**“BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM”**

**MATT. 25:6**

Ever since Jesus told his disciples that he must go away, but would return again (John 14:3 “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may also be.”)

The true disciples have held on to this promise made to us by Jesus. It is a personal promise, to forever be with him, where he is!

Very often Br. Russell referred to Jesus’ offices or titles at this second advent in three expressions: *BRIDEGROOM, REAPER AND KING.*  (i.e. C-126, B-247, etc.).

At both the first and second advents Jesus presented himself as such. He is a Reaper or Chief Reaper of the both the nominal Jewish House at the First advent and again at the Harvest of the nominal Spiritual House at his Second advent. And if we are being faithful, we too will be co-reapers with him.

He was the King by the close of his First advent as demonstrated in his kingly entrance to Jerusalem at his final week on earth, and he returns as a king, to reclaim that which is rightly his, his first kingly action in 1878 with the resurrection of the sleeping Body members – the saints who had died or fallen asleep in death before his return. His Kingdom growing in strength over time until he shall rule over all in righteousness.

But today our special attention is this title “BRIDEGROOM”. Yes, he presented himself as the future Bridegroom for his Bride, which we have learned to be the 144,000 Overcomers developed and tested throughout this Gospel Age.

I like to suggest that Br. Russell put these three titles in this order on purpose. While it is true that as the Chief Reaper, those of us who have been reaped from the Tares (nominal Christians), we have a special sense of appreciation, and now we can cooperate with him in this ongoing work, yet actually this would include the Wheat (144,000 Little Flock), but also the unripe Wheat (the Great Company that also left Babylon), yet the aspect of Bridegroom has a special significance to the Bride Class alone.

Similarly as King, Jesus is our king, but he is also to be King to the whole world of mankind. We too are offered the reward of being “kings and priests” with him Rev. 1:6, 5:10.

So then, we might be co-reapers and kings with Jesus, yet we, will never be part of the Bridegroom, nor will anyone else. This is Jesus alone. And he has only one Bride, though made up of 144,000 overcomers.

When we read of Bridegroom Reaper and King, which title denotes a most intimate relationship? It is Bridegroom of course!

Certainly Reaper will end with the close of the Harvest. King too will start to pale in significance when the work of restoring mankind and concluding the 1,000 year reign is over. However, Bridegroom and Bride or then Husband and wife will be eternal. This suggests that the ongoing dynamic work of the Husband and Wife will be given new work to perform by the Heavenly Father in the Ages to come!

Let us read again John 14:3“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may also be.”

This expression by Jesus to us suggests his Bridegroom to Bride relationship. This living together is not a temporary situation, no it is forever.

Let us consider a few more scriptures on this:

John 3:27-30 “John answered and said, a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice, this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Yes, John the Baptizer, is stating he not the Christ, nor is he of the Church. He is the last of the Ancient Worthy class, “*FRIENDS”,* those who lived faithfully and died before Jesus had provided the ransom price, hence they could not be spirit-begotten.

We learn that Jesus as the bridegroom was developed and tested first, then the bride class would follow after.

John would decrease = the AW would decrease and be concluded as a class as the Gospel Age opens and a New Way of Christ discipleship starts – the Call of the Bride.

Rev. 19:7-9 “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb has taken place 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.”

In context (from vs. 1), this is the Great Company acknowledging that the Bride of Christ is not only complete (the 144,000), but that since the marriage *has taken place,* she is now the Lamb’s WIFE.

The GC is disappointed in their realization that they were “foolish Virgins”, and *not of the Bride Class, but they are of a right attitude that the grand work of the* Gospel Age (finding, developing and testing The Christ, Head and Body), is now over and next phase of restoring the human family is about to take place, so they are told that they will be invited to the Marriage Supper, a lessor but still a wonderful privilege denoting a spiritual resurrection for them, for the world or earthlings are NOT so invited.

II Cor. 11:2,3 “for I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted form the simplicity that is in Christ.”

Paul writes that he desires to warn the Little Flock that they can lose their special relationship to Christ as their *INTENDED, COVENANTED FUTURE HUSBAND,* if they are seduced or led away from the simplicity of the truth in Christ and confused into accepting some other source for instruction! Just like the first Eve.

In verses 13-15 “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostle of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into the angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the minsters of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.”

Yes, in this context we see that Paul is warning the *SECOND EVE,* the future Bride of Christ, that we too might be deluded into accepting other sources of so-called spiritual guidance and really we might be led away into darkness, at least in part. One current example besides following Nominal Churchanity, is to get involved with POLITICS of this world, which is passing away, and losing sight of our one Head our one Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. This can led into *SPIRITUAL ADULTRY* or *HARLOTRY,* and is so represented in many Scriptures.

TURNING TO OUR THEME TEXT:

Matt. 25:1-13. General observations:

The context is from 24:1 through 26:1. It is all about his 2nd. Presence. He is really talking to us living during his Parousia, during his Return.

Explain the parable. 1829 – 1844 disappoint of Br. William Miller and 2nd. Adventist. 30 year parallel of being in expectation of Messiah to early!

1st. Advent from Jesus’ birth and dedication at the Temple (declared to be future Messiah), to his actual baptism at age 30 and his being spirit-gotten – the anointed Messiah as Head.

With the Millerite expectation of Messiah’s return in 1844 exactly 30 years before his actual return in 1874!

Kingdom of heaven = call to be of the embryo kingdom, to be of the Bride of Christ.

Virgins = Spirit-begotten.

Vessels = themselves as New Creatures.

Lamps = Scriptures.

Oil = Holy spirit that enlightens our minds.

10 = Complete number.

5 and 5 = it is an equal chance (or choices), of being of the Overcomers Class. Similar to the “casting of lots” between the two goats on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).

Wise Virgins = those that demonstrate their zeal in being properly prepared to be of the Bride Class by making choices and doing those things that increase their amount of the Holy spirit in their hearts and minds.

Foolish Virgins = those who do not make the best choices or practice the better discipline to attain more of the Holy spirit in themselves.

NOTE: THE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR HABITS OF LIFE IS WHAT DETERMINES THEIR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT WHICH IN TURN DETERMINES THEIR REWARD TO BE OF THE BRIDE.

Slumbered and slept = disappointment in the Lord’s returning soon.

At midnight = when most are deeply asleep.

A cry was made = the fulfillment of prophecies, the true Biblical Chronology, the understanding of the mis-translated word “Parousia” brought to the brethren’s attention by a Br. Keith, who read this in the Wilson’s Diaglott. The signs of the time, and by the provision of the Harvest Message through the wise and faithful servant Br. Russell.

NOTE: Every tract, every booklet, every ad in newspapers, magazines and now on the internet, every mobile app, web site, Facebook page, U-tube video, every CONVERSATION, on the 2nd. Presence can be part of this “cry”.

Behold the Bridegroom! = The long and longing awaited event of the Bridegrooms returning for his Bride is finally happening! Jesus’ return in October 1874 was only understood AFTER the fact! You see, “behold the Bridegroom” means he is present! Not still coming.

Go ye out to meet him = Once the message of Jesus’ return is brought to the Virgins attention (most often as single individuals), they are encouraged to look more deeply into this subject.

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps = Study out the Scriptural evidences that he is in fact present. This implies more action on their individual part. They are now awake to this matter and it becomes part of their testing to see what they will do with this information.

But more than that, what will they do with this SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE?!

The following verses demonstrate that the intended result of this SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE is that the Virgins would be MOTIVATED to make meaningful decisions in their day to day life that would increase the amount of the INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THEIR MINDS AND HEARTS -TRANSFORMING THEM INTO CHARACTERS WORTHY TO BE OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST.

This is what is meant by the Wise Virgins having oil in their vessels and their lamps.

These were privileged to enter into the Marriage with the Bridegroom.

The Door to the marriage would then be shut to the other Foolish Virgins. Note that all the virgins were given the same opportunities.

There is a cost to obtain the oil (the Holy spirit), it costs us our little all.

It means sacrificing daily in some way the things of earth.

It is well said: “ the Little Flock fit their lives into the truth, but the Great Company fit the truth into their lives.”

The vital message of this parable that Jesus spoke is that those of us living during this time of his presence have the GREATEST MOTIVATOR IN HELPING US TO MAKE OUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. THE LONGING LOVE OF THE BRIDE FOR HER BRIDEGROOM’S RETURN FOR HER IS DEMONSTRATED IN THAT IT IS OUR LOVE FOR HIM THAT DRIVES OUR DEVOTION, SECOND ONLY TO OUR LOVE FOR OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, WHO IN FACT CALLED US TO BE A BRIDE FOR HIS SON!

We want to emphasis that this call – “Behold the Bridegroom, go ye out to meet him”, is during a period of time and not just a moment in time.

In our context, Matt. 24:3, the apostles ask what will be the SIGNS OF HIS PAROUSIA AND THE END OF THE AGE?

Parousia in the Greek means “beside being” or present. Not coming.

The various signs that Jesus gives start and continue throughout his Parousia.

In vs. 27 his presence is likened to the bright shining of the sunrise and gradually enlightening the whole world, but it is only seen by the eye of faith by those watchers who are awake, having heard the cry that the Bridegroom is present!

This denotes a period of time.

In vss. 44-47, we have the Lord choosing a faithful and wise servant to dispense the spiritual food to his fellow servants. Why would this be necessary unless the Parousia was for a long period of time?

In vs. 32 the parable of the fig tree branches, first budding then putting forth leaves, this suggests growth, it is depicting the development of the re-established nation of Israel, hence a long period of time during this Parousia.

And so it is true of all the signs that Jesus gives, they all denote a period of time for his presence.

Jesus tells us that he returns as a thief, that is secretly (vs. 43), but other scriptures (II Thess. 1:7), tell us that he has an Apokalupsis = Revealment or Revelation, of himself to the entire whole. These two very different descriptions of his RETURN indicates that there are two very different PERIODS OF TIME DURING HIS RETURN.

First the secret Parousia to Call his Bride (among other things), and then a Apokalupsis revealment to the world after the Bridegroom and Bride are married!

There is a beautiful lesson in the 7 Stages of the Gospel Age Churches development.

In Rev. 2:5 during the 1st. Stage: “or else I will come unto thee (quickly is spurious)…

In Rev. 2:16 during the 3rd. Stage: “Repent or else I will come unto thee quickly…”

In Rev. 2:25 during the 4th. Stage: “hold fast till I come…”

In Rev. 3:3 during the 5th. Stage: “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee (heko -be present), as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

In Rev. 3:11 during the 6th. Stage: “Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

And finally in Rev. 3:20 during the 7th. Stage: “Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come into him and will sup (eat), with him and he with me.”

What a wonderful promise! During the Laodicea period of the Church, the Lord is present and symbolically knocking on the door to our hearts and minds. If we recognize his presence and respond by receiving the truth of his presence and all that that indicates, then he will be feeding us spiritual food (remember the lesson of Matt. 24:44-47).

This was not true during any of the previous stages of the Church previous, for he was not Parousia, present, but his message to all was to be in an expectant mind set to receive him.

Here again this denotes that his Parousia is during a period of time.

So then dear brethren, are we hearing the Voice of our Bridegroom? Are we hearing the Call to go forth and met him?

Let us each examine ourselves to be sure that we are motivated by our love and expectation of spending our eternity with our glorious Bridegroom as part of that Divine Family of Immortals!

(if time Psa. 45:13, 14) (Matt. 9:15).