

Is Christ's Bride Ready?

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Revelation 19:7-9

“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. 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. 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.” KJV

The true church of Jesus Christ anxiously awaits His return as a bride awaits her groom's appearance. The marriage supper of the Lamb is going to be a wonderful experience to those who endure to the end. Yet, in the post-modern church there are many who have not made themselves ready as spoken in this opening text; their garments are stained with the flesh, and their hearts are unrepentant. It is my desire this morning to take a few moments to examine three areas mentioned in the Revelation whereby the modern church is tainted.

It is imperative that you examine your hearts as I minister these three anomalies according to the Scriptures and see if your heart is indeed touch by their influence. It may be possible that there are those among us today that have not made themselves ready, and the Holy Spirit is yearning to convict your heart of indwelling sin; to trouble the waters of your soul unto the healing of these inordinate passions.

Remember, the Holy Spirit did not give this message to the Pastor down the road, no, He has given it unto us here locally and those who by providence listen to this message abroad on the internet. Now, I am going to mention three areas whereby the strength of sin is asserting its power and influence in the modern church; possibly here. It is important that we note, these sins have not been identified by your Pastor, but by the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Word of God.

- I. Failure to recognize our innate wickedness
- II. Allowing our first love to become tainted by worldly involvements
- III. Cultivating an appetite for heretical doctrines

I. Failure to recognize our innate wickedness

Revelation 3:17

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” KJV

Of course we know our Lord is addressing the seven churches mentioned in the beginning chapters of the Revelation as a demonstration of His love. As many as He loves He rebukes and chastens. (Rev. 3:19) In

His address, He illuminates indwelling sin and rebukes it in divine love. It is important that we understand that these are but ensamples for us, lest we too should fall after their folly and example.

The church of Laodicea had several sins harbored amongst them, but one of them stands out as a glowing ember in our present generation. It is the church that has forgotten that she is inherently wicked, and boasts of a righteousness that is not in her possession. Today we have mindsets in modern Christendom that mirrors what we see here in Revelation. It is the mindset that boasts of righteousness while forgetting whose righteousness we claim. It is not the righteousness of Christ which is imputed by faith, but a righteousness that is self-ascribed by the works of pious activity.

This righteousness is benign and not active, for it is self-wrought and self-centered. Also, we must understand, this imputed righteousness, the true imputed righteousness of Christ, stands together as the Christian is wholly mindful of his innate wickedness, and the folly of his own heart. The righteousness of Christ is only valued when it is experienced through the realities of our own wicked hearts and what we truly deserve.

This righteousness is received by faith, but it is given by grace. It is truly an unmerited imputation. We wholly deserve the punishment and wrath of God because of who we are; sinful and wicked beings. Nonetheless, by faith, God blesses us with what we do not deserve and that is a righteousness that wholly belongs to His Son.

But this is not the righteousness mentioned here in this passage. This is the failure to recognize the evils and darkness of our hearts while claiming a righteousness that we do not value. This is a church, a religious assembly, even a belief system, that celebrates a righteousness without identifying inward unrighteousness – and therefore the system is amiss.

Laodicea saw herself as rich, increased with goods, having need of nothing. They did not know that they were grievously wicked in the eyes of God, and their celebration of righteousness was in vain. They did not identify their innate wickedness, just as many today. There is today a mood that exists, especially in certain doctrinal circles, that negates the realities of personal depravity. It is a system that refutes the importance of understanding the depths of our innate depravity.

This system teaches its followers that they are as righteous as Jesus Christ and acceptable in the eyes of God. These depraved and deceived followers live their lives in an unrighteous righteousness that is amiss at the root level. Their profession is that they are righteous and holy, but their motives are corrupt, being lovers of temporal things and not lovers of God.

II. Allowing our first love to become tainted by worldly involvements

Revelation 2:4

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” KJV

It is human nature to cling to one thing at a time. We rarely leave a thing until another thing comes along that we begin to value more than the thing we have in our possession. We value our car until we set our affections upon another that we begin to value more than our own, so we work our magic until we let go of what we have to lay hold of what we desire more.

This is the case with Ephesus and it has a message for those who are holding fast to Christ's Name in the modern church. There is a mood that has crept into the hearts of church going folks that professes Christ without loving Christ. Their mouths are committed to their confession, but their hearts are committed abroad. They have become lovers of this present world.

As our Lord addressed:

Mark 4:18-19

“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.” KJV

These are those who never forsake their identification with Christ, only their love for Him. This is a fundamental wrong! The heart begins to depart but the mouth never does; they are lovers of this present world – but their deceived hearts never allow their profession to change allegiances. They practice and profess two different things.

These are church members that labor day and night for the mammon that provides earthly things, but in the quest, we abandon the Lord Jesus by practice, but not by profession. We still sing songs, raise hands, carry Bibles, and even quote spiritual themes on facebook, but our hearts are committed to the pursuit of possessions, monetary assets, and physical things that make this temporal life more pleasant and comfortable.

With the increase of labors for possessions, come less and less desires to honor and love the One Whom has begotten us by His blood. Again, the deception is that our minds are wholly unaware of the change of allegiance. We yet go to church, carry our Bibles, and quote scriptures; yet our hearts are more fond of the things of this world that are pleasant, that tend to our comfort and ease.

We spend more and more time laying up for ourselves, thereby robbing our Lord of that which He has purchased. Heaven is no longer a passion, but the things of this temporal life, hobbies, possessions, fashion, social networks, entertainment, and friends now hold our heart in bondage, all while we lift our hands in song to an offended God that does not hear the viols of our songs.

Amos 5:23

“Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.” KJV

III. Cultivating an appetite for heretical doctrines

Revelation 2:14-15

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.” KJV

This is a rebuke for those amongst the church of Pergamos that held-fast to doctrines of devils while mingling it with a profession of faith. There were those amongst the church that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which was a doctrine that promoted indulgence. The doctrine of Balaam is a doctrine that centers around prosperity. Do you think this has plagued our modern church? If you don't see it, you are blind my friend.

These had a profession of Christ, but their doctrines were tainted to suit their desires. Their wicked hearts were indulgent, and their motives were perverse. They miscontextualized passages from the Bible to endorse their perverted beliefs. Their hearts were held in the chains of pleasure and prosperity, while their profession seemed to be free as they did indeed profess Christ. Yet, their Christ is another Christ, and not the Holy Son of God who requires all of His followers to abandon all to follow Him.

This is the belief that you can have Christ and this present world too. It is a doctrinal tenant that correlates mammon with righteousness. Moreover, it identifies righteousness by financial prosperity, instead of faith alone in Jesus Christ. This system teaches the reward of righteousness is monetary, and without this effect, your faith is faulty.

This doctrine emphasizes your "best life now" but does not prepare the heart for a Kingdom that is built upon righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It laces together New-Testament redemption with the lusts of this present world. It is a mingling of the holy and the profane. It projects the holy Name of Jesus as a means to gratify and indulge sinful and innate desires whereas the Bible teaches us that these desires must be mortified by the Spirit of God, and nailed to the Cross of Jesus Christ.

It is a Jesus without a Cross, and a Christianity without sacrifice. It is Christianity that adds more to the corrupt heart of man; not Christianity that requires the man's life and heart. It is a belief that God is the servant of man, not man the servant of God.

This is the belief that the pleasure and well-being of man is the chief end of mankind, not the biblical revelation of God's glory to be mankind's chief end. Yet, the profession may be much akin to true biblical Christianity – but the heart of it is strangely amiss.

In this new breed of Christianity (that is no Christianity) historical and biblical doctrines are not valued, nor emphasized. In many evangelical circles, doctrinal truth is all but extinct. Those in the pew are wholly unfamiliar with the sacred doctrines of the faith. Hence, they are tossed to and fro, thrown about by every wind of false doctrine – chasing every current fad that leads to nowhere.

Much of this disorder is being taught by false pastors that are hirelings and not shepherds. They do not feed the sheep; but bleed them. They rob their poor congregations of their hard earned money while they sit in the seat of ease – making a living from the hard labors of other men. They drive BMW's and wear Gucci suits, they live in million dollar homes, and their doctrine justifies their extravagance; but God will judge them for it.

This system takes advantage of the greed that is inherently in the unregenerate to exploit them as merchandise. The doctrine is greatly coveted simply because the god of mammon and prosperity is preeminent. Its drawing power is tremendous, and its followers vast. Yet, it is the doctrine of Balaam; the god of prosperity and wealth.

This system is so powerful and prominent today, that if you speak against its leaders, it is as if you are speaking against God Himself. Brethren, run from them, run away for your life is at risk. Denounce these heretics, flee from their doctrine; put it to death at once for God's judgment is stored up against it and its fate is that of damnation.

Oh beloved, the true bride of Jesus Christ is beautifying herself with truth and obedience in this hour. Her adornment is that of righteousness, commitment, sacrifice, and humility. She hungers after Truth, and is in love with His divine persons.

Esther 2:12-14

“Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.” NKJV

We are truly in the dispensation of preparation. The Holy Spirit is at work, illuminating our maladies, sanctifying our deficiencies, purifying our sins, that we might be a chaste virgin, presentable to Christ. Hearing Truth, obeying Truth, and following Christ by His Spirit is the chief desire of our hearts. It is the only way that we will be ready at His beckoning cry.