

Proverbs 31 And The Wife Of Christ

An Introduction

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As Ronny mentioned, the Feast of Tabernacles was about a month ago. This year during God's holy Feast of Tabernacles and on the Eighth Day, especially on that day, the messages that God inspired across the Feast all pointed first and foremost to Jesus Christ Himself and the different aspects of His work to make us just like Him, as Bill even just mentioned, through sacrifice.

Within all those messages, God inspired a carefully woven single theme of Christ's work and our limited but necessary participation in that work as He is moving all towards the perfection of all in all for the glory of the Father. As Richard noted on the Eighth Day, our relationship with Christ right now should be so close that we even share the same rights and privileges as He does, although yet limited in this flesh. We complete Him and He completes us. Even though He completes us individually and as a group to a much greater degree than on the other way around, He completes us.

This is all within God's carefully designed plan for all of mankind. This is all in accord with God's perfect work to make us all in His image, according to His likeness. However, we can never make this about ourselves, but about God's plan and purpose to expand His Family. They will always be subject to His awesome sovereign authority.

One of the themes that came to the fore for me especially, is the most intimate relationship which the bride of Christ will have with Christ for eternity. To mankind, God has clearly given us a type of this relationship in the marriage of the husband and the wife, and as it is intended, to perfectly complement one another. While the first woman, Eve, was created from the first man, Adam, and thus shared completely in his life, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the second woman, the wife of Christ, shares completely in

the life of Christ as an intrinsic part of God's work. It therefore is our privileged responsibility for those called into this most intimate relationship with Christ now to spend a lifetime learning to live as Christ lives.

The wife of Christ absolutely must be doing things that complement God's plan to create man in His image and likeness. Please note there are two words in the English language that are spelled exactly the same except for one letter: complement with an E and compliment with an I. However, they both define very important parts of the essential nature of the wife of Christ. Complement with an E is something that completes or brings to perfection. Compliment with an I is an expression of praise or admiration. Both express the work that we are to be doing now in this lifetime of preparation for the return of Jesus Christ and the responsibilities that go with the wife of Christ.

Toward the end of the two sermons I gave on the bride of Christ at the Feast this year, I mentioned what I considered the outline that should be carefully studied as a guideline for all who have been called into this vital part of God's plan, as He is in the process of creating all men in His image, according to His likeness. So God-willing, over the next few sermons that I have the opportunity to give, we are going to spend a good deal of time examining Proverbs 31:10-31, starting today with the very essence of the perfected bride of Christ.

First, I would like us to go back to a scripture that contains the broad direction that Christ expects for those whom He has set apart to serve in this specific assignment within His incredible plan of outgoing concern for all mankind right now within this exceptionally difficult world in which we live. We will be picking it up in Revelation 19. Revelation 19 follows the short description of Babylon's final fall in Revelation 18.

Revelation 19:1-3 After these things [the fall of Babylon and the Satan's world] I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!"

Revelation 19:6-9 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

I think it may be good to recognize the harlot, Babylon, that has now been destroyed, as the zeitgeist of Satan and this world, totally driven by enmity against God. Because it is within this chaotic mess that God is working everything toward the end that He is determined from before the foundations of the earth. It is from within this system that God is putting all the pieces together to create His perfect Family, a Family He can totally trust to live as He lives, productively with outgoing concern for others in all things.

It is within this Babylon that most of mankind lives, battling among themselves, driven by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Yet it is within this mess that the wife of Christ is making herself ready, living under the sovereign direction of the Word of God within the chaos around us.

Now I would like to read these verses in Revelation 19 from the Amplified Bible that brings additional description of God's judgment and more importantly, of the impending joy of all for a job well done.

Revelation 19:1-2 (AMPC) After this I heard what sounded like a mighty shout of a great crowd in heaven, exclaiming, Hallelujah (praise the Lord!); Salvation and glory (splendor and majesty) and power (dominion and authority) [belong] to our God! Because His judgments (His condemnation and punishment, His sentences of doom) are true and sound and just and upright. He has judged (convicted, pronounced sentence, and doomed) the great and notorious harlot (idolatress) who corrupted and demoralized and

poisoned the earth with her lewdness and adultery (idolatry). And He has avenged (visited on her the penalty for) the blood of His servants at her hand.

Revelation 19:7-9 (AMPC) Let us rejoice and shout for joy [exulting and triumphant]! Let us celebrate and ascribe to Him glory and honor, for the marriage of the Lamb [at last] has come, and His bride has prepared herself. She has been permitted to dress in fine (radiant) linen, dazzling in white—for the fine linen is (signifies, represents) the righteousness (the upright, just, and godly living, deeds and conduct, and right standing with God) of the saints (God's holy people). Then [the angel] said to me, Write this down: Blessed (happy, to be envied) are those who are summoned (invited, called) to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me [further], These are the true words (the genuine and exact declarations) of God.

Note the preparation of the bride was accomplished through living as Jesus Christ does in righteousness. The bride is allowed to dress in the dazzling clothing of righteousness, as the Amplified noted in Revelation 19:8. The prepared, upright, just, and godly living in deeds and conduct and right standing with God. You may remember this in line with what I cited from President Reagan's commencement address to the Citadel, class of 1993, when he said,

For you see, the character that takes command in moments of crucial choices has already been determined. It has been determined by a thousand other choices made earlier, seemingly unimportant moments. It has been determined by all the little choices of the years past, by all those times when the voice of conscience was at war with the voice of temptation, whispering the lie that it really doesn't matter. It has been determined by all the day to day decisions made when life seemed easy and crisis seemed far away. The decisions that piece by piece, bit by bit developed habits of discipline or of laziness, habits of self-sacrifice [as Bill just said], or of self-indulgence, habits of duty and honor and integrity or dishonor and shame. Because when life does get tough and crisis is undeniably at hand, when we must in an instant look

inward for the strength of character to see us through, we will find nothing inside ourselves that we have not already put there.

As I mentioned in that last sermon I gave at the Feast, within this world that is always driven according to the zeitgeist of Babylon, the wife of Christ must be revealed at His return. She has the privilege and responsibility *now* to walk not yoked with this world's mindset of chaos and confusion, but in unity with Him prepared right now within the truth of God's Word in upright, just, and goodly living, deeds, and conduct and right standing with God.

These are the things that are already put in place to create the absolutely perfectly prepared helpmate of Christ, and within His Word, God has faithfully given us the table of contents for the wife of Christ's instruction manual, a table of contents that we can spend a lifetime expanding in the details we glean from this chapter.

So let us turn to the wife of Christ's preparation manual, to Proverbs 31, and we are going to read all the way from verse 10 through the end of the chapter. But I want us to consider this beyond what we normally would consider the *physical* ideal wife. I would like us to think about all these words with ourselves in mind regarding what the wife of Christ, who has made herself ready, is to be doing right now.

Proverbs 31:10-18 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it; and from her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night.

Consider that *night*, we will get into this in the next couple of sermons. But she is working in the time of night before the beautiful light of God is always the present.

Proverbs 31:19-31 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hands to the spindle. She extends her hands to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates [her husband being Christ, who sits in the gates of judgment], when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, let her own works praise her in the gates.

As we develop what we can learn from this over the next few sermons, we will be looking at the themes interwoven in these verses regarding the work and character lessons that we should be learning right now as God prepares each one of us for our very specific responsibilities that will be part of our own work and character for eternity in the Family of God. But for today, we are just going to focus on the all-important introduction to this manual of preparation as it appears in verses 10 through 12. An introduction to any book prepares the reader for what lies ahead in the context of the book. Here in Proverbs 31:10-12, we have both a question and a very broad answer to what the rest of the manual begins to expand regarding the perfected wife of Christ.

Proverbs 31:10-12 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

This introduction begins with the first hint we have that the remainder of the chapter is laying out a number of things for our consideration. Verse 10 begins with a question that does not anticipate a direct answer. Who can find

a virtuous woman? is grammatically an anthesis. It is a rhetorical question, a question not looking for information or a direct answer, as I said. Rather, it is a question posed in expectation of careful consideration concerning details of the object of the question.

Please put a marker there in Proverbs 31, and we will turn to a couple of examples of this kind of grammatical question. So please turn with me first to Genesis the 13th chapter. We will be coming into the middle of a situation with Abraham and with Lot.

Genesis 13:7-11 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was very well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go towards Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

Abraham poses a rhetorical question that implies careful consideration from Lot regarding all the various aspects of the land in front of them both.

Now please turn with me to Psalm 35 for another good example of someone who asked this same kind of question of himself for consideration, meditation in awe. We will start in verse 1. This is a psalm of David.

Psalm 35:1-3 Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. Also draw out the spear, and stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."

David goes on to look to God in faith for what only God can do to save him from his enemies. Down in verse 7:

Psalm 35:7-10 For without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit, which they have dug without cause for my life. Let destruction come upon them unexpectedly, and let his net that he has hidden catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall. And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation. All my bones shall say, "Lord, who is like You, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?"

The psalm then goes on, with David considering what only God could do to his enemies and rescue him while he was in the midst of the trials that only our great God could resolve. It gave him pause to consider his trials and how God would choose to resolve them according to His Word, ultimately ending with David's concluding statement. And there in verse 28, where David said,

Psalm 35:28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long.

The point is that these were questions that evoked careful thinking regarding what was already apparent and how to deal with it. In these two examples, one man, Lot, only saw the physical and what would please him. The other man, David, saw beyond the physical and what would give him the ability to please God, speaking of His righteousness, praising Him all day long. Remember what I said about complement E and compliment I. Pieces of the responsibilities of us forever: to complete and to praise.

With this in mind, let us go back to Proverbs 31, verse 10, and what God is telling us within this all-important 3-verse introduction regarding what we will be examining in a bit greater detail later from verses 13 through 31 in other sermons. Just exactly what does God think of this wife of Christ, if you will, as implied from the rhetorical question: Who can find a virtuous woman?

In verse 10, the word virtuous is the Hebrew word *chayil*. This word carries with it the basic idea of strength, force, influence, worthiness, excellence. It indicates someone who is trustworthy and consistently at work with outgoing concern for others in excellence. However, we need to add an important

piece to this, as it is often found within God's Word. And that is, God Himself is the source of this strength. We need to see a couple examples of this.

Please turn with me now back again towards the other end of the Book, towards here to II Samuel chapter 22, verses 31 through 34.

II Samuel 22:31-34 As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places.

In verse 33, that word strength is the same word, *chayil*. David declares all strength, as well as everything good that virtuous represents comes from God.

Now please turn with me to Habakkuk, just before Zephaniah there. As Martin Collins taught us in his 2016 four-part series on the book of Habakkuk, he lived in times very similar to the time of chaos and confusion in which we live.

The prophet struggled throughout the book to make sense of the crazy life around him and why God would allow things to go on the way they were. Yet finally, at the end of the book, with an eye toward God's perfect sovereignty, Habakkuk ends with these words of absolute faith.

Habakkuk 3:1-19 Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me to walk on my high hills.

The Lord is my *chayil*. He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me to walk in my high hills. The virtuous wife's strength is from God to be used in learning to live as He lives forever.

Back to Proverbs 31, verse 10.

Proverbs 31:10 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.

This is what we need to keep in mind from God's introduction to the preparation manual for the wife of Christ. He is the Source of all that makes up the virtue of the wife of Christ, even though it is the wife's responsibility to faithfully live within the virtue that then becomes her own. We can expand on this a little bit. I would like to read this same verse from the Amplified because it adds something that seems to be overlooked in the King James version.

Proverbs 31:10 (AMP) An excellent woman [one who is spiritual, capable, intelligent, and virtuous], who is he who can find her? Her value is more precious than jewels and her worth is far above rubies or pearls.

What I was looking for us to catch was the last sentence and specifically the last word in the sentence as translated in Amplified. "Her value is more precious than jewels and her worth is far above rubies or pearls." The King James limits the translation to rubies, but as described in *Strong's*, the Hebrew word *panîn*, the Jews translated ruby. Actually it was probably a pearl.

The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary even puts it this way, "A wife such as she ought to be is a rare treasure, a good, excelling all earthly possessions. A virtuous woman who can find her? She stands far above pearls in her worth." We can now tie this into Jesus Christ's parable as recorded in Matthew 13: 45. You do not have to turn there, I will just read it.

Matthew 13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went out and sold all that he had and bought it."

The wife who is using God-given strength in everything she does represents the magnificent jewel that is being developed within this chaotic world.

Christ already saw the fullness of the beautiful pearl that was to be developed within the trials and tribulations of this world. A beautiful pearl that was being developed by those continuing to live faithfully by every word of God within this pressure. A beautiful pearl that He paid the ultimate cost for in His sacrifice, as Bill said. Our focus is often too limited on the physical, as Lot's was. But God fully expects our focus to be the same as David's on what we will become through the God-given strength that comes only from Him, so we can begin living as parts of His righteous work, always giving Him praise.

Please hold your finger again there in Proverbs 31 and turn with me back to Ephesians the 5th chapter, verse 22.

Ephesians 5:22-27 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her [for that beautiful pearl], that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

That, brethren, includes every member of that church. Back now please a couple chapters to chapter 2 in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:4-10 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now please turn with me over to II Peter 1, verse 2:

II Peter 1:2-4 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Virtue here is the Greek word *arete*. It means excellent, intrinsic, or attributed, praise, virtue, moral excellency, perfection, goodness of action. God looks at us as partakers of Christ's own glory, moral excellency, and goodness of action. It is all through Him, and this is what God sees in the virtuous wife of great price, Christ's own glory and excellence.

Now please, I hope you have kept a marker there in Proverbs 31, in verse 10 again:

Proverbs 31:10-12 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies or pearls. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

I had titled this sermon, "Proverbs 31 and the Wife of Christ, an Introduction." But I think it also serves as the preface to verses 13 through 31. English grammar and composition are certainly not my strong suit, but are left to Doctor Maas or Richard. But from what I understand about nonfiction literature, the preface gives the author the opportunity to introduce himself to the readers and explain to them why they should hear what he has to say.

He gives some insight into his credibility, what you are about to read, and why it is important. Well, the introduction explains what the book is about by touching on the major themes. As one fellow noted that I looked up, "The

introduction lets your readers get a peek at what they are going to get out of reading your book." He noted, "What's in it for them? Here is where you make your case."

It seems to me in these three verses God fills the bill with both a preface and an introduction to what we are going to explore in the next 28 verses in the coming sermons. God establishes that it is He who provides the strength of purpose and character for the one He is preparing for perfect harmony with Christ. It is He that is in the process of making those who He already sees as His precious and finished jewels that will perfectly complement Christ—with an E and with an I—in unity and in praise.

It is He who is introducing us to the perfected work and character of the wife of Christ who does good and not evil all the days of her life. God-willing, we are going to expand in the next sermon on what God is telling us that makes the excellent wife of Christ more valuable than any and every jewel. We will see what God expects us to be working on right now as those who Christ can safely trust from His heart to do good and not evil through eternity.

For a closing scripture, please turn with me again to the epistles of Peter, and this time we are going to go to I Peter, the third chapter. And this time we will be thinking: these are His words to physical husbands and wives, but I think we need to be thinking about them because of what it says at the end of what I read.

I Peter 3:1-12 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to

the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Brethren, the virtuous, trustworthy wife of Christ, relying on the excellency and strength that only comes from God, will only be those who have already learned faithfully, have been following the preparation manual of the wife of Christ that God has set before us to do the work and build the character of the virtuous wife that only does good to complement, with an E and compliment with an I, Christ for eternity.