

THE BRIDE THAT CHRIST IS ATTRACTED TO



The Bible calls the true church of Jesus Christ “The Bride of Christ.” Just as a righteous man is attracted to virtuous qualities in a bride so also God seeks virtuous qualities in the true bride of Christ.

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by Steve Ritchie

The following teaching was taught at Pillar of Truth Church on Wednesday Night, May 3rd 2000:

Isaiah 62:5 ". . . as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."

Revelation 19:7 ". . . the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready."

The Scriptures plainly show us that the Church is called to become the Bride of Christ. The Scriptures further reveal to us that not everyone who is called to the marriage supper of the lamb will make themselves ready to enter therein. As a husband finds certain qualities that are attractive in a wife, so is the Lord attracted to His bride when she makes herself ready. The more that we attract the presence of Christ, the more He shows up.

In the natural, a man tends to find certain characteristics or qualities attractive in a woman. When a man seeks to find a suitable bride, he looks for certain qualities in her that he is attracted to. When I met my wife, I was attracted to her meek, quiet, and submissive spirit. I was attracted to her powerful prayer life and faithfulness to God and to His Church. When my wife displays these qualities in front of me, it attracts me to her.

Yet there are many women that are very unattractive in their unsubmitive, brazen behavior. They may appear beautiful on the outside but they are not beautiful on the inside. Jesus is primarily concerned about the inside of us, not the outside. Yet

the outside will always reflect what is going on, on the inside. He is attracted to our godly inward characteristics which are always manifest on the outside by how we speak, by how we control our attitudes, and even by our external appearance in dress and hygiene. When we seek to please and attract Christ we will obey the scriptural command found in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God."

I believe, according to the Word of God, that it is possible to only partially attract the presence of the Lord. Jesus can be present in a Christian or in a Spirit Filled Christian Church but that does not mean that the particular Christian or Spirit Filled Church is fully submitted to the Lord. The more we submit to Christ, the more He is attracted to us. And when He is greatly attracted to us, He will show up in greater glory.

ALL PROFESSING CHRISTIANS WOULD DO WELL TO
ASK,
" WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES THAT CHRIST FINDS
ATTRACTIVE IN HIS BRIDE?"

CHRIST IS ATTRACTED TO A SUBMISSIVE BRIDE

Ephesians 5:22-24-27 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Brethren, does it not makes sense that if our wives are to be submitted to us in everything pertaining to this life, then the

True Church of Christ must also be submitted to Christ in everything pertaining to New Testament Scripture? As the True Church is subject unto Christ in everything, so our wives are to be subject unto us in everything - as long as we do not tell them to violate God's commandments found in New Testament Scripture.

The New Testament is a very big book with a whole lot of commandments that have been given to the Church. It is essential that the Church is subject unto these commandments of Christ. Not some of these commandments, but all of these commandments. Most of Christendom has blatantly and rebelliously decided to ignore many New Covenant Commandments. Most professing Christians have chosen to pick the portions of scriptures that they wish to obey. The scriptures that they find displeasing, they decide not to obey by totally ignoring them.

Church, you know how I have taught you in the past. I have been honest to state that there are some things found in the Word of God that I do not particularly like. Some things I wish were not in the Holy Bible. Yet because I desire to be subject to Christ in everything, I must live by these new covenant ordinances and teach the same to you, whether I like them or not. It is not my right to choose only the scriptures that I like and teach them to you. I must teach and preach the whole counsel of God, just like the apostle Paul declared to the Ephesian Elders at Miletus in Acts 20:26,27: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Shall we turn to Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians chapter eleven, verse one.

1 Cor. 11:1 "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances just as I delivered them to you."

The word "Ordinances" is translated from Greek word "paradosis." It literally means "precepts", or "traditional laws." Many have been deceived into believing that there are no laws or commandments that the church must be subject to. Yet the New Testament clearly commands Christians to keep the precepts, ordinances, or traditional laws just as they were delivered in the first century. Those who do their very best to fully follow Jesus Christ's New Testament Laws are severely persecuted as alleged "Legalists," or "Pharisees."

But what does it mean to be a Legalist or a Pharisee? First of all, the word "legalism," or "legalistic" is nowhere to be found in the Bible, even though many Professing Christians regularly use this word. This word in the New Testament context would mean that one is putting a yoke upon the neck of New Testament disciples by commanding them to keep laws which the apostles "gave no such commandment (Acts 15:24)." A Pastor who teaches laws or commandments that the apostles clearly taught to the first century congregations as recorded in New Testament Scripture is not a Legalist or a Pharisee at all. If this were the case, we would have to call the apostle Paul a Legalist or a Pharisee. For he taught many of God's New Covenant Commandments.

A Pharisee is a teacher who likes to sit in Moses' Seat. He thinks he has the authority to either establish New Laws or nullify

God's Laws. He likes to take upon himself the authority to either add commandments outside of scriptural authority, or to make scriptural commandments of God "of none effect" by his tradition (Matthew 15:6). Jesus clearly rebuked the Pharisees for doing both. They added traditions to the Word of God and they took away from the Word of God by explaining Biblical Truths Away.

There are two kinds of modern day Pharisees today. The first type of religious Pharisee adds traditional commandments that are not taught in New Testament scripture. The Amish, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh day Adventists could be called modern day Pharisees for adding unscriptural commandments. However, most professing Christian Believers have fallen prey to the other extreme. They have sought, by their traditional teachings, to nullify certain New Testament Commands of God. Jesus clearly condemned the Pharisees for doing both. When Jesus returns He will certainly condemn all professing Christians Teachers who are either adding or detracting from His Word today.

CHRIST IS STILL ATTRACTED TO A BRIDE THAT WILL KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

There are many New Covenant commandments that were delivered to the Church by the first century apostles of Christ. The majority of twenty first century professing Christian believers have blatantly ignored many scriptural commands found in the New Testament. Although Christ will graciously give a measure of blessing to those who only obey in a measure, the greatest blessings will only come to those who fully carry

out all of Christ's commandments. The True Apostolic Church that Christ will receive as His Bride will be fully submitted to Him in all things that were delivered to the New Testament Church in the first century. Many professing Spirit Filled Christians who profess to know Christ will be rejected by Him at His appearing.

Luke 13:24-28 "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and you begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not from where you are: Then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drank in your presence, and you have taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not from where you are; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. . ."

These professing Christian believers shall say, "We have eaten and drunk in your presence." Here we have positive proof that many believers will spiritually eat and drink in the presence of Christ. Yet they will be rejected by the Lord Jesus because they were not fully obedient to Him. Jesus will tell them to depart from Him. They will be rejected from the Marriage Supper of the Lamb because they worked iniquity. The word "iniquity" means "wickedness" or "lawlessness." Christ clearly has given commandments for the New Testament Church. He has given us laws that we must carry out as the true bride of Christ.

Matthew chapter seven verses 21-23 provides us with further proof that many professing Christians who have the Baptism of

the Spirit and have eaten and drank in Christ's presence will be rejected from being the true bride of Christ.

"Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity."

It takes the Spirit of God to prophesy and do wonderful works in His Name. There will be many who have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit who will not enter into the Kingdom because they are disobedient to Christ's commandments. It truly is amazing that many will pray for healings and miracles in the name of Jesus Christ but they will not baptize in the name of Jesus Christ as the scriptures clearly command.

There are many areas of scripture that the great majority in Christendom totally ignore. We will only cover a few tonight.

Let's turn to 1 Cor. 11:4-7;13-16 and plainly read New Testament commands that are being ignored by the majority in Christendom.

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not cover his head,

forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. . . Judge in yourselves: is it proper that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

The apostle Paul did not waste ink and paper by writing unnecessary verses of New Testament Scripture. All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable to the New Testament Believer. Even nature itself teaches us that it is proper for a woman to have long hair and a man to have short hair. If these verses were not suppose to apply to the twenty first century church, then why did the apostle appeal to nature? Has nature changed in two thousand years?

Many false teachers have promulgated two false interpretations of this scripture. Many have falsely promulgated the view that if a Christian decides to be contentious about keeping this hair ordinance, then all of the churches of God suddenly have no such custom. Such a view is utterly preposterous, especially when we consider that the Greek word translated as contentious can also be translated, "disputatious," or "fond of strife." And the Greek word translated as "custom," is literally translated according to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible as "force of habit," or "usage." Hence this scripture more literally reads as follows: "But if any man seem to be disputatious or fond of strife, we have no such force of habit or usage, neither the churches of God."

The apostle was not addressing the aforementioned hair teaching when he used the word "habit" or "usage." Paul was actually saying, "But if any man seem to be disputatious, or fond of strife over this scriptural hair teaching for men and women, we have no such bad habit of being disputatious over God's commandment, neither the rest of the true churches of God.

Many others have erroneously stated that these verses of scripture were only for the first century Christians but not for the twenty first century Christians. Has God's Word really Changed? Does not even nature itself teach us that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? Does not even nature itself teach us that a woman's long hair is a glory to her?

If we are duped into believing that these verses of scripture do not apply today, then what is to prevent us from believing that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is not for us today either? This false religious reasoning can be very dangerous. All Christians would have the prerogative to choose only the New Covenant commandments and doctrines that they wish to obey while rejecting the New Covenant commandments and doctrines that they do not prefer by stating that they do not apply for the twenty first century church. Our Lord Jesus Christ was very serious about His Church Keeping His Commandments.

John 14:21 "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

The more obedient that the Christian is, the more Christ will manifest Himself to the Christian.

1 John 2:3-6 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments, He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keeps his word, in him truly is the love of God perfected: And hereby know we that we are in him. He that says that he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

Just as Jesus in his humanity was subject to the Father in all things, so must the church be subject to the Father in our humanity. Therefore all true Christians will walk in the Spirit, just as Christ walked in the leading of the Spirit.

James 1:25 "But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

The perfect law of liberty stands in contradistinction to the law of bondage in that the law of liberty gives us power by the indwelling Holy Spirit to keep God's laws, whereas the law of bondage had no power in that the Old Testament Believers lacked the power of the Holy Spirit. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied that the New Covenant Believers would be empowered to walk in God's statutes and keep His ordinances by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Ezekial 11:19,20 "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

The prophet Jeremiah further spoke of the power of the Spirit of God which makes it an easy yoke to keep God's Commandments:

Jeremiah 31:31-33 "Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was and husband unto them, says the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Beloved, it is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost that gives us this power. The prophet Joel prophesied that in these last days God would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. All flesh that would have faith to receive this promise. Peter declared by the Spirit, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." The apostle Peter was clearly commenting on the outpouring of the Spirit that all had plainly observed on the Day of Pentecost. All spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave the utterance when they received this experience on the Day of Pentecost. There is none other experience other than the Baptism of the Holy Ghost which endues us with such power. If you have not received this experience, you can receive it tonight. You can have power to keep God's Commandments without difficulty.

John 15:1-6 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. . .If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

According to the gospel of John chapter one, Jesus is the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God. . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. . ." If we truly abide in Jesus we will abide in His Word. Brothers and Sister, we are commanded to abide in Christ's Words. If we abide not in His Words we will be cast away as withered branches and thrown into the fire. Do these words of Christ agree with the doctrine of eternal security?
Certainly Not.

It makes me sick inside when I see how Satan has deceived the masses of professing Christians with his easy believism form of pseudo Christianity in which everyone is going to make it into the pearly gates without obeying the Word of God. The way you hear some preachers talk, you would think that everyone is going to heaven as long as they say that they have accepted Christ as their Savior. Beloved, believe not this lie from hell. Only those who prepare themselves in obedience and submission to Christ's Words will enter into eternal life.

Jesus Christ clearly proclaimed that all who would truly believe upon Him would have to believe upon Him through the Apostles

Words. The Apostles Words are clearly the Words of Christ. Let us turn to John chapter seventeen, verses seventeen through twenty as our proof text. Jesus clearly prayed for His Apostles, and for all future disciples who would believe upon Christ through the Apostles Words.

"Sanctify them through your Truth: Your Word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

Jesus clearly stated in this prayer that all who would claim to believe on Christ would have to believe upon Him through the Apostles Words. Brethren, what do you suppose would happen if a professing Christian chose not to believe upon Christ through the apostles? What if someone said, "I will choose the words of Christ rather than the words of the apostles?" Will this person not be in reality rejecting the Words of Christ? Jesus gave His authority to His apostles to preach and teach the whole gospel message to the whole world.

He commanded the apostles as recorded in Matthew chapter twenty eight, verses nineteen and twenty: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . . TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. . ."

Wherefore, the apostles were commanded to teach all future Christians to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded the church. Let us further turn to first John chapter four, verses five and six for additional proof that we must adhere to the Apostles Teachings:

"They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

Many professing Christian Believers are of the world. They preach a perverted view of the gospel which has been tainted by Satan's worldly influence. The world finds it more palatable to hear these preachers because they are also influenced by the spirit that works in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).

The apostle John further writes, "We are of God." The original apostles were truly of God. He that truly knows God hears them - The Apostles. He that is not of God does not fully hear or hearken to the Apostles Teachings. Hereby we know those who have the spirit of truth working in them, and those who have the spirit of error working in them.

Anyone can hear the Bible on audio cassette tape. But this does not mean that he is truly hearing. The apostle John was talking about hearkening unto what the apostles wrote in scripture. Those who do not hearken unto the clear Apostolic Teachings are not truly or fully of God. Those who do hearken unto the clear Apostolic Teachings found in scripture are truly of God.

Beloved, God's Word cannot be clearer than this. All who are disobedient to the original teachings of the apostles have a spirit of error from the Devil working within them. This is why the world can more readily accept them. This is why so many churches and denominations are seeking to unite with the ecumenical religious world. This is why so many churches are not being persecuted by the Devil. Many Trinitarian Pentecostal

Churches are showing their true colors by uniting in fellowship with Catholic and Protestant Churches that are devoid of the Holy Spirit of Christ. But the True Bride of Christ recognizes that if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. For by One Spirit, (The Holy Spirit Baptism) are we all baptized into one body."

CHRIST IS ATTRACTED TO A BRIDE THAT IS HUMBLE AND OF A BROKEN SPIRIT:

Let us turn to the book of Psalms chapter thirty four, verse eighteen. And then we will read Psalm fifty one, verse seventeen.

"The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit."

Psalm 51:17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Our God is attracted to the kind of spirit which is broken, humble, and contrite. The more that we are broken and penitent in our prayers, the more Christ will manifest His presence. The more that we pray with tears in fervent intercessory prayer, the more the Spirit will manifest His presence. It is an easy thing to hear the voice of God when we have sighed and cried in prayer. God finds us irresistible when we can easily cry and be broken in His presence. When my wife cries it breaks me up inside. I immediately respond to comfort her and pray with her. When Christ's bride cries out to Him in humility, Christ always responds and rewards her openly. Beloved, if we want to attract the presence of Christ, we must stay broken, contrite, and

humble before the Lord in continual prayer.

CHRIST IS ATTRACTED TO A PRAYING BRIDE

It is possible to understand all mysteries and all knowledge of the Bible and yet still lack the true love of God. The true love of God comes only through a very close relationship with His Spirit in prayer. Many Spirit Filled Pentecostal Believers who were once very prayerful have digressed into carnality by operating in mere head knowledge rather than being led by the Spirit.

Christ is attracted to those who unceasingly pray for fresh anointing. He is attracted to those who yield to the Spirit in prayer. God is always speaking to His Bride but those who are not diligent in prayer become dull of hearing. They fail to fully hear and heed His voice.

CHRIST IS ATTRACTED TO A BRIDE THAT PRACTICES SELF CONTROL AND THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

"The fruit of the Spirit is . . . self control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Many who have received the outpouring of the Spirit of God are grieving the Spirit because they have closed their hearts to other portions of the word of God. Many have become dull of hearing through overeating. The Bible clearly teaches that gluttony is a sin. Proverb 23:21 categorizes gluttony with drunkenness. "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." Jesus declared in Luke 21:34, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be loaded down with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

Lack of self restraint in eating loads us down so that we cannot hear the voice of God as readily. Overeating causes health problems. Statistics now indicate that over 300,000 Americans die prematurely every year from overeating. Overeating is second only to smoking as the number one cause of premature deaths in America. Almost all Pentecostals preach against smoking because it is bad for the temple of the Holy Ghost. But what about overeating?

The genuine fruit of the Spirit will effect the life of a true Christian to such an extent that it will effect his actions, his attitudes, the words that he speaks, and the very thoughts and intents of his heart. Those who do not grow in the fruit of the Spirit fall prey to the works of the flesh. If the tree of our heart brings forth the bad fruit of the works of the flesh, it will be hewn down and cast into the fire.

All true Christians will crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. They will allow Christ to live in them by yielding to His Holy Spirit. They will discipline themselves to yield to the Spirit's promptings to fast and pray, lest they enter into diverse temptations.

CHRIST IS ATTRACTED TO A FAITHFUL BRIDE

1 Corinthians 4:2 "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Christ's true bride will become attractive to Him by diligently pursuing the Father's Business. She will be faithful to Him in carrying out all of His commandments. She will be faithful to Him in prayer, Bible reading, yielding to the gifts of the Spirit, and by diligently pursuing faithfulness in her diverse ministries in the church. She will be faithful to church

attendance, she will get involved in winning lost souls to Christ, and she will faithfully give tithes and offering to further the work of the gospel. The true and attractive bride of Christ is not stingy or selfish. As Christ was willing to lay down his life for the church, so the true bride also is willing to lay down her life for the brethren, for lost souls to be saved, and for the truth of His Word .

The kind of bride that Christ is attracted to is submissive to the authority of His true Pastors, Elders, and Deacons. She is not self willed or rebellious to God given authority. The Attractive Bride of Christ will be faithful to Christ and His Kingdom Work in all things. Not just in some things. This is what separates the true bride from the false bride. The false apostate bride will not be acceptable to Christ when He returns. But the true bride of Christ will enter into the joy of the Lord because she prepared herself by becoming faithful to Him in all things. Beloved, this message is the true Word of the Lord.