted to see each other when the arrangements were made nor until they were actually united in marriage.

3rd. They were permitted to have a certain amount of communication by way of correspondence, letters passing between the two.

4th. In connection with the wedding, if either of the parties should manifest any unfaithfulness to the spousal which had been made by the parents, they could be treated as though they had actually violated the marriage law and would be subjected to the restrictions of a divorce as though they had actually been married.

5th. After the espousal for a period of us ally about one year, if they proved faithful and the conditions were satisfactory amidst great rejoicing the proposed bridegroom came to the home of his love one, received her to himself, escorted her with all the dignity appropriate to his station in life to his own home, and there in a great feast called a marriage supper, she was inducted into all the privileges of union with her lawful husband.

These oriental customs were quite typical of the present arrangement for the selection of the greatest and most honored bride the world ever has or ever will know anything about.

1st. It was not Jesus who said he wanted to be married. It was not the church who said she wanted to enter the marriage relation. Jesus came to do the Father's will. He came to give himself a ransom for everyone to be testified in due time. It was not for the purpose of selecting a few out of earth's billions of people to take them to heaven while all the rest were to be destroyed. Man at one time was perfect. God pronounced him very good. But man disobeyed God and brought

upon himself condemnation and death.

The earth was made to be inhabited. It was created with all the elements necessary to sustain the lives of all the people that God might see fit to place here. And it was evidently the plan of God to have the people to fill the earth for the first command he gave to Adam was for him to be fruitful, multiply, and fill up the earth.

He was not created for heaven nor any intimation given him that at any future time he might be exalted from his earthly nature to a spirit being to dwell in heaven.

And when Adam disobeyed God he lost his perfection, and as God told him beforehand that the penalty for disobeying him would be death, Adam knew when he ate of the forbidden fruit that he was under the condemnation of God and that a death sentence was hanging over his head and that ultimately the sentence would be carried into effect. And he also knew that all of his descendants would be under that death sentence. And that death was not simply a momentary or a transient affair but it was to be an eternal blotting out of existence so far as anything he could do to prevent it. And there was no promise of any deliverance from that condition at any future time, except the mysterious promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, and Adam is certainly excusable for not understanding that, enigmatical promise, when, even in our day, there is not one out of a thousand that has the faintest conception of what it means.

The world then, if it was filled at all would be filled with men and women who were under the death sentence and far from perfect.

Jesus said "I will go and redeem them from the grave, and will purchase them and they will be mine. And I will restore them to the perfection they lost when Adam transgressed God's law. They shall every one be brought to such a condition that my Father will once more pronounce them VERY good."

But we have no intimation that God promised him a bride from the restored race at the time the arrangement was made between them that Jesus should undertake the task of redeeming the human race from oblivion.

But God saw fit to offer the prize of the high calling to the spirit nature and immortality to one hundred and forty-four thousand souls, on conditions. This number is to constitute the bride of Christ. So the Father, in harmony with oriental customs, selects the bride for his son.

It isn't compulsory upon any one to make a consecration of himself to God and run for membership in the bride class. No body will be compelled to marry God's son unless he wants to. God has graciously set apart one hundred and forty-four thousand crowns for an equal number of the redeemed race, and the crowns will be given to the ones who comply with the conditions. And that number will be found to wear the crowns.

The second point of the simile is, that the bride and groom are not to look upon each other's faces until the marriage takes place. Hence those who are running for the prize are running simply by faith. There are exceeding gracious promises held out to induce the bride class to accept of the offer, but the things offered are so superior to our human experience that we

can have no adequate conception of what is in store for those who succeed in making their calling and election sure.

The home of the bride is to be heaven, and Mrs Hemans describes it vividly in her poem of the "Better Land."

"Eye hath not seen it my gentle boy!

Ear hath not heard its sweet songs of joy;

Dreams cannot picture a world so fair;

Sorrow and death may not enter there;

Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,

Beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb;

It is there, it is there, my child."

If the human mind could thoroughly comprehend what is offered them, and the advantages that would accrue, there are none but would enter the race with all their strength and mind, but they no more comprehend the blessings promised them, than they fear the orthodox hell of the nominal church.

It is true the preachers tell the people about the glories of heaven, but how many really care anything about it? The things of this world are more to them than all the glories of heaven. They realize that they have to die, and realizing that, they have hopes of reaching heaven after they are through with this earth, and many of them try to conform their lives to consistency with that hope, but if they were put to the test, and what they considered a real, bonafide proposition were made by some power that had the authority to grant the wishes of men, that they could live here on the earth in happiness eternally, or they could go to heaven and spend eternity there, I wonder how many would make any change. My own idea is that there would be very few whose faith would be sufficient to cause them to change from the earthly to the spiritual nature. But, my dear reader, if you are ever fortunate enough to reach the goal that the bride of Christ will have to reach, you will have to give up earth and earthly privileges, not simply from necessity but from choice.

The espoused virgin must walk by faith until the hour of the marriage arrives.

3rd. The oriental bride and groom were allowed the privilege of corresponding with one another. So it is with the heavenly groom and bride. Many letters have been given to the prospective bride to cheer her during the years of preparation, and to guide her in the way she should go, and steady her feet as she goes over the rough and slippery paces. She is permitted to commune with her beloved by faith, and while she cannot see his face, yet he has sent the Holy Spirit to guide her into all truth, so she is not desolate nor forsaken. With the Bible as a lamp to her feet and a light to her path, and the Holy Spirit to lead her and help her, she is able to fight a good fight, and to run with patience the race set before her.

4th. During the period of espousal, if either party should manifest any unfaithfulness, they could be treated as if they had actually broken the marriage vow, and would be subject to a divorce the same as if they had actually been married.

It is so in the case of our Lord and his espoused bride. There is no danger of our Lord being unfaithful. He was tried, thoroughly tested, and he stood the examination. So if there is any

unfaithfulness manifested it will be on the part of the prospective bride.

Of course Satan will do all in his power to prevent the bride from making herself ready. There will be worldly allurements, afflictions to torment, and doubts to be overcome, and in these last days it may be that holding membership in the church in which you were converted will cause you to lose your crown. It certainly will, if your eyes are opened to the fact that all the different denominations of Christendom help to make up the mass called "Babylon" in the Scriptures, and if your ears hear the call "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues," and you close your eyes, and stop your ears, and continue to sanction the errors taught in the different creeds, it will be a test of your loyalty to God, whether you will give up the man-made creeds and win the crown, or hold onto them and lose all.

I will notice the fifth condition later.

During this betrothal period, the bride is to make herself ready. There are lessons to learn. She is called to be a queen, and she must learn how to govern those she is called on to rule, and she may need years of practice on herself before she will ever be fitted for such a position.

A queen on her throne is to possess dignity and the material of which Christ will claim his bride, many at least, are any thing but dignified and from a worldly standpoint the church will need considerable schooling before she will be able to conduct herself in a queenly manner,

Remember, that all who are in the race at all are there because they have been called of God. And what God saw in us to cause him to select us, (for I take it for granted that all my readers have entered the race and are candidates for crowns of glory) is beyond our comprehension.

There are thousands of people whose names are on the books of the different churches, who are not in the race at all, and what is more, they do not deceive themselves by thinking they are even trying to win a crown in heaven, although their churches may blind their eyes to such an extent that they try to believe they are really Christians.

Besides learning the lessons that she needs in preparing herself for her queenly position, and attaining the dignity necessary for the bride of the creator of the universe, she has her wedding dress to make.

The material is furnished her. It is a gift from the groom. It is represented as being made of fine linen, and as our text tells us, "the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." We are not righteous, no, not one of us, and therefore we have to throw over us the robe of Christ's righteousness, so that our imperfections are hidden even from God's eyes. It is certainly a fortunate thing for us that we have the robe of Christ's righteousness to throw over us for we have none of our own, and it would be very unbecoming of us, as well as disastrous, to appear before our God in our naked condition. But Christ has graciously provided the material with which we are to make our wedding dress, and now it is our business to make and beautify it, but before we begin work on it we want to notice some of the preliminary steps to be taken.

We will confer with the Psalm (45th) quoted at the beginning of this address.

(Continued next week.)

Mrs Ida Halsey's The r and Miss nized We parsonag tor of the T. P. I Saturday morning. J W O chased a moved to Monday.

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