



Faith



LOVE



Flying Water



The Feet of the Cross



Good Shepherd - Lost & Found

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O.....S
A CLOSER WALK



The Sower



Joyful



Wise & Foolish

WRITTEN BY CATHERINE PRICE
ILLUSTRATED BY CONNIE RHODES



Widow's Offering



Fishers of Men



Come Follow Me



Prayer & Care



Hi! I am Catherine Price and I live in the small town of Aliceville, Kansas. I am a member of the Mont Ida Church of the Brethren. I have been married to my husband, James, for 28 years. I have just recently retired from Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation in Burlington, Kansas where I worked in the Accounting Dept. for 17 years. For the last 10 years, I have taught the Young Adult Sunday School Class and I also help to lead the singing. I began writing a newsletter for our church in September of 2007, shortly after my "inspiration" came at the Western Plains District Conference. Connie Rhodes' Footprint Art was displayed in the sanctuary of the McPherson Church of the Brethren and our theme was "Come...Follow Jesus." Connie has graciously allowed me to use her art in the Newsletter and I have done so through 2007 and 2008. In 2009, I published several newsletters that were consolidations of several months. My last newsletter was in August 2009. After this I felt God's calling to begin a Daily Devotional Book based on these Footprints. I talked to Connie about my idea and she was very excited about it and has been a constant inspiration in her willingness to share all of her art so freely. Since that time I have been working on each month's devotionals which, looking at the cover of the book, you can see on your top left, the theme of "Faith" and going across the top, you see the themes of "Love", and "The Foot of the Cross" "The Living Water -The Holy Spirit". Next, is "The Sower" and on down the right side; "The Wise and Foolish Virgins". This is the first Volume.

Second Volume: May 1, 2013 Update: I am now finished with the Second Volume. These are the Footprint Titles: Prayer & Care; Come, Follow Me & I Will Make You Fishers of Men; The Widow's Mite (Giving); Joy; The Good Shepherd. I am very grateful to God for allowing me to learn these truths as I write down what He has given me to say. I pray that many of you will open up your hearts and allow ALL of His Love to Come In! In Loving Service, Cathy
If you have comments or questions, please feel free to call or text me at: 1-785-204-2938.



Connie Rhodes would like to extend her greetings to you all. In the above photo, she is doing her art presentation before an audience at Salina, Kansas in April of 2008, at the Western Plains District Ladies Retreat. Her talents became apparent to many of the “Brethren” when we came to the District Conference in July, 2007. She had been given the task of creating art work that depicted the Conference theme: “Come, Follow Jesus” Each of her original designs were in the form of a footprint and artistically portrayed a Bible story or theme. The original paintings were displayed around the sanctuary of the McPherson Church of the Brethren where the Conference was held. As we saw at the Ladies’ Retreat the next year, she is so much more talented. Her presentation includes; painting a beautiful scene while talking to the audience. This usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes. She is a very funny lady. You can see all of her art work on her website: www.artbyrhodes.com. Connie has been a member of the Newton Church of the Brethren for 22 years (as of this writing) and is also the Church Clerk, as well as serving on the Church Board and teaching Sunday School where needed.

FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

CHAPTER SIX

“THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS”

JUNE DEVOTIONAL

Connie shares with us about her footprint: "Are you ready when the unknown time comes or are you busy procrastinating all the...would, could, should have instead of seizing the moments. Are we human doings, or are we human beings created by God for God?"



**THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS
(Living Version)**

Matt. 25:1-13: "The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. But only five of them were wise enough to fill their lamps with oil, while the other five were foolish and forgot. So, when the bridegroom was delayed, they lay down to rest until midnight, when they were roused by the shout, "The bridegroom is coming! Come out and welcome him!" All the girls jumped up and trimmed their lamps. Then the five who hadn't any oil begged the others to share with them, for their lamps were going out. But the others replied, 'We haven't enough. Go instead to the shops and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were gone, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Later, when the other five returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Sir, open the door for us!' But he called back, 'Go away! It is too late!' So stay awake and be prepared, for you do not know the date or moment of My return."

Let us study together, this parable. It surely means more than we see on the surface, just as we are used to Jesus explaining other parables where there is a more spiritual meaning behind them, this also has much more meaning, but, this time, Jesus doesn't offer any explanation. We are to figure it out for ourselves. So, let us see what the Spirit teaches us this month! Fasten your seat belts, and away we go!

FOOTPRINTS TO A CLOSER WALK

CHAPTER SIX

“THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS”

JUNE DEVOTIONAL

FIRST WEEK –

“THE TIME FOR STRAIGHT TALK”

DAY ONE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:1-8:

“As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples came along and wanted to take him on a tour of the various Temple buildings. But he told them, “All these buildings will be knocked down, with not one stone left on top of another!” “When will this happen?” the disciples asked him later, as he sat on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. “What events will signal your return, and the end of the world?” Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone fool you. For many will come claiming to be the Messiah, and will lead many astray. When you hear of wars beginning, this does not signal my return; these must come, but the end is not yet. The nations and kingdoms of the earth will rise against each other and there will be famines and earthquakes in many places. But all this will be only the beginning of the horrors to come.”

Welcome to June. This is traditionally the month for brides and grooms and weddings, so I thought it only logical to have Connie Rhodes’ Footprint of the Ten Virgins highlighted this month. Little did I know, what all would be revealed to me when I started my study on this subject. I will try to cover the main ideas in the thirty days I have to work with, but as we know, this subject of the end times is very vast, so forgive if it is not covered to your satisfaction. The parable of the ten virgins or bridesmaids (whichever version of the Bible we are looking at) was an illustration by Jesus having to do with His previous dialogue of the whole end time scenario. We must begin there to get the full meaning of His parable. In the scriptures above, He is telling us that there will be many things that will happen on the earth before His coming; from wars to earthquakes to disease. “Been there, Done that” is a popular saying, and we all feel that we have been through our share of tribulation, and look at the world today and sigh; with all of these things going on it seems logical to conclude that we are nearing the end times. But Jesus tells us that it is only the beginning! So cheer up, things could be worse. I cheered up and sure enough things did get worse. Ha! Ha! If that didn’t help you feel better maybe these words will help: This is: Scripture Prayer from Romans

Father, we praise You, even in the midst of this tribulation we are going through in our lives, because we know that suffering gives us patience, and through patience we gain experience, and through experiencing Your faithfulness we have greater hope. It is Hope that makes us not ashamed of sharing with others the Good News of the Gospel. Father, help us to be patient in this tribulation by continuing to pray to You about it. Help us to remember those who are in need and minister to them. Help us to show love to those who would be our enemies, by treating them as we would want them to treat us, so that some may be saved. Help us Lord, to overcome evil with good! For the time is drawing closer and now it is high time to awake out of our sleep! The night is far spent and the Day is at hand. Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the name of Jesus! Take our fears for today and our worries about tomorrow, where we are (in our circumstances) – whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, and help us to know that nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God. Because of our Lord’s sacrifice on our behalf and because we have trusted Him to save us He has set His seal of the Holy Spirit upon us to bring us safely to Heaven! Amen

**DAY TWO.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)**

CHRISTIAN MARTYRS

Scripture Reading taken from the Chronological Bible: Matt. 24:4-14; Mk. 13:5-13; Lk. 21:8-19: “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of Me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. All men will hate you because of Me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

I read in a Christian magazine the other day that every 5 minutes a Christian is killed for his faith in Jesus Christ. I realize that there are lots of other statistics out there on the number of Muslims, Buddhists, and of course, Jews, who are also killed for their beliefs as well. But, for our common interests as Christians...I felt saddened by this statistic. Most of us do not have to fear for our lives because of being a Christian. But, perhaps, that too will change before long. Getting the gospel message out there can always cause those who hate us to try to stop us. There are already some legislature and movements against Christianity here in America, as most of us are aware. We are fast losing our freedoms as never before. Whatever it is that is coming, to cause us to turn on each other, or to turn each other in, let us be on our guard. I think of the Holocaust, and further back the Crusades, and it seems that these terrible times of persecution were surely the very worst. But, then we read that there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. This could be in the past, but I know that Jesus was concerned about all of us future generations knowing what would happen before His return, because He knew what would be coming. I have to ask myself if I have the strength of my convictions to withstand persecution such as so many others have done. But I know that just as in our scripture about thinking of what to say, we are comforted by knowing that the Holy Spirit will give us the words, I know that He will be with me and will be my strength and my courage as well.

Prayer: Father, how I pray for all of us who are believers, to strengthen our faith and courage through the Holy Spirit, so that we will be ready for whatever is coming, and watch and pray for Your coming! Amen

**DAY THREE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)**

THERE WILL BE FALSE MESSIAHS

Scripture Reading taken from the Chronological Bible: Matt. 24:15-28; Mk. 13:14-23; Lk. 21:20-22: “So when you see standing in the Holy Place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its’ desolation is near. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, “Look, here is the Christ!” or, “There He is!” do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets shall appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.For as the lightening that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

We are taking one day at a time here, and I like it that way, don't you? In studying the end times, sometimes, it is better to not try to put too much information on your plate at once. The false Christs that scripture mentions could be the Anti-Christ, or is talking about all of the people today who are practicing to deceive with lying wonders and vain babblings! I just know that there have been people in the past who have tried to impress us with their charismatic ways and turned out to be false. I have never heard of anyone who actually called themselves Jesus. But I have heard of those who believe that they are completely and totally complete within themselves and think that they are a pretty good replacement for a god. They deny God's power and all of His Glory they want for themselves. To me, that is being false, even to themselves. It would seem to me, meditating on the above scriptures, that these warnings seem to be relating to what will happen to the Jews, or those who are referred to as Israel, for this surely is what seems to be foremost in the news these days, as the world seems to be pressuring Israel and threatening her, and even though her people are already scattered upon the face of the earth, there is an ingathering happening now as well. Interestingly, Jesus ends this portion of His discourse with the statement that assures us that there will be no secret coming, everyone will see Him just as they would lightening in the sky.

Prayer: Lord, I thank You for this day that You have given so generously to me. I want to take pleasure in the simple things all around me, and the wonderful knowledge of Your word within me, that You have shown me and all of us who have accepted You as our Savior. We have been so gifted with the Holy Spirit, and He is so diligent in teaching us Your words of truth. In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY FOUR.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN

Scripture Reading taken from the Chronological Bible: Matt. 24:29-35; Mk. 13:24-31;
Lk.21:23-33(shortened) Adding (Living) Rev.6:12-17

“Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its’ light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Editor’s note: this is May 1, 2013—NASA has projected that in the next 3 years that there will be blood-moons (moon eclipses where the moon is blood-red, and a complete solar eclipse in 2015; check this out for yourselves in case I am mistaken) It certainly merits our utmost attention, in light of this prediction of the sun turning black and the moon appearing as blood: “I watched as he broke the sixth seal and there was a vast earthquake; and the sun became dark like black cloth, and the moon was blood-red. Then the stars of heaven appeared to be falling to earth—like green fruit from fig trees buffeted by mighty winds. And the starry heavens disappeared as though rolled up like a scroll and taken away, and every mountain shook and shifted. (all mankind) hid themselves in caves and rocks of the mountains and cried, “Fall on us! Hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne, and from the anger of the Lamb!”

He does not want to frighten us by His detailed descriptions of how it will be, but because He loves us so much, He wants every one of us to be Awake! Be aware—and Watch and Pray! We need to be ready.....that’s #1; we need to get others ready.....that’s #2we will be so busy getting ready and getting others ready there won’t be any time to get sidetracked and start getting “in the flesh” and doing anything that displeases God, that’s #3.

Getting ready. How does one get ready for His return? That was why He gave us the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Jesus gave His disciples all of this information, just five days before His crucifixion. He was facing the worst day of His life, but He cared more about helping His disciples to become prepared for all that was ahead. Even though He knew that these events were far in the future, He had to tell them, so that they would be recorded in the Bible for all of us in the future; that is now. Isn’t He awesome!

Prayer: Oh Holy Lord! I bow down before You in humility and repentance. I want to be ready for Your return. Even if I die before that great day, it will be my great day! When I see You, either in death or in Your coming, I must be ready. Fill me with Your love and compassion that I may go out and plant those seeds we talked about earlier, and water the young plants, and help in the fruit-bearing as well as the fruit-picking. Help me to not waste any more time, for I know the time is short. In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY FIVE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT THAT DAY

Scripture Reading taken from the Chronological Bible: Matt. 24:36-44; Mk. 13:32-33

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven; nor the Son; but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this—If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.”Matt. 24:43-51(living version) “Just as a man can prevent trouble from thieves by keeping watch for them, so you can avoid trouble by always being ready for my unannounced return. Are you a wise and faithful servant of the Lord? Have I given you the task of managing my household, to feed my children day by day? Blessings on you if I return and find you faithfully doing your work. I will put such faithful ones in charge of everything I own! But if you are evil and say to yourself, ‘My Lord won’t be coming for awhile,’ and begin oppressing your fellow servants, partying and getting drunk, your Lord will arrive unannounced and unexpected, and severely whip you and send you off to the judgment of the hypocrites; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

There has been speculation on when that day will be, ever since the Lord left us the first time. He is pretty clever, isn’t He? Since no one knows when it will happen, then everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus will faithfully carry out their duties and keep watching and praying and wondering about all these things. That’s where He wants us, isn’t it? It keeps us hoping for that day, knowing it will be here soon—keeps us diligent to keep on-task. Also, it keeps us humble, not knowing too much, and relying fully on Him. We can then keep our hearts in readiness, by feeding upon His hidden manna, keeping ourselves pure from the world, and ready by our complete dedication to Him. The illustrations help, don’t they? To help us picture ourselves in these scenarios, then we can better envision what our role is and our purpose and everyone needs an incentive to work harder, and that would be our reward, eternal life with Him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to keep on-task. Right now, I feel that my task is basically to finish this Devotional Book because I believe that it will be given to those who will be encouraged by Your words and helped by understanding Your word to them better. This is my way of witnessing and mentoring to others. But I know that you have called me to take care of my brothers and sisters in Christ, and I hope that I can do more in that area, as well. Amen

DAY SIX.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

WHEN CHRISTIANS DIE

Scripture reading from the Living Version: 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-10

“And now dear brothers I want you to know what happens to a Christian when he dies so that when it happens you will not be full of sorrow, as those are who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and then came back to life again, we can also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with Him all the Christians who have died. I can tell you this directly from the Lord; that we who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet Him ahead of those who are in their graves. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a mighty shout and with the soul-stirring cry of the Archangel and the Great Trumpet call of God. And the believers who are dead will be the first to rise to meet the Lord in the air and remain with Him forever. So comfort and encourage each other with this news.” “When is all this going to happen? I really don’t need to say anything about that dear brothers, for you know perfectly well that no one knows. That day of the Lord will come unexpectedly—like a thief in the night. When people are saying, ‘All is well, everything is quiet and peaceful’—then, all of a sudden, disaster will fall upon them as suddenly as a woman’s birth pains begin when her child is born. And these people will not be able to get away anywhere—there will be no place to hide. But, dear brothers, you are not in the dark about these things, and you won’t be surprised as by a thief when that day of the Lord comes. For you are all children of the light and of the day, and do not belong to darkness and night. So be on your guard and not asleep like others. Watch for His return and stay sober. Night is the time for sleep and the time when people get drunk. But let us who live in the light keep sober, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the happy hope of salvation. For God has not chosen to pour out his anger upon us, but to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ; He died for us so that we can live with Him forever, whether we are dead or alive at the time of His return. “

Praise You Lord for reassuring us that Your plans of destruction do not include those who belong to You, but only for the wicked. Most Christians believe that we will be “caught up” or raptured, before any of the tribulation begins. But, there are others who believe that there will be Christians who will still remain and will be the last witnesses, and the last martyrs. We are given some very good information in these epistles to the church in Thessalonica. Even back then, people were looking for His coming, and asking many questions. Paul has written the above scriptures and many more, about this great event. In the above scripture, we are assured of one thing: when Christ comes again, He will bring all of those who have died with Him, if they have died “in the Lord.” I think of all the scriptures about being “asleep” when referring to those already dead, and realize that this must be referring to the sleep or rest of the physical body, but we will get into that a little later.

Prayer: Father, thank you is not a big enough praise for You, for letting us in on most all of Your plans, not keeping us in the dark, but exposing them to the Light. Praise You, in Jesus Name, Amen

DAY SEVEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIRST WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

GOD'S ITENERARY

Scripture Reading from the Living Version—2Thess. 2:1-12

“And now, what about the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our being gathered together to meet Him? Please don't be upset and excited, dear brothers, by the rumor that this Day of the Lord has already begun. If you hear of people having visions and special messages from God about this, or letters that are suppose to have come from me, don't believe them. Don't be carried away and deceived regardless of what they say. For that day will not come until two things happen: FIRST—there will be a time of great rebellion against God, and then (SECOND) the “man of rebellion” will come (anti-christ)-the son of hell! He will defy every god there is and tear down every other object of adoration and worship. He will go in and sit as God in the Temple of God, claiming that he himself is God. Don't you remember that I told you this when I was with you? And you know what is keeping him from being here already; for he can come only when his time is ready. As for the work that this man of rebellion and hell will do when he comes, it is already going on, but he himself will not come until the one who is holding him back steps out of the way. Then this wicked one will appear, whom the Lord Jesus will burn up with the breath of His mouth and destroy by His presence when He returns. This man of sin will come as Satan's tool, full of satanic power, and will trick everyone with strange demonstrations, and will do great miracles. He will completely fool those who are on their way to hell because they have said ‘no’ to the Truth; they have refused to believe it and love it, and let it save them, so God will allow them to believe lies with all their hearts, and all of them will be justly judged for believing falsehood, refusing the Truth, and enjoying their sins. “

The time of great rebellion seems to have already started, ever since prayer was taken out of the schools, and later, prayer is being taken out of our public gatherings in many instances, abortions have been made legal in some states, we see mass killings everywhere, and people challenging Christian messages such as the Ten Commandments being displayed in public buildings, and on and on we could go. There are many things that seem to be upside down and backwards in our world today. But it has been a gradual decay, hasn't it? It just seems that in the last 20 years things have speeded up to a maddening pace, partly because of the increase in technology, we are hearing more and more because of this, our “knowledge is increasing and we are racing to and fro” as the Bible puts it. This was part of the description of how it will be in the last days. The man of rebellion will come before Jesus comes. That is why we need to be alert and watching, so that we will not be deceived by him or his followers.

Prayer: Lord, it is very sobering to think on all of these terrible scenarios of what lies ahead. But many of the prophecies of the end times are already going on, and some how we don't seem to be that alarmed. Could it be that we are like the frog in the pan of water on the stove who didn't feel it getting warmer and warmer, because he kept “adapting” and he finally got cooked. Please give me discernment to know what is going on around me in society and try my best to speak up for what is right and point out what is wrong! Amen

CHAPTER SIX

“THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS”

JUNE DEVOTIONAL

SECOND WEEK –

“THE VIRGINS AND THE MARRIAGE”

DAY EIGHT.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

SEPARATING THE FOOLISH FROM THE WISE

Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:24-29; 24: 37-42; 25:1-4, 31-33

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it fell. And great was its’ fall.” “The world will be at ease—banquets and parties and weddings—just as it was in Noah’s time before the sudden coming of the flood; people wouldn’t believe what was going to happen until the flood actually arrived and took them all away. SO SHALL MY COMING BE! Two men will be working together in the fields, and one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be going about their household tasks; one will be taken, the other left. So be prepared, for you don’t know what Day your Lord is Coming!” “The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. But only five of them were wise enough to fill their lamps with oil, while the other five were foolish and forgot.” “But when I, the Messiah, shall come in My glory, and all the angels with Me, then I shall sit upon My throne of glory. And all the nations shall be gathered before Me. And I will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and place the sheep on My right hand, and the goats on My left.”

In the footprint picture of the bridesmaids, we see that there are only five. Do you think that these were the wise ones or the foolish ones? According to the other scriptures above, they could be either the wise man or the foolish man; the ones taken or the ones left, the sheep or the goats, and by the way, they could be either the bridesmaids or the virgins—(our different versions of the Bible cause us to study deeper). I would like us to embark on an adventure, discovering the mystery behind all of these various scenarios; and coming face to face with the Truth of God’s Word. I hope to be able to lead us all into greater light on this whole subject. But you have to promise me that you will lay down all of your preconceived ideas about it and be willing to stretch your imaginative faith. Even though I have no formal education in the field of theology, I have been a student of the Bible for over 45 years and in this time I have learned much from others’ teachings, and also some revelations that I believe to be straight from the Holy Spirit, the one who leads us to all Truth. Are you ready to start on our adventure? Yes, we certainly need to start with prayer.

Father, You are our source of all wisdom, knowledge, guidance, and council. We lean on You now, to bring us into Your Haven of Rest, where we want to just follow You into realms of truth where we have not been before. Protect our integrity with Your love and mercy leading us to paths of righteousness we have not tread upon before. Let each in our own way, discover for ourselves, what You would have us learn. In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY NINE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

DON'T BE FOOLISH!

Scripture Reading: 2Pet. 3:3-4; 2Pet. 2:12, 20; Matt. 25:5-8

“First I want to remind you that in the last days there will come scoffers who will do every wrong they can think of, and laugh at the truth. This will be their line of argument; ‘So Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? He’ll never come! Why, as far back as anyone can remember everything has remained exactly as it was since the first day of creation.’ “But false teachers are fools—no better than animals. They do whatever they feel like, born only to be caught and killed, they laugh at the terrifying powers of the underworld which they know so little about, and they will be destroyed along with all the demons and powers of hell.” “And when a person has escaped from the wicked ways of the world by learning about our Lord Jesus Christ, and then gets tangled up with sin and becomes its slave again, he is worse off than he was before.” “So when the bridegroom was delayed, they lay down to rest until midnight, when they were roused by the shout, ‘The bridegroom is coming! Come out and welcome him!’ All the girls jumped up and trimmed their lamps. Then the five who hadn’t any oil begged the others to share with them, for their lamps were going out.”

These are all examples of foolish people who were the bad examples and probably what the goats represented. They are worthless to the Lord! They are also causing a lot of trouble for other people as well. In the first example we see them trying to discourage others in their hope of Christ’s coming. In the second example, they are teaching, I am assuming, in the church, to laugh at the powers of the underworld. Have you heard a good joke lately about satan? Or ‘the devil made me do it’? Would that be a good example of what they do? Then there is the person who has learned about Jesus and has even put away their wicked ways, but then becomes entangled in sin again. That is the same kind of thing that happened to the person who heard the Word-Seed in the parable of the Sower and received it with gladness but soon got entangled in the things of the world and withered and died. The last illustration is our foolish virgins who didn’t remember to fill their lamps with oil, and when the bridegroom came, they were not prepared. We must continue searching scriptures to see why they were called foolish and the others wise. Perhaps the foolish ones were preoccupied with other things, they perhaps were thinking of the wedding and trying to decide on what to wear or how to fix their hair, instead of preparing their hearts for the marriage, instead of being very prayerful about whether or not they loved the bridegroom enough. Were they unprepared in other ways that are simply hidden from view in this parable but are still there? Our mystery deepens as we contemplate what deeper meaning that parable could have!

Are you prepared for His return? What do you think that you need to do to get prepared?

Prayer: Father, there are so many hidden mysteries in Your word and while Jesus was on the earth, He gave us so many clues to investigate on our own; to keep us excited about His Words to us, and to keep us searching for deeper truths. Thank You, Amen

DAY TEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

BE WISE

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:2, 4-5; 2 Pet. 3:7, 11-13; Matt. 25: 9-10

“Dear friends, God the Father chose you long ago and knew you would become His children. And the Holy Spirit has been at work in your hearts, cleansing you with the Blood of Jesus Christ and making you to please Him. May God bless you richly and grant you increasing freedom from all anxiety and fear.” “And God has reserved for His children the priceless gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in His mighty Power, will make sure that you get there safely to receive it, because you are trusting Him. It will be yours in that coming last day for all to see.” “And God has commanded that the earth and the heavens be stored away for a great bonfire at the judgment day, when ungodly men will perish. “ “And so since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives we should be living! You should look forward to that day and hurry it along—the day when God will set the heavens on fire, and the heavenly bodies will melt and disappear in flames. But we are looking forward to God’s promise of new heavens and a new earth afterwards, where there will be only goodness.” “But the (wise virgins) replied: ‘We haven’t enough (oil). Go instead to the shops and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were gone, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with Him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked.”

There are many scriptures that speak of being wise and having wisdom. But, for our purposes here these scriptures spoke out as showing the wisdom of trusting in God, and knowing His promises of eternal life and the motivation of continuing on in godly fear because of the end times ending in fire. We must, here again, stay on-task; trusting Jesus to save us through His Blood which cleanses us from sin--#1; then trusting Him to free us from anxiety and fear--#2; then trusting Him to get us to heaven safe and sound and we will live in the realm known as “new heavens and new earth.” That’s #3--That is the ultimate WISDOM! To follow after all of these things that God promises when we trust Christ to the very end! Romans 8: 6-8 puts it quite bluntly: “Following after the Holy Spirit leads to life and peace, but following after the old nature leads to death, because the old sinful nature within us is against God. It never did obey God’s laws and it never will! That’s why those who are still under the control of their old sinful selves, bent on following their old evil desires, can never please God.”

Prayer: Precious Holy Spirit, thank you so much for coming to live in my heart, for you are the comforter, and you comfort me so many times, when I become anxious about tomorrow and even give way to fear, You come and tell me the Truth—that God loves me and will take me to a safe Haven of Rest and feed me Hidden Manna. I want to please You, because You love me so much, Love, your servant. Amen

DAY ELEVEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

WHY THE FOCUS ON OIL?

Scripture Reading: Ex. 30:22-33; Lev.8:10-12;
Num. 11:16-29(NKJV)Scriptures copied from the chapter on the“Living
Water” (to save space it has been summarized).
1 Sam. 16:13

"Moreover, the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "Also take for yourself quality spices. And you shall make from these a Holy Anointing Oil. With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; and all that it contains. You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to Me as priests. And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying; 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition. It is holy and it shall be holy to you." "So the Lord said to Moses; Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, and then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again." "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him (David) in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah."

In our study on the Holy Spirit in April, we learned much about the anointing oil and how people who were anointed with this oil were empowered by the Holy Spirit to prophesy and also to become courageous leaders. However, in the parable of the virgins, the focus is on oil for their lamps. The girls needed it to have enough light to find the bridegroom in the dark. Now one could spiritualize this parable and come to the understanding that the oil was symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:6-11 tells us blatantly that if we do not have the Holy Spirit we are not even Christians. In Eph. 4:30 we are told that the Holy Spirit seals us for the day of redemption. So we see that this is certainly a possibility, that the oil would represent the Spirit. I do believe that this is certainly part of the message, but from all of the other parables that Jesus mentioned that were connected to this one, there are other things to consider as well. In the NIV version of the parable of the virgins, Jesus tells the foolish virgins, "I never knew you!" Oh! Now I think that we have found the "defining moment!" The girls needed the oil to guide them to their bridegroom, getting to him was the all important goal. The foolish girls were not "enlightened" enough to recognize him, and perhaps felt that they needed to do more "studying" to come to that truth. But the sheep hear His voice and come to Him when He calls without hesitation. Our relationship with Christ is what it is all about. We can have the Holy Spirit and still not have a close relationship with the Lord.
Right?

Prayer: Oh Lord, I know you through Your voice in my heart, and Your word speaks to me clearly, but help me now to not take it for granted that You know me. Help me to reach You and share with You all of my deepest thoughts and intents of my heart.
Amen

DAY TWELVE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE WEDDING BANQUET MYSTERY

Scripture Reading: Luke 14:12-14

“ Then Jesus said to His host, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” When one of those at the table with Him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God.” Jesus replied, “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’ The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ Sir, the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

I will divide this subject up between today and tomorrow because there is a lot here to digest. The parable of the virgins is talking about going to the Wedding Banquet in one version (Living), and in the NIV it is the Wedding, however you really cannot have one without the other. It is also talking about the Bridegroom and it is pretty obvious who He is. When the Virgins are interpreted as the Bridesmaids it is hard to understand whether they are the Bride or the friends of the Bride. Perhaps that is the point. The above parable is talking about the Wedding Banquet. Wouldn't it be terrible if we lived our Christian lives down here, but lost out when it was time to meet the Lord and go with Him into the Wedding? This is why it is so important to grasp these truths with all of our minds and understand them with our hearts and believe what they are saying so that we can live out our transformed lives with all of the meaning that Jesus wants us to have of what it is all about. I think it is “key” to consider the fact in the parable above of the importance of who to invite. We know one of the biggest challenges in preparing for a wedding is the invitations. Who do we invite? We must be busy inviting others to the wedding. Remember, here, that the people who were all invited, did not want to come and made excuses. Unbelievable! We all realize the spiritual implication of those who were given the message of the Gospel of Good News and still did not “come in” they didn't accept the salvation of God, they were too preoccupied with worldly things. So, now, Jesus tells us we must go out to those who are the most lowly, needy, undesirable, and even down right disgusting! But He knows best, let Him lead us through His Word to us. Getting back to preparing for the Wedding, and making out the “Guest List”, perhaps we need to take a step or two back and realize that God has given the invitation to All Men, “Come All Ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Rest for the weary, food for the hungry, peace for the troubled, etc. Jesus couldn't say it any other way, someone who doesn't take him up on his offer, has got to be foolish. Tomorrow we will see another parable about a wedding banquet with a different twist to it.

Prayer: Lord, help us all to see with our spiritual eyes what all You are showing us. Amen

DAY THIRTEEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

WHO ARE THE TEN VIRGINS?

Scripture Reading: Matt. 22:1-14

“Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The Kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then He sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner; My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready: Come to the wedding banquet.’ But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

It is all important to know who the ten virgins represent in the parable of the virgins. They could represent the “Bride of Christ” but, there is a problem because they were not all accepted. But when we consider the parables we have been reading about, these people had been invited, and were all on the guest list, but some made a decision not to “show up.” So, my assumption is that they are the wise and foolish Christians. Is this not what the sheep and the goats, and the wheat and the tares, represent?? We talked about the bride and groom making out the guest list yesterday, and today we need to focus on the “Wedding Clothes” due to our parable taking us in that direction. We know that the bride usually takes great care in choosing her wedding gown and it is usually quite exquisite and expensive. Our apparel as the bride of Christ will be spotlessly white linen, with no wrinkles or flaws. The man in the story who got “kicked out” was not part of that special group of people the Bible calls the “Bride.” He had not “put on” Christ. We must realize again what was mentioned earlier, that Christ must know us. When we consider whether or not to marry a person, isn’t the most important questions we can ask ourselves is; ‘Do I love him/her enough for a lifetime commitment to them? Do they really know me? Do I really know them? In knowing Christ and He knowing us—all goes right back to His teaching on abiding in Him and He in us.

Prayer: Lord, how I want to abide in You, to live in Your love, to be cared for and comforted by You, thank you for being my bridegroom. Amen

DAY FOURTEEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....SECOND WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

WHO IS THE BRIDEGROOM?

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:1-4; Matt. 9:14-17; John 3:25-31

“Or do you not know, brethren, (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.” **“Then the disciples of John came to Him saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins and both are preserved.”** “Then there arose a dispute between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him! John answered and said, ”A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth; He who comes from heaven is above all.”

Our role as the “Bride” is to get ready for the “Bridegroom.” He is coming. All men have been invited to attend the “Wedding Banquet” at the end of time. But there are specific things (God’s laws) which determine who will be chosen to attend in the final analysis. We are given in the Word of God, His blueprint for mankind—a road to redemption—the way of salvation is spelled out for all men to come and dine at His Table. If only people would understand what He requires so that they would not be rejected when it is determined to be too late! It is not too late – yet.

I hope that these Devotionals will bring light to everyone who has been in the dark, and will guide them along the path of knowledge of the Truth to the Only Begotten Son of God, The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and the Bridegroom of the Bride.

Prayer: Oh Lord, lead us on that straight and narrow path – that Lovely Road to Eternal Life – to Jesus our one and only Way of Salvation. Amen

CHAPTER SIX

“THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS”

JUNE DEVOTIONAL

THIRD WEEK –

“CONNECTING THE DOTS”

DAY FIFTEEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE JEWISH WEDDING CUSTOMS

In order for us in the twenty-first century to understand the language of the Bible, the analogies of scripture, and the parables of Jesus, we must first understand some basic Jewish Wedding customs. Since Jesus was Jewish, and always observed all of the laws and customs of His day and culture, He spoke many times in a way that was familiar to the common person of that day and time, but not so understandable to us. In God's view of things, Israel was His wife and she committed adultery by worshiping other gods. So, He sent His Son to not only take care of the sin problem for all time, but also, and something many do not understand, He sent Him to find a wife, that bride, that would not be God's Bride but Christ's. We have read much scripture that talked about the Church being Christ's body, and that just like in an earthly marriage; the man loves his body and cherishes it (speaking of the wife), so Jesus does the Church (speaking of his bride.) The bridegroom, who is betrothed to the bride, has many things to do before the wedding day. He has thus far gone to the parents of the bride and asked for her hand in marriage, and they have drank a cup of wine together to seal their pledge and agreement. Then the wonderful celebration, and now he must build a house for his bride. This may take quite awhile, depending on how much money he has to build it with and if he has any helpers or not. Cottages in those days were usually extensions onto the parents' homes. When he has finally finished it, and is ready to come to take his bride home with him, he sends out messengers to announce his return. The parable of the ten bridesmaids/virgins is all about this Jewish wedding custom. In the custom of the Jews, when a man and woman want to be married, there is a year-long engagement period. The betrothal vows are taken, and a marriage covenant is also signed. There are many changes in the marriage customs since the day when Christ was on earth, and I believe we need to realize that the way that it was then, is the way that we should look at the correspondence in scripture referring to these observances taking place before marriage. Speaking of the old customs, back then the betrothal vows were taken so seriously that if a couple changed their minds it required them to go through a divorce. This is a lifetime commitment, and not to be entered into lightly, so therefore, they are betrothed but not yet wed, there is no sexual activity, only getting to know one another in all other ways. They will save that most sacred moment for the wedding night, when the consummation takes place. While the happy couple are in the private chambers, the wedding banquet may still be going on outside. The friends of the bridegroom hear his shout "It is finished!" or "It is accomplished!" The celebration is even more boisterous at this time, knowing that the wedding has been consummated and God's blood covenant with the man and wife is now sealed.

We have been given many clues in our second week of study on this subject. Now let us go forward and use discernment and lean on God's Wisdom, His Word, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help us to connect the dots—which are God's marvelous mysteries revealed in His Word.

Scripture Prayer from Romans: Thank You Lord for convincing us that NOTHING can separate us from Your Love! Death can't and life can't, the angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep Your love away! Praise to You, who is able to establish us according to the gospel of the Lord by preaching the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began; now made manifest by the prophetic scriptures made known to all nations, by the commandment of the everlasting God – for obedience to the faith and to You, Father God, Who alone is wise, be the Glory forever through Jesus Christ Our Lord. AMEN

DAY SIXTEEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE BRIDEGROOM'S PROPOSAL

Scripture Reading: John 14:1-6; Rev. 3:20

“Let not your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s House are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there you may be also, and where I go, you know the way.” Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, “I am the Way; the Truth; and the Life. No One comes to the Father except through Me.”

“Behold! I stand at the door and knock! If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

When Jesus spoke the words recorded in the book of John, He wasn’t just speaking to His disciples, He spoke to everyone who would read these words in the future. He has prepared a place for us to live with Him. In the spiritual sense, He is living with us now, in our “hearts” which means our lives, our innermost beings, if we have opened the door and let Him come in. The vows that were spoken at the beginning of the betrothal were promises given by the Bridegroom to His Bride. He vowed His love and undying devotion. The Bride vowed to love and cherish Him; honoring and obeying Him as her husband. We must do the same, as His Bride. Have we given Him our word that we will follow Him, and trust Him no matter what, to honor and obey Him from this day forward? Our vows go beyond that of an earthly couple who only vow until death. Our vows reach clear into eternity! We are betrothed to our beloved! He is preparing a home for us, and will return to take us to His home as His Bride and Wife. I was thinking about what the ring signified. It is in a circle, signifying “never ending” and there are several ancient ceremonies involving actually cutting the finger all around to eventually form a scar that resembles a ring. But in scripture I find no spiritual significance of the ring other than it being a token of everlasting devotion. The token that we will receive as Christians, after we are together with our Bridegroom will be a crown for the good deeds that we have done while on earth. Jesus’ crown of thorns was what He wore to show us His undying devotion, He wore it Himself because He was taking our place on that cross. Until He comes for us, in a literal, physical way, we have Him already in our innermost being in the form of the Holy Spirit. Our love must grow in this time, for us to be truly ready for His return. I have mentioned several times about what a person would be most concerned with when contemplating marriage and the thing that came to me was whether or not we loved that person enough.

Ask yourself: Do I have enough oil in my lamp to see the light of day to find Him even in the Dark? Do I love Him with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength? Will He recognize me, as His? Does He truly KNOW me?

Prayer: My Lord, My Bridegroom, come to me, I need you to speak those words of comfort to me once again. My Lord, My Bridegroom, You have vowed your love to me, and I have vowed my devotion and love to you, but I need to renew my mind with all the beautiful words of love and promises in Your Word, to woo me again to You, to call unto me again, my beloved, I need You this moment to come to me and hold me in Your arms and comfort me with Your Love. Amen

DAY SEVENTEEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE BRIDE MAKES HERSELF READY

Scripture reading: Rev. 2:10-11: “Remain faithful, even when facing death, and I will give you the Crown of Life—an unending, glorious future! Let everyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. **HE WHO IS VICTORIOUS SHALL NOT BE HURT BY THE SECOND DEATH.**” Verse 17—“Every one who is victorious shall eat of the hidden manna, the secret nourishment from heaven; and I will give to each a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one else knows except the one receiving it!” Verses 26-29: “To everyone who overcomes—who to the very end keeps on doing things that please Me—I will give power over the nations. You will rule them with a rod of iron just as My Father gave Me the authority to rule them; they will be shattered like a pot of clay that is broken into tiny pieces. And I will give you the Morning Star!” Rev. 3:5: “Everyone who conquers will be clothed in white, and I will not erase his name from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and His angels that he is Mine.” Verse 11-12: Look! I am coming soon! Hold tightly to the little strength you have—so that no one will take away your crown. As for the one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God. He will be secure, and will go out no more, and I will write My God’s Name on him, and he will be a citizen in the City of My God—the New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from My God; and he will have my New Name inscribed upon him!” Verse 21: “I will let every one who conquers sit beside Me on My throne, just as I took My place with My Father on His throne when I had conquered.”

These are just some of the rewards that await us in Heaven, which we can be encouraged by, to continue following Jesus. But let us back up just a little and think about what He requires of us, now. What is it that distinguishes us as being a part of “the Church”? There were things that we did along the way that were “requirements” for membership into that Church—receiving Jesus as our Savior, going through the baptismal waters, partaking of the bread and cup. These were all outward signs that we have put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and are willing to obey, honor, love and cherish Him. Now, in studying the Jewish wedding customs, I found some really awesome “DOTS”! There was to be a period of fasting by the couple signifying their sorrow for sin and their desire for a “New Beginning.” Also, there was an observance of each one, separately, immersing themselves into the ritual bath called the “mitveh” which is a bath of natural waters instituted for the purpose of “sanctification”.

Prayer: Oh Heavenly Father, what awesome things await us in eternity! But, Oh Lord, help us to understand all of Your requirements of Your Bride; to be found in the Book of Life, as a victorious, conquering overcomer in life right now. Help us to connect these dots that were given today, bringing much more understanding to each of these “rituals” which, as members of Jesus’ Body, we have experienced and participated in, Praise You, My Lord and King. Amen

DAY EIGHTEEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE WEDDING TAKES PLACE

Scripture Reading: Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:6-9

“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water by the Word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish, so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord does the church, for we are members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns, Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the Wedding of the Lamb has come. And His Bride has made herself ready. Fine Linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Then the angel said to me (John), ‘Write, blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! These are the true words of God.”

In the traditional Jewish wedding customs, the groom has been off preparing a wedding chamber for the bride. When He comes to take her off to this bridal chamber; they are to spend the honeymoon here for seven days. This is the time when we finally will be married to our Groom. We will be married to the Lamb. We will have a Wedding Gown, pure and white made of Linen. In studying the wedding customs, I came across the part that explained more fully what certain items in the wedding actually stood for. The veiled bride walked toward her bridegroom escorted by her parents; the bridal procession to this point in the ceremony represents her walk to the new home that her groom has prepared. As they proceed to the front of the aisle the couple stood under the bridal canopy, signifying their new home together. Let us romanticize how our bridegroom has done everything that is needed before the wedding: After He made the New Covenant, drank the Cup, and paid the price, He said “It is finished!” and He made His way to His Father’s house, and went to prepare a place for His Bride, so that where He was, she could be also. He promised His Bride that He would return for her. He would come suddenly and surprise her and take her away to their place of abode and have a wedding party following, where there would be a wedding and a wedding feast. While we are here on the earth awaiting our bridegroom’s return, we are to keep ourselves pure from the world. We wear a veil not seen by the world, for we are hidden with Christ behind this veil, as virgin brides-to-be. A veil separates and covers. Our ‘virginity’ is based on our pure lifestyle, our obedience to Christ’s commandments not to sin and if we do sin, we can come to Christ and ask His forgiveness. And yet we are not to be idle, there is much to be done in the world, and to keep up our strength we must partake of the Hidden Manna and the Living Water. We must read over our covenant with Him and refresh ourselves and keep ever in remembrance our vows to Him and His promises to us and His reassurance of His Love and as a token of His Love He has given us the precious gift of the Holy Spirit, to be our comforter until He comes.

Prayer: Oh My Precious Bridegroom – Help us be ever mindful of our vows of commitment and love that we have spoken to You, and we will continue trusting every promise that You have given to us as a token of Your love until that Day of Days – our wedding day. Amen

DAY NINETEEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

JESUS'S ITENERARY

Scripture Reading: Matt. 3:13-17; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.’”

While on earth, Jesus did many things that “links” to what we are learning about the wedding customs of that day. Jesus was baptized – and this of course, was for an example to us to follow – but also as He said, it was to fulfill all righteousness – it was for sanctification (His for our sakes and ours for His). We have learned that the couple to be married immersed themselves in the pure waters for the sake of “sanctification.” Then Jesus went into the wilderness and fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. We learned that the betrothed couple was to fast (and I am assuming, pray) contemplating the very serious matter of matrimony, but in the custom it was said that fasting signified their sorrow for sin and their desire for a new beginning. Then there is the very wonderful explanation by Jesus at the Last Supper (could this be the Wedding Banquet in type?) when He explained that from then on we are to partake of the bread & the cup in remembrance of His New Covenant that would be signed & sealed with His own Blood. Of course, this would remind one of the marriage covenant of the bride and groom, when entering into matrimony. We, probably, have all gone through all of these activities (baptism, prayer and fasting, partaking of the Lord’s Supper) as we have traveled on our journey, following Jesus, but probably didn’t realize all of the symbolism that is now being revealed. But we all are growing and changing from “glory” to “glory” upon our journey. It is the same sensation I have experienced when realization comes when meditating on the abundant life—it is something I already have.

Open up your heart and mind to realize all of the spiritual and symbolic meanings of everything in God’s Word! There is no way to even wrap our arms around it – too vast and abundant for us to even take hold of!

Prayer: Father, I praise You and Thank You so much for opening up my spiritual eyes to understand more of Your promises to me. I feel so Rich & Full & Blessed! Amen!

DAY TWENTY.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE BRIDEGROOM'S PRAYER

Scripture Reading: John 17

“Father, the time has come. Glorify your son that your son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And, now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours, you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They know with certainty that I came from you; and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them, I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one; I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

Amen

DAY TWENTY-ONE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....THIRD WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

IN CONCLUSION....

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-7; James 3:13, 17

“All honor to God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; for it is His boundless mercy that has given us the privilege of being born again, so that we are now members of God’s own family. Now we live in the hope of eternal life because Christ rose again from the dead. And God has reserved for His children the priceless gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in His mighty power, will make sure that you get there safely to receive it, because you are trusting Him. It will be yours in that coming last day for all to see. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though the going is rough for a while down here. These trials are only to test your faith, to see whether or not it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests gold and purifies it—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold, so if your faith remains strong after being tried in the test tube of fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day of His return.” ”If you are wise, live a life of steady goodness, so that only good deeds will pour forth. And if you don’t brag about them, then you will be truly wise! But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure and full of quiet gentleness. Then it is peace-loving and courteous. It allows discussion and is willing to yield to others; it is full of mercy and good deeds.”

When our Bridegroom comes for us may we all be ready to go “out” to meet Him – we will need to have our oil lamps lit – apparently the analogy is pertaining to having “enough” oil – is it Faith? Good deeds? Holy Spirit? Or Relationship? The five foolish virgins went to “buy” oil. Apparently they were able to obtain the oil because then they were knocking on the door (where the Bridegroom and wise virgins were). But, now there was another problem, they were too late. (Don’t wait until tomorrow to get things settled with God) for today is the day of salvation. But then we have one more problem, Jesus’ sharp rebuke, “I do not know you, go away!” (relationships take time, honesty, transparency, trust, loyalty and most of all, love.) Matt. 25:31-46 : “But when I the Messiah shall come in My glory, and all the angels with Me, then I shall sit upon My throne of glory. And all the nations shall be gathered before Me. And I will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and place the sheep at My right hand and the goats at my left.

Then I, the King, shall say to those at my right, ‘Come, blessed of My Father, into the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I was hungry and you fed Me, I was thirsty and you gave Me water, I was a stranger and you invited me into your homes, naked and you clothed Me, sick and in prison, and you visited Me. .. (Vs. 40) For when you did it to these, My brothers, you were doing it to Me! Vs. 41 – “Then I will turn to those on My left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. Vs. 45—When you refused to help the least of these My brothers, you were refusing help to Me.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us all today to see with new eyes and hear with new ears what the Spirit is saying to the Bride. Amen

CHAPTER SIX

“THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS”

JUNE DEVOTIONAL

FOURTH WEEK –

“LINING UP THE SCENARIOS”

DAY TWENTY-TWO.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

THE BOTTOM LINE

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:8-13; Hebrews 9:27-28; Rev. 14:12-16

“You love Him, even though you have never seen Him; though not seeing Him, you trust Him; and even now you are happy with the inexpressible joy that comes from heaven itself. And your further reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of your souls.” Vs. 13: “So now you can look forward soberly and intelligently to more of God’s kindness to you when Jesus Christ returns.” “And just as it was destined that men die only once, and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died only once as an offering for the sins of many people; and he will come again, but not to deal again with our sins. This time he will come bringing salvation to all those who are eagerly and patiently waiting for Him.” “Let this encourage God’s people to endure patiently every trial and persecution, for they are His saints who remain firm to the end in obedience to His commands and trust in Jesus. ..At last the time has come for His martyrs to enter into their full reward. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blest indeed, for now they shall rest from all their toils and trials; for their good deeds follow them to heaven.” Then the scene changed and I saw a white cloud, and someone sitting on it who looked like Jesus, who was called “The Son of Man”, with a crown of solid gold upon His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.....So the one sitting on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the Harvest was gathered in.”

I guess I should do this subject last, but I have to write it when it comes to me. The bottom line is – Jesus’ Coming. This is the key to all prophecy – His coming is what everyone needs to focus on, and not on dates or signs or tribulations etc. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, and do not waver! We have looked all around “His Coming” and talked about where we are, because we do need to analyze our own motives and actions and attitudes, but we are now being directed to the Point to it all—His Coming. We need to ask ourselves this question – What is the Reason for His Coming again? We know the reason for the season of Christmas and His Birth & the wonderful story of redemption, but now as we focus on His Second Coming we must realize what the reason is. We needed a Savior, so He came for that purpose the first time – now He will complete the whole process – It is Harvest Time! The Ingathering will occur! All of the prophecies and promises in scripture will now be fulfilled! Meditating on today’s scriptures will help to enlighten us on His purpose – to bring full and complete salvation to a close or I should say to a brand new beginning! Prayer:

Father, Help us today to focus on You, take away all of our anxiety about today, tomorrow, and eternity. We trust You to take us through whatever happens and believe that our home is going to be our final resting place, that mansion in the sky. We praise and thank you, Amen

DAY TWENTY-THREE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

FULL AND COMPLETE SALVATION

Scripture Readings: 1 Cor. 15:20, 22-23; 51-53; Reference to Rev. 14:12-16 is made in the meditation for today, yesterday's scripture.

“But the fact is that Christ did actually rise from the dead, and has become the first of millions who will come back to life again someday.” “Everyone dies because everyone is related to Adam, being members of his sinful race, and wherever there is sin, death results. But all who are related to Christ will rise again. Each, however, in his own turn. Christ rose first, then, when Christ comes back, all His people will become alive again.” “ But I am telling you this strange and wonderful secret: we shall not all die, but we shall all be given new bodies. It will all happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For there will be a trumpet blast from the sky, and all the Christians who have died will suddenly become alive, with new bodies that will never, never die. Then those who are still alive shall suddenly have new bodies too.”

Our focus is still on Jesus' Coming: Think back to when Jesus ascended. An angel announced to the stunned Apostles that Jesus would return in the same manner that He left them. He left in a cloud, and He will arrive in the clouds. I tried to find instances in Revelation that I could find anything about a cloud; and there were just three; where John saw the vision of the Great Harvester with the Sickle (Rev. 14:14-20); where the angel had his left foot on the earth and his right foot on the sea (Rev. 10:1-3); and where the two witnesses were resurrected and caught up in a cloud to God's throne (Rev. 11:12). This first scenario sounds very ominous but it is only figurative of the Ingathering. Almost in the same breath is the angels quick annihilation of the wicked that will be put into the winepress of God's Fury. We must look at these things and try to find the truth in them. The truth is always Light...even when it is blatantly gloomy for those who refuse to believe in the Only Son of God. His coming will bring US full and complete salvation; which includes resurrected & perfect bodies; rewards for good deeds; the marriage to the Lamb; the 1,000 year reign with Christ; and then the culmination of all that has been promised and so much more! I have divided this into five sections with these titles in the next five devotionals.

Pray: Father, it is so difficult for me to wrap my arms around such a seemingly harsh judgment. Help me to put it in the proper perspective and be able to comfort others, that You are a God of Love but also a God of Vengeance. You are perfect Righteousness and Holiness, something we know so little about in our finite minds. Give us all the wisdom to come to peace about this as with all other matters. In Jesus name, Amen

DAY TWENTY-FOUR.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

PART ONE—WE SHALL ALL RECEIVE NEW BODIES

Scripture Readings continued from yesterday; also, 1 Thess. 4:13-17(NKJV)
“But, I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Him, those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Yesterday’s scriptures tell us that we shall not all die...these are those favored ones of God who will still be on the earth when Jesus comes. I do not want to get into a lot of scriptures that deal with all of the different scenarios of what might be going on at this time in the future. I have written a book called, “Thine Is The Kingdom” that deals with all of this. It just about drove me crazy when I started studying this subject deeply. As I said in my book, it was like getting into quick sand. For these Devotionals it is not realistic to delve into scripture at such depth. So, let us just discuss the meaning behind the scriptures that are referenced and see if God has something more for us. I know that when Jesus comes, we will be given new bodies. This is to be the Resurrection, even for those who are still alive. Those who have died “in the faith” throughout the centuries will be the first to rise, then those who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet Him in the air. It really sounds exciting, much more encouraging than the sickle scenario. But the main thrust here is that we will receive new bodies that will never die, so that whatever is happening on the earth, will not destroy us. Hallelujah! This is now getting closer to the parable about the ten virgins. They went out to meet Him, and greet Him, and then went into the marriage chamber with Him. We must notice the trumpet references. In yesterday’s scripture, it was plain that this trumpet was the “LAST” one. It is quite suggestive that this relates to the Seven Trumpets of Judgment that are described in Revelation 9-11. Today’s scripture does not call the trumpet the last one but calls it the Trumpet of the Lord. Let us combine these two references to get all of the information together.

Pray: Lord, continue guiding us to be able to go out to meet You in the air.
Amen

DAY TWENTY-FIVE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

PART TWO.....THE REWARDS OF THE SAINTS

Scripture Reading: Continuing our study of the afore mentioned scriptures in the twenty-first thru the twenty-fourth days; Rev. 10:5-7; 7:9-10; 11:15-19;

Then the mighty angel standing on the sea and land lifted his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and everything in it and the earth and all that it contains and the sea and its inhabitants, that there would be no more delay but that when the seventh angel blew his trumpet, then God's veiled plan—mysterious through the ages ever since it was announced by his servants the prophets—would be fulfilled.” “For just then the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were loud voices shouting down from heaven. “The kingdom of this world now belongs to our Lord, and to His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.” “After this, I saw a great crowd, too great to count, from all nations, provinces and languages, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white, with palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a mighty shout, ‘Salvation comes from our God upon the throne, and from the Lamb!’ “It is time to judge the dead, and reward your servants—prophets and people alike, all who fear Your name, both great and small—and to destroy those who have caused destruction upon the earth.”

There are numerous scenarios in the Revelation of John, depicting the time of the resurrection of God's saints. Each scenario is a little different than the other one. Each one is designed to give us just a small glimpse into the gigantic, overwhelming, stupendous, catastrophic events that John saw and the only way he could possibly try to convey them to us is by showing us in separate scenarios what all will happen all at once in many instances. At some point the saints are rewarded for their good deeds, and I think that we need to refresh our memories on what Jesus said in Matt. 25 about coming to the judgment seat of Christ, and separating the sheep from the goats.

Pray: Lord, we all must realize the urgency of the hour, for your coming is near.

There are many things to do, in order to be ready for your coming. Help us to realize that each one of these things should be those people all around us who need the Lord, before it is too late. Amen

**DAY TWENTY-SIX.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)**

PART THREE...THE WEDDING OF THE LAMB

Scripture Reading: Rev. 19:7-9,11-16

“Let us be glad and rejoice and honor Him; for the time has come for the wedding banquet of the Lamb, and His bride has prepared herself. She is permitted to wear the cleanest and whitest and finest of linens.”(fine linen represents the good deeds done by the people of God.) And the angel dictated this sentence to me: “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb; And he added, “God himself has stated this.” “Then I saw heaven opened and a white horse standing there; and the one sitting on the horse was named “Faithful and True” the one who justly punishes and makes war. His eyes were like flames, and on His head were many crowns. A name was written on His forehead, and only He knew its meaning. He was clothed with garments dipped in blood, and His title was “the Word of God.” The armies of heaven, dressed in finest linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. In His mouth He held a sharp sword to strike down the nations; He ruled them with an iron grip, and He trod the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. On His robe and thigh was written this title: “King of Kings and Lords of Lords.”

This is all that we get here, about the wedding and the feast. It seems that the most important part of this section of scripture is going to earth to destroy the wicked ones and all of the armies of heaven are coming to help. We will be in that “Wedding Procession” apparently. Everyone who has ever been persecuted, tortured, mistreated, hated, threatened, and any other evil thing done to them because of their testimony about Jesus, will now be able to find complete vengeance and justice at this time, when we will all be riding with the Lord to rid the earth of all evil. What a time in the future this will be! In this symbolic and allegorical stretch starting in Rev. 19:17-18 an angel is shouting to the birds, “Come, gather together for the supper of the Great God!” This is in no way, the Wedding Feast! But, it is almost comical that it is mentioned in this way right after presenting the picture of the bride and the wedding feast. Now, the birds are invited to clean up the mess after the battle of Armageddon is over and Satan is defeated with all of his army.

It is only logical that Jesus’ Bride has properly prepared herself for the wedding – and the final detail is much more than that; the final detail is the resurrection of the body which is the Bride—now being given a supernatural body like that of the Bridegroom; to be presented to her groom in all perfection and glory. Now we can move on to the main reason for Jesus’ Second Coming, He will now proclaim Victory over Death and Hell, and will bring His Kingdom into a New Realm of Glory called “The Millennium Kingdom”, or the thousand year reign of Christ which others call, ”The Messianic Kingdom”.

Prayer: Father, how magnificent are your ways! There is no way that any of us can know about what lies ahead, we have a lot of clues in the Bible, but still, there is a lot to wonder about. Help us all to know what we need to do today to get ready in the way in which You would have us be ready. In Jesus Name, Amen

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

PART FOUR---THE MILLENIUM KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: Rev. 20:1-6

“Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. He seized the dragon—that old serpent, the devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for 1,000 years, and threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked, so that he could not fool the nations any more until the thousand years were finished. Afterwards, he would be released again for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and sitting on them were those who had been given the right to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus, for proclaiming the Word of God, and who had not worshipped the creature or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They had come to life again and now they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This is the First Resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.) Blessed and holy are those who share in the First Resurrection. For them the second death holds no terrors, for they will be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

This is the Government of Peace & Justice that all of scripture alludes to. It was what so many believed would be Jesus’ mission on earth the first time He came. But that was not yet the timing for this wonderful period of time when Satan is locked up so that people will no longer be fooled by him. If we believe the scripture verses in 1 Cor. And 1 Thess. That we will be caught up to meet Him at His coming, and that we will receive new bodies at that time, then this is the rest of the story of the Resurrection. Some call this period of time the millennium, for 1,000 years, and others call it the Messianic Kingdom. Let us just bask in the exciting time in which this portrays. Those who are found worthy, will reign and rule and judge the “nations”. This is a time in history when, even after all of the cataclysmic events occur, there seems to be those who have apparently survived through it all. We cannot even guess the answers to all of these questions. No one can even imagine what all of it will be like—“eye hath not seen, ear has not heard, and it has not even entered into the mind or heart of man, the things that are going to come to pass.” That means that even with our best insights, our best visions and our best guesses & imaginings, we will not any of us be able to know what lies ahead for us. So we just pray, hope, and believe and wait patiently for it like a child at Christmas time waits for Santa Claus and wonders what all the wonderful things will be that he brings them.

Prayer: Father, even though I have searched the scriptures, and even checked out the back of the Book, I still do not know how it is all going to come out. I know that this is Your will and so I rest in that knowledge of not knowing. It is ok, I will just trust You and be ready for anything knowing that You love me. Surprise me, my Bridegroom! I love you, Amen

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FOURTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

PART FIVE---THE WIFE OF THE LAMB

Scripture Reading: Rev. 21:9-21; Ephesians 2:20-22

“Then one of the seven angels, who had emptied the flasks containing the seven last plagues, came and said to me, “Come with me and I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” In a vision he took me to a towering mountain peak and from there I watched that wondrous City—The Holy Jerusalem, descending out of the skies from God. It was filled with the glory of God, and flashed and glowed like a precious gem, crystal clear like jasper. Its walls were broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. There were three gates on each side—north, south, east, and west. The walls had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel held in his hand a golden measuring stick to measure the city and its gates and wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square as wide as it was long; in fact it was in the form of a cube, for its height was exactly the same as its other dimensions—1,500 miles each way. Then he measured the thickness of the walls and found them to be 216 feet across. The City itself was pure, transparent gold like glass! The wall was made of jasper, and was built on twelve layers of foundation stones inlaid with gems. (I will skip this due to lack of space) The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure, transparent gold, like glass.” “What a foundation you stand on now! The apostles and the prophets; and the cornerstone of the building is Jesus Christ himself! We who believe are carefully joined together with Christ as parts of a beautiful, constantly growing temple for God. And you also are joined with him and with each other by the Spirit, and are part of this dwelling place of God.”

Do you get the funny feeling that we, as the wife of Jesus, will be the completed, prepared Mansion? Jesus told us that He went to prepare a place for us, and this gives that promise a whole new meaning. I am reminded too, of the letter to the churches in Rev. 3:12: “As for the one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; he will be secure, and will go out no more; and I will write my God’s Name on him, and he will be a citizen in the city of my God—the New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from my God; and he will have my new name inscribed upon him.”

Is this for real? Or, like so much of Revelation, is it only symbolic? Whatever, it does help us to grasp a better understanding of what all awaits us. I believe it points to the fact that we will no longer be “individuals” which is, actually, the true picture of the Church and how it should be visualized in this same way. We are to be “all one body”, and in this sense not to be separated by diversity, but to all function (ideally) as One Person, and that Person being Christ. Whew! I hope this isn’t blowing you away too far!

Prayer: Father, You are completely blowing me away with this awesome discovery. But, perhaps I can see it in context, because we are the temple of God, and we as a body, are the church. So, thank you for Your eye opening journey, to help us to become prepared for it all. I Love You! Amen

CHAPTER SIX

“THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS”

JUNE DEVOTIONAL

FIFTH WEEK –

“IN SUMMARY” PART 1 AND 11”

DAY TWENTY-NINE.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIFTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

IN SUMMARY—PART ONE

This whole chapter is focusing on Jesus' Coming again. We have used the beautiful footprint art to depict the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Jesus used this parable to illustrate one aspect of His Coming, and as He put it, "the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by this story". We have learned much about the Jewish wedding customs and how very much Jesus' actions and words while here on earth were in line with these same customs and how His coming can be interpreted as "the return for His Bride!" Remember that the "bride" is the church, and the church is explained and given the title in the Bible as "His Body!" In Ezekial, there is a story that is frankly the same as a parable, about the bones coming together and rising from the dead. This is one picture of the Resurrection. There are many more. The scriptures about Lazarus, speaking metaphorically, (Luke 16:19-31) about, supposedly, a fictitious character, that was in the place of the righteous dead and also the rich man who was in torment, in hell, speaks to us about the secrets of immortality and the after-life. They were able to converse, and see one another, even though they were in opposite places. The rich man wanted Lazarus to come over to him and give him a cool drink of water, but Abraham said that there was no way, because there was a great chasm between them and no one was permitted to cross over into the other's territory. The rich man then asked if Lazarus could be sent back to tell his brothers what a terrible place awaited them if they did not change their ways, but this was also refused with the cutting remark: "The scriptures have warned them again and again and your brothers can read them any time they like." The rich man said that they wouldn't do it, but if Lazarus was to come back from the dead they would listen. But Abraham again had very sad news: "If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets they won't listen even if someone rises from the dead." Then we read in John 11:38-44 about Jesus' friend, Lazarus, who has died and Jesus brings him back from the dead. It makes one wonder if the aforementioned "parable" may have been Jesus' foreknowledge of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Just speculating! There are so many things like this in scripture that keeps us on our toes, and keeps us guessing. But all of these things help to understand a little bit more about what lies beyond the grave.

Prayer: Lord, help our knowledge of the after-life be a comfort to us all. Amen

DAY THIRTY.....CHAPTER SIX
SIXTH MONTH.....FIFTH WEEK
(DEVOTIONAL).....(BIBLE STUDY)

IN SUMMARY...PART TWO

I will be sharing my poem with you at the end of this devotion. What I reveal in this poem is rather startling! Bear in mind that I was given this poem by the Holy Spirit, shortly after my conversion experience. I knew very little about scripture at the time, and even though I feel that it was divinely inspired.. as I began to learn more, it seemed that the poem was speaking of something that I did not actually believe in; for it seemed to portray “soul-sleep”. However, I have inquired of the Lord to help me to understand it better, and I hope that I can explain in a way that will make it all much more simple and clear. Of course, I have had the help of many different Christian teachers writing their own understanding of this subject. I am willing to believe these accounts are accurate. They simply make sense. I have rested my case in them. At a person’s death, their spirit leaves their bodies (Ecclesiastes 12:7). They immediately go either to Heaven or Hell, where they are fully conscious of their existence (the story of Lazarus and the rich man).

Paul said he longed to be “absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8) Remember the account of the thief on the cross, who believed in Jesus and Jesus said that he would be with Him in paradise that very day? This is where those who have died—covered by Christ’s blood are now—we’ll await the time of Christ’s return to the earth, our bodily resurrection, the final judgment, and the 1,000 year reign of the Messiah and then when all things are fully restored, the New Jerusalem descends and there will be a New Heaven and New Earth. There is no such thing as “soul sleep,” for the phrase “fallen asleep”(1 Thes. 4:13) is a euphemism for death, describing the body’s outward appearance. The physical part of us “sleeps” until the resurrection, while the spiritual part of us relocates to a conscious existence in Heaven.(2 Cor. 5:8-9). The dead in Christ enjoy the rest, comfort, and bliss of God’s presence, though they will experience the fullness of eternal life only after the resurrection of their bodies on the Last Day. Then all believers in Christ will appear before the “Judgment Seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10). The purpose of this judgment is not to determine a person’s eternal destination in Heaven or Hell, for that has already been decided at their salvation. Instead, this judgment will affect the gain or loss of our eternal rewards(1 Cor. 3:12-15; Rom. 14:10-12).

Prayer: Father, I long for that time when I will be with You, safe in the comfort of Your arms. In Jesus Name, Amen

JUST A DAY AWAY

Fellow Christians, watch and pray,
for Christ is coming with no delay.
In God's glorious plan for mankind
He's promised to free us, leave sin
behind.

Sustained by the hope of Christ
coming again, to strengthen our faith
til death we remain.

In our finite minds, impatient we
stay, though to God a thousand
years is but a day.

Men hoped in Christ before He first
came, all ages of men do not hope in
vain.

Glory is near for all who in hope
remain.

Every past age will see Christ
appear, for they believed His coming
was near.

Time stopped still as death came
stealing, in upon their hopes,
ensealing.

And there in death's timeless sleep
they stay, until the trumpet sounds
relay-

The Good News of Christ's glorious
presence, when they awake to
time's incessance.

And it will seem to be just
yesterday, when they left life with
faith of a resurrection day.

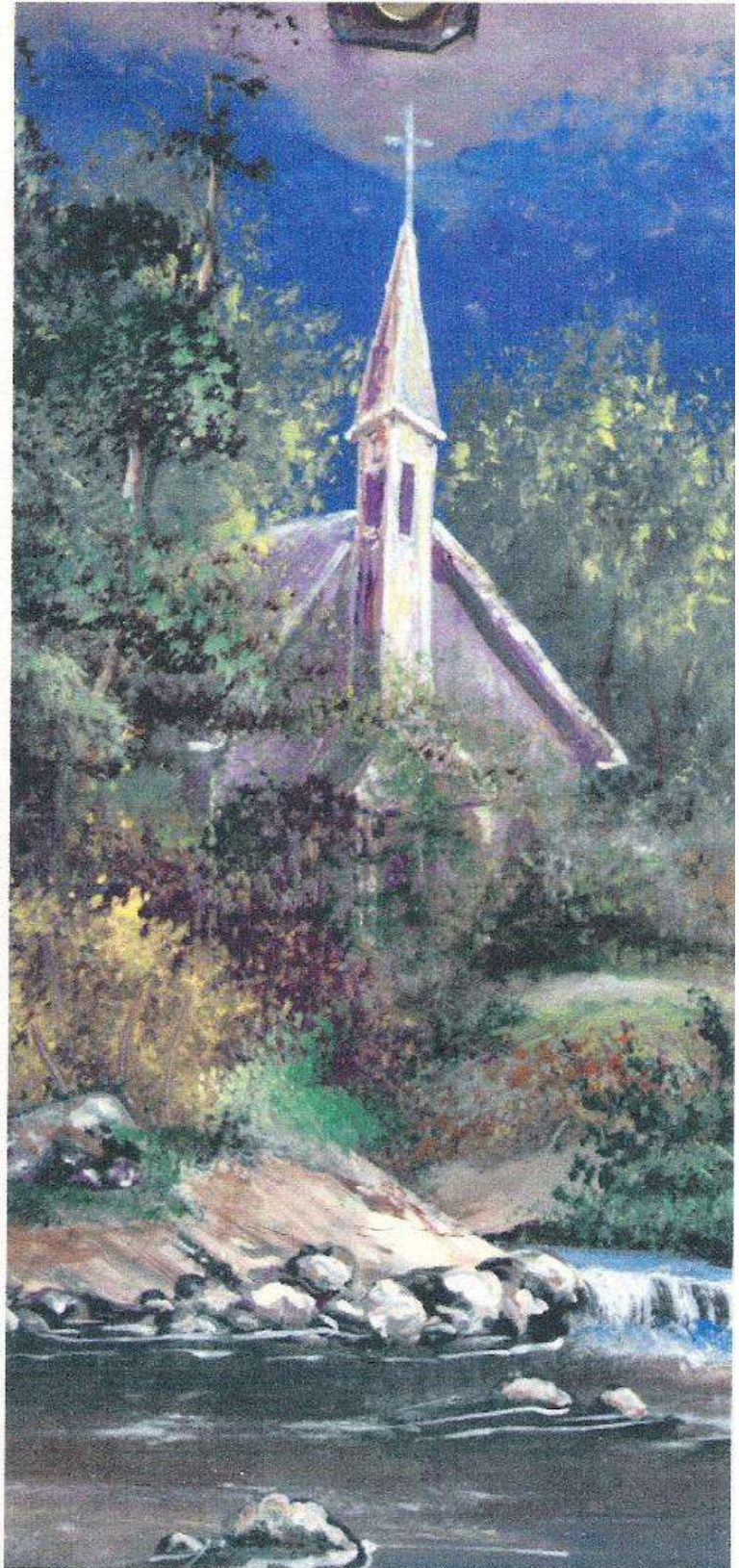
Now the next day the dead are
rising swift, to meet their Lord face
to face, what a gift!

So, you see, weary Christian, if we
die before that Great Day will
appear,

we haven't missed a thing, in fact it
brings us even nearer.

For as we sleep, we know no time,
until the day when we upward climb.

As all saints are gathered at
Christ's Judgment Seat that Day,
We'll realize in wonder, that after
death, His coming was
Just a day away!



Poem by Catherine Price and Art by Connie Rhodes

This Concludes Volume One of “Footprints to a Closer Walk”
Volume Two is now completed, and I would like to present to you these last
six months of devotionals which follow right along starting in July.
I welcome your comments, questions, and challenges. Thank You, Catherine

Price

pricec214@gmail.com

or text @785-204-2938