

Message #15 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

Are You Truly The Bride Of Christ?

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd first like to talk to you about Preparation Ministries. Preparation Ministries is our non-profit organization which sponsors this outreach program of, "Scripture Beneath The Surface." The purpose of our radio broadcast is to bring to you information in scripture which is not generally taught in our churches, either from the pulpit or in church Bible study classes. Much of the material we present here on the program is considered by church denominations too deep for your average Christian. In fact, some church ministerial courses even teach their ministerial students that sermons should never be anything other than generalized salvation messages. They adamantly discourage any deep Bible study, because, as they say, it has a tendency to cause disagreements and might affect membership roles. Of course, their main concern is how many people they can get in church, and they have little regard for instructing God's people. To them, growth in the size of church congregations seems to be more important than the growth of a Christian's knowledge and understanding of God's word.

However, we at Preparation Ministries believe that studying the Bible in a much deeper sense is what Christians need most. That's why we bring you this program. We believe it is time that Christians start looking beneath the surface of scripture in order to more fully understand heavenly things, and also to become better witnesses in these end times.

O.K. Now let's go on with today's message. What I'd like to talk about today is the subject of getting married. No, I realize that most of you are not looking for a spouse, but please listen to this little narrative that I've provided. It's just a dialog which might possibly take place between a mother and daughter prior to an upcoming wedding. Here goes.

“Jean, Jean, where are you, sweetheart? Oh, there you are. Hey, why are you sitting in the dark? Here, I’ll switch on this little light. There, isn’t that better? Hey, something’s wrong, isn’t it. You look like the world is sitting on your shoulders.”

“Oh, Mom. I’m just thinking, that’s all.”

“Well, what about, Hon’? Anything I can do to help?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I’m just thinking about my upcoming marriage. I’ve got a funny feeling that won’t go away.”

“Oh, Jean, Honey. That’s normal. Every girl gets the jitters when it gets close to the wedding day. You’ll be fine.”

“No, Mom. It’s not that. I’m not nervous about it. I’ve just been turning over some things in my mind about Jim’s and my relationship, and some things don’t seem to fit just like they should.”

“Oh? Well, do want to share with your Mom? I was once in your place, you know. Maybe I can help.”

“Well, Mom. . . it’s just that Jim seems like the perfect guy, good looking, nice personality, got a good job, likes kids, and all that. But something’s missing.”

“Like what, Hon’?”

“Well, like the other day I asked him if he would go with me to a concert, and he said he was busy that night. And then I asked him if he could come over for Bobby’s birthday party with the family, and he said he’d like to, but he had some plans with some friends of his.”

“But Jean, he can’t do everything you want. You have to be able to adjust to his schedule a little too, you know.”

“Oh, I know that, Mom. But it’s not just a couple of isolated cases. It seems that Jim loves to be with me when we can go to a car show or fishing, or some other guy type thing like that, but the only other time he wants to be with me is when we are someplace alone, just the two of us. In fact, he seems to want to be with just me with no one else around. Sometimes too much.”

“Too much? What do you mean by too much, Honey?”

“Well, when we’re alone together, he seems more interested in my body, then in me. We hardly ever talk about things that are important. The times with him seem to be more about having to remind him that we aren’t married yet, and watching where he puts his hands? And no, Mom. I don’t mean it’s bad. It’s just that his attention to me doesn’t seem to go past the physical. I’m wondering if he really loves me, or does he just love the feeling he gets when we get close? It makes me think that if we get married, and he gets what he wants, then that’s the only times we’ll have together.”

“Oh Jean, I see what you mean. That can happen. It does with a lot of girls. The guy says he loves you, and then it never goes past the physical. Then the girl, after she’s married, ends up being an emotional widow because the guy is never there for her, but only there for himself.”

“Mom, that’s what scares me. Jim seems to want to marry me, but not for me. It seems he wants to marry me for what he can get, but the outlook for a close relationship with him is getting dimmer and dimmer. Just today he told me not to expect to see him much for the next couple of weeks because it’s deer season, but that he’d think of me a lot while he was hunting.”

“Jean, I don’t want to put a damper on this, because this is your decision, and it’s your life. But these are important things to consider. Sometimes young people don’t realize that times of physical and emotional satisfaction is not enough reason on which to base a marriage. Marriage isn’t temporary, and you can’t just change spouses whenever you want. It’s a permanent decision, and has very lasting implications. Before you go through with this decision to marry

Jim, you had better make sure your relationship with him is one that will stand the test of time. If he doesn't have time for you now, except for his emotional and physical satisfaction, then he won't have time for you later. If you want something that's permanent, your relationship must be firmly established first. If he says he loves you, but he never really has time for you other than that which meets his own needs, then he probably doesn't really love you. And it sounds like, by what you say, that he loves himself, and that you meet some of his needs, but that he doesn't seem to care about meeting any of your needs."

There is a quiet time, as Jean nods in agreement with her mom, but we'll leave them to themselves. For whether Jean marries Jim or not, is her business, and doesn't really affect us. However, the marriage that really does affect us is our marriage to Jesus Christ. We, as Christians, are in the courting stage. We are the prospective bride of Christ, and we've said we would like to be married to him for all eternity. But, as in every marriage proposal, both parties have the right to say yes, or no.

It may be that we, as Christians, have said yes, but what reason do we have to think that Jesus will say yes also? Do we have a relationship with him that meets his needs? Or do we have a relationship that only meets our needs? How would you feel if he finally decided that we're too busy with our own lives and can't find the time to be with him. Or what if he decided that the only thing we're looking for is emotional and physical satisfaction, and that his purpose and our purpose are not the same. His purpose for entering into a lasting marital covenant with us is for more than just our needs, but he wants us to love him enough to be consistently concerned for his desires as well.

In short, are you in a relationship with Jesus that not only gives you what you desire, but one in which your desires are also his desires? If not, there would be constant division between you and him forever, because you wouldn't really want to enjoy life with him, but would actually only want to get what you want from him. Marriage is a two way street. And Jesus can still say, "No!"

The chapters of Revelation 17 and 18, describe an unusual scene which goes along with this concept. It is a woman riding on a great red beast which has seven heads and ten horns. This is the same beast that we find in Revelation 13:1, which rose up out of the sea. The woman who rides the beast is called Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

Now, generally speaking, this woman symbolizes all people of the earth who have rejected Jesus Christ as their eternal husband, as their eternal master and King. She has given herself to another master, to another lord, which she believes to be a king.

However, let's take this description of the Great Whore step-by-step. First, the beast which carries her is the base nature of Satan, the animal nature of Satan, which he chose to follow rather than to humble himself before God. This beast nature, this animal nature, is opposed to the Holy Spirit nature of God. The woman is supported by this beast in that the woman becomes unfaithful to Jesus Christ and turns to other lovers who will give her rewards which fulfill her desires for fleshly stimulation. She is not satisfied with the spiritual rewards which are promised

to the bride of Christ, but seeks to satisfy her carnal appetites with worldly things. These things are symbolically listed in Revelation 18:12-13. These are the same things that every human being desires until they are born again. When man remains in his initial stage of life with a beast nature, he must have gold and silver, precious jewels, fine cars, fine clothes, delicious food, immoral sexual gratification, etc. In short, when man remains in his initial beast nature, he must have the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life in any form which will stimulate the beast within, that animal nature that works through man's flesh.

This is described in Revelation 18:3, where it speaks of the woman's fornication for the sake of obtaining these fleshly delights. In essence, if you are preoccupied with things which have no eternal value, then you are preoccupied with things that are not provided by an eternal husband in the form of Jesus Christ. There are many people who claim to be the bride of Christ, but are actually only looking for self-stimulation, but there are significantly fewer people who claim to be the bride of Christ and who actually love the things of Jesus.

Our present world social system has been forming for hundreds of years, but it has been in the last couple of hundred years that Satan has been allowed to work at an accelerated pace. Any reasonable assessment of our present world social environment must accept the fact that our world, at this present time, is secular in nature. Christianity is the last stronghold for the spiritual concepts of a holy God, but because the lure of worldly desires is so strong, the foundation of the church has become seriously eroded. Satan has been able to coerce even God's people into being preoccupied with worldly desires, at the expense of being fully occupied with the things of God.

An example which may help you to see the picture more clearly, is tent revivals. In the 1800s and early 1900s tent revivals were fairly popular. The reason for this was that there were no other entertainments available to many of the population. People would come from near and far to attend the nightly meetings. Even people who had no taste for religion would attend these meetings because it was something to do. Today, if you hold a tent revival your chances of attracting a crowd are slim. This is because, in this day and age, there is no end to the possibilities for finding alternative entertainment.

Christians of today are more prone to shun a sincere relationship with Jesus Christ, and to embrace strongly that which fulfills the desire of the fleshly body. Scripture says that one of the sins of Sodom was fullness of bread. And today's church is not that much different. It generally eats heavily at the world's table, but only occasionally at the Lord's table. Yet, these same people say they are the bride of Christ. But God knows their hearts, and therefore he knows whether these people truly love him or just want a quick fix for their spiritual needs.

For a moment, put yourself in the place of Jesus Christ, and pretend you are looking for a wife. As you look around, you see a young lady who may be a prospective bride. You begin to court her, giving her flowers and small presents, and slowly getting to know her. After some time she says she loves you, and you tell her that you love her also. The relationship continues for a while, and then you find that it is getting more and more difficult to contact her when you want to speak with her or see her. It seems she is never at home. Upon investigation you find that she is not just occupied with the necessary things of life, but is actually enjoying the courtship of another man while at the same time being courted by you. In fact, you find that she is having a

love affair with the other person because of what the person offers her. When you confront her, she tells you that she really does love you, and that you are the only one for her. You may even give her the benefit of the doubt for a while, but when you see that she still continues to go to her other lovers because of the things they offer her, you finally accept the fact that she may love you, but that she loves all the others also. You also accept the fact that this kind of relationship does not build a firm foundation for a marriage. Consequently, you break off the relationship with her, for in your time of courtship you have found that when she says that she loves you, the words are only coming from her lips, and not from her heart.

This scenario is quite clearly represented in Matthew 7:21-23, where it refers to those who call themselves Christians, but who are not recognized as Christians by the Lord. They call him Lord, but they are servants of unrighteousness. They have given themselves to that animal nature that first rose up in Satan, and have refused to be truly born again in spirit. Just as the harlot, in Revelation 18:7, believes that she has a husband who is the ruling king, and therefore she is a queen, so do some people believe they are the bride of Christ when they really aren't.

Now, if a person wants to be sure that the testimony of their lips is also the testimony of their heart, all they have to do is make a personal assessment of their lives and look at what they find to be their most enjoyable things, or the things most often enjoyed. If you claim to be the bride of Christ, you should have no fear at taking an honest look at yourself, for you should only expect to find that which confirms your testimony. If you are afraid to take a long clear look at yourself in the mirror, then you must have something to hide.

So, are you truly the bride of Christ, or is your courtship with Jesus threatened by other loves? Are you occupied with the work you were called to, or are you too busy with the preoccupations which bring enjoyment to your carnal nature? It's not too late yet to make an assessment of your life, but it soon will be. Very shortly the world will be filled with the glory of God. If your claim to being a bride of Christ is rejected, you will see no glory of the Lord.

Now, don't think that today's message is aimed at the bar hopping Christians who show up for church on Christmas and Easter. It's not aimed at them and it's not for them. Today's message is aimed rather at the one's in the church who are the shop till you drop Christians who frequent churches on a regular or semi-regular basis. It is for the Christians who can't wait until the sequel comes out to the latest blockbuster movie or the next season's hit television show. It is for the Christians who know more statistics about football, baseball, and auto racing than they do about the Bible. It is for the Christians who spend more time on the golf course than in reading their Bibles. It is for the Christians who have more time for community social events than they do for Jesus.

If today's message is offending you, then it is you who needs to take a long honest look at whether or not your kind of courting is making Jesus love you more, or making him more frustrated with you. If you are offended, it is better that I offend you than that you should be rejected. There are only two choices to make in this world. Either choose to serve Jesus Christ and make him Lord of your life, or choose to serve Satan and make him lord of your life. By taking all the delicate things of this world that Satan offers, you are making your choice to serve him without actually knowing it. You don't think you are serving Satan, because you aren't

consciously praising him. But you are taking his presents, and you think they're so wonderful. If this is you, wake up before it is too late.

It isn't my intent to offend you. My intent is to sound a warning to let people know that we are not ready for the Lord's soon return. No, it doesn't mean that you are an unsaved person. It doesn't mean that you will necessarily be rejected when Jesus comes. It's just that Jesus is coming very soon and he is coming back for a church without spot or wrinkle. Very soon we will begin to see things take place on this earth that will be very trying for men's souls. This is referred to in Revelation 3:10. At that time God's people will begin to realize just how all encompassing Satan's world economic and social system has become, and that Christians are caught up in it almost as much as the wicked. Christians are deceived to a great extent, and if God did not call a halt to the deception, if he did not shorten the time for the sake of the elect, then the deception would overwhelm even us.

You might say, "How are we deceived?" And the answer is that God's people hardly have spiritual eyes and ears anymore, and are unable to place their complete trust in God. They trust their paychecks, their charge cards, their physicians, their banks, their lawyers, but cannot rest in God's perfect ability to provide everything they need. They are immersed in world entertainments which openly use God's name in vain, and which display a spirit of evil instead of giving glory to God. Instead of being a separate people, they just take whatever comes along and just try to pick out the worst parts and discard them, thinking that's good enough.

And if you think I'm way off base, then think about something. Think about what you will give as an answer when the Lord asks you a question pertaining to television, and says, "Why did you allow those images that speak to come into your house and use my name as a swear word instead of giving my name glory? Who forced you to take those blasphemous images and words that come across the TV screen into your own house?" What will be your answer?

Well, do you still think you're not deceived?

It's time for Christians to repent. Jesus said, in referring to John the Baptist, "If you can receive it, this is Elijah who should come." It is time for Elijah to come and set all things right. There will be a showdown in the world just as there was a showdown in the days of Elijah on Mount Carmel. And just as John the Baptist preached repentance because the kingdom of heaven was near at hand, the message must go out today that the church needs to repent from being in bed with the world, for the kingdom of heaven is very near.