



## Our Preparation by Craig Simpson

Jesus said: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." (Rev. 16:15). These words are extremely applicable to us in this generation, who are living in this godless society, on the eve of Christ's return. Truly the evil and lack of morals of this generation can be compared to the days of Noah and of Lot.

And with the world so evil and so far from God, it is extremely important for us to be on our guard, to be keeping our garments unspotted for this evil world.

It has been rightly said that "all men are in large measure the creatures of their age." And so it follows that as the world gets further from God, and as the world's morals grow more and more lax, as a sense of pleasing oneself rather than pleasing God pervades, and as evil deeds and actions are no longer frowned upon by society, that we individually and collectively head the same way - in general as the world gets further from God so do we! We are products of our environment.

We as humans are so prone to sin; we are prone to falling away from God's standards but now more than ever before we have to be on our guard.

In Matthew 7:21-23 it says: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

These people were active in the Truth, they thought they were doing God's will, they were Christadelphians just like you and I, but yet it appears they'd never let the Truth transform their lives.

And it's possible for us to be in the same situation. It's possible for us to attend gatherings such as this, to go to the meeting every Sunday, not because we feel obligated to go because of allegiance to Christ; but rather we go to see our friends, or our family.

Living life in the Truth can be a way of life, this is what we've done for years and so we continue doing it. We can read the Bible, not because we long to develop a spiritual mind, but rather because that's what we've done all our lives, because that's what our friends and family do. We can read for the sake of reading. To mark off on our calendar that we've done the readings; and so we can feel a sense of achievement.

There is a way however to avoid this complacent attitude, and it comes by understanding what God requires of us. It can come by self-examination.

Let's just spend a couple of moments thinking about what we are doing. One of the big things that we should realise is that whilst man sees the act - the act of reading, the act of going to the meetings. God sees the heart and the act.

Why do we attend these meetings - is it because of man or is it because of God? When we sin who do we think of and who are we afraid will catch us - man or God? If you look back at the past week what have you spent your time doing, pleasing yourself or other people, or pleasing God?

We can apply these types of questions to any part of our lives, when we gossip are we concentrating on and satisfying man or God? In our work places, in our education, when we are driving the car, when we're relaxing at home, who are we feeding, who are we giving glory to? Are our thoughts focussed on the return of Christ? Are our lives and the things we do limited by the requirements of God?

I want you to think about the five foolish virgins. They all recognised that Christ was coming. They were virgins indicating a certain amount of separation from the world, in other words they were Christadelphians.

They had neglected to replenish the oil in their lamps. They were resting upon what they'd done in the past; they'd lost sight of the Bible's true teaching and weren't letting the Word of God transform their lives.

You might say I'm not like them; I'm a good Christadelphian! I attend all the meetings - their attendance is not called in question. Doubtless they were still reading their Bibles daily - but far from letting God's Word transform their lives, they were coasting along thinking everything was okay, until Christ came and they realised their lamps had ceased from burning. That should act as a wake up call to us. Because over time life in the Truth can become stale, "run of the mill", "the same old thing." And we can continue to do the same old thing over and over again, but in large measure remain unchanged by our actions. These virgins only realised they'd run out of oil once Christ came - is your lamp still burning? Now is the time to make these preparations. Remember "all men are in large measure the creatures of their age."

As the world gets further from God, so do we. Even if we are doing all these things, remember, and strive more than ever before, to let the Word of God transform our lives. It really does require all we have. Our responsibility to ourselves is to prepare ourselves for Christ's return with the time we have remaining to us. Our preparation can be likened to that of Esther's.

You see the king Ahasuerus gave all the maids twelve months to prepare before they would be presented before him and he would choose himself a bride. The twelve months were divided in two separate sections: six months being

purified with the oil of myrrh (which amongst other things can symbolise the Word of God); and six months being purified with sweet odours (symbolising prayer).

In symbol is presented to us what our lives and preparation to meet our King should be. Our preparation should consist of reading the Word of God, and prayer. In other words our preparation should consist of listening to what God has to say - God talking to us; and prayer - talking back to Him.

We do this by reading His Word; and we should read His Word more than ever before as we see Christ's appearing drawing near, and this world getting so far from God. But not only reading His Word, but putting it into practise in every aspect of our lives. And praying; praying to God always, when we get up, for breakfast, whilst going to work, for lunch, after work, for meals, for the readings, for the day - for everything! Asking God for guidance, for understanding, for wisdom, for the return of His Son. In this way we put God first and man last. We manifest God in our lives, giving glory to Him, which really is and should be our sole purpose in life. And if you think about it, that really should be what we are doing, and its not too much to ask when we consider what God has in store for those who love Him.

In Esther's day, once this preparation was completed, when every maid presented herself before the king, "whatsoever she desired was given her, to go with her unto the king." (Est. 2:13). She could take whatever she wanted, whether it was clothes, or jewels, or gold - whatever she wanted.

We also will take with us something when we go before our king, at the judgment seat of Christ - what will it be?

When you appear before the judgment seat of Christ what will you take? Will you take your house? Will you take your car? Will you take your job? Will take that holiday? - What will it be?

We can't literally take any of these things of course. But we can take them in our hearts. Because all any one of us will take before the judgment seat of Christ will be our minds and our hearts. And so the question arises, where is your treasure?

The only thing we will take is our character and the question is what kind of character will that be?

Really when you think about it, the only thing worth taking is part of Christ, part of the character of Christ - some little part, that when we appear before our King we will find favour in his eyes. That's all that's worth taking and now is the only time we've got to develop it.

We each have a responsibility to examine ourselves, to keep ourselves unspotted and separate from the world. To prepare ourselves for the return of Christ. This involves many things, but they can be summed up as listening to what God has to say, and talking back to Him. Reading His Word and doing the things contained therein, letting it transform our lives and praying to God.

Our lives should be wholly dedicated to the glory of God, to pleasing God and not man. Keeping our garments unspotted from the world. And so I leave you with a question, when you appear before the judgment seat of Christ, what will you take?