

THE
COURTSHIP OF JESUS

BY M.W. HALL

**THE
COURTSHIP OF JESUS**

**A STUDY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH
As**

HIS BRIDE
Based Upon THE SONG OF SOLOMON

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INTRODUCTION THE COURTSHIP OF JESUS SONG OF SOLOMON

The Bible is the most wonderful Book in the world.

It is wonderful because it is the Word of God. Being the Word of God, it is the channel through which God reveals Himself to us. Words are vehicles of thought; they are instruments through which one may make known his mind, his attitude, or his feelings, toward another. In the Bible God not only reveals His mind and attitude toward us, but He reveals Himself and His purposes, as well, and that in human terms that we can understand.

The Bible is wonderful because it is ageless. It applies to any time, and to all times; its message is for any man, and for all men of all ages; it anticipates any need, and every need; it has the answer to every circumstance, every condition, and every relationship of life. It is as old as God, yet shining new each day.

The Bible is wonderful because it is a miracle of unity. God used many different men to write it, and gave it over a period of many centuries, yet, there is no conflict in the message of its sixty-six books, from Genesis, the book of beginnings, to Revelation, the book of consummation. Both the Old, and New Testaments, reaching back to the eternal past, and looking forth to the eternal future, have the same messages – messages of creation, sin, death, redemption, salvation, service, hope, resurrection, judgment, hell, heaven, etc.

The Bible is wonderful because it is illimitable, and imperishable. Paul said, II Timothy 2:9 “...**the word of God is not bound.**” The message of the Bible is so simple that a child may understand, yet, it is so rich, and full, so deep and fathomless, that one may spend a lifetime searching through its treasures, only to find that it is infinitely beyond our puny minds.

We have heard it said of some men, that they have “mastered” the Bible. Such a thing, we know, cannot be true; if it were so, it would indicate that the Bible is no more than any other book written by men. Can man master the glory of a sunrise, or the beauty of a sunset? Can he master the depths of the ocean, and its dark caverns of mystery? Can he master the infinity of the heavens, its sun, moon, planets, and the stars of the milky-way? No matter how far into space their satellites may go, there are distances untraveled; no matter to what distant stars their telescopes may probe, there remain yet other stars unreached. Can one master the fragrance of a flower, the budding and leafing of the trees, the beauty of a landscape, the majesty of a mountain, the whisper of a summer breeze, the mystery of life, the softness in the eyes of a child? Neither can puny mortal hope to master

the boundless beauty of the Word of God. Howbeit, it invites, it challenges us to search out its treasures, and the diligent search of those who sincerely want to know will never go unrewarded.

In presenting the studies in God's Word, as given in the following chapters, I lay no claim to originality, nor do I propose to give the readers something new, and unheard; I simply endeavor to set forth some of the rich truths which have brought such blessings to my own life, through the more than thirty years of my ministry. Through the years, I have delivered the studies in the following chapters, to many congregations, in many churches, and I say in all humility, that some of the greatest and most spiritual services that I have ever had the privilege to enjoy have been in the presentation of these things. The enthusiastic reception of these messages has been more than gratifying, and many people, both ministers and laymen, who have heard them, have urged that I should publish them in a volume, thus, making them available to many more people than I have been able to reach from the pulpit.

I certainly do not presume to expect that everyone who reads this volume will agree, or give approbation to all that is set forth therein, however, I do feel that a careful and earnest appraisal of these things will help every saved reader to love and appreciate the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ as never before.

The first chapter on "The Body and Bride of Christ" will clarify the various terms, and usage of the same, as given in the following chapters. It will also make plain why I have given this volume the title, "THE COURTSHIP OF JESUS." I have endeavored to set forth the relationship of Christ and His Church in the same manner in which it is used throughout the Bible. I make no apology for the presentation of these great truths on a human basis. To appreciate them we must keep them on a plane that ordinary people can understand. True love, courtship, marriage, and homemaking of men and women are things ordained of God. These things are used of God to show the real relationship of Christ and His Church. Only a filthy, evil mind and heart would look lightly upon the great truths taught in *The Song of Solomon*, or would think evil of the way in which they are presented.

It will be noted that we have given most of the text, and scripture references, in full quotation, which tends to make this study more voluminous. This we have done in response to the requests of many fellow-ministers, who feel that the full quotation of references makes the study more effective, and easier to grasp.

May all who read these pages be led to a little deeper love and appreciation of Jesus, and of His Church, and may such ones be constrained to give their life and loyalty more

completely to Him. May each reader also come to have a bit more joy in anticipation of His return. If such can be the result, then I shall feel that all of the time, effort, and expense, that has gone into this volume has been more than justified.

-THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHURCH, THE BODY, AND THE BRIDE, OF CHRIST

In launching forth into a series of studies in *The Song of Solomon*, it is necessary for us to discuss, at least, in a limited manner, certain terms used in the scriptures, and, necessarily to be used in our studies in subsequent chapters: The Church, The Body, and The Bride of Christ. We must clarify these terms, so that our constantly recurring use of them in the pages that follow may be understood by the reader. There is a great deal of unwarranted confusion and misunderstanding of these things among men today, and I do not wish to add to that confusion. When I shall speak of "The Church," or "The Bride," in our studies, my desire is that the reader may well understand just what meaning is intended in the usage of the same.

Let me emphasize the fact, that my purpose in this volume is not an exhaustive study of the controversial views of men on these questions; but, rather humbly to set forth some of the things that have been such a blessing to my life and ministry in the years past. May the reader carefully consider the contents of this introductory chapter, and, doing so, no doubt, will be able to read the chapters that follow, and not be confused as to the message intended.

These are people in the religious world who seem to believe that the "kingdom," the "church," the "body," and the "bride" are all one and the same. This view, we must emphatically deny. The kingdom and the church are not the same. The kingdom of God is

composed of all the saved people on earth at any one time; all of the saved people on earth today, make up the kingdom of God on earth, today; and that kingdom may be said to be both visible, and invisible: visible, if we think of the persons who are saved, but invisible if we think of the immortal souls born into God's kingdom. We might go further to say here, that the Family of God is an entirely different thing, being composed of all of the saved of all ages, both on earth and in heaven. Paul, in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, says: Ephesians 3:15 **"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."**

Now, we come to these three terms about which we are primarily concerned in this chapter: *The church*, *The Body of Christ*, and *The Bride of Christ*.

Let us take the question of the Church, First:

The church of Jesus Christ is definitely a New Testament Institution. Jesus, Himself, founded it, as He said: Matthew 16:18 **"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."**

That statement alone is enough to settle the question forever, as to who established the church. By His own testimony, He set up the church during the time of His public ministry on earth, and contrary to the erroneous teachings of many, that the church was formed by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Jesus built the church of material which had been prepared by John, the Baptist.

Moreover, we can easily find the occasion of the establishment of the church: Luke 6:12-16 **"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."** I Corinthians 12:28 **"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles..."** In other words, they became the nucleus, or the charter members, of the church.

The church was a local, visible body, and was established with the possibility and power of reproduction, power to become other churches like unto itself in conformity to God's law of the universe: that everything should bring forth after its kind.

Jesus is declared to be The Head over the church, which is His body: Ephesians 1:22-23 **"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."** Colossians 1:18 **"And he is the head of the body, the church..."** Ephesians 5:23 **"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body."** Ephesians 4:15 **"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."** Colossians 2:19 **"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment**

ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”

The word that is translated “church” occurs one-hundred-thirteen times in the New Testament; and, although it is not possible for us to examine them one by one, here, we can say, that in practically all of these occurrences, the word definitely applies to a local, visible, body of baptized believers. These are a very few instances in which the matter might be considered debatable:

In Hebrews 12:22-24, there are set forth certain provisions of grace, as in contrast with the terrors of the law: **“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”**

Notice the difference in **“the general assembly,”** which is all of the saved, and **“church of the firstborn,”** which is evidently the Institution of the New Testament Church in heaven as The Bride.

Another passage of scripture in reference to the church, and considered by many to be debatable is that already mentioned, in the latter part of the 5th chapter of Ephesians. We shall come back to a closer examination of this scripture a little farther on. However, we can say positively, that, even here, the inspired writer was speaking directly to a local, visible church. I find no evidences in the Bible of a universal, invisible church.

Not only do we find “the church” to be a local, visible, body of baptized believers, in the teachings of scripture; but we find, that the “body” of Christ also indicates the local, visible church organization. Yet, there are many people who want to make the “body” mean the same as the “kingdom.” I have heard more than one preacher, or teacher, speak about when the last soul would be saved who would complete the body of Christ, as though all of the saved of the ages, and the body of Christ, were one and the same.

As I have definitely taken the position, that the church is a local, visible organization, so I must also take the position that the “body” likewise refers to the same, in most, if not all, of the instances used. Eighteen times in the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians alone, we find the word, “body,” and in every occurrence, it refers to the activity and function of a local church. If it were possible here, I would like to make a detailed study of these things; but this is a little aside from the main purpose of this volume. I am merely trying to make my position clear, as to these matters, so that the reader may not be confused as to what is being said later on.

More important to our purpose in this work is the term, *“Bride”* or *“Bride of Christ.”* This will be used many times, and in making a study of *The Song of Solomon*, we must

understand what it means.

According to scripture, just who is The Bride of Christ? There are many who teach that all saved people are of the Bride. Such teaching I believe to be erroneous; therefore I must oppose it. I must affirm that *The Bride of Christ will be made up of the aggregation of all truly New Testament Churches, gathered unto Him when we shall meet Him in the air at the time of the first resurrection, and the rapture.* Rather, I should add, that it will be the saved of the true churches; we know that there may be unsaved people, whose names are on the rolls of New Testament churches here on earth, but those unsaved ones will not be with the Lord in glory. Only the saved will be there.

I believe that true Baptist Churches are unequivocally New Testament Churches. This does not mean that we believe that only Baptists are saved; all who are in Christ are saved, regardless of what so-called church they may be affiliated with, or whether with any church. From a brief look at several selections of scripture, it becomes obvious that all saved people are not, can not, be a part of the Bride. There will be others present at the marriage supper of the Lamb who are not of the bride; there are “guests” and “friends” of the Bridegroom.

In the 22nd chapter of Matthew, verses 1-13, Jesus spake a parable, in which He likened the kingdom of heaven unto a king which made a marriage for his son. It is plain to see in this parable, that the son represents Jesus Christ, and the occasion is the marriage supper of Jesus, the Bridegroom, and His Bride, the church. It will be noted that many guests were brought into the feast, and each one was required to be dressed in a wedding garment, or such as was appropriate to the occasion. The King was there; the Bridegroom was there; the Bride was there; and the Guests were there.

Another parable is given in Matthew, chapter 25, verses 1-13; this is the parable of the ten virgins, waiting for the Bridegroom. The five wise ones, who were most certainly saved people, were ready when the Bridegroom came, and they went in with him to the marriage. Every saved soul will be with Jesus in glory, but only those who make up the true churches of New Testament order brought together in one in that great day, will be His Bride.

John, in making plain the fact that he was not the Christ, but only the friend of the Bridegroom, (the church was not established, as yet) declared: John 3:29 **“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”**

Again, in Revelation the 19th chapter, verses 7-9, the marriage of the Lamb is announced with joy, and it is said, verse 9 **“...Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb...”**

We have here the *Bridegroom*, the *Bride*, and **“they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”**

Each local, visible, individual, true New Testament church is a body of Christ, and may rightly be designated *“The Body of Christ”* in that particular locality. Further-more, inasmuch as Jesus’ relationship to the true local, visible church is the same as His relationship to the aggregation of the true churches – the Bride – in a sense, it can be said of each true individual church, that it is the bride of Christ in that place, for all of them together will ultimately make up the Bride. The individual true churches constitute God’s voice of true witness in the world, today; hence we hear Him say in Revelation 22:17 **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come...”**

Again Jesus’ relationship of marriage to the individual church is indicated in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, II Corinthians 11:2 **“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”**

From these brief statements it can be seen that Jesus holds the same relationship, love, kindness, and concern, to His individual churches here on earth, as He will to the aggregation of them as the Bride in glory.

In Ephesians 5:22-32, we have one of the most beautiful selections of scripture, concerning Jesus and His church, to be found in the Bible: **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 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 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 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.”**

We note certain facts in the foregoing scripture:

1. These things were addressed to a local church.
2. The church is Christ’s body.

3. Christ is the Head of the body.
4. He loved the church, and gave Himself for it; He is the saviour of the body.
5. His relation to the church is that of marriage – husband and wife.
6. He is now espoused to the church; the consummation of marriage is yet future.
7. He sanctified the church (set it apart for His own use). It is now in an unclean world, but has the water of the word for cleansing from the pollutions thereof.
8. He will one day present the church (churches making up the Bride) to Himself without blemish.

How our hearts rejoice in anticipation of His return for His chosen Bride, and for them who will be guests at the wedding feast. All of the saved of the ages past will be there, from Adam to the end of the age. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with all of the patriarchs of old, also the Apostles, and our loved ones gone before, will attend that great supper. And the Bride, as the very Queen of Heaven, will sit in the place of honor next to Jesus. All of the saved will be there; but all will not be a part of the Bride; all will not be permitted to share her honor. Only those saved ones who have honored and obeyed the Lord Jesus Christ in being scripturally baptized, and becoming a member of a true New Testament Church. Thank God for salvation! But I want more than that; I want to be a part of the Bride, by being a part of a true New Testament Church.

To say that all saved people make up the Bride of Christ is to say that one church is as good as another, and that is not true. Jesus established only one kind of church; and in order to claim New Testament authority, a church must be like the one which He established, in organization, in government, in doctrine, in practice, et cetera, et cetera. To have Jesus is to be saved; but to obey is to be happy and blessed of Him. I Corinthians 3:11 **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”** But notice that the preceding verse says, **“...But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”** Romans 7:4 Yes, we are: **“...dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”**

We are married to Jesus, and in the scriptural realm there is no divorce. What does marriage mean? It means to love one another; it means to leave all others to cleave to one another. It means to build, and share a home together, to bear children, and to rear a family. It means to **“...bring forth fruit unto God.”**

It was stated earlier in this chapter, that the church is a New Testament Institution; that it was established by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, during the days of His public ministry here upon earth; that it was a local, visible, body of baptized believers; and that love,

marriage, and the home, are used in the Bible to show the relationship of Christ and His church. However, like all other great truths, or doctrine, of the New Testament, God gives us types and pictures of the church, and of Jesus' relationship to her, in the Old Testament. Brief reference to a few such pictures will be sufficient introduction to the study of the Song of Solomon, which is made up of such beautiful types.

In the very beginning of human history God established the institution of marriage, and of the home, which centuries later he used to picture the relationship of Jesus and His church.

According to Genesis 2:21-24, God took a rib from Adam and made it a woman to be a companion and helpmeet for him. It is a beautiful thought that, instead of making a woman from the dust of the ground, as He made Adam, He made the woman from a part of Adam's body; thus her very life, her very being, was of Adam. No closer relationship could ever be known. As He said in Genesis 2:24, **"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."**

In the 23rd chapter of Genesis we are told of the death of Sarah, Abraham's wife. She was "the mother of Israel," so to speak; and, after her death, Israel's tent was empty; there was sorrow and mourning. There must also have been sorrow in the heart of God when the Jews, typified by Sarah, rejected the revelations of grace in Jesus Christ the Son of God. However, in Genesis 24 we see Abraham sending out his faithful old servant (who is a type of the Holy Spirit) in search of a bride for his son, Isaac. Beautiful Rebekah is chosen, and goes back with the old servant to become Isaac's bride. Genesis 24:67 **"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."**

In connection with this event the reader will do well to study once more Ephesians 5:22-32. Rebekah becomes another true type of the church, the Bride of Jesus.

In Genesis we also have the account of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers, and of his rise to power and honor in Egypt; then in Genesis 42:45 we see him taking a Gentile bride. No real student of the scripture doubts that Joseph is a type of Jesus, whose own people (the Jews) sold Him to His death, or that Asenath is a type of the church.

Moses, a Jew, took a Gentile bride in the land of Midian: Exodus 2:21, thus giving us another type of Jesus and His Bride.

Among all of the Old Testament types of Jesus and His Bride, one of the most beautiful is the story of Boaz and Ruth, as told in the Book of Ruth: The time it takes to read the Book of Ruth will be time happily and profitably spent just here. We have Ruth, the woman of Moab, turning her back upon her own land and people, with their false religions, and, in company with Naomi, turning to the land and the God of the Jews. There, wise old Naomi,

who is a type of the Holy Spirit, engineers the affair of the courtship and marriage of Boaz and Ruth – Boaz being a type of Christ, and Ruth a type of Christ's Church.

In the chapters that follow, we shall be studying the most wonderful, and comprehensive of all the Old Testament types of the Church, the Bride of Christ, as found through The Song of Solomon.

In the preceding pages, I have been trying to prepare the reader for the studies that follow, and I would emphasize once more the meaning of our use of the titles, "The Church," and "The Bride." One might use the term, "*the home*, or "*the family*," and, in using them, "*mean any home, or family*," or simply the home, or family as an institution. We can speak of "The Church" as an *Institution*, and we can use the term as indicating any *local body*. In studying The Song of Solomon, as we see the Bridegroom and the Bride - Jesus and the Church - in their love-life to each other, we may think of the relation of the church to Him in the sense of a local, visible body, or in the sense of the completed Bride. A difference will be, that, here on earth, the local churches are all imperfect, having spots and blemishes, because they dwell in the midst of a polluted world; but when all of them together, making up the Bride of Christ, are presented to Him in glory, they will be pure and spotless, as declared in Ephesians 5:26-27. **"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of 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."**

It is my profound conviction that all truly saved people, who will earnestly study the truth discussed, or outlined in the following pages, and study with unbiased minds and hearts, will come to love and appreciate the institution which Jesus established as never before.

Oh, may each saved person seek immediately to find a true local New Testament Church, and become a member.

CHAPTER TWO

“THE SONG OF SONGS”

Song of Solomon 1:1-17

Song of Solomon 1:1-17 **“The song of songs, which is Solomon’s. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother’s children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver. While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.”**

The Song of Solomon is a beautiful and strange piece of literature. It challenges us as perhaps no other part of the Old Testament. That it has for us a special message, and a divine purpose, surely no one can deny; and, to him who has a spiritual mind, who loves the Lord, and who has a hunger to know His truth, this study will bring thrills and blessings.

Speaking of Solomon, I Kings 4:32 **“And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.”** When we consider that God preserved this one, separate and apart, on the sacred page, we must conclude that it has a very significant place in his inspired revelations. Jesus often taught by analogy. He often took common objects best known to men, things they could understand, and used these things in teaching great spiritual truths. Some of the most marvelous things He ever taught were set

forth under the pictures of human relations and associations. "The Courtship of Jesus," may be deemed a strange title for a book, but when we consider the love and relationship of Jesus to His church as revealed in the Bible, there is no irreverence here.

This is truly the "Song of Songs," and only the unspiritual mind could mock, or look with lustful attitude upon the beautiful and sacred truths herein portrayed. This is a love story – the most beautiful love story in the world.

Throughout *The Song of Solomon* the principal characters seen are a man and a woman in love with one another, and that love is clean and holy. They are separated as in actual presence, but out across the intervening time and space their hearts reach toward each other in loneliness and longing. Their separation only intensifies their love; and their consolation lies in their joyous anticipation of that glad day sometime when they shall meet in the sweet consummation of their marriage. As their hearts reach out to one another, and are filled with bright images of love, they exchange compliments and expressions of endearment, and speak of that happy occasion for which they wait.

Some say that this is but the account of a love experience of Solomon with some beautiful woman – perhaps, one of the many love affairs of his life. We do know from the scriptures that such was one of his weaknesses, such turned away his heart: I Kings 11:1,3 **"But king Solomon loved many strange women...And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."**

If this is but a love story of Solomon and some woman – which I seriously doubt – we do know that King Solomon in the glory of his kingdom, is a type of Christ, and the teachings of this book can consistently be types of the relation and love life of Christ and His church. Thus true love, courtship, and marriage, are elevated to a high plane. Today, these sacred things have been dragged down into the filth and mire of human lusts. Marriage has become a joke, and divorce is the "smart" thing. Is there any wonder, therefore, that the church is treated so lightly, and counted so unimportant, not only by the world, but also by many who claim to be saved? I do not hesitate to affirm that the wrath of Almighty God is upon men today for the way they have belittled the sacredness of love, marriage, and the home; this being true, how much more shall His wrath be upon those who so sin against His sacred Bride.

Every fundamental teaching concerning the love and relationship of Christ and His church found in the New Testament can also be found in *The Song of Solomon*. And, I repeat, if the reader really wants to know the truth, and will study these things without bias, or prejudice, I believe that his soul will be thrilled, as mine has been, and he shall praise Him who shed His blood that we might have eternal life.

In the perusal of this great love story, we shall find that it is not a narrative unfolded in

unbroken sequence, or consecutive order. It does not necessarily begin with a minor point and develop in an orderly arrangement of events as would normally be true. Rather, we shall find a series of pictures, or types, each one revealing some special truth concerning the love, relation, and expectation of the Bride and Bridegroom. We shall see the beauty of the Bride as the Bridegroom sees her through the eyes of love; and we shall see the beauty of the Bridegroom, and what he means to the heart of the Bride, as she looks to him with adoration and quickened heartbeat.

Ah, yes, this is the love story of Jesus. Yes, this is the "Song of Songs," a song of love, a song of divine protection, a song of tenderness and pure affection, a song of homebuilding, a song of courtship, love and marriage. Jesus woos her whom He has chosen forever; He endeavors to arouse in her a deeper love, a greater faith. There is nothing more beautiful in life than this. The pure love of a man and a woman to one another is a wonderful thing. Courtship and marriage is of God. And there is the home which follows: A real home, though it be a humble one, built upon pure love and appreciation, is the sweetest thing on this earth.

My thoughts go back across the years to the time of my own love and courtship of a true, sweet girl. I remember the day of our marriage, and the great joy I felt in knowing that she was my wife. What pride and satisfaction I had in the knowledge that my deep feeling of love and admiration was reciprocated. She was not perfect, neither was I; but our love and understanding made it possible for us to bear with each other's failures, and to overlook each other's faults. And how can I ever forget what happiness we had as we began our "house-keeping" together: We had only one poorly furnished room upstairs, but it was a little heaven on earth to us; there we cooked and ate and slept; there we fellow shipped and prayed; there we shared life together. It was a lowly place, but real love was there, and that made up for all the rest. There our firstborn came, and was no sooner known and loved, than he was taken away from us, to draw our hearts more eagerly toward heaven. There in that little room we wept together, as we tasted the first bitterness of bereavement; but because our love was strong and true it became a means of grace to help stay both our broken hearts in that, and other dark hours which came through the years.

So, likewise, that bond of mutual love, that unity of spirit, of Jesus and His church, gives her the faith and strength and courage to carry on in a world of conflict. She is not perfect; yet He loves her, and because He loves her, because she is dear to His heart, He bears with her imperfections, and patiently awaits that glad day. Ephesians 5:27 **"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."**

Now, my friends, with our hearts prepared to begin the study of The Song of Solomon upon a basis of such human experiences, from a viewpoint so simple and comprehensible, yet so wonderful, let us approach the text of the scriptures. I do not propose to give “an interpretation” of each verse found in the text; neither do I mean to be unduly “dogmatic” in the thoughts offered for consideration. I rather intend, by the help of God, to set forth what I see, and what I sincerely believe to be the truth.

Most of The Song of Solomon is composed of the statements, or speeches, of either the Bride, or the Bride-groom, and usually it will be easily observed as to which of the two is speaking; if there is any question, a careful study of the context will clarify the matter. We shall also find that most of these speeches consist of expressions of love, or declaration of what the lover means to the one who speaks. The beauties, graces, and virtues of each are extolled by the other.

There will be parts of this text about which little, or no comment will be made. There are two reasons for this: One is, that some things will be found which are so obscure that an effort to explain would only result in greater confusion; the other is, that to attempt a detailed study, and explanation of every part of the Book, The Song of Solomon, would run into such a voluminous manuscript it would be unsuitable for such a volume as this. I do not hesitate to say, furthermore, that there are some parts of The Song of Solomon which I have never, as yet, been able to comprehend to the complete satisfaction of my own mind. Verse 1 **“The song of songs, which is Solomon’s.”**

This opening statement indicates that Solomon was the one inspired of God to write this beautiful message. Considering Solomon’s call of God, his great wisdom, etc., (I Kings 3:5-13) we can understand why this is so. This first verse also indicates that, among all of the songs, this one stands out as having very special significance.

In verses 2-7 it is the Bride who speaks: **“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.”** Verses 2-3.

The words of the Bride in these two verses bring four things particularly to our attention. – Four significant things concerning the Bridegroom (Jesus).

1. *His kisses*: A kiss is due to be a demonstration, or expression of pure, sincere, unsullied love – a token of affection. To use it promiscuously is a sin. The Bible speaks of the “holy kiss” of salute, Romans 16:16; and the kiss of betrayal, as that of Judas Iscariot in the Garden of Gethsemane. Kisses upon the lips (“the kisses of his mouth”) are only for the purest intimacy: as those who are betrothed, or the Bride and the Bridegroom. The love between Jesus and His church should be the most intimate of all love.

2. *His love*: “Thy love is better than wine.” Oh, love of Jesus! Who can write of it? Who

is able to search out its unfathomable depths? Even when we try to probe its wonders, we find that it is like a great ocean; we become lost in its infinite bosom.

Speaking of his heart's desire and prayer for the spiritual growth of the Ephesian Church, Paul said in Ephesians 3:17-19 **"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge..."**

Volumes and volumes might well be written about His love; but such verses of scripture as John 3:16, and Ephesians 5:25, tell the story as fully as it can be told in words of human speech.

"Thy love is better than wine," she said: The sweet fire of wine may stimulate the body, and send a warm glow through one's physical being, or temporarily drive the thoughts of care from the troubled mind; but the love of Jesus, who is the object of His church's supreme devotion, warms, stimulates, and fills her soul with lasting joy.

3. *His Name:* **"Thy name is an ointment poured forth."** Ointment is used to soothe, to heal, to mollify, and for sweet fragrance; the Name of Jesus is all of that to His church. His Name on her lips, and in her heart, brings comfort in her loneliness, peace and assurance in her conflicts, and healing when her heart is broken. Just to whisper his Name, "Jesus" in the stillness of the midnight brings courage for the conflicts of tomorrow; and to whisper that Name in prayer is to unlock the door to the throne-room of heaven. As the song writer said,

"Jesus, oh how sweet the Name,
Jesus, everyday the same;
Jesus, let all saints proclaim
His worthy praise for ever."

Our Lord bears many titles in the Bible, but above them all stands this, JESUS. Jesus is the name given Him of the Father before He was born. In Luke 1:31, the angel told Mary, **"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS."** That is the name that He bore among men; it told the purpose of His coming into the world. The name means "saviour," and that is what He came to be.

Acts 4:12 **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."**

Philippians 2:9-11 **"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a**

name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The beauty, attraction, and influence, which the church may have before the world will primarily be determined by the place she gives that Name in her ministry. Yes, as she waits for His return, she holds that Name sacred in her heart.

4. *The Virgins*: “...**therefore do the virgins love thee.**”

The “virgins” are mentioned twice in the Song of Solomon: here in verse 3, and in Chapter 6, verse 8. In examining numerous places in the Bible where virgins are spoken of in a more, or less, figurative sense, we find that they indicate purity of character – those undefiled. Of course, there may be some exceptions to this rule.

In the 25th chapter of Matthew, verses 1-13, we have the Parable of The Ten Virgins, awaiting the Bride-groom. We see that five of them, being called wise, and having oil in their vessels with their lamps, represent saved people; while the five foolish ones, having no oil, represent unsaved people. However, the very fact that they all had everything in common, except the oil, would seem to indicate that the foolish ones represent those who are morally clean (as Nicodemus, John 3), or who are depending on their own good works (as the Rich Young Ruler, Mark 10:17-22), or who have some “religion” which they think is sufficient to get them by.

Revelation 14:1 John speaking: “**And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.**” (these being the Jews saved out of the great tribulation.) Verses 4-5 “**These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.**”

From these, and other references, we must take the position that the virgins in the Song of Solomon are possibly saved individuals, having pure spiritual life, but not a part of the Bride. The reference in S. Of S. 6:8 seems to bear this out, for there it speaks of “*virgins without number,*” and they are clearly not of the bride.

“*The virgins love thee*” we are told; and we can well understand that all saved people, whether in a true church, or not, have the love of Christ in their hearts. Then verse 4 of chapter one follows on to confirm, for we read, “...**the upright love thee.**” Verse 4, “**Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.**”

Note the appeal of the Bride in this verse: **“draw me,”** and **“we will run after thee.”** Here is a suggestion that the Bride is not able to stir up, not arouse herself to run after the Bridegroom. She has no will of her own, it is lost in His perfect will; she can only run after Him as He may, by the exercise of His will, or the drawing power of His great love, incite within her the desire to follow. Certainly this is the teaching of the scriptures: we can not lift up ourselves, but He can lift us up; we cannot revive our spirituality, for revival must come from God. The Prophet Jeremiah cried in Lamentations 5:21 **“Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.”**

David recognized the fact that God Himself must draw one before that one could turn unto God, or feel the surge of revival in his soul. Psalm 85:6 **“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”**

Then in a time of spiritual declension, the Prophet Habakkuk, realizing that God’s people could do nothing without being moved by God’s power, cried out Habakkuk 3:2 **“O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”**

Jeremiah 31:18 **“...turn thou me, and I shall be turned...”**

Not only are we saved by the grace of God, but we are dependent on that grace for the continuation of faithful and obedient service.

The statement; **“...the king hath brought me into his chambers...”** seems to be anticipative of that happy occasion yet to be, when they shall know the consummation of their marriage.

Revelation 19:7-9 **“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”**

Now in verses 5 and 6 of this first chapter, we see a spirit of deep humility manifested in the words of the Bride: She seems to feel her unworthiness; seeing herself in her imperfections, and touched by the pollutions of the world around her, she stands amazed that He could love her so. **“I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother’s children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”**

It is as though she were saying, "I am black and ugly, surely there is no beauty or attraction in me to win the love and affection of One so wonderful as Jesus. I am all sun-burned, because my mother's children have been angry with me; they hated me, and made life as hard for me as they could; they made me look after their vineyards, and I was subjected continually to the sun and all the exposure that would blight my outward appearance."

She would hide her face in a deep sense of her nothingness before the face of her Beloved. She forgets that He looks not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart. Perhaps the greatest beauty He sees is that of her character within. And in marked contrast to her sense of her own ugliness, as she sees herself, is His view of her as expressed in verse 15 of this same chapter: "**Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair...**"

It has already been stated, that there are numerous passages and terms in the Song of Solomon which seem quite obscure, and in our studies, we may not be able to clarify them everyone to our complete satisfaction; however, we need not be discouraged because of this, for it only proves its greatness, and challenges us afresh to study it again and again. Among these terms and expressions we find, as in the fifth verse of this chapter, "**...daughters of Jerusalem...**" In addition to this verse, they are mentioned in the following places throughout the book: 3:5; 3:10; 3:11; 5:8 and 8:4. A careful study of these passages will, no doubt, indicate to the reader that the daughters of Jerusalem, or Zion, are the Jews.

There are two instances in the book where simply "*daughters*" are mentioned: 2:2 and 6:9. Where "daughters of Jerusalem" refer to the Jews, the "*daughters*" I would take to refer to other institutions, and other churches so-called, many of which try to usurp the position, power, and honor that can only belong to truly New Testament Churches.

I call attention to the Bride's words in verse 6: "**...my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards...**"

These, unquestionably, are of the Gentile world, for they have the same mother as the Bride, and she is a Gentile Bride. Her mother's children are evidently those leaders, or institutions, or organizations of men, which have ever been, and will continue to be, opponents and critics of the true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. They have attempted to push His churches out, and take their place, or else to belittle them and their divinely appointed purpose in the world. "**...they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.**"

These worldly agencies do their best to side-track the true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ from their sacred service of a spiritual ministry in a lost world, to secular worldly

channels of education, sociology, physical culture, politics, government, entertainment, and benevolence. The ministry of the church is spiritual; it is making Christ known to a lost world, and teaching the things of Christ to those who are saved.

Verse 7: **“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?”**

The Bride seeks the presence of her Beloved; without that all else is vain. In Revelation 1:12-13, John saw Jesus in the midst of the churches. That is the place He desires to dwell, that is where He should be most easily found, with His flock.

Mention is made here of the flocks of his “*companions*.” These “companions” are also mentioned in chapter 8, verse 13. We may well see in them other great leaders among men – great Philosophers, Scientists, Teachers, Philanthropists, Religionists, etc., above all of whom Jesus stands out, separate, and alone.

The Bride seeks Him, and His, for why should she turn aside by the flocks of His companions? Why should the church turn aside to other things than her Christ-given commission? She knows her place, her sacred task, for the charge He gave her was plain and simple: Matthew 16:19; 28:18-20; John 20:19-23. She humbly confesses her failure in this responsibility in verse 6, “**...but mine own vineyard have I not kept.**” Oh, that the Baptist churches throughout the world today would make sincere confession of the same failure of which we are all guilty, and would turn back to the fundamentals again.

Now, the Bridegroom speaks in answer to the inquiry of the Bride, verse 8: **“If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”**

Note here, that, though the Bride be full of imperfections and impurities, though she sees herself as black and uncouth, yet still to the Bridegroom she is the “**fairest among women.**” In other words, the church of Jesus stands out among all of the institutions of the world separate and distinct, the only institution claimed by divine ownership. Jesus said of her alone, “My church.”

Furthermore, in verse 8, Jesus directs the Bride to follow “**the footsteps of the flock,**” if she would find where He *feeds*, and *gives rest*. See verse 7. Inasmuch as the Bride and the flock seem to be distinctively different here, it is to be assumed that the flock refers to all of the saved on earth, His sheep.

Psalm 95:7 **“For he is our God: and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand...”**

Psalm 100:3 **“...we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”**

It would be well to read John 10:1-29. There we can see that the “sheepfold” is not the

church, but rather the kingdom of God. There are many “lost sheep” in the world: Isaiah 53:6 **“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...”** Matthew 10:6 **“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”** Luke 15:3-7 **“And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”** The reading of these scriptures will help to clarify the matter. If nothing more, it is my sincere hope that the reader may be provoked to more earnest searching of the scriptures. Time and space just here will not permit us to follow out many of these rich veins of truth, as we would so much like to do.

The business of the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ here in the world is primarily seeking the lost (making disciples), and, after they are brought to Jesus, and are baptized, to teach them and give them spiritual care. Matthew 28:19-20 **“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”** Not only is it the church’s duty to make disciples, but, also to endeavor to search out all saved people and lead them to the truth.

We believe that true Baptist Churches are the real churches of Jesus Christ; we furthermore believe that they alone are the divinely appointed custodians of the truth, and, that if the whole truth is given to the world, Baptists will have to do it. We believe that the doctrine of the Baptist faith is the doctrine of the New Testament – the same as those held and propagated by the church that Jesus Himself established. However, we honor the moral right of all people to oppose us in this doctrine, if they so desire.

In verse 8 of our text the Bridegroom instructs the Bride to follow the footsteps of the flock, and **“...feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”** The kids are the young and tender ones of the flock. They are new in the kingdom of God. They are like little children: they have to be cared for, fed, and protected, for they are unable to look after themselves. The wild beasts are on every side; they continually lurk along the path, hoping to kill and devour the helpless ones. The church must look after them and show them the way.

We are reminded of that occasion, as told in John 21:12-17, that wonderful morning, when Jesus sat down to breakfast on the seashore with Peter and some of the other disciples. When they had dined, Jesus questioned Peter as to how much he loved Him, pressing the question upon him three times until He got the answer that He sought. Twice

He said to Peter, **“Feed my sheep,”** and once, **“Feed my lambs.”** In other words, the church’s love to Jesus will be proved by her faithfulness in caring for them for whom Jesus died. If they are not properly fed, if they are undernourished, they cannot grow; and, on the other hand, if they are fed, she will have to do it.

The Bridegroom continues His speech to the Bride: verses 9-12: **“I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver. While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”**

As already stated, it is necessary that we pass briefly over some parts of The Song of Solomon, and make our comments few: partly because of the obscurity of some verses, and partly because some verses are not as important to our study as others. Such is the case here.

The Bride is compared to chariot-horses in the army of the king. This suggests the important place that the church fills in the great warfare of our Lord against all the evil forces of Satan in this world. We shall find other places in The Song of Solomon where the comparisons, or pictures of the Bride, are as unusual and outstanding as this. The church is not due to be a “sissy,” but a mighty courageous force against evil.

The beauty of the Bride’s cheeks and neck is pointed out in verse 10. The **“rows of jewels”** and **“chains of gold”** indicate the riches of grace, or the divine gifts bestowed upon her. Jewels, in a general sense, represent God’s glory, while gold symbolizes deity, or divine righteousness. The chains of gold about her neck declare that her righteousness is of God, and not of self. We might further add that **gold** and **silver** mentioned in verse 11 mean divine righteousness and redemption. In scripture silver is nearly always associated with the thought of redemption. In all of the construction of the tabernacle, and in the tabernacle worship, this can be seen, and in many other places in the Bible. Also Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver.

In verse 12 we see the king at His table, and we smell the wonderful fragrance of His spikenard. There can be no question as to the identity of the king, it is Jesus; He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is presented to us as such in many places in the Bible. Here He **“sitteth at His table.”** This suggests that He is engaged in the administration of His present affairs. We know that He is at the right hand of God, engaged in His intercessory priesthood, (Mark 16:19, Revelation 3:21, etc.); and we know that He is our Advocate.

The spikenard, which sends forth such a fragrance, is a fine perfume, which was highly prized by the ancients. This fragrance emanating from the King-Bridegroom in glory is the

very sweetness and influence of Jesus' life, and character, permeating our very being. Though He is in heaven, at the right hand of God; yet He is here with us. We are ever conscious of His blessed presence.

In the great Messianic 45th Psalm, verse 8, we read of him: **“All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.”**

Again the Bride speaks in verses 13-14 of this first chapter of our text, saying, **“A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.”**

Only the base, distorted, and unspiritual mind will here find anything that could be considered as vulgar, or impure. It but portrays a deep and pure intimacy anticipated by the Bride and her Beloved. Such marital desire and intimacy are ordained of God; and the very fact that God used these things to show the relation of Christ and His church, elevates them, when properly used, to a high and holy plane.

When the Bride likens her Beloved to a **“bundle of myrrh,”** she is but endeavoring to express something of the fragrance, sweetness, and beauty which He brings into her life. Myrrh is an aromatic gum resin, obtained from the tree *Commiphora abyssinica*, which is found in Africa and Arabia. The ancients highly valued myrrh as an ingredient of perfume and incense; it was also used as an unguent. The myrrh mentioned here was probably a mixture of pure myrrh and labdanum. Without doubt, it was highly treasured, and considered very meaningful, for it was among the gifts the wise men brought to Jesus at His birth in Bethlehem. Matthew 2:11. This is but a beautiful way of expressing what Jesus means to His church.

She also declares that He is unto her as **“a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.”**

En-gedi means; “the fountain of happiness”; and *camphire*, or henna, is an Old World tropical shrub which produced beautiful, fragrant, white flowers. Hence, to His church, Jesus is beauty, satisfying pleasure, and lasting happiness. Everything beautiful and worthwhile in life comes to us through Jesus.

It is the Bridegroom who speaks again in verse 15; **“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.”**

He sees His love, the church, – as the world can never see her here – in all of her beauty and purity yet to be. Jesus can see beneath the external pollution and impurities with which she is stained and marred in her contact with a world of sin. In the love-visions of His heart, He sees her as she will one day be in reality, when He presents her to Himself, Ephesians 5:27 **“...a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such**

thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

He speaks of her “*doves’ eyes*”: The dove is a symbol of harmlessness, peace, and mourning innocence. Her eyes are soft; they are eyes of love and tenderness. What a fitting comparison this is; what a beautiful and touching manner of expressing one’s affection for a loved one.

It is the Bride who speaks in verses 16 and 17. To the Bridegroom’s words in verse 15, she replies, “**Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.**”

The Bridegroom has just said, “You are beautiful, and tender and innocent.”

She replies, “You are beautiful, and very pleasant.”

There are three things more here which are worthy of mention. She calls attention to their bed, the beams of their house, and the rafters.

The bed is a place of rest. It is a place where we may find comfort and much-needed relaxation after the heat and wearisome toils of the day; it is a place where we can shut the world out and be alone with Jesus, in sweet meditations of the night. There is scarcely anything more refreshing to a tired body and mind than a comfortable bed. The bed mentioned here is “**green**,” which suggests that it is fresh and fragrant. Some of the deepest stirrings of my soul, some of the most intimate moments, have been on my bed at night. Many sermons, later used of God, have been gotten there.

Then there is sleep, sweet sleep: a provision of God’s marvelous grace, a safety-valve for our, often over-taxed, bodies and minds. No matter how long and hard the day, no matter how fierce the conflict, in the secrecy of our bedroom, and upon the softness of our bed, we find comfort.

Psalm 127:2 “**...for so he giveth his beloved sleep.**”

Matthew 11:28 “**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**”

The song writer has so fittingly voiced it;

“There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the heart of God;
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the heart of God.”

One of the world’s greatest preachers, Doctor J. Frank Norris, long since gone on to glory, once said, that the reason he could carry on under such terrific burdens and conflicts was that he could lie down to sleep, and shut the world out until morning.

The thought of love, marriage, and home-making are continued here: The Bride thinks of the home which she and the Bridegroom will share; The **beams are cedar**, which typifies Jesus. We can find this in many places in the Word of God.

Its sweet fragrance, beauty, and lasting qualities, make it a fitting type. The beams evidently refer to the under-girders, or floor joists which support the house. Fir is also a fine wood, and she says that the *rafters* of this house are fir. What beautiful thoughts! In this spiritual house of God, Jesus is the foundation of stone, Jesus is the under-girder of cedar, and Jesus is the protective covering of fir.

Ephesians 2:19-22 “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Hebrews 3:5-6 “And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

1 Peter 2:5 “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

The Bride, in her loneliness, longing, and day-dreaming, finds sweet consolation in the promises of her Beloved that He would prepare her a place:

John 14:1-3 “Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

CHAPTER THREE

A LILY AND AN APPLE TREE

Song of Solomon 2:1-7

“I AM the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.”

Verse 1 ***“I AM the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”***

These words seem to stand somewhat alone; they are spoken by the Bridegroom about Himself. That they refer to our Lord Jesus Christ, no one can reasonably deny, for the comparison could not be made of another. Sharon evidently refers to The Plain of Sharon, lying along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, in North-West Palestine; while the rose of Sharon would be a rare and beautiful flower characteristic of that plain. The lily of the valleys is a perennial herb native to temperate Eurasia and North America. It is a white, fragrant flower, whose roots contain medicinal glycosides, used in the manufacture of certain medicines. True lilies are valley flowers.

When we consider the characteristics of the rose and the lily, and their basic values, for beauty, fragrance, and healing, then it is very easy to understand how the words of this verse apply to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom. We shall see the further significance of the lily as we go on in the study.

True courtship is a beautiful, and uplifting experience. We might say, that it is communication between a man and a woman who have some sincere mutual interest in each other. It is the inter-change of deep feelings of their hearts, blossoming into a flower of reciprocated and lasting love. It can, and should be, a pure and holy experience. It is too sadly true, that in this loose modern age, old-fashioned love has almost become taboo; but through the Bible, love, courtship, and marriage, are held to be sacred.

When a man and a woman really love each other, they desire to be together; their destinies, at least in desire, become one. In a sense, they live in a world apart. They are more concerned in the wishes and welfare of each other, than of anyone else. When they are separated, they are lonely, even in the midst of a multitude, and their dreams are

always of that happy day when they shall meet to part no more. Such are the experiences of Jesus and His church as seen in the pages that follow:

The Bride and the Bridegroom Exchange Compliments of Love – Verses 2-3.

“As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”

In the above verses we note an exchange of loving compliments between the Bride and the Bride-groom. They are separated – she is on earth, He is in heaven – yet their tenderest thoughts are of one another; and as they dream in sweet anticipation of the day of their happy reunion, their hearts formulate strange and beautiful expressions of endearment to each other. Hearts of deep love draw many strange pictures of the objects of their ardor.

We hear the Bridegroom speak first of what His Bride means to Him: **“As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”**

What a marvelous comparison He makes here, **“as the lily among thorns.”** What mean these strange words? Ah, it is but Jesus saying, “As the lily among thorns, so is my church among all of the institutions and organizations of the world. The church stands out in the world, by way of comparison, as a lily among thorns. Can you imagine a snow white lily in all of its pure beauty with a bundle of dry crackling thorns set on either side of it, or a spiney thorn-bush growing on either side? “That,” says Jesus, “is a true comparison of the position and character of my church as it stands today in the midst of all of the institutions of the world.” Thorns are good for nothing but to be burned, they have no beauty, they symbolize the refuse of the world; but, on the other hand, the lily symbolizes the very opposite.

Three things are suggested by the lily: *truth, purity, and faithfulness*. Such should be the church toward Jesus. She should stand as a symbol and a witness of truth, and her robes of purity should be kept untarnished from the filth of the world. No doubt, more than all else, Jesus desires of her loyalty and faithfulness to His love, and to the sacred task to which she has been appointed. The people who compose her are to be a separated people. Is this not a fitting picture? Is it not touching to see Christ’s tender love for her who is the flower of His heart? Some would hold up other institutions, lodges, societies, human organizations, to an equal place of honor and importance with the church; but they cannot even be compared to her for whom Jesus shed His blood, and who, according to His own promise, will one day be presented to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish in the consummation of eternal marriage.

There is one thing more to observe here: The Lily of the Valley, which is, no doubt, the

one referred to here, is truly a valley flower. It is often said that, "in the valley is where the lilies grow." We can well say that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ is a valley flower. It was in "the valley of the shadow of death:" that she was purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, for He went into the darkest valley death ever had to give her life; and for nineteen centuries she has walked through the valleys of persecution and conflict. She has been despised by the world, yet she has challenged the world as no other. Her robes have often been stained with martyr's blood, yet in it all she has magnified the blood of Jesus as God's only remedy for sin. Her only message is Jesus, John 14:6 "**...I am the way, the truth, and the life...**" She has not been perfect in the world, because those who make up her membership are imperfect human beings; however purity is her ideal, and faithfulness is her intention. The world hates her because she belongs to Jesus; and Satan will fight her to the end, as he has opposed her from the beginning, because she is Christ's witness of grace in the world. But, praise God, she stands on the promise in Matthew 16:18 "**...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**"

No, she is not perfect now, but Jesus loves her, and the eyes of true love can overlook many imperfections.

Having heard the Bridegroom's speech to the Bride, in which His perfect love was couched in such beautiful language, now let us hear her reply; She comes back with an answer, but how pitifully inadequate seem her expressions of love compared to His. One who does not pause to consider and comprehend the true attitude of her heart would almost find amusement in what she says of her Beloved: "**As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons...**"

This seems to be a very poor compliment, but we may be assured that the Bride's expressed attitude and feeling toward the Bridegroom is far deeper, and more wonderfully significant than it would seem at a glance.

He has spoken of her as, "**a lily among thorns.**"

The best she can come up with is, "**as the apple tree among the trees of the wood.**"

Those who would be critical of the apparent inadequacy of this compliment to the Bridegroom should consider well before passing judgment, for there is more here than meets the eye.

Go with me today into the great forest, and let us walk between the massive trunks of the towering oaks; lift up your head and gaze toward their lofty height, or view their far-reaching branches. And as we walk those cloistered aisles remember, that all of the fruit that can ever come from the giant oak is the tiny acorn. So with the wide-spread elms. What fruit, I ask you, did you ever gather from an elm tree? But wait, let us walk on a little farther. Here we come to a small clearing in the forest, and in the midst of it we behold the

green branches and heavy foliage of a small apple tree. It casts a solid shadow beneath its heavy-leafed form; and gazing up into its bowers, we behold the luscious, delectable fruit with which we delight ourselves. Ah, now we see the deep significance of her ardent, yet apparently crude, compliments of love. The apple tree bears satisfying fruit; it may not be so imposing in stature as many other trees, or so beautiful to look upon, but it has something to offer that cannot be found elsewhere. When we were bare-footed boys we used to go to the old apple tree with sticks and stones to knock down the fruit, and the stones and sticks under the tree bore testimony to the fruitfulness of the tree.

Here is summed up the fundamental attraction of Jesus to His church. I do not believe that the physical person of Jesus was so unusually attractive or commanding as to draw the special attention of people who might see Him walking amidst the throngs along the street. I have heard speakers speculate at length on the strong and beautiful physique of Jesus, the firmness of His hands, the mold of His chin, and so on; such speculations are but the brain-spun fancies and foolish vagaries of men. The Bible does not indicate that Jesus was so different, or so superb in physical characteristics, that one would have picked Him as a stand-out in the crowd. He was a man among men, and we hear the prophet say of Him in Isaiah 53:1-2; **“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”** No, the attractiveness of Jesus did not lie in His physical beauty. In the most glorious hour of His earthly appearance – the hour of His death – His features bore all of the hideous marks of sin and brutality. Again we hear the prophet speak of the suffering one at His crucifixion: Isaiah 52:14 **“...his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”**

That which has drawn men to Jesus, as the magnet draws the metal, is the eternal spiritual fruit which comes to us through the death, and the life of the man of Galilee. Concerning that fruit of His death, I have heard Him say, John 12:24 **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”**

Thus spake our Lord, concerning the harvest of spiritual blessings to be borne of His death. How many things press the mind, just here, for utterance. How many things we should like to say, if space permitted, concerning the law of fruit bearing, not only in Him, but in us who are saved by His grace. We must die to live; we must give ourselves a **“living sacrifice”** if we would bring forth fruit unto God.

Now, in the light of these things, we see how very much Jesus is to His Bride, and how ably she has described Him **“among the sons.”** He has spoken of her in comparison with

“the daughters,” which we identified as the institutions and organizations of the world; while her comparison of Him is with **“the sons,”** who, no doubt, refers to other great men of the world from whom Jesus stands apart, alone.

In looking through my bookshelves one day, I noticed a book, the title of which caught my eye: “CHRIST AND OTHER MASTERS.” In my heart I said, “Surely, there is something grossly in error here; This seems to put Jesus among the great men of the world, as just another illustrious character, to be given the ordinary honors accorded other world leaders. This must not be, for He stands alone; He is the *Son of Man*, he is *the Son of God*. As the poet has said,

“He’s the lily of the valley, the bright & morning star,
He’s the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.”

Somewhere back across the years I found the following great tribute to our Saviour, written by some unknown author; though we do not know to whom we should give the credit here, yet we can give all of the glory to Him who loved us.

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

“He came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He put on humanity that we might put on Divinity. He became Son of man that we might become sons of God. He came from Heaven, where the rivers never freeze, winds never blow, frosts never chill the air, flowers never fade. They never phone for a doctor, for there no one is ever sick. There are no undertakers and no graveyards, for no one ever dies – no one is ever buried.

He was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, reared in obscurity; only once crossed the boundary of the land, in childhood. He had no wealth nor influence, and had neither training nor education. His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential.

In infancy He startled a king; in boyhood He puzzled the doctors; in manhood, ruled the course of nature. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book, yet not all the libraries of the country could hold the books that could be written about Him.

He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme of more songs than all song writers combined. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine, yet He has healed more broken hearts than the doctors have broken bodies.

He never marshalled an army, drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun, yet no leader ever made more volunteers, who have under His orders, made rebels stack arms or surrender without a shot being fired.

He is the Star of Astronomy, the Rock of Geology, the Lion and the Lamb of Zoology, the Harmonizer of all discords, and the Healer of all diseases. Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not destroy Him, the grave could not hold Him.

He laid aside His purple robe for a peasant's gown. He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor. How poor? Ask Mary! Ask the Wise Men! He slept in another's manger. He cruised the lake in another's boat. He rode on another's ass. He was buried in another man's tomb. All failed, but He never.

The ever perfect One – He is the Chief among ten thousand. He is altogether lovely.”

He is greater than the greatest of scientists, for in their lives and deaths, they give us no eternal life, and no relationship to God.

He is greater than poets, authors, and orators, John 7:46 “**...Never man spake like this man.**”

He is greater than dictators and rulers, I Timothy 6:15 for He is “**...King of kings, and Lord of lords.**”

From His suffering, His sorrow, His shame, His supreme sacrifice; out of darkness and death, and the tomb; out of His triumph over death, hell, and the grave, He gives to us the sweet fruit of eternal life, and fellowship with God forever.

The Bride Dreams of the Future

Still further perusing this beautiful simile of the Bride, we hear her say, in the fourth verse: “**He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.**”

There is a two-fold significance in this speech: It speaks to us of the daily feast of good things provided for us out of the unwasting fulness of His amazing grace; every day, and hour we are blessed with the fruit of His sacrifice. Psalm 107:9 The Psalmist has said, “**For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.**” Jesus is, indeed, the “Bread of Life,” and in Him our spiritual hunger is satisfied each day.

However, there is another import here, one that is prophetic: “**He brought me to the banqueting house...**” looks forward in happy anticipation to that time, as revealed in the Word of God, when we shall be with Him at the wedding feast. We read of it in Revelation 19:9, and it is set forth in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, in Matthew 22. It is also suggested in the parable of the ten virgins, Matthew 25, and other places in the scriptures. Ah, yes, beloved, He will bring us to His banqueting house at last. With continuing joy, the Bride sings of His love, “**...his banner over me was love.**” Let us get

the complete picture here. The order is beautiful:

“I sat down under his shadow with great delight.” Not only is there satisfying fruit from this apple tree, but there is spiritual refreshment under the bowers of His mercy; there is blessed repose, and comforting shade from the heat of the noon-day sun. Here we may rest from the weariness of life’s conflict.

“His fruit was sweet to my taste.” This includes all of the good things given us daily in Jesus; it is fellowship, and spiritual blessings.

“He brought me to the banqueting house” – This anticipates the marriage supper of the Lamb. John speaking in Revelation 19:6-9, ***“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters...Let us be glad and rejoice...for the marriage of the Lamb is come...Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb...”***

Brother, I expect to be at that banquet table. Will you be there? Sometimes, we used to sing,

“Lo, the table is spread, and the feast is waiting there;
Hear his loving voice calling still.”

Today the Holy spirit is calling you to the marriage of Christ, the Bridegroom, and His church, His Bride. The invitation is universal.

Revelation 22:17 ***“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”***

“His banner over me was love” – The meaning of that banner under which we rest, can best be summed up in the one word that expresses His very being: “Love.” It is wonderful to know that we abide under the wings of His love.

Psalm 91:1-4 ***“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”***

Inspired, no doubt, by such wonderful words from the Blessed Book, William O. Cushing was moved to write the words of that great song, “UNDER HIS WINGS.”

“Under his wings I am safely abiding;
Through the night deepens and tempests are wild,

Still I can trust him; I know he will keep me;
He has redeemed me and I am his child.

“Under his wings, what a refuge in sorrow!
How the heart yearningly turns to its rest!
Often when earth has no balm for my healing,
There I find comfort and there I am blest.

“Under his wings, O what precious enjoyment!
There will I hide ‘til life’s trials are o’er;
Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me;
Resting in Jesus I’m safe evermore.”

The Bride Continues Her Meditations

Verses 5-6 **“Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.”**

In verse 5 above the Bride voices her loneliness, and heartsickness in the absence of her Beloved: **“I am sick of love,”** does not mean that she is tired of His love; but rather that her love is so deep, so great, so intense, and the need of that love for His presence so acute, that her very heart is sick. There is no sickness like heart-sickness; there is no loneliness like that of being separated from the ones we love the most; there is no longing like the heart yearning for the dearest loved one; and there is no waiting that so tries the patience of one’s soul like the waiting for the return of one so dear, and for such a glad occasion as a wedding day. So His church, the Bride, waits anxiously, and impatiently for the fulfillment of His sweet promise, “I will come again.”

But as the Bride, in heartache and longing, awaits the return of her Beloved, she prays for Him to give her strength and comfort in His long absence. **“Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples...”**

To “stay” means “to stop from falling, to prop, to hold up.” It also means “to sustain,” and “to satisfy.”

“Flagons” are wine-bottles; and wine is a type of Jesus’ precious blood. In other words, the wine which typifies His blood, actually represents God’s amazing grace.

So, with these facts before us, we can now understand the real substance of the Bride’s prayer: For the ordeal of waiting, and for the prosecution of her ministry, as she waits, it is as the church praying unto Him.

“Oh, dear Lord, I am weary and weak; I am sick, and need Thy help. Please hold me

up, keep me from falling; sustain me by Thy grace, satisfy me with Thy love. Keep me by Thy power, for Thou art my security. My hope is in Thy precious blood. Dear Lord, the days and the nights are so long, and the world is so unkind. I want to be faithful; I try to be patient; but I grow so homesick for heaven, so lonely for Thy presence. Until Thou dost come to me, I shall rely upon the wine of Thy grace – it is sufficient; and I shall find comfort in the “apples” of Thy love. In the daytime I shall go forth to do Thy work, because I love Thee; and in the loneliness of the midnight Thou shalt fill my dreams.”

We may consider verse 6 more, or less, anticipative: **“His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.”**

Knowing that the Bride and Bridegroom are separated – He in heaven, she on earth – we can see that the above words may well indicate what she sees in the dreams of her heart. It is a sweet dream of His embrace. She is reclining; while He bends over her, holding His left hand under her head, and embracing her with His right hand. The whole scene is one of deepest tenderness, and certainly sacred. Of course, Jesus’ spiritual presence is with His churches here on earth always; but He is in heaven at the right hand of God. As our Great High Priest He has gone into the Holy of Holies, and we are waiting for Him to finish His ministrations there, that He may return for us. As we wait, it is only natural that our hearts should be filled with dreams of Him.

In verse 7, we hear the Bride make an earnest appeal to certain ones on earth: **“I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.”**

Because of the fact that, in our study of the next chapter in verse 5, we find the very same statement made by the Bride as in the above verse, we shall defer any comment until we get to that point. It is a very significant passage of scripture, and one that we shall take time to study; however the explanation will be more appropriate there than at this point.

CHAPTER FOUR

“THE FIG TREE PUTTETH FORTH HER LEAVES”

The Song of Solomon 2:8-17

*The Bridegroom Seeks To Arouse In The Heart
Of The Bride An Eagerness For His Return*

Beginning with verse 8, and running to the end of this chapter, a series of very beautiful truths unfold. Remember, the Bride is on earth, and the Bridegroom is in heaven. Now she hears His voice speaking to her across time and space. He is inciting her to greater eagerness for His return, and for their wedding day: 2:8-14 **“The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”**

The Bride here visualizes her beloved as a roe, or a young hart leaping and skipping upon the hills – in other words, young, strong, and happy, and very eager as He thinks of her. The roe and hart are red deer – the roe is possibly the female, and the hart, or hind, is the stag. Though separated, yet there is sweet communion between her and her beloved. He speaks to her, and she can hear His voice. Thank God, there is communion between Jesus and His church: He speaks to us through the inspired scriptures; and He speaks to our hearts in the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. The world cannot understand, because the world does not have the Spirit, and spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

Not only does she hear His voice, but with the eye of faith she sees Him with partial, or limited vision. She is here behind a wall of mortality of sinful flesh; He is yonder beyond this veil of tears in “a land that is fairer than day.” **“...he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.”** Jesus is in one world, we are in another; but I am so glad that God has made windows in the wall that

separates heaven and earth, and we can see Him at those windows. The Bible is a great window, and so is prayer. We are not able to see Him in all of His glory, for He is as one behind a lattice. We know that He is there, we can only see Him in part, we can hear His voice: and our soul is thrilled with desire to see Him face to face.

I Corinthians 13:12 **“For now we see through a glass, darkly: but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”**

I John 3:2 **“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”**

It is truly as the poet said,

“And when by his grace, I shall look on his face, Oh that will be glory, be glory for me.”

So the Bride waits with eager heart here in the world, hoping for the day when she can see Him face to face. We often talk of the eagerness of God’s people for the return of Jesus, but we seem to forget that His heart is also filled with longing and desire to come for us. No doubt, our Lord wants to be with us, who are the blood-bought trophies of His grace, more than we can ever want to be with Him.

Now with this picture before us – of the Bride, as a stranger in a strange world, waiting for her Beloved, and the Bridegroom longing for the day when He shall have a place prepared, to which He may carry her to be with Him forever – we are somewhat prepared to listen to His tender coaxing, as He whispers down the pathless skies. **“...Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”** He endeavors to keep her mind fixed upon the thought of His return. The attitude of God’s people toward the doctrine of the return of Jesus pretty much governs their attitude toward everything else.

The Bridegroom is here, comforting, consoling, and encouraging the waiting Bride, by reminding her that it will not be long; everything indicates the nearness of that glad day. She must be patient, though eager, in waiting, and find joy in His unfailing promises. Oh, how long it seems to her, since He has gone away, now more than nineteen hundred years have passed. She has gone through flame and flood, through turmoil and tempest, through blood and tears, yet, in it all, she has rested in the assurance of His words, John 14:3 **“And if I go...I will come again, and receive you unto myself...”** I Thessalonians 4:18 **“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”** Surely, every truly regenerated soul awaits the return of our Saviour with eager anticipation.” Hebrews 9:28 **“...and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”**

In these verses 11-14 we hear the Bridegroom wooing the heart of His love. He paints a bright picture, of hope soon to be realized, of joys soon to be shared. He calls her attention to the fact that the rigors of winter with its ravaging blasts will soon be past; the

rain will soon be over and gone. The flowers are beginning to spring up from the warm bosom of the earth, the birds are beginning to fill the air with song, the voice of the turtle is heard in the land, the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell, and the fig trees have begun to put forth their new crop of fruit.

What does it all mean? Why, beloved, it means that springtime is near; and springtime speaks of resurrection time. There comes to my memory the words of one of the early poets: I cannot now remember his name; yet I do know that I had to memorize the poem when I was a lad in high school. These lines bear upon the same beautiful sentiment of springtime and resurrection:

“Then what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, comes perfect day,
And heaven try earth if it be in tune,
and over if softly her warm ear lay.
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
we hear life murmur, and see it glisten.
Every clod feels a stir of might; and instinct
within it that reaches and towers,
And groping blindly above it for light, climbs
to a soul in the birds and the flowers.”

Springtime is a time when all the world bursts forth into new life. It is the time of love and marriage, truly, a time of mating. It symbolizes the resurrection. Every bursting clod, every tender shoot of new grass, every delicate, fragrant blossom, every bud and green leaf, every little bird building a nest, every bee buzzing hastily from flower to flower, every gentle zephyr that kisses our cheek in springtime, cries out the glorious message of Christ's return, and the “First Resurrection.”

It is said here, that “**...the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.**”

I remember an occasion many years ago, when I was speaking to a congregation along this line. I asked the question publicly, “Does the turtle have a voice, and if so, what kind of voice is it?”

A man in the congregation spoke up and said, that the voice of the turtle is a hissing sound, something like the blowing of an old goose, as we have often seen them do in the spring “setting” season.

Then I remembered that oftentimes as a boy, while rambling through the swamps in the spring of the year, in the time when turtles were mating, I had often heard them, when I

came near, make that hissing, blowing sound.

What a perfect picture all of this scene presents: what an indication to the Bride that her beloved will soon be returning for a wedding in the spring. Down through the infinite spaces of heaven He whispers to her, that she may be getting ready, and be on her watch. How the people of God should be alert today; how they should be busy at the sacred task, realizing that what we do, we must do quickly, for time is running out. The signs of His coming are on every hand. Even as I write these words, I am pressed with a deep feeling of urgency, a feeling that I must hurry and be done, and get this message out while it can still do good.

Jesus told His disciples, Matthew 24:32-33 **“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”**

The Bride is making ready for the wedding day; and her attendants, who are The Word of God, and the Holy Spirit, are dressing her up in garments pure and fine, that when the Bridegroom comes for her, she may appear most beautiful to Him without blemish and without spot. Her heart is all aflutter, and with diligence, she watches, while she listens to hear the first faint sound of His chariot wheels returning down the highways of glory.

In this intervening time, between His going away and His return, the Bridegroom hungers for the sound of her voice, and for the sight of her dear face. He invites her to come and commune with Him in prayer.

Let us note verse 14. He calls her a tender name: **“O my dove...”** The dove speaks of mourning innocence; it is likewise a symbol of peace. What a fitting simile! The very ministry of the churches of Jesus Christ is a ministry of peace. They are to carry the message of the gospel of Calvary to all the world, that men may be at peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that the peace of God may fill their hearts. Surely His peace fills the heart of His Bride.

I hear the Master say in John 14:27 **“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

Again he says, John 16:33 **“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.”**

Let us observe something else: As He speaks in endearing terms to His love, His church, He also makes clear just where he is positional, *“In the clefts of the rock.”* That is where the Bride of Christ positionally is found, hidden in the wounded side of Jesus. He

gave Himself for her; she was purchased with His own precious blood on Calvary. He is the "Rock of Ages." The words of that great old song by Augustus M. Toplady which we used to sing in the days of yore so aptly express the blessed truth of our hope:

"Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide
myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood, from thy
wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin, the double cure, save from
wrath and make me pure."

Back in the 33rd chapter of Exodus, verses 18-23, Old Moses, that great leader of Israel, a man very close to God, besought the Almighty to show to him His glory, but God denied him his request.

Verses 20-23 **"And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."**

No doubt these words became the inspiration to Fannie J. Crosby for that great song:

"A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord,
a wonderful Saviour to me;
He hideth my soul in the clefts of the rock,
and rivers of pleasure I see.

He hideth my soul in the clefts of the rock
that shadowed a dry thirsty land;
He hideth my life in the depth of his love,
and covers me there with his hand."

Being thus hidden in Christ, we can appreciate the words of Paul in Colossians 3:3, **"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."**

Not only so, but through this blessed relationship, we have the privilege of prayer. The Bridegroom desires communion with the one He loves. He says to her, verse 14 **"...in the**

secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”

Thus He calls her to prayer. Stairs speak of a way of access; and by virtue of our position in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have access to the throne of God. We have the privilege of daily communion with the Lord. Not only is it a privilege, but a sacred duty as well. Paul said in Hebrews 4:16 **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”**

We usually think of prayer as a means of obtaining something we need, or want, from God; but one of the greatest values in prayer lies in the fact that it becomes a medium of sweet fellowship with our Lord. He desires it; and we, too, if we be truly “born again,” find it an indispensable means of grace for our peace of mind.

Jesus wants to hear the voice of His Bride in prayer, and to see her face on the stairs rising heavenward. He longs for her close companionship. He wants His church to be a praying church, let her not disappoint Him; He finds glory in that, let her not rob Him of the glory due His name. To Him, her voice is sweet, and her countenance is comely.

Colossians 3:1-2 **“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”**

THE LITTLE FOXES

Verse 15; **“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.”**

In the preceding verse, the call of Jesus to His church has been a call to prayer, and fellowship, and close communion. Now in verse 15, the suggestion that the little foxes spoil the vines, etc., brings to the church a very tender, and timely warning. Here we may find a key to the tragic condition of coldness and powerlessness of so many churches; here may be the cause for so much broken fellowship with Christ.

It is said that the “vines have tender grapes.” When the grapes are young and tender, then the new vines and green leaves are also tender, and are choice morsels for the young foxes to feed upon. The danger here is not that of the grown foxes who will later feed upon the full-grown, ripe grapes; but it is a grave danger of the baby foxes, who can slip in under the gate, or fence, and feed on the tender vines. No one would give a thought to them; they are so small, they could do no harm, we think, or they would go unnoticed altogether. They are too small to do damage to the crop at harvest time, but the unnoticed feeding of many little foxes on the new vines and tender grapes will tell all too late at the end.

The little sins and faults and failures, not the big ones, in the church are the ones that hurt the most. The big ones are obvious; we rise up against them, and stop them before they do their worst. But the little sins that go unnoticed, the so-called “respectable” sins, are the ones that sap away the spirituality of the church, and keep us in a state of broken fellowship with God. These sins, such as malice, envy, covetousness, neglect of prayer, neglect of Bible reading, dishonesty with God, neglect to attend services, et cetera, et cetera, are the ones that gradually rob us of the joy of salvation, and render us backslidden and useless in God’s service.

Oh, how many times we have seen promising young Christians start out in the membership of a church, and seem to be filled with burning zeal for the Lord, their love was deep, their hearts seemed afire with interest; but before we could scarcely realize what was taking place, they have drifted away, and seem to care no more. We try to find an answer, or a cause, but apparently there is none. This did not happen all in a day, but gradually, and unnoticed, the “little foxes” spoiled the fruitage of the life.

Jesus is warning His church: Look out for the little foxes; don’t let them come between us.”

Most of us have known of instances where a man would be called away to war, or for some other purpose, and, upon returning home after a long absence, would find that the one he loved, the woman dearest to his heart, had proved untrue in going after whoredoms. Results: The heart of a trusting loved one was broken in disappointment. Oh, let us not break the heart of our beloved Lord by our faithlessness. Let us be true to Him who loves us with the greatest love the world has ever known. Let us live and serve in such a manner that we shall not be ashamed to meet Him at His coming.

The Bride speaks in verse 16, **“My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.”**

In verse 2 of this 2nd chapter, the Bridegroom spoke of His Bride as, “a lily among thorns.” Now, in this 16th verse she pictures Him as feeding “among the lilies.” This is Jesus in the midst of the churches. Of John’s vision, while on the Isle of Patmos, he says in Revelation 1:12-13, **“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candle-sticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”**

He was seeing Jesus in the midst of the churches, for the 20th verse of that same chapter explains that the seven candlesticks are the seven churches. The place that Jesus wants most to be is in the midst of his churches. Many other wonderful things press the mind for utterance just here, but we are forced to go on to other things. Last of all in this

chapter, we shall listen in as the Bride and Bridegroom make a date.

They Fix a Rendezvous In Glory.

The Bride speaks in verse 17: **“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”**

“*Bether*” means: “separation.” The thought here seems to be the Bride’s reluctant acceptance of the necessary separation from her beloved, until that glad day somewhere in the indefinite future, when comes “the daybreak, and the shadows flee away.”

Now in chapter 4, verse 6, we find an almost identical expression, this time from the Bridegroom: **“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.”**

The Bride has told Him to go, and be like a young deer on the *mountain of separation*; while He has declared that He will be gone to the *mountain of myrrh and frankincense*.

Myrrh and frankincense were among the gifts which the wise men brought to Jesus at His birth in Bethlehem. Myrrh, as has already been stated in this study, is an aromatic gum resin obtained from a tree found in Africa and Arabia. It was used in perfume and incense, also as an unguent, and possibly in embalming fluid. Frankincense was also a very fragrant resin, which gave off a pungent aroma in burning; it was also used in embalming. In stating that He will get Him to the mountain of myrrh and frankincense, the Bridegroom, perhaps, refers to the Holy of Holies in heaven, where He is now with the Father. He is in glory; she is in a world of separation.

How wonderful the picture presented here! It is the picture of true lovers, torn apart for a season, but agreeing upon a time and place where they shall meet again. As to the time, to them, it is indefinite. No one knows but the Father. Mark 13:32. To them, it is simply when **“...the day break, and the shadows flee away...”**

Thank God, I have a date with Jesus! I hear the song of birds, and the voice of turtles; I see the green figs putting forth, and the tender grapes, while the soft breezes of heaven kiss my cheeks. Springtime is here, and Jesus is coming soon.

“Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine.”

We need to “strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. We need to get our heads among the clouds, our hopes heavenward; We need to face the sunrise, and forget the shadows, for

“The toils of the road will mean nothing,
When I’ve gone the last mile of the way.”

“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

Ah, these words refresh the hungry heart of the Bride with the hope of the morning that will surely come, in whose sky there will be no cloud to cast a shadow across her path, and whose sun shall not go down.

Over yonder on the sea one gloomy night, according to John, chapter 21, verse 4 Peter and John and some other disciples toiled all night fruitlessly with their nets, **“But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore...”**

And, beloved, they sat down to breakfast prepared by our Lord’s own dear hands – a blessed picture of the fellowship that will be ours when we shall sit at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

As Jesus and His Bride commune with each other across the silent skies, they find joy and comfort in that common expectancy. She, out of the deep recesses of her lonely heart, whispers, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away;” while in that still small voice, she hears His tender reply, **“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”**

Beloved, now the shadows are about us, but the day will dawn soon. The question is, “Watchman, what of the night?” And the watchman replies, “The morning cometh.”

Oh, friend, I want you to see these soul-stirring truths: I want you to see the Bride of Jesus waiting eagerly, longingly, hopefully, for her Lord’s return. I think I can see her as she rushes here and there, hastily making things ready. Now and then she runs to the window to see if He is coming, or opens the door to listen for the sound of His returning chariot wheels; and when she lies upon her bed, weary from her labors, at the close of the day, she is comforted with the thought, that perhaps His call will awake her at the midnight hour. She has heard His message from glory, in which He bade her to rise up and be ready to come away.

Oh, yes, He loves that virgin with an eternal love. She is pledged to Him, and He to her. He has gone to prepare a place – a home – to which He will take her some happy day. She will be so glad when He returns, and the wedding day has dawned; then He will carry her to the mansions prepared, where she will be the queen of His habitation.

This, my friend, is the hope of the people of God, who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. It is the hope of a home coming with Jesus, the hope of being present at the wedding in the skies.

One of the most wonderful times in a man’s life is when he takes his new bride into the little home which he has prepared for her with his own hand. Every hammer blow has been

made with love; every board, every shingle, and every stone has been laid in the purest affection of his heart.

Can I ever forget the day, which has been mentioned before, when my bride and I began housekeeping together. We had just one little room, but it was a wonderful place, for in that room was love.

Our honeymoon home in this world may be just a cottage in the woods, a cabin on the hill, or even a little shack down the lane, but, where love abides, it is enough. But thanks be unto God, it is neither a cabin, nor a shack, that He is fitting up for His Bride on the shores of eternal morning. It is a mansion. The song-writer expressed it in the following words:

“He is fitting up my mansion which eternally shall stand,
For my stay shall not be transient
in that holy, happy land.
There is rest for the weary, there is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary, there is rest for you;
On the other side of Jordan, in the sweet fields of Eden,
There is rest for the weary, there is rest for you.”

When the day breaks, and the shadows are gone, we shall meet again; and it will not be on these rugged shores of sin and sorrow, but among the clouds with Jesus. Surely, it will not be long.

Dear reader, are you waiting for Him, are you listening, and longing for His return? He is coming again. It is my “blessed hope.” What about you? Do you rest by faith under the outstretched wing of His saving grace?

Yes, thank God! I have a date with Jesus. And He will not fail to come for me.

THE SOUND OF HIS FEET

“In the crimson of the morning,
In the whiteness of the noon,
In the amber glory of the day’s retreat,
In the midnight robed in darkness,
Or the gleaming of the moon,
I listen for the coming of his feet.

“Down the minister aisles of splendor,
From betwixt the cherubim,
Through the wandering throng,
With movements strong and sweet,
Sounds his victory tread approaching,
With movements far and dim—
The music of the coming of his feet.

“Sandaled not with sheen of silver,
Girdled not with woven gold,
Weighted not with shimmering gems and odors sweet;
But white-winged and shod with glory,
In the Tabor light of old—
The glory of the coming of his feet.

“He is coming, O my spirit,
With his everlasting peace,
With his blessedness immortal and complete;
He is coming, O my spirit,
And his coming brings release.
I am panting for the coming of his feet.”
(Author Unknown)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BRIDE SEARCHES FOR HER BELOVED

Song of Solomon 3:1-5

“By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.”

Some very vital things regarding the church and her ministry are brought to our attention in these verses. For the sake of emphasis, I would like to repeat a statement made earlier in this study: In the main, the array of facts set forth in these studies, concerning Christ and His Bride, the church, are also true – or should be – of Jesus and every local, visible New Testament body. I would also repeat, that no truly saved individual can study these things with an open and unbiased heart, without emerging from such study with a greater love and appreciation for the New Testament church than ever before, and with a greater desire to be faithful to the sacred task given to that church.

Let us first see:

I.

The Bride At Ease On Her Bed.

She desires the nearness of Him whom her soul loveth, but lolling in ease and lethargy on her bed while there is work unfinished, which He has bidden her do, she cannot know His presence, nor feel His power. ***“By night on my bed I sought him—I sought him, but I found him not.”***

As long as a church reclines in ease upon the couch of idleness, undisturbed, and unburdened for souls, it is impossible for that church to experience the power and presence of the Lord to any great degree.

In the preceding chapter, we have observed how Christ looked upon His church with great tenderness and love, we have heard Him speak to her in the most endearing terms

and with compliments. We have also heard her, out of the sincerity of her heart, return those compliments, and magnify His beauty and attraction, in the earnest avowal of her love. With the eye of faith, she could see Him through the lattice, or looking forth at the windows; She could hear His still, small voice whispering to her heart, calling her to the place of prayer. She has read, and reread His love letters in the Holy Word, and has become reconciled to His necessary absence for a while.

However, the waiting grows long and wearisome, and little by little, she has succumbed to her weariness, she has drifted into a condition of lethargy. She does not mean to be indifferent, but she has relaxed, when she needs to be alert. She is becoming lazy. It is so nice to lie in idleness and ease upon her couch, and dream of her beloved; but to her consternation, she becomes aware of the fact that strangely, somehow, He seems so far away. He used to be so near, and His presence was so real, but, try as she may, she cannot find Him upon her bed. He has eluded her.

The true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ love, and look for His appearing: to them it is the "Blessed Hope" for which they live, and serve, and wait. They feel secure in His love, happy in His promises, but they are too often lulled asleep.

The church too often wants the presence and power of Christ without paying the price. She wants the glory without the humiliation. She wants the victory without the conflict. She wants the song without the service and sacrifice.

Let us face the fact: We know that we are in Christ, that we are saved; we know that we are eternally safe and secure in Him; we know that He is coming again, and that He will receive us unto Himself. Nothing can nullify, nor obliterate our living hope. But we are too often content to wrap ourselves in the soft robes of security, lie down on our beds of idleness, and draw over our weary souls the covers of "blessed assurance," and just take it easy. Then we wonder why our Lord seems so very far away, and our heart no longer throbs with the thrill of His presence and power. Listen, my friend, Jesus is nearest to us when we are faithfully serving Him. Let His churches not betray His sacred trust.

There are many local, visible, churches in the world today, that, though they can boast of divine origin, and are unquestionably orthodox as to the fundamental doctrine of the New Testament, have very little power, or warmth, or spirituality, and, like the barren fig tree, they bear no fruit. They sit down upon the stools of do-nothing, and enjoy their spiritual siestas, and expect God to come down and bathe them in seas of celestial joy, and stir them in continuous old-time revival.

The Prophet Amos drew a picture of them in Amos 6:1-6, as he said, **"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Pass ye unto Calneh, and see;**

and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint them-selves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”

It is no wonder that a lot of churches today are more like a graveyard than a church, and their services are as cold as the tomb. It is no wonder that they are not spiritual, or happy, and can't pray a prevailing prayer, and are not accomplishing anything for God.

Too many churches are self-satisfied, like the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-19) who said, verse 17 **“...I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing...”**

Jesus said to her, verses 17-18 Thou **“...knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.”**

Idleness and power do not go together; ease and accomplishment can never be one. We cannot please, nor honor, nor magnify the Lord Jesus Christ without faithful service.

The Bride bears His name, she is His by blood; they are to be “henceforth in interest, and in destiny, as in affection, one.” And to be one with Jesus is to want what He wants, love what He loves, and be faithful to the sacred responsibilities of that relationship. To be saved and secure is not enough. The thing of importance is **“faith that worketh by love.”**

I have had professing Christians come to me all troubled, and say, “I don't know what is wrong with me. Why can't I feel close to the Lord? There was a time when I was happy, and felt the power of God in my life, but now it seems that there is something missing. I can't get an answer to prayer. What is wrong?”

I will tell you what is wrong: You are lying on the couch doing nothing; your life is fruitless, therefore empty. We are here to bear fruit unto God; but too often we are willing to lie down and take it easy, and let the world go to hell.

The quickest way for a church to die is of inactivity. Faith must do more than well-wishing; real faith is active, forceful, aggressive. If a church does no more than rest in a sweet spirit of complacency, or spend her time telling Jesus how wonderful He is, or how much she loves and trusts Him, then she is not going to be blessed too much with His

presence and power. It is great to praise the Lord; but it is greater still to serve Him. He is more concerned with the proof of our love than with the meaningless declaration of it.

Ephesians 2:10 **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”**

To hear a sermon, without seeing one, imposes very little influence upon the hearer. And for a church to sing her love songs to Jesus while on a bed of idleness is but mockery.

I Peter 4:17 **“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God...”**

Many of the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ are in a state of sleepiness today. A spiritual stupor seems to prevail. I am sure that the words of Paul to the Ephesian church so long ago constitute a challenge to our Lord’s churches, as well as to individual believers, today: Ephesians 5:14 **“...Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”**

In the study of chapter two of our text, we have observed that the Bridegroom is seeking to arouse the Bride to a greater eagerness for His return, and to a more earnest watchfulness for the signs of its eminence.

Jesus knew that this lethargy, or “falling away,” among His people would come as the end of the age drew near, and He foretold the same through the writers of the New Testament. In His own great discourse with His disciples, concerning the signs of the times, Matthew 24:12 He says, **“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”**

In Paul’s letter to the Roman Church he, too, sounds out the solemn reminder, Romans 13:11-14 **“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”**

The church needs to awake from her dreams, and arise from her couch, and be about her Lord’s business. She is seeking His dear presence and power on her bed of idleness and ease, while the world is on fire, civilization is going to pieces, and precious souls are going down to hell.

We can cry, “Revive us again,” and “Lord, send a revival,” until the end of the age, and, unless we bestir ourselves to get up, and get out for Christ, our sad lament will continue to be: **“I sought him, but I found him not.”** It is as one has said:

THERE IS A THIEF IN YOUR CHURCH

“The thief in your church is Indifference. Indifference steals the congregation, saps the enthusiasm of your members, kidnaps the members of your Sunday School, steals the life from the services, robs the choir and orchestra of their joy of serving, and takes the pleasure out of giving both of time and money to the Lord’s work.

“Indifference keeps souls from the altar of surrender. It blinds sinners to their need of Christ, and Christians to the value of the sinner’s soul. It lurks around the corner ready to employ every modern method to capture the new convert, enticing him with every attraction the world can offer.

“Indifference causes his victims to shirk their responsibility, but he never rests, he ceaselessly endeavors to steal from your church the very principles of its foundation.

“Indifference is a thief and a robber: drive him from your church.”

II.

The Bride Now Goes Into The Streets.

Our text verse 2 “**I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.**”

We have seen the Bride reposing upon her bed, there filled with a deep longing for the presence and power of her Beloved. On her bed she sought Him, but found Him not. Now, a strange restlessness takes hold upon her; sleep goes from her eyes; she feels that she cannot lie there longer: Something must be done without delay. What shall it be?

Well, one common plan of meeting such a situation, one way to combat such a condition of sleepless, restless, nervous disorder, is the use of a sedative. Yes sir, all that a person has to do in this fast moving age, when he cannot sleep at night, is to swallow a couple of high-powered pills, then forget everything in life’s sea of troubles, and float away on a cloud of dreams.

The fact of the case is, this very plan is being used by churches everywhere to overcome their restlessness and dissatisfaction, and to find their sweet repose. They are using the sedatives of the world in an effort to soothe their troubled minds. The churches are not happy just doing nothing, and many of them are too lazy and backslidden to get under the responsibilities of the kingdom work of our dear Lord, so they try to satisfy themselves in the sedation of worldly interests. They try to substitute other things for their

real duties, things like Ball Clubs, Bowling Teams, Bingo and Ping-pong Parties, Social Activities, and such like. They wear themselves out in such enterprises as these, then wonder why they can't reach anyone for Christ, and why there seems to be so little joy in "Christian Service."

I would to God that the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ would become restless today. Oh, that they might become so wretched, and miserable, and unhappy in their chasing of fantasies, that they might awake to spiritual realities. May the Holy Spirit so stir the churches with a sense of shame, and so arouse them in a soul-stirring revival, that they may get off of beds of idleness, and go forth to witness for Jesus in the highways and hedges.

The Bride leaves her bed, she goes out and begins to seek her beloved in the highways, in the hedges, in the hills, in the valleys, in the streets, in the shops, in the slums, in the humble homes of poverty, and everywhere. She talks of Him to everyone she meets along the way.

This, my friend, is the Lord's plan for the ministry of His church, In the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son which Jesus gave in Matthew, chapter 22, we read in verses 8-10: **"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."** See also Luke 14:16-24.

We know that salvation is of the Lord, Ephesians 2:8 **"For by grace are ye saved through faith..."** We know that the church is no saving agency, it has no power to save any one; but Jesus commissioned her to go and preach the gospel to all the world, and she cannot neglect that sacred task and hope to be spiritual and happy. To the church He gave "the keys of the Kingdom of heaven" (The Word and The Holy Spirit), and made it plain that He was depending on her. If the job is not done by the New Testament Churches, it will not be done at all. But it will be done.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, in Romans 1:14-16 he declared, **"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."**

Christ's church is His witness through the gospel, and if she would know the joy of His presence and power, she must be faithful to that responsibility.

It is true that the devil doesn't want the gospel of Calvary preached to a lost world; and

he is against every true church, tooth and toenail, which is faithfully engaged in the business of witnessing. He has always been. Acts records the persecutions of the Apostolic church, how they were brought before the Sanhedrin, and commanded not to preach any more in Jesus' name or be beaten and thrown in prison.

Their answers were always such as, Acts 5:29 **"...We ought to obey God rather than men."** Acts 5:32 **"...we are his witnesses of these things..."** Acts 4:20: **"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."** Acts 5:42 **"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."**

They believed in a living Saviour. Acts 4:33 **"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."**

In the 15th chapter of Luke, verses 3-7, we have the beautiful parable of the lost sheep: **"And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having and hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."**

Beloved, this is the God-given ministry of the church, first to go afield after the lost, even though it be into the wilderness, into the mountains, or in the blackness of midnight. That is when she is closest to Jesus; that is when she can rejoice in the fulness of His presence and power. The missionary, soul-winning church is the happy, and influential one.

The Bride is now hastening through the lanes and streets of the city, and into the broad ways seeking Him, but to no avail.

"I sought him, but I found him not."

Oh, let us see, that the key to the situation is this: she is *seeking* Him, not *preaching* Him. That is the trouble: she is more concerned with satisfying her own loneliness and heart-hunger for His presence, than in telling other people about Him. She does not seem to realize that, to truly love Jesus, is to also love precious souls for whom He shed His blood; to prove our love most to Him is to do His will.

Why do we want the presence and power of Christ in our lives, anyway? Is it purely for the sense of our own satisfaction—that we may take pride in the fact that we are close to the Lord and spiritual? Is it so that we may be able to boast of our power with God in prayer, or of our faith? I can recall an occasion many years ago, when I heard a preacher boast of how much faith he had. He said, that when any man had more faith in God than he, that

man had to be bigger than he. I say to you, my friend, I cannot boast of my faith in God; I am ashamed that it is so little.

But back to the question: why do we want God's power upon our lives? What are we going to do with it?

Well, I am going to church every Sunday, and sit in the "Amen corner"; I am going to nod my assent when the preacher makes a good point, and shout, "amen" when he really bears down on the Old Book.

I tell you, if you want spiritual power, just to sit and enjoy salvation, then you will not get spiritual power. If you want spiritual power just so you can pop your heels together, and shout, "Hallelujah, Glory to God," then you will not get spiritual power. We need power for a purpose, and that purpose is to be able to go out and win souls to Jesus Christ.

Don't get me wrong. I believe in old-time, heartfelt religion; and I believe in old-time shouting of His praise, when it is real and sincere. I have heard both my Mother and my Grandmother, who are long since gone on to glory, praise the Lord aloud many times, and their daily lives, and faithful service, backed up their praise. It had influence. I can never forget when, as a thirteen year-old boy, I stood dripping wet on the bank of the creek, where I had just been buried in baptism – a long line of candidates stood there – and my mother and grandmother put their arms around me and praised God for the salvation, and baptism, of the "baby boy."

Yes, that is wonderful, and I would to God that more of us were that close to the Lord today. However, in my experience, I have seen a lot of people who could shout all over the hill, and you would think that they were about ready to take off to the Elysian shores, yet they never made any great effort to lead some lost soul to Christ. They never spoke to a sinner on the road to hell. Frankly, I don't have much time, nor respect for that kind of spirituality. It is not worth the time it takes to tell about it. What do you want with influence? What do you want with the presence and power of God in your life, if it is not to get out in the sticks, in the hills, in the shops, on the streets and give the gospel to someone that they may know the way of salvation?

III.

Two Things Take Place When The Bride Goes Into The Street.

Verse 3: "**The watchmen that go about the city found me...**"

1. The first thing that takes place when the Bride arises from her couch, puts on her garments, and goes out into the streets, is that the watchmen find her. But who are these

watchmen?

We find them mentioned once more in the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, verse 7. From the study of that passage along with this reference, we must conclude that the watchmen are those who represent governmental authorities and powers. City watchmen would ordinarily be officers of law, and here they would seem to represent the whole system of world powers. The church has ever been persecuted by these powers through the centuries, especially when she has stood uncompromising in her witness to the truth. Church history bears this out. Also, when the church has gone forth in the faithful prosecution of her gospel ministry, even though her robes have been often stained with martyr's blood, she has dispelled spiritual darkness, and brought in the light of Christ. Superstition and idolatry have given way to truth and hope.

There is yet another possible aspect to consider here: As the "daughters of Jerusalem" represent the Jews and Judaism, so we can consistently take the position that "the watchmen" may well indicate the "rulers of the Jews," the Sanhedrin. This is definitely in accord with the New Testament history of the apostolic church. When that church went forth in a bold ministry before these powers, she was persecuted unbelievably; however, the presence and power of the Lord was upon them.

Acts 4:29-33 Quoting verses 31,33 **"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness...And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."**

2. The second event that took place, after the Bride went into the streets, was that when she began to witness to the watchmen she soon found her beloved.

"The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth..."

In other words, when the Bride arose from her bed, went out into the streets, began to talk about the Bridegroom to everyone she met, then she soon found the joy of His presence and power in her ministry. Notice how she questioned everyone she met: "Have you seen my beloved? Do you know him?"

Yes, my friend, without a doubt, when the churches of Jesus Christ get revived enough to go afield, and begin to really talk of Jesus everywhere they will find that He is very near; likewise, then, will the world sit up and take notice that our faith is a reality, and our profession more than an empty gesture.

Not only so, but our assurance is also increased, our doubts dispelled, and our joy

made abundant, in faithful witnessing. Saved people get “down in the dumps” sometimes, and fall into doubts about their salvation. It may be that sin has gotten into their lives, as in the case of David, when he took Uriah’s wife, and had Uriah killed in the battle (II Samuel chapter 11). We see the resulting spiritual condition of his life in his great prayer of confession in the 51st Psalm. In verse 12, we hear him cry, **“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”**

The following verse, then indicates the real reason for the joy of salvation, or the fulness of Christ’s presence in one’s life, that is, for soul-winning.

Verse 13, **“Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”**

I remember a woman, who was a member of the church where I was pastor many years ago, who was always falling into doubts. She would get to thinking that maybe she was not saved after all, and sometimes she would become so upset that she became a burden to her family. I had tried to help her to dispel her doubts and fears in most every way I could think of, but I seemed to be at my wits end. I had prayed with her, and read the Scriptures, but had been unable to get her straightened out; though I had reason to believe that she had been saved for many years.

Finally, one day she called me, and asked that I come out to her home to talk with her. As I drove out, I asked the Lord to give me some way to help her get settled as to whether or not she was really saved. The following test came to my mind:

I told this woman, “Let me give you a test: You say that you do not know whether you are saved, or not. Are you willing to try out something to determine once and for all if you are saved?”

“Yes,” she avowed, “I am willing to do anything to find out for sure.”

“All right,” I said, “I will tell you what to do. You start out this very day, with a determination that you are going to witness for Christ, that you are going to win a soul. Don’t lose, or neglect an opportunity to talk to people about their soul salvation. You earnestly try, and before you have gone far, if you are not saved you will know it; and if you are truly a child of God, your heart will be singing praises in blessed assurance.”

She agreed to put the matter to this test, and, as far as I ever knew, that was the last of her doubts.

What I would say is, that when we go forth with a surrendered life, and magnify the name of our dear Lord everywhere, we shall not want for His blessed nearness, nor lack His power upon us.

“Yes,” the Bride declared, “I found my Beloved, not on my couch of idleness and comfort, but when I went out to testify of his saving grace.”

IV.
***The Bride Brings Her Beloved Into
Her Mother's House.***

Verse 4: **“...I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.”**

The Bride, now having found her beloved, after such a time of loneliness and longing, determines that she will not let Him go again. She will not make the same mistake again. She will hold on to Him now.

The whole scene in the preceding verses reminds us of numerous local church situations we have known. We have seen local churches drift along in a state of complacency for a long time, doing little but marking time; then a spirit of revival began to work in their midst, and soon they were marching forth victoriously in the Spirit and power of God, winning souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some wonderful truths set forth in this 4th verse. The Bride has found her Beloved; she now holds on to Him, and declares, ***“I would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.”***

What have we in these words? Why, beloved, *her mother's house can be no other than the Gentile world.* It is true that the Apostles, who were set first in the church of Jesus as charter members, were Jews. That, however, does not alter the fact that the church of The Lord Jesus Christ is, in this church age, a Gentile church, and will be ultimately presented to Him a Gentile Bride.

In the marriage of Jesus and His church, we have the union of Jew and Gentile.

Now, we know that the mother of Jesus, the Bridegroom, – nationally speaking – was Israel. Such a picture is given us in the 12th chapter of Revelation. There the great wonder appears in heaven:

Revelation 12:1-2,5 **“...a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered... And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”**

This shows Israel bringing forth Jesus, in fulfilment of prophecy, and His being caught up to heaven in escape from the destructive intent of the dragon (Satan).

In Isaiah 66:7 we read, **“Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain**

came, she was delivered of a man child.”

From the above scriptures, we see that there are evidently two “travails” of Israel: One, the travail in the Jewish world prior to the birth of Jesus. These birth-pangs were minor in scope, and intensity. The other travail is in the Great Tribulation, out of which will come the Spiritual Birth (Salvation) of the remnant of the Jewish Nation. (See Zechariah 12:10-13:9). The scriptures that bear out these truths are so numerous, that it is impossible to examine them here.

We would reiterate that as Israel is the mother of Jesus, so the mother of the Bride must be the Gentile world. And in the marriage of Jesus and His church, we have the union of Jew and Gentile.

In writing to the Ephesian Church, which was a Gentile body, Paul spake of Jew and Gentile being made one in Christ.

Ephesians 2:14-18 **“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**

If time and space permitted us to examine verses 11-13, and 19-22, also chapter 3: verses 1-10, and other scriptures, these facts would be very clear.

The Bride, having found her Beloved, is determined that she will never let Him go until she has brought Him into her mother’s house. This must ever be the purpose to which the church of our Lord Jesus Christ is dedicated, to give Jesus to the Gentile World. Certainly, as far as the love of God is concerned, Romans 10:12-13 **“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”** However, we know that this is the day of grace unto the Gentiles, and, although any Jew who will by faith accept Jesus as a Saviour will be saved, yet it is the time of Israel’s blindness. (Read Romans, chapters 9 and 11).

The Bride’s avowed purpose is to bring her Beloved into her mother’s house, which is the Gentile world; so it is the sacred task given to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to carry His glorious gospel to all the world. No more worthy purpose can be found.

Going back to the fact, that the Bride could not find her Beloved, as she rested upon her couch, we would then reemphasize the conditions under which she ultimately found Him nearest to her, that is, when she went forth into the streets to talk of Him to others. Let,

therefore, the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ take heed to this great lesson, and dedicate themselves to the fundamental purpose of worldwide missions, and evangelism, and let them prosecute this program with all of the love and fervor of their souls. Then there shall be no lack of His blessed presence and power.

V.

A charge To The Daughters of Jerusalem

Verse 5 **“I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.”**

In a previous chapter we have explained that “the daughters of Jerusalem,” refer to the Jews. This will be seen in other places as we go along. Also we have pointed out that the “roes, and hinds of the field,” are of the red deer. Just why this expression, which is a common one in the Song of Solomon, is so used we cannot say.

It will be noted that chapter 2, verse 7, is identical with the above verse 5 in this chapter. In our previous studies, in the second chapter of our text, we purposely passed over verse 7. I should like to make some comment on these identical verses just here.

We observe, with interest, that both in the 2nd chapter, and in the 3rd, the context preceding the verses in question deals with a common thought: In chapter 2, verse 6, the Bride anticipatively sees herself in the loving embrace of the Bridegroom; He holds her tenderly, and she is most overwhelmed in the ecstasy of His love. This is her time, and her’s alone; hence she cautions the daughters of Jerusalem to stir not up, nor awake her love until He please – that is, to make no overtures toward Him yet.

Likewise, we note in chapter 3, verse 4, that the Bride has just gone out from her bedchamber into the streets, and has found her Beloved. Now she holds Him, and brings Him into her mother’s house – the Gentiles – and she again admonishes the daughters of Jerusalem to stir not up, nor awake Him, till He please. I repeat: this is her time and her’s alone. This is the time of the Gentiles. The Jews can not stir up, nor awake Him until He is ready. God is sovereign, and His work of grace to the Jews will only be in His own time.

At the end of Jesus’ scathing denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, in the 23rd chapter of Matthew, He cried out to them brokenheartedly, Matthew 24:37-39, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen**

gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

When Jesus stood on trial before Pilate, the Roman Governor, in the presence of the rulers of the Jews, he asked them what he should do with Jesus.

Their unanimous reply was, Matthew 27:23 “**...Let him be crucified.**”

When Pilate washed his hands in water, declaring his own innocence from the blood of Jesus, Matthew 27:25 “**Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.**”

The Jews turned Jesus down flat, and God committed themselves, as a nation, to spiritual blindness, “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” We again refer our readers to Romans, chapters 9 and 11.

Romans 11:25 “**For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**”

So the Jews as a nation will go on in their blindness and unbelief (with the exception of a scattered remnant through the years, and the 144,000 to be saved during the tribulation, according to Revelation 7) until Jesus comes down the pathless skies in glory, as in Revelation 19:11-16, and Zechariah 12:10 “**...they shall look upon me whom they have pierced...**” then, Zechariah 13:1 “**In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.**” All of the Jews living in that day shall be saved.

Romans 11:26-29 “**And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.**”

The church is the virgin Bride of Jesus; Israel is the adulterous wife of Jehovah. This is the church age, this is the Bride’s day; and the daughters of Jerusalem will have to wait for the favors of Jesus until such a time as He, in His infinite wisdom, is pleased to extend His grace.

Matthew 23:37 Jesus talking to the Jews, “**...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!**”

Romans 11:33 “**O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of**

God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

Jesus is our Great High Priest. According to Leviticus 21:13, the High Priest could take none other than a virgin as His wife. **“And he shall take a wife in her virginity.”** The New Testament Church is that virgin, and she, only is the Bride of Jesus.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BRIDEGROOM-KING

Song of Solomon 3:6-11

“Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.”

In these verses we see the Bridegroom as King. The scriptures which portray Jesus as King, both in the Old and New Testaments, are so numerous that it would not be expedient for us to engage in the examination of all of them here. We do know that the kingly character of Jesus is set forth in many types in the Old Testament. Among such types King Solomon is an outstanding one.

As King David of old is a marvelous type of Jesus, with special emphasis upon the fact that he is a great conqueror, and that His is an enduring throne; so Solomon fittingly typifies Jesus as to the glory of His kingdom. No king of olden times had quite such a glorious and resplendent kingdom, and certainly there was none with such great wisdom.

In I Kings the third chapter, we have the account of the Lord’s appearance to Solomon in Gibeon, at which time he gave him the choice of anything he might desire. Solomon’s request for wisdom and understanding to rule God’s people was pleasing to the Lord:

I Kings 3:11-13 **“And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise**

and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.”

The fourth chapter of First Kings is also largely given to a description of the magnitude of Solomon’s operation as king. And II Chronicles the 9th chapter tells of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to find out for herself the truth about Solomon’s great wisdom, and the glory of his house and kingdom.

Verses 3-6 **“And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom: Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half on the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard.”**

When Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees for seeking a sign, and calling up the Ninevites, who had repented at the preaching of Jonas, as witnesses against them, he also referred to this visit of the queen of Sheba in the same manner:

Matthew 12:42 **“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”**

Thus he indicates that Solomon in his wisdom and in the glory of his kingdom is a type of Jesus as king; and we know that the reality, or fulfillment of the type, always far surpasses the type itself.

The message of our scripture text in this chapter of our study, we shall divide into five parts:

I

The Bridegroom-King’s Glory In Overcoming Temptation

Verse 6, **“Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?**

Here the Bride sees her Beloved coming up out of the wilderness in all of the full glory of victory. He is indeed a conquering king, for He is fresh back from one of the greatest

victories ever won, and one of the most significant.

Even the most casual Bible reader should have no difficulty in understanding this scene: It is Jesus our Beloved, our Saviour, the Champion of our cause, the Winner of our conflicts, the Overcomer of our temptations, coming back from the wilderness, whither he was led of the Spirit to be tempted, and from which temptation He now emerges triumphant.

In the Fourth Chapter of Luke we have the full account of the event of our Lord's temptation: Jesus had returned from the experience of His baptism, at the hands of John the Baptist, in the River Jordan; verses 1-2 **"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered."** There were forty days of fasting; and, though we can hardly conceive of the fact, He was subjected to such temptations of the devil as to literally comprehend all of the temptations that can ever come to man.

Hebrews 4:15 **"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."**

It was necessary that Jesus, as a man, should prove Himself superior to Satan in every point where sin might make a bid against us, for our victory is only in Him. A careful examination of Luke's account of the temptation of Jesus will reveal that the three-fold onslaught of the devil against Jesus, as described there, covers the whole scope of sin's appeal to a human life: There was the appeal to ***"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."***

The Holy Spirit, through John, tells us in I John 2:15-17, **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."**

We shall never be able to realize, while in this mortal frame, just how much Jesus endured for us. Indeed, He is an all-sufficient Saviour.

We would emphasize another point, just here. In His temptation, Jesus beat down the devil with the Word of God; and, in so doing, He established a precedent for us to follow: The sword of the Spirit is our most effective weapon against the power of Satan. It is senseless of us to argue, or to reason with him; he will overcome us every time when we do; but when we draw the "Sword of the Spirit," we find James 4:7 true, indeed, **"...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."**

Further pursuing the study of Luke the 4th chapter, we find in the 14th verse that, **“...Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee...”** Verse 16, **“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”**

The scripture which He read was from the 61st chapter of Isaiah: we read Luke 4:18-19 **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”**

Our purpose in calling all of these matters to the attention of the Reader is to show the clear meaning of our lesson text.

In the New Testament Scriptures which we have been considering – that is, in Luke’s Gospel – we see the power of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus – in fact, all that he ever did was done in the Spirit. He has shown himself a sufficient Saviour, one who has all power, one who is a conqueror, one who is able to do for us the things mentioned in Luke 4:18. Therefore we are not afraid to trust Him; He is worthy of our greatest, most implicit faith, and our loyalty to the end.

In our scripture text, the Bride sees Him coming out of the wilderness with the Spirit and power of God upon Him, just as He came back to the synagogue in Nazareth. She described His appearance, “Like pillars of smoke.-” Many times in the Bible we find God’s presence in Spirit and power manifested as smoke.

When Israel was led out of Egyptian bondage, and into the wilderness, on their journey toward the promised land, the Lord went before them by day as a pillar of cloud, and by night as a pillar of fire. Exodus 14:19-24.

In the days of tabernacle worship, when God wished to manifest His presence in a special way, on special occasions, the tabernacle was filled with a cloud. Numbers 16:42.

When God called Moses upon Mt. Sinai to talk with him, smoke and fire covered the mountain. God’s presence was thus manifested. Exodus 19:18.

When Solomon dedicated the magnificent temple which he had built for God, making great offerings unto the Lord, and praying on his knees before all Israel, the fire came down from heaven, and **“...the glory of the LORD filled the house.”** II Chronicles 7:1.

In Isaiah’s marvelous vision of the glory of the Lord, when God cleansed him, and called him into special service, he beheld that **“...the house was filled with smoke.”** Isaiah 6:4.

All of these, and other instances in the scriptures, show the manifestation of the shekinah glory of God as a smoke. So we can understand the significance of the appearance of Jesus to the Bride, coming **“...out of the wilderness like pillars of**

smoke...”

She also says, that He is “...perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?”

Now, the myrrh and frankincense, and powders of the merchant, are components used in the sweet incense, and ointments which were used in the anointing of the priests, and offered on the altar of incense. Exodus chapter 30, also Exodus 37:29, also Leviticus 8:10-12, etc.

The sweet fragrance, or aroma of the ointment upon the head and garments of the priests was a sweet savour unto God, as was the fragrant smoke that came up from the altar of incense. It meant acceptability before God. Now Jesus is our great High Priest. And as the Bride sees Him coming out of the wilderness with the smoke of the divine presence about Him, and the sweet odours of the anointing oils emanating from His garments, it is Jesus coming back from His victory in temptation, in all of the acceptability of His holy and righteous character before God. Jesus, Redeemer, Saviour, Great High Priest, Bridegroom, and King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

II.

The Bridegroom-King's Bed

Verse 7 “**Behold his bed, which is Solomon's...**”

Very little need be said, just here, about the King's bed. In our discussion of the 1st chapter and 16th verse of our text we gave some attention to the bed, as mentioned in that verse.

There we laid stress upon the fact that the bed offers a place of rest from the weariness of toil. In His infinite mercy, God has given us a time and place of repose, when we are tired and in need of refreshment. Divine wisdom has made provision for the oft needed renewal of the Bride's strength. All of her ministry is not a ministry of wearisome toil; but there are times of blessed escape into privacy of the bed-chamber.

Furthermore, we must not overlook the fact that this love story of Jesus, and His Church, is set forth in a true picture of human relationship such as we know here in this world. However, in viewing this relationship, we must take cognizance of the truth also that the union of Jesus and His church is purely spiritual, holy and undefiled. It is a union of heavenly nature, not to be confused with the sexual relations such as are given only to mortality.

The sexual order which God ordained for mankind is not, in itself, unholy, when kept where God put it, and observed as God intended it. Marriage is of divine origin, given for

the promotion of human happiness, and for the protection of the social order; hence Paul tells us in Hebrews 13:4, **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”**

So pure and holy is the love-life, and marriage relationship of Jesus and His church, that He often addresses her as, “My sister, my spouse,” thus elevating their relationship to a plane as pure as that of brother and sister. In chapters four and five we shall find this expression used a number of times.

“Behold his bed...” It is the King’s bed. And the Bride speaks in happy anticipation of the day when their spiritual marriage shall be spiritually consummated there. Only the mind of the ascetic, or the lustful, will see evil here.

III.

The Bridegroom-King’s Honor Guard

Verses 7-8, **“Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.”**

Who are these that have the privilege of being the personal attendants of the King? To whom does He give the special privilege of occupying a place in the intimacy of His bedchamber and around His bed? These, my friend, constitute the King’s honor guard. These are they who have the courage, the boldness, the faith, and the loyalty to gird on the sword of God’s eternal truth and stand by Jesus in the great conflict.

Will you, or reader, be one of these valiant soldiers in the honor guard of Jesus?

David was a type of Jesus as King. And in the 22nd chapter of I Samuel we read of how he, being forced to flee from Saul, escaped into the wilderness and took refuge in the cave of Adullam. There a minimum force of four hundred men – soldiers, that is – gathered about him, and stood by him in his estrangement.

Again in II Samuel, chapter 23, we find a long list of names of “mighty men” who had stood by David in his times of exile and trial. Surely, these were dear to his heart, because they had been tried, and had proven their loyalty to him.

How one appreciates those who stand by faithfully in the times of great need! We think of Jesus coming to the Garden of Gethsemane that dark lonely night of His betrayal: Three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, go with Him into the Garden; and as He begins to be sorrowful and very heavy, Matthew 26:38 **“Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.”**

According to Matthew’s continued account, we see Jesus go a little farther and fall upon

His face to pray, while His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. How much it must have meant to Him in the hour of His agony to have someone standing faithfully by; yet when He returned from prayer, He found them, whom He had trusted, fast asleep.

Peter especially, had so boasted of how he would be loyal to Jesus unto death. Now Jesus rebukes them tenderly, and sadly, Matthew 26:40 **“And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?”**

What must have been one of the saddest and most tragic moments in the life of Jesus is recorded in Matthew 26:56. There Judas Iscariot has led the blood-thirsty mob to Jesus, and they have laid hands upon Him. Impulsive Peter, who had physical courage, but who was a spiritual and moral coward, drew his sword to fight, but Jesus rebuked him, and told him to put away his sword. **“...Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”** There is no lack of men of physical courage; but Jesus wants men who have the faith and spiritual courage to stand with Him, to suffer with Him, to share His shame and dishonor before the world.

When we look again upon the scene of Calvary, in that awful time of our Lord's ignominious death, we see one lone disciple who has gone all the way. Old faithful John stood by the cross.

On, what a challenge we face today, a challenge to become a part of the Honor Guard of Jesus. We are soldiers of Jesus Christ, but in II Timothy chapter 2, Paul tells us how to be a “good soldier.”

In the 8th verse of our text we are told that the King's valiant men **“...all hold swords, being expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh...”**

Now, it is no secret that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, and that the good soldier of Jesus Christ knows how to use that sword. Paul admonishes Timothy, II Timothy 2:15 **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

The King's valiant men here not only are “expert in war,” but they are in a state of constant readiness, **“Every man hath his sword upon his thigh.”**

In Ephesians 6:11-17, Paul urges us to the preparation of a real warrior in the conflict. We are admonished to, **“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”**

He then tells us why this is so necessary, **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you**

the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Continuing the discourse, he describes the armour of the soldier: **“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*”**

We are commanded to be in a state of readiness always: readiness to witness, and readiness for His return. 1 Peter 3:15 **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”**

Matthew 24:44 Jesus speaking, **“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”**

In our text we are also given a reason why the King’s valiant men must stand ever in readiness, with their swords upon their thighs: **“because of fear in the night.”** We must be on the alert.

The enemies of truth are legion; the dangers are on every hand. The cohorts of Satan are out to sabotage the churches, the ministry, and the cause and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that the time is short. There is fear, distrust, and treason on every hand. Oh, how we need to stand by Jesus, our King, with unflinching courage, and unshaken faith.

Let us come into the inner circle; let us prove our worthiness and loyalty in service; let us prove our courage in combat; let us strive for a place in the Honor Guard of Jesus.

IV.

The Bridegroom-King’s Chariot

Verses 9-10 **“King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.”**

We have already emphasized the fact the King Solomon is a type of King Jesus; therefore as we view King Solomon’s chariot in the above verses of our text, we find that the message changes to a little different line, and very fittingly so: Jesus, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords is rather shown here, under the type of Solomon, more specifically in the role of “King of the Jews.” That fact is brought out in the references to “the daughters

of Jerusalem,” and “daughters of Zion.”

We have already discussed the identity of “the daughters of Jerusalem,” having found them to represent the Jews, or, more especially, Judaism as a system of religion. Although the charter members of the church which Jesus established were all men, and although the membership of that body, and of the bodies which subsequently came out of it were later composed of both men and women, Jesus chose to refer to His church in the feminine gender, or, in other words, to picture her as a woman, who is ultimately to become His spiritual bride.

Inasmuch as a woman in scripture seems to be used as a representation of a religious system, or organization, we can easily comprehend the significance of “the daughters of Jerusalem.”

We are told in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 23, verses 27-28, “**And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.**”

According to a harmony of the four Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, after Jesus was crucified, Pilate wrote a title in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and put it on the cross: “**THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.**”

The Jews were not pleased with this, and besought Pilate to change it. He refused to do so, John 19:22 “**Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.**”

No doubt, the Divine purpose was verified in the displaying of this inscription, for Jesus is, indeed, the King of the Jews. We have already said, that He is a King in fulfillment of God’s promises of old; He is a King by birth; and He will be a King by conquest when He comes to earth again. So, as the Bride sees Him in this part of our text, she recognizes Him in His relation to, and in His purpose for, the Jews. He is not only the Bridegroom – King of the church, and the King of the Jews, but He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now we come to the consideration of King Solomon’s Chariot:

A chariot was a two-wheeled vehicle commonly used in days of old, both in war, and in common travel. It was pulled by horses, and in wartime use, it usually carried two men; one a driver, and the other to handle the bow, or the spear.

As the wealthier people of today may drive the finest, most luxurious automobiles, so in days of old, the kings and nobility would have the finest chariots. King Solomon’s chariot described here was evidently the best. However, we see this as but a type of King Jesus and His chariot of salvation. See Habakkuk 3:8.

There are five things revealed about this chariot in verses 9 and 10:

1. It is made “**of the wood of Lebanon.**” This was, of course, the wood of the famed

“cedars of Lebanon.” Concerning these cedars of Lebanon, The Universal Standard Encyclopedia has the following to say,

“All are characterized by their fragrant, light red, durable wood. The cedars of Lebanon have been famous from early times, being frequently mentioned in sacred and secular writings. The original groves mentioned in the Bible have become greatly reduced through various causes, and the largest grove now known contains only about 400 trees, some of which are evidently of great age. In its natural home the cedar of Lebanon is found at elevations of 6,000 feet or less; it thrives best in sandy loam, where the roots can reach water.”

The cedar wood itself, in its typical or symbolic significance, represents the humanity of Jesus, for its characteristics mainly were beauty, fragrance, resistance to parasites and diseases, and great durability. It was used in cleansing ordinances in The Old Testament, especially in the ordinance of the red heifer. See Numbers 19:1-10. Here the cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet were used together: the cedar wood representing Jesus’ humanity, the scarlet His blood, and the hyssop faith.

The cedar wood was also used in the cleansing of leprosy. See Leviticus 14th chapter. There also it was used with hyssop and scarlet. We know that leprosy is one of the most perfect types of sin; therefore, the use of cedar wood in the cleansing of leprosy bears out its type of Jesus the man who is God’s remedy for sin. Our text certainly indicates the offer of this remedy to the Jews, which offer was rejected long ago, when Jesus presented Himself to the Jews, and was turned down cold. John 1:11 **“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”** However, when He shall come again, they will receive Him.

2. In the description of the King’s chariot we find that its ***pillars were of silver***. It is no secret to Bible students that silver typifies redemption: The boards of the tabernacle rested upon sockets of silver, Exodus 26:19. The tabernacle throughout, the place where God met His people, typified Jesus Christ and His work; therefore, we can see how the type holds true when we remember that the whole tabernacle rested upon silver – the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The fillets and hooks that upheld the linen hangings of the tabernacle were also of silver, Exodus 27:17, for it is by virtue of the redemptive work of Jesus that we have access to God.

The price of ransom for the people, as prescribed in Exodus 30:12-15, was also silver: **“When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after**

the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls."

In Isaiah 1:22, where God, through the prophet, is upbraiding the Jews for permitting their service and worship to degenerate to mere formality without spiritual meaning, He says, **"Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water."**

The truth of redemption had become as refuse; and they were trying to mix the water of human merit with the wine of God's pure grace.

Jesus our Saviour was sold unto death for thirty pieces of silver; it was the price of redemption – rather, the price of the Redeemer. The Prophet Zechariah, fore-telling of this said in chapter eleven, verses 12-13: **"And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD."** Another reference in the New Testament which is the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy is in Matthew 26:14-15, **"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went into the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."**

This blood-money could not satisfy Judas; no soul can ever be satisfied with the guilt of Jesus' blood upon it. Judas tried to undo what he had done, but it was too late.

Matthew 27:3-6 **"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood."**

This silver for which our Lord was sold was used to buy the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Matthew 27:9-10, **"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."**

From these scriptures we can see the symbolism of the silver in the King's chariot of

Salvation.

3. We note further the Bride's description of the chariot: *the bottom thereof was of gold.*

As silver stands for redemption, so gold represents Deity, or divine holiness and righteousness. We go back to the tabernacle again, and we find the uses of gold so numerous that it is quite impossible here to study them one by one. We shall, however, examine two or three of the more outstanding instances;

Take first the ark of the covenant, Exodus 25:10-15: It was made of shittim wood (which was a type of Christ's humanity), and was overlaid with gold within and without. Upon it was a crown of gold, and four gold rings at the corners; also the staves by which it was to be carried were made of shittim wood and overlaid with gold. In all of this we see both the humanity of Jesus, and His deity.

Then notice the cherubims of gold on the mercy seat: Exodus 25:18-20 **“And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.”**

We cannot take space to reproduce all of these scriptures, nor to make a study of all of these types; but we do urge the reader to take time to read and study them all. It is one of the richest, and most rewarding studies in God's Word, and it is my sincere hope that someday I shall be able to devote a whole volume to the same. Suffice to say here, that we see the throne of a holy God, which, under the outstretched wings of the cherubims, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, becomes a throne of mercy. God offers to meet us at the ark of the testimony. And here we see Jesus human and divine.

We could go on and on in the study of these uses of gold: The table of shewbread was overlaid with gold – it is Jesus the bread of life; and inside the tabernacle was the golden candlestick, which is Jesus the light of the world. The whole 25th chapter of Exodus should be read. Every curtain, color, socket, board, and material in the tabernacle system typified some part of the person and work of Jesus in redemption, as did every sacrifice. In all of this the gold portrays His divine character.

4. ***The covering of the King's chariot was of purple.*** Surely no one will doubt that purple is indicative of royalty; It speaks of Jesus' kingliness. Purple is the apparel of kings. We shall cite just a few instances in the Bible which will bear this out:

In Exodus 25:3-7, we have a list of the various materials and articles to be taken of the people in God's offering, and each of them bears a typical meaning in relation to the person

and work of Jesus in redemption. The gold is deity, the silver is redemption, the brass is judgment, the blue means heavenly, the scarlet represents Jesus' blood, the linen is His righteousness, et cetera, et cetera. Among all of these, the purple can only represent His royalty, or kingliness.

Again in Exodus 26:1, the purple is found in the ten curtains of the tabernacle, along with the blue, the scarlet, the linen, the cherubims, etc. While in Exodus 28:1-3, we find a beautiful picture of the symbolic meaning of these things in the garments made for Aaron, the High Priest. Certainly Aaron was a type of Jesus who is our Great High Priest.

In the 4th chapter of Numbers, where God is giving instructions concerning the Kohathites, how they shall handle certain articles of the tabernacle service, verse 13 tells us that they are to take the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it, upon which certain vessels of the altar shall be placed. In this we see Jesus, the King of Kings, shown by the purple, and Jesus the sacrifice, made to be sin for us, shown by the altar and its vessels, brought into one great plan of redemption. Oh, what condescension! Oh, what marvelous grace!

In Judges 8:26, where Gideon gathers the spoils of the Midianites, among the things taken is listed **“purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian.”** Thus again we see that purple is the raiment of kings.

In II Chronicles 3:14, where Solomon is building and equipping the magnificent temple of the Lord, he wove purple into the veil of the temple, along with the other typical colors and materials. This is the same kind of veil that **“was rent in twain from the top to the bottom”** the moment that Jesus died upon the cross of Calvary. See Matthew 27:50-51.

When Mordecai revealed the plot against the life of King Ahasuerus, in the days of Esther, and was later honored by the king, Esther 8:15, **“And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.”**

From the foregoing, and other scriptures which we might look into, we feel justified in saying, that the covering of purple, which the Bride saw on the King's chariot, speaks of Jesus as King, indeed.

5. And now comes the most wonderful thing of all about the King's chariot: it was **“paved with love for, the daughters of Jerusalem.”** This does not mean to suggest that there is any lack of love for the Gentile world; for we have John 3:16 to settle that question once and for all. However, as has already been stated, in these scenes the Bride beholds her Beloved especially in His love for the Jews, and in His desire to save them.

John 1:11, Jesus **“...came unto his own, (country) and his own (people) received**

him not.” But He loved them with eternal love, and His heart was broken when they rejected Him.

In Matthew 23:37-39, we hear Him cry, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”**

Here Jesus lays the responsibility squarely upon them. He said, **“I would have..., but ye would not.”**

We see the King’s love for “the daughters of Jerusalem” manifested in a special way again on the occasion of His entry into Jerusalem riding upon the foal of an ass. On His descent from the Mount of Olives, the disciples were praising Him as **“the King that cometh in the name of the Lord;”** but the Pharisees met Him with cold rebuff, reflecting the official attitude of the Jews.

Luke 19:41-42 **“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”**

Yes, the chariot of our Lord’s salvation is paved with love, thank God!

And His love shall not have been in vain. God’s purpose for the Jews shall not fail. Romans 11:2 **“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew...”**

Romans 11:23 **“And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.”**

One day Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, shall come down the pathless sky in the revelation of His glory (as in John 19:37), and **“...They shall look on him whom they pierced.”** and receive Him as their Messiah-Saviour.

Romans 11:26 **“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”**

V.

The Bridegroom-King’s Crown

Our text, verse 11: **“Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.”**

The Bride earnestly appeals to **“the daughters of Zion;”** she is enthusiastic in her

praise of the King; she would exalt Him before the eyes of the world. She is especially concerned that His own people, whom He loves with an eternal love, should come to Him, and love Him.

“Come,” she is saying to them, “Oh, come, and look upon Him. You have never beheld anyone like Him; you have never seen such a marvelous king as He. And look at that crown upon His head. He is a King, and He has a crown.”

What is that crown? Now, we are speaking of Him in His redemption character. We have looked upon the elaborate beauty of His chariot of salvation – but this crown, it draws our attention, it captures our interest.

She says, “Come and see this crown on His head; it is the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day when He became espoused, or engaged, to me.”

This is not a crown, or diadem, as upon His head when we see Him coming down the skies in the revelation of His glory, as recorded in the 19th chapter of Revelation. There He comes to overthrow the beast and the false prophet, and their enemies.

This is not the crown that He shall wear as judge of the nations, when in Matthew 25:31-32 **“...he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”**

This is not the crown of His millennial reign, when He shall reign over the whole earth in one righteous kingdom, Jerusalem being the capital city of the whole world. Isaiah 32:1; Micah 4:1-7 and 5:2. Also Zechariah 14:9, etc.

No, this is another crown. His mother crowned Him, or had Him crowned, with this crown in the day of His espousals – that is, the day that He became engaged, or betrothed unto the Bride. This was the day that grace and salvation were bestowed upon her; this was the day that she was purchased with His own blood.

His mother was Israel. And the only crown that she had anything to do with placing upon His brow was ***the crown of thorns***. She was responsible for it. When Pilate sought to set Jesus free, the Jews cried for His blood, and demanded that He be put to death. They would have killed Him, but they were under the authority of Rome; so they delivered Him to the Romans, and demanded that He should die; therefore, at the instigation of the Jews, Jesus was beaten, abused, and crowned with thorns. Oh, it is true, the guilt of Jesus’ blood is upon the soul of every lost sinner in the world, both Jew and Gentile; however, the stain is upon Mother Israel in a special way.

Matthew 27:27-29 **“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it**

upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocking him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!”

John 19:1-6 “Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests there-fore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him...”

Yes, His Mother Israel was responsible for the thorn-crown on His brow. And, although the thorns pricked His flesh, and the blood ran down to drip upon the ground, yet this crown of thorns was the crown of His greatest glory.

There was glory in His marvelous virgin birth, in Bethlehem. The wise men came with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, to honor Him, Matthew 2:11. The angels told the shepherds the good news on the Judean hills, Luke 2:8-12. Verses 13-14, “**And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.**”

There was glory at His baptism, Matthew 3:13,16-17. “**Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him...And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**”

There was glory in His merciful ministrations among men, as He traveled over the hills of Judea, or by the shore of Galilee, healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, lifting up the fallen, giving hope to the hopeless, teaching and preaching as never man spake before.

There was glory in His resurrection, when the angel came down from heaven, and the stone was rolled away; and Jesus came forth triumphant over death, hell and the grave. The glad news went out that “**He is not here: for he is risen.**” And, thank God, we know that today we serve a living Saviour.

There is glory in heaven now, where Jesus is at the right hand of the throne of God. He has gone into the Holy of Holies to carry the blood of the sacrifice, to make the atonement for sin. There He is our Great High Priest; there He is our Advocate; there He is our Intercessor; and there He represents our cause before the Eternal Father.

There will be glory when He comes again down the pathless sky, for His own blood-

bought Bride. The trump of God shall sound, and the bodies of those who have died in Christ shall come forth from the graves; the living saints shall be changed from mortal to immortality, and, together with the risen ones, shall be caught up to meet the returning Bridegroom in the air. **“...and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”** I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Yes, there was great glory in all of these things. Howbeit, the greatest glory of Christ in all eternity was in the hour of His ignominious death on the cross of Calvary. The crown that He wore there was His glory crown.

Paul, in Hebrews 2:9, speaks of it thus:

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for (by) the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

That hour of His agony, that hour, when He bowed His head and said, **“It is finished,”** that hour when He plunged into the abyss of death’s darkness, thank God, that was the hour of the supreme glory of Jesus Christ, my Saviour. For in that hour He was winning eternal salvation for you and me. The way to his glory was through His suffering.

The hour of His death on Calvary was the hour of His supreme glory, because it was then, and there that He wrought His greatest work; there He purchased salvation for a lost world.

In our text, the Bride declares that this glory crown was put upon His head, **“in the day of the gladness of his heart.”** Though this was the time of His greatest sorrow and suffering; yet it was a time of joy, as well. We read of this in Hebrews 12:2: **“...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

Even in the midst of our Lord’s most crucial suffering, He saw the multitudes whom He would save; even while His life’s blood ran down upon the ground, He foresaw the innumerable company of those precious souls, whose sins would be cleansed in the crimson flood, and whose robes would be washed whiter than snow. This was His joy; this was the gladness of His heart.

So the Bride sees her Bridegroom-King in His chariot of salvation; She calls to the Jews to come, behold Him crucified – crowned with thorns – and in beholding Him by faith, to be saved forever. Because she loves Jesus, she also loves them for whom He died, and she longs for their salvation.

Oh, may every lost soul who reads these lines heed the invitation in Isaiah 45:22, **“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”**

Isaiah 1:18, **“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”**

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE BRIDE

Song of Solomon 4:1-7

“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks. Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”

For a long time in my studies of The Song of Solomon I passed over this part of the text as being of no especial importance. However, the thought came to me with force, one day, that, if this is the word of God in reality – and we know that it is–, then every chapter, every verse, every statement, yea, every word is important. It all has God’s message for us. There are no irrelevant and unnecessary things found here. God did not give, preserve, and safeguard these sixty-six books of the Bible for the propagation of foolishness.

I then began to apply myself to the prayerful study of these scriptures, that I might find what truths God intended to convey here, and I found that they are wonderful, they challenge us with their beauty and spiritual meaning. After all, the message here is quite simple, when we really look for it.

One primary reason that we do not get more thrill, and spiritual elevation in our reading of the Bible is that we do just that, we merely read, skimming the surface of God’s word, we pick up a few of the more simple things, like a man doing strip mining, who gets the more inferior coal near the top of the ground. To get the real treasure, and to find the real glory and beauty of truth, we must dig, and dig, and dig, deep into the things of God.

I am well aware of the fact that many people will not accept the things I teach here; some will say that they are far-fetched, or imaginary. There will be others of unspiritual mind, who will try to find vulgarity and evil in these studies.

By far the most astounding and unspiritual attitude that I have ever found anywhere, I must say, was that of a deacon in a Baptist Church. As we stood in front of the church one Sunday morning before service, he was telling about his Bible reading that week. He said,

“You know, I have been trying to read the Song of Solomon, and I’ll tell you, that is some mess.”

My friend, how any saved man could think thus about one of the most beautiful, and important messages in God’s Word, I cannot understand.

Of course, there will be some who will pay little, or no attention at all to these scriptures, and what they may mean, either because they are too backslidden to care, or because they are mentally and spiritually too lazy to try to find out the truth. As for me, I will say, that the interpretations, or explanations offered here are perfectly satisfying to my own heart and mind. My heart has been thrilled as the Holy Spirit has led me in these studies.

As we begin this study of the seven wonders of the church, which is Jesus’ Bride, I should like to re-emphasize the fact that, though these truths apply to the Bride, which is the aggregation of all of the true New Testament Churches, they may well apply, also, to any, and every true local body of Christ in the world. What the Bridegroom says in this text about all of the wonderful characteristics of the Bride, He should also be able to say about any true local church. I pray God that He can.

The Bridegroom begins His complimentary speech in our text with the statement, Verse 1, **“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair...”**

We have already found that statement spoken by the Bridegroom of His Bride back in the first chapter of The Song of Solomon, and the expression will be found in other places as we go on. It is as a man deeply in love with a woman; and he is trying to express just what she means to him, and how beautiful she appears. The eyes of love overlook many blemishes and faults in the loved one.

Jesus sees His own true love, His church, as being “fair” which, as used here, is a term meaning beautiful, graceful, pleasing to look upon. Looking upon His Bride, loving her with perfect love, yearning for her, seeing in her everything that is beautiful, and good, and desirable, He cannot refrain from these lofty, yet tender, descriptions of her fair person. And in these seemingly strange compliments, these word pictures, He gives to us some of the most important truths concerning the church to be found in the Bible.

In saying that she is “fair,” He does not mean that she is perfect here in her earthly abode. The church on earth cannot be perfect any more than her adherents, who are human beings, are perfect. There is much impurity and uncleanness to be found in her now. But her Beloved sees her here in anticipation, as she will be one day, **“not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,”** He looks ahead to that time when He can say, as in the 7th verse of this text, **“Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”**

Yes, Jesus, our Lord, knows the impurities that are in His churches on earth. He is more conscious, than are we, of those faults and failures so prevalent in us all; yet He so

loves us, that He bears with us patiently, and looks beyond to what He knows we shall be when we meet Him face to face.

In these few verses of our text, we find seven characteristic features of the Bride described by the Bridegroom. They are very simple things, yet oh how pregnant with meaning; how truly characteristic of the church and her ministry. We think of these features as “The Seven Wonders of The Church,” or Bride: It will be observed that features of the Bride discussed in the text are the natural focal points of beauty, and there is logical sequence in the order of their mention.

I.

The Eyes Of The Bride

The Bridegroom speaks first of the Bride’s eyes,
“...thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks...”

This statement, and each of those that follow, opens to us an avenue of thought as to the character and ministry of the church of Jesus Christ here in the world.

Here is suggested the church’s *compassionate vision*. She has the eyes of a dove. Now, a fellow might think this a crude way to compliment the eyes of his lady-love, but I assure you there is nothing crude, nor ridiculous in this statement of our Lord concerning His Bride’s eyes. The Holy Spirit has set forth these things on the sacred page in a way we can understand. It is all the more comprehensible to us, because it is so intensely human.

Now let us consider: just what can be the significance of the eyes in the study of the character and ministry of the church?

The fact is, one’s eyes go a great way in the revelation of one’s character. We can often look into the eyes of an individual and read much truth about the inward person. It has been said, that “the eyes are the windows of the soul.” It is, indeed, hard for one to so mask the sight of the eyes, as to prevent the reflection of much of the inner self. The eyes reveal the emotions of the heart: in them we may show fear, hatred, consternation, doubt, or love.

Following this line of reasoning, we would say, that the eyes of the church reveal her soul, and determine largely the extent of her spiritual ministry.

Proverbs 29:18 **“Where there is no vision, the people perish...”**

The church, because of her love for the Bride-groom, cannot but look with compassionate vision upon a weary, heart-broken world, steeped in sin, and lost. Oh yes, the eyes tell the story. Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 5:15-16, **“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are**

evil.”

Walk circumspectly? That means to walk with your eyes open, looking around you. That means to see the needs of a dying world; that means that the church must not close her eyes to the multitudes who are lost, without God, and without hope in the world. We are to see the fields that are white unto harvest. As Jesus sat by Jacob's well outside Samaria, after the Samaritan woman had left her waterpot, and gone into the city, He said to His disciples, John 4:35, **“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”**

“Use your eyes.” That is what Jesus is saying to the church, today. You have eyes to see. Though they were once blind in sin, they have now been enlightened by the Spirit of God, and are able to behold the true state of an unbelieving world.

Ephesians 1:18 Paul speaks of, **“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened...”**

To see is to know; to know is to understand; and to understand is to give. Seeing the condition of a sinful world, and understanding the terrible fact, that every soul not saved “by grace, through faith” in Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour is condemned already, and on the road to a devil's hell, then the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ can surely be no less than missionary. Luke 24:48 **“And ye are witnesses of these things.”**

If there is one thing the churches need today, it is a love vision of lost souls. A church without a vision is dead, while she lives.

The Bridegroom said to the Bride, **“...thou hast doves' eyes...”**

Now the dove is a symbol of mourning innocence, a representation of peace, and purity.

I stood by the window in the springtime, and there came to my ears a mournful melody. It was the call of the mourning dove. Most any day in the spring and summer you may hear, as far distant, the cooing of the dove. It is a soft strange sound that has a melancholy air; it sounds as though the little winged creature is sad and mournful about something. Really, it is a love call to its mate.

As the dove, which stands for purity and innocence, is used to illustrate the character of the church, so ought the church in holiness and innocence of life seek to fulfill that type.

As the dove stands a symbol of peace, so should the ministry and mission of the church in this world be that of peace.

As the dove stands a harbinger of hope (it was a dove that Noah sent out from the ark, who returned to him with an olive leaf in her mouth, indicating that the waters of judgment were abated from off the earth) so shall the church give to the world the only message of

hope, which is the message of the glorious gospel of God's **"amazing grace."**

As the dove represents love and mourning tenderness, so ought the church to have broken-hearted concern for sinners.

We might well learn a lesson from Jeremiah, the weeping prophet: Mourning over the ruin of his nation because of their sins, and unable to get them to heed the message that he brought from God, he cried out his soul's lament,

Jeremiah 9:1 **"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"**

Jeremiah 13:17 **"But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive."**

Perhaps more soul-touching than any other part of the prophet's message in his plaintive cry in Jeremiah 8:20-22, **"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"**

Jesus is saying to the Bride, "You have the tender eyes of a dove. You ought to be able to look out upon the world with its wars, its bloodshed, its sin, its disappointments, its tears, its broken hearts, its lost souls going down to hell with each tick of the clock, and seeing these conditions through eyes of compassionate love, you should give yourself to Christ's service as never before.

Psalms 126:6 **"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."**

We need a revival of tears, and compassion in our churches today. We have come into such a condition of spiritual frigidity that we can no more weep over the lost and erring. We need more of the spirit of Paul in Romans 9:1-3. **"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."**

Many other things press for utterance here, but we cannot speak them all. As we pass on to other things, we can only pray, and urge the true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, to endeavor to live true to type, as having the eyes of a mourning dove.

II. *The Bride's Hair*

After the Bridegroom's comment on the eyes of the Bride, He next turns His attention to her hair. And we would like once again to call attention to the logical sequence in the order in which these natural points of beauty are mentioned. In closely scrutinizing a beautiful woman, it would be quite natural to take notice of her eyes first, then next to give attention to her hair, etc. So in the examination of the Bride's many features of beauty, we hear the Bridegroom say, **"...thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead."**

"But," one may say, "What possible spiritual meaning can we find in such a statement as this?"

Why, my friend, this statement brings to our attention a fact of the utmost importance, particularly as to the relationship of the church to her husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, as He observes the features of the Bride's beauty, He takes special notice of her long, beautiful, luxurious hair. And in feminine beauty the hair is one of the most essential points. For pleasing appearance in a woman, nothing is more important than a fine head of hair.

If space permitted, and it were necessary to this study, we could examine a number of selections of Scripture in which hair indicates majesty and glory. In Daniel's vision, Daniel 7:9, **"...and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool..."**

Then John, when he was on the Isle called Patmos, and saw the glorious vision of the Son of Man, described Him thus in Revelation 1:14, **"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow;..."**

However, there is a far greater significance in this mention of the Bride's hair, in our text, than these others which we have referred to. He is not speaking here of the glory and majesty of the divine One; but he is speaking of His betrothed, His spouse, His church, whose business here in the world, while awaiting His return for their wedding in the sky, is to faithfully carry out the world-wide mission work of her Beloved.

He admires her long, luxurious, beautiful hair; It represents feminine beauty, and womanliness. But it means much more than this. I will show you what it means as we turn to the word of God: I cannot reproduce all of the scripture references here, but I ask the reader to turn and read I Corinthians 11:1-16.

It will be found in these verses, that the man is the head of the woman, in God's plan; that she is to be subject to his headship; and that she is to show this subjection by wearing her hair differently to that of the man.

I Corinthians 11:14-15, **"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her:**

for her hair is given her for a covering.” Verse 5, **“But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head...”** (that is, her husband.)

To pray with her head uncovered – that is, to pray without wearing the proper hair, which is plainly declared to be her covering – is to dishonor her head. It is plainly stated that the man is her head.

A point which has been argued and debated much among Bible students is whether or not it is wrong for women to cut their hair. Of course, the question might resolve itself to simply, “How long is long, or how short is short?”

Now, we cannot deny that the scriptures teach that the man is the head of the woman, and that the woman is to be subject to the man. But I think that we are due to study the scriptures with a bit of common sense; and we cannot overlook verse 11 which says, **“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.”**

This shows plainly that neither one is to abuse the relationship.

Furthermore, that the matter of the length of the woman’s hair is not to be made a point of dissension, or confusion, is plainly evident in verse 16, **“But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.”**

Personally, I think that the long hair of a woman more naturally shows the true picture of her proper regard for the headship of her husband. Her hair is to be a sign of her humility; it shows a recognition of her place in subjection to the authority of her husband.

In writing of the prayer-life and service of men and women, the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul in I Timothy 2:8-10 **“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”**

Then again, the same truth is set forth in I Peter 3:3-5, **“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.”**

From the foregoing, and other scriptures we see, that the woman is to recognize, and honor her God-given place as being subject to the man, who is her head; Her attitude should be one of a quiet, meek spirit of humility and modesty. Her long hair, which is given

her for a covering; is a sign that she recognizes, and accepts this place. Thank God, for humble, modest, quiet, faithful, women, who can find joy in serving God in the way that He ordained of old.

In the light of these things, the application of the words of our text is too obvious to need extensive comment. The Bridegroom, Jesus, is speaking of His Bride, the church, and He sees her as beautiful, humble, modest, quiet, meek, adorned with the spirit of honor and submission to Him. She honours Jesus as Her Head; and her love for Him constrains her to be faithful to Him in service. (See Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18). The most primary appointment she has is to witness for Him in a world that is lost in sin.

Her hair is described as that of “a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead.” And when we consider that the Bible meaning of “*Mount Gilead*” is “*Hill of Witness*,” we can understand the applicability of the simile.

The beauty of the Bride in the eyes of the Bridegroom, is measured largely by her faithfulness to the appointed task. This, to me, is a field of beautiful thought. But we must pass on to the third wonder.

III. *The Bride's Teeth*

Song of Solomon verse 2, **“Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.”**

Having observed, with deepest admiration and appreciation, the tender loving eyes, and the long beautiful hair of the Bride, the Bridegroom now takes notice to her fine set of even white teeth.

There is nothing that adds more to the attraction of one's person than a good set of evenly spaced, gleaming white teeth. A smile is so nice when it exposes beautiful teeth; they make for great beauty.

Contrast, if you will, a person with such a fine set of teeth, to the other extreme condition, namely one who has false teeth, or one whose teeth are bad, or even a person having no teeth at all. The difference is not just in the appearance of the individual, but it may well become a question of health. A person who has no teeth, or whose teeth are bad, is certainly not able to masticate his food properly, and is, therefore, denied the enjoyment, and health giving properties of many of the best foods; consequently, his health may become impaired, his strength curtailed, and his growth and development arrested. Good teeth enable the possessor to utilize good food. Such a person can feed on meat,

instead of having to remain on a diet of liquids, say milk, etc.

Now, all of this discussion may seem crude and improper in this study of the scriptures; however such is not the case, for we have here a simile that is very fitting, and very true. God gives us a spiritual message. The Bridegroom is making an appraisal of the features of His Bride; it is Jesus speaking of His church, and using very human, down-to-earth terms in which to describe her.

I do not feel that it is altogether necessary to discuss this feature of the Bride at great length; the application will be quite obvious to the reader. However we might sort of summarize the various truths suggested here by the Bride's teeth: Good teeth speak of

1. Beauty.
2. Health.
3. The ability to take strong nourishment.
4. Proper growth and development, etc.

The point which I want to particularly emphasize here is the part that good teeth play in the health, growth, and strength of an individual, because those teeth make it possible for the individual to feed on strong meat. When I had all of my natural teeth extracted, some years ago, I found it impossible to eat the foods I had liked so well, and which were so necessary to my physical strength. I had to eat soup, milk, and other liquids.

Now we know that our spiritual growth and strength depend, in a large measure, upon the kind of spiritual nourishment we feed upon from day to day. If we would remain babes in Christ, then a milk diet is all we need; but if we want to grow up into full spiritual manhood, we must be able to take the meat of the word.

To live a life time without growth is abnormal. Surely no one should want to do it. Yet there are many, many, Christians who seem to be perfectly content to stay on the bottle all of their lives.

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul rebukes them for their carnality, and likens them to babies who must still be fed milk.

I Corinthians 3:1-3, **“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”**

Again, in the letter to the Hebrews, those spiritually dull, stunted believers are upbraided for their lack of spiritual growth: Hebrews 5:12-14 **“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.**

For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belong-eth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Our Lord commands His people to grow, and He gives them the means of grace whereby they may do so. Such scriptures as Ephesians 4:11-16, II Peter 3:18, and others bear this out.

There is another thought which the Bible student might consider here: In the 7th chapter of Daniel, in Daniel’s visions, he saw the fourth great beast rise up out of the sea – this beast, of course, represented the Roman Empire. It had great iron teeth with which it devoured and broke in pieces all of its enemies. So the teeth, in this case, signified power to overcome the enemy.

Taking all of these things into consideration, we have little difficulty in comprehending the spiritual meaning of the Bridegroom’s words concerning the Bride’s teeth.

They signify her beauty: They “**...are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing...**” This means that they are clean and white. And “**...none is barren among them.**” This is to say, none are missing; each one is in its place.

Her teeth also speak of the strong, healthy church of Jesus who is able to feed on the meat of the Word of God, and properly assimilate that meat for her health, and growth, and strength, and capability in the ministry of her Christ.

He provides the nourishment for His church; and He provides the means whereby she is able to use it to His glory.

IV.

The Bride’s Lips And Speech

The next feature of the Bride yielding to the scrutiny and admiration of the Bridegroom is her lips:

Verse 3 “**Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely...**”

The lips and speech we take together. She has such pretty lips. “Why,” He says, “they are just like a scarlet line.”

As we read this, we are reminded of the common custom of our modern women, whose lip-stick colors range from a sickly pink, to a deep vermillion. I do not speak of this necessarily by way of criticism, for I accept the fact that a little of the right color on the lips of a woman adds to her beauty. However, too many women are extremists in the use of

cosmetics, and actually detract from their natural beauty by the excessive application of artificial preparations. A woman can become hideous in her appearance by the promiscuous use of beauty aids. The most attractive lips of women are those whose scarlet coloring comes from the natural circulation of blood through a healthy body. We cannot deny that the mouth, or lips, is one of the most important features in womanly beauty.

It is true, that you can take an old house that is all broken down and dilapidated, with the paint all faded, or chipping and peeling, the weather-boards warping, and the nails all pulling out, and it looks bad. Sometimes it is necessary to use a wire brush to clean it up. Then the application of a couple of coats of good paint makes it look like a new place.

I suppose that this may be the basic reason a lot of women paint themselves up so thoroughly; they are sort of worn out, faded and wrinkled, you know, and they want to cover up those blemishes. I would not find fault with that, no, no. I must admit that deep red, especially on their lips, looks pretty nice.

But, my friends, it was not so much the flashing beauty of the Bride's scarlet lips that drew forth the praise of the Bridegroom here. It was because of the glorious spiritual meaning it held. Her lips like a thread of scarlet, and her comely speech, reveal some of the greatest truths ever known regarding her character, and ministry here in the world.

The scarlet line speaks of blood, His blood poured out upon the Cross of Calvary for our sins; while her lips, and comely speech, speak of her message to a lost world: it is the message of redemption only through that blood. It is the message of His marvelous grace.

When the spies of Israel went into the city of Jericho, in preparation for the siege of that city, they were hidden and protected from the men of the city by a harlot, called Rahab. She beseeched them that she and her family might be spared when Israel should take the city; and they gave her specific directions as to what she would do.

Joshua 2:18-19 **"Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him."** Verse 21 **"...And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window."**

Rahab's scarlet line is a type of Jesus' blood that was **"...shed for many for the remission of sins."** Matthew 26:28. We can see that scarlet line running throughout the Bible from Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 22:21.

Every drop of blood poured out upon Jewish altars was a part of that scarlet line pointing to the blood of Calvary.

Every trembling beast that sank down upon the ground in death beneath the sacrificial knife was a part of that scarlet line, and pointed to “...**the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**” John 1:29.

Every drop of the blood sprinkled by the fingers of the High Priest before the mercy seat, and beneath the outstretched wings of the cherubims on the days of atonement, was a part of that scarlet line, and cries out the fact, that we are not our own, but we are “...**bought with a price...**” I Corinthians 6:20, and that is the price of His precious blood.

The scarlet lips of the beloved Bride is a part of that scarlet line. They speak of the God-given ministry and message of Christ’s Church in the world.

Certainly the Bridegroom appreciates the beauty of the Bride’s lips, as He appreciates her other features of attraction; however the message of those lips, the comeliness of her speech, is what He glories in most of all.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is His witness, His messenger; and He loves her more for her faithful witness, than anything else. When she speaks the message of the glorious gospel of Christ in all of its purity, than it can be said that her speech is comely.

We have often heard it said that, “Beauty is as beauty does.” And there can be no doubt that the manner of one’s speech, and the type of one’s language determines largely the attractiveness of one’s person. Our speech betrays us. What a man talks about will do more to reveal his true character than most anything else.

Proverbs 23:7 “**For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he;...**”

Matthew 12:37 “**For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.**”

The true character of the Church of Jesus will be seen by the world in her faithful ministry of the message of eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and in her faithful proclamation of this great gospel of blood redemption, she shall have the admiration of a sin-sick, heartbroken world, as well as the joyous approval of her Lord, Adonai (Jehovah, her husband).

Yea, beautiful are her eyes, her hair, her teeth, and her lips; but more beautiful than all is her message of His saving grace.

V.

The Bride’s Temples

Chapter 4:3, “...**thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.**”

The above statement is found (in just a little different form) in one other place in the Song of Solomon, that is in chapter 6, verse 7. I must admit that the Bride-groom's loving compliment at this point may seem to be a little more obscure than at others.

From all evidences that I am able to find on this particular point, I must say the Bride's temples described here represent her beauty and strength of character. Let us remember that we are looking at these things as upon a human basis. We are examining the beauty features of a magnificent woman.

If we were to go into the study of craniology, we would find that the temporal bones, which make up the structure of the temples on each side of the head, are very important in determining the proportion of the temples, which, in turn, go far in the arrangement of facial beauty.

Now, in looking upon the fine features of His Bride, the Bridegroom sees her temples as like unto a piece of pomegranate. This, too, emphasizes her beauty.

The pomegranate mentioned here probably refers to the fruit of a small tree, or shrub, found in tropical Asia and Africa. The Universal Standard Encyclopedia says of the pomegranate, "The plant itself is of bushy growth with glossy leaves and red flowers. The fruit is about the size of a large orange, and has an acid, edible, orange-red pulp. The rind, which is astringent, is used in medicine."

Thus we can see more clearly, from the characteristics of this plant and its fruit, just why it would be used in a symbolic manner in the description of our Lord's Bride, the church. The beauty, the fragrance, the red color, the food value, and the medicinal qualities of the pomegranate all make this quite obvious.

VI.

The Bride's Neck

Verse 4 **"Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men."**

In the sixth place we see the Bridegroom's amorous gaze light upon the Bride's beautiful, well-shaped neck, and here, truly, His tender compliments reach a new height in spiritual implication.

Let us first notice the basic significance of the neck itself. It suggests the will and determination of the individual – or, as in this case, Christ's church. A scriptural instance or two will suffice to demonstrate this fact:

Let us go to the 7th chapter of Acts, and see that great, Spirit-filled man, Stephen, standing before the Sanhedrin. He preaches them a mighty sermon, beginning with the call

of Abraham from Chaldea, and coming down through twenty one and a half centuries to the Lord Jesus Christ. He brings an awful indictment of blood guiltiness against them, and in verse 51 says, "**Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.**"

Of course, in these words, he was referring to their stubborn, unyielding wills against the power of God. Though this presents the reverse side of the situation, yet it illustrates the representation of the neck, that it stands for the strong will, and unyielding spirit.

Proverbs 29:1 "**He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.**"

This, too, presents the reverse side. However, the other side of the matter can be seen in a couple of passages found in Proverbs 3:3 "**Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.**"

Then in Proverbs 6:21, where the son is admonished to keep the commandments of his father, and the law of his mother, he is told to "**Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.**"

These verses will suffice to show the propriety of the simile used in reference to the excellencies of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, her will, her courage, and her determination.

But there are some more wonderful truths to be seen here: The Bridegroom says that His Bride's neck "**...is like the tower of David builded for an armoury...**" An armoury is a place where arms and instruments of war are kept. Now David was a mighty man of war, and a great courageous king. No man demonstrated more courage and determination than David, even from the day when, as a shepherd lad, he went out to meet the Philistine Giant, Goliath, with but a sling and some small stones. His whole life was filled with strong-willed courage; and after he became king over all Israel, he had his armoury, or tower in the wall of Jerusalem.

Then we are told, that in this armoury "**...there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.**" These bucklers are shields which were worn upon the forearms of soldiers in battle; they could be shifted about at the will and discretion of the warrior for the protection of his body against the spears and swords of the enemy.

Ofttimes, when mighty war heroes are dead, the weapons which they have used in war are kept and cherished by the nation in memory of their illustrious deeds. The thousand shields which hung in the armoury of David, as mentioned in our text, would be, no doubt, the bucklers of those mighty warriors who faithfully stood with David, their great leader and king. See II Samuel 23:8, I Chronicles 11:10, etc.

Sometimes we visit national shrines where are kept personal possessions of our great

leaders of other days, and, as we read the stories inscribed there of their valour, and their great deeds, our hearts are thrilled with a new sense of loyalty and pride, and our courage mounts up. We are filled with a feverish desire to emulate their heroic deeds. What schoolboy has not been stirred in the reading of the great events of history, of the biographies of great lives of the past.

So, my friend, we hear the Bridegroom, Jesus, describe the beautiful, strong neck of His Bride, the church, as like unto the armoury of David, where the shields of mighty men hang in mute testimony of their valorous deeds of long ago. This means that she is like a mighty army in the service of God; this means that she has a strong will, a determination, a courage, as befits her position as His true witness in a hostile world. Oh, how the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ need real courage in the world today – courage that is born of true faith in God.

Time and space would fail us to walk down the bloodstained avenues of the glorious history of the church. What an illustrious history she has had through the centuries! And how fittingly the wise one said, that her neck was like an armoury where the shields of a thousand mighty men, who fought, and bled, and died, have been hanged in honor and glory.

We could go through the halls of this armoury, and we would see the shields of the apostles hanging on its walls. Men like impetuous Peter, who supposedly was crucified head downward, and sound-hearted, practical James, who died a martyr's death, and faithful, depend-able, loyal, kindly old John, who spent his last days in exile on Patmos for the Word of God, and that greatest of all missionaries, the apostle Paul. They wrought well. They were faithful, fearless soldiers in the warfare of the gospel. They cried out the message of the cross, which was given to the church to proclaim; they defended her cause; they stood up for her interest; they would not yield. And, when they had fought their good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith, one by one they bowed their heads in martyr's death, and passed on to the fellowship of that great company of Christian Warriors gone before. Their shields of faith were hanged in God's Hall of Fame, to become an unending inspiration to the replacements that must follow.

One by one through the centuries, we have seen the mighty men of God come and go: men like Spurgeon, and Truitt, and Norris, and others too numerous to name. They were men who fought the good fight of true and undaunted faith; they were men who would not surrender; they were men who asked no quarter, and gave none. Their shields now hang proudly in the armoury of Jesus, in the glorious annals of His church.

One of the greatest, and most thrilling stories in the history of our country is the story of the Alamo:

The Alamo, which is a former Franciscan mission in San Antonio, Texas erected sometime about 1722, was later used as a fort. It is now preserved as a State monument. At the Alamo transpired one of the most heroic episodes of the Texan War of Independence against the Mexicans.

In February of 1836, a force of Mexicans numbering several thousand under the command of General Antonio Santa Anna came into San Antonio. The city had been captured the previous December by the Texans. There were only 155 men in the San Antonio garrison, later reinforced by 32 men. These were under the command of Colonel William Barrett Travis. They managed to withstand the Mexican siege until sometime in March, when it became apparent that there was no hope of holding the fort against the great odds faced.

It is said that the commander took his sword and drew a line down the middle of the fort floor, then, calling his small group around him, he said, "Gentlemen, every man is now on his own. There may yet be a chance of escape for some. On this side of the line there is a possibility of personal freedom; you are free to make the attempt, if you wish. However, to take the other side, and remain here, is to die. Choose as you will; but, as for me, I prefer to die for the freedom of Texas."

And so saying, the Commander stepped across the line which he had drawn with his sword. Silently every man stepped across after him. It is said that, when the battle was over, every man lay dead, but they were surrounded by heaps of dead Mexicans. Later, at the battle of San Jacinto, where Santa Anna was defeated, the battle cry of the Texans was "Remember the Alamo!" The episode of the Alamo was the key to the freedom of Texas.

Jesus wants His church to have faith, and courage, and a will yielded only to His. He would have her to go forth determinedly today in the prosecution of her glorious purpose, inspired by the spiritual heroism of those great characters gone before, and to present her body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Him.

VII. *The Bride's Breasts*

Verse 5 **"Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies."**

Last among these admirable features of the Bride examined here, and perhaps, the most wonderful of them all, are her breasts, likened unto young roes that are twins. The young roes are young deer; and being twins, they are just alike. The scene is one of grace, symmetry, and beauty.

The thought is a very tender one, and very meaningful. The picture is that of a beautiful woman, beautiful of face, and fine of figure. She has full, well-developed breasts, which is a fundamental focal point in true feminine beauty. This is a characteristic most often envied by less-fortunate, flat-chested women.

What do these fine, well-molded breasts indicate in the Bride? It means that she is a woman capable of supplying nourishment for her children. She is ready for marriage and childbearing; she is supplied with sufficient resources to care for her little ones. There is no more wonderful sight, than of a mother nourishing her child at her breast. That is the ideal of womanhood.

One of the most revealing names of God used in the Bible is that in which the Lord approaches Abraham in Genesis 17:1, when He said, “**...I am the Almighty God...**” This is “El Shaddai.” El means, “the Strong One,” while the Hebrew word “shad,” means “the breast.” It is the term invariably used in the scripture for a woman’s breast.

God is the “breasted one” to us. He nourishes, supplies, and satisfies the every need of His helpless children. Not only are we spiritually fed, but we are comforted and protected there.

Furthermore, just as our El Shaddai meets our every need of life, so the church of our blessed Lord, – like a full breasted woman who is capable of motherhood – is to be a source of spiritual nourishment to hungry souls.

The appointed lot of the Bride of Jesus is according to the original purpose of God in marriage: that is to bring forth children, and to give them proper nourishment, in order that they may grow up to the full stature of manhood in Christ.

Hopeless, helpless humanity should be able to find spiritual nourishment at the breasts of the churches of Jesus Christ.

We may have to say, as Peter said to the lame man at the temple, in the 3rd chapter of Acts, Verse 6 “**...Silver and gold have I none...**” But, thank God, we can also say, “**...but such as I have give I thee...**” And we can take them by the hand and lift them up.

If a church is not able to give true spiritual nourishment and help to a dying world, then there is something seriously wrong with that church. Her business is first to minister to the souls of men.

In these verses we have heard the Bridegroom magnifying the beauty and virtues of His beloved Bride:

He has pointed out the *dove’s eyes* of her compassionate vision of a lost world.

He has called attention to her fine covering of *hair*, as indicating her submission to her Head, who is her husband.

Her *teeth* have been likened unto a flock of sheep, giving evidence of both her beauty,

and her ability to feed upon strong meat.

He has shown up her *lips*, which are like a scarlet thread, and her comely *speech*, all of which means her message of blood redemption.

He has remarked about the strength and beauty of her character, shown by her *temples*, which are like a piece of pomegranate.

He has thrilled us with the comparison of her *neck* to the armoury of David, where hang the shields of mighty men of old.

And last of all, He presents her in her mother character, with her beautiful, fully developed breasts, capable of giving spiritual nourishment to her children.

Now, having day-dreamed of her sweet likeness, with all of her excellencies, He comforts His own eager heart with the anticipation of their ultimate rendezvous somewhere, sometime, in glory: 4:6, **“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of Myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.”**

Now, in concluding this chapter, I would call attention to an interesting point:

In the first verse of this chapter of our text, as the Bridegroom begins to describe the features of His Bride, He says, **“...thou art fair, my love...”**

But you will notice in the 7th verse, after He speaks of their rendezvous when “the day breaks,” He seems to be looking forward in anticipation of that day, and in His heart there is a vision of what she will be when she comes to meet Him. Hence He says, **“Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”**

Yes, this last statement seems to anticipate that glorious day when He shall come and receive her unto Himself. The blemishes will all be gone; she will have no spots or impurities then. As He sweeps down the pathless skies, and she wings her way to meet Him, the shadows will be gone. It will be “sunrise with Jesus through eternity.”

Oh, may she be faithful and true to Him now; may she ever magnify Him to a lost world; may she honor and serve Him in such a manner that she will not be ashamed to meet Him face to face.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BRIDEGROOM'S GARDEN

Song of Solomon 4:8-5:1

We have given the title, THE BRIDEGROOM'S GARDEN, to this chapter because this is, after all, the real topic of this part of our text. However, there are some other things to which we shall give attention in leading up to the main topic.

In the preceding study we covered chapter 4, verses 1-7 of our text, seeing The Seven Wonders of the Bride, or church. There we left the Bridegroom looking with eager anticipation to the time when he will come for the Bride, at which time she will be found "all fair," with "no spot" in her.

Now, as we continue, beginning with verse 8, we find the Bridegroom still speaking:

"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards."

The teaching of this verse seems to be a bit more obscure than some others; however we shall inquire into it somewhat in passing. The study of these words seems to indicate that the Bridegroom is leading up in a progression of thought to the main truth to be presented, namely, that his Bride, or Church, is like unto a garden.

When we consider the meaning of these proper names used in the 8th verse, we begin to grasp some continuity of thought. Evidently the Bridegroom is calling upon his Bride to come to these prominent points mentioned, and take a universal view of things as she faces them here in the world.

Lebanon means: "white," or "incense." Both whiteness and incense stand for purity.

Amana means: "integrity, truth."

Shenir means: "lantern," or "light."

Hermon means: "anathema," accursed, or that which is "devoted to destruction."

He calls her to come and walk through the mountains, to behold purity from Lebanon, truth and honesty from Amana, light from Shenir, and the curse of destruction from Hermon. In other words, these are the things with which she must have to do in her earthly ministry. Let us spend no more time speculating here; these are but suggestions to provoke the reader to more thought.

We shall now briefly consider verses 9-11:

"Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my

spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”

The Bridegroom addresses the Bride as, “my sister, my spouse.” As a spouse she bears the most intimate relationship to Him, that of marriage – though the marriage relationship has not yet been consummated. The purity and holiness of this relationship is suggested in the term, “sister” hence He uses the terms connectively; “my sister, my spouse.”

It is quite interesting to notice the many different terms used of our Lord in reference to His Bride, the Church; “my love,” “fairest among women,” “a lily,” “my fair one,” “my dove,” “my sister,” “my spouse,” “my undefiled,” are some of them most commonly used.

In verse 9 He says, **“Thou hast ravished my heart...with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.”**

In ravishing His heart she has simply taken away, or completely captured His heart. In other words, He has fallen madly in love with her. She ravished Him with one of her eyes – that is, just one look into her eyes, and His heart goes out to her in deepest love. In chapter 4, verse 1, He speaks of her “dove’s eyes.” He looks into her eyes, and somehow He loves her. He is chained to her forever.

Oh, is this not a wonderful thing? Thank God! One day Jesus looked upon us, and we were dirty, sinful, and altogether unlovely; but, praise be to Him, in His infinite wisdom He saw beneath the dirt and sin and stain – He saw a soul that He wanted to save. He saw me, as I could be by His marvelous grace, and He loved me. Yea, all of the love of His great heart reached out to me; and, for me, He went all the way to Calvary.

4:10, **“How much better is thy love than wine!”** He says. Jesus wants the love of His Church in its fulness. It is more satisfying than the finest wine.

Notice the beauty, and the significance of the 11th verse: He says that her lips **“...drop as the honeycomb...”** In verse 3 of this 4th chapter of our text we saw her lips as a thread of scarlet, which indicated that her message is of blood redemption. Now, in this verse, her lips drop honey, and *honey and milk* are under her tongue. On, how sweet is her message! It is the food of life to those who will receive it.

John 6:63, Jesus said, **“...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”**

Jesus gave the message of the Gospel to His church, and commissioned her to go into all the world and preach it. That gospel is the sweetest message lips ever spake, or ear ever heard, and to those who will receive it by faith, it means eternal life.

One other statement in this 11th verse we must take note of: **“...the smell of thy**

garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”

The smell of Lebanon is the odor of mountain freshness, the pungent fragrance of evergreens. The Bride of Jesus is clothed in the garments of His perfect righteousness; they are garments of purity and cleanliness. Not only so, but she is making herself ready in “raiment of needlework,” yea in “fine linen clean and white.” See Psalm 45:14, and Revelation 19:7-8. We shall discuss these Scriptures later on in our study.

The Bridegroom’s Garden

We now come to the main topic of this chapter: “The Bridegroom’s Garden.” We might well say, The Church, The Garden of Jesus, for that is how she is here presented. These other things have led up to this revelation of her character. One of her important character roles is here revealed.

4:12-5:1, “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

A careful examination of the above scriptures will reveal that, in reality, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ is here shown in five images, or likenesses: “A Garden,” “A Spring,” and “A Fountain,” in verse 12, and as “A Well of Living Waters,” and “Streams from Lebanon,” in verse 15.

All of these suggest the same great truth: namely, that the business of the church is to make Jesus Christ known to a lost world. His church is His one and only appointed witness to all humanity. Jesus, Himself is the water of life: and His true churches are the mediums through which He must be made known. As a garden, a spring, a fountain, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon, the church is His instrument for the dissemination of His gospel.

It would be well just here to read again the 4th chapter of John, where Jesus talks with the Samaritan woman concerning the water of life. He makes it plain, that the water of life is in Him, yea, He is the living water, and must be received by the personal faith of the

individual. However, it is the church who must make Him known. And the church should be something more than just a wet-weather spring.

Romans 10:13-15, **“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?...”**

God has never sent another, since the day that Jesus established His church, save that church. Jesus must be preached; and the only one in the world who has the commission, and the authority to preach Him is The New Testament Church, which He personally established.

Now I want to present this study of Christ’s Church, as a garden, in four general divisions: – and remember, that what is said here of the church, as an institution, is also true of the local body.

I. ***The Garden Itself***

While awaiting the return of her Beloved, there are certain burdens, or obligations devolving upon the Bride; there are certain things that she must do; she has a work to perform, by which performance alone she can please Him. In the prosecution of her ministry here on earth, she must assume the character role of a garden. And where can a more appropriate simile be found to portray her true position and purpose here in the world?

In viewing the church as a garden, we shall make seven distinct observations:

1. *Christ’s Church is like a garden.* A garden is often an enclosed plot of land, taken from the surrounding territory, which is sometimes an uncultivated waste. Such a plot of ground has a connection with the surrounding area, yet is not of it. It is separate and distinct from all that is around it.

These characteristics are certainly true of the church. She is in the world, yet not of the world; her’s is a pilgrim character; she is a stranger in a strange land. She is a “called out” assembly. She is due to be composed of “baptized believers,” – people who have repented of their sins, and have exercised faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, and, having been “born again,” have then submitted to the ordinance of scriptural baptism.

II Corinthians 6:17-18, **“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”**

John 17:14-16, Jesus praying to His Father: **“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”**

John 15:18-19, **“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”**

The marvelous thing, Beloved, is that the material of which Jesus established His church was, in truth, taken from the uncultivated waste around it. The world scorned and belittled His church, then hated it, and finally feared it, because they saw that it could not be overthrown; they became convinced that it had a line through to God.

Acts 4:13 **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”**

No institution of earth could have had such an obscure, and insignificant beginning, faced such organized opposition, and, yet have had such an influence on the world, arriving, as it has today, at such undreamed-of magnitude. Only through the grace and power of God could such a miraculous thing be accomplished.

I have traveled through the burning, barren deserts, where nothing but dry, baked earth, or sand and rocks, could be found for many miles. There seemed to be little sign of life; no water could be found to slake the thirst of the tortured traveler; and there was no cooling breeze to refresh the sun-scorched brow.

Then, suddenly, to one's great consternation, yet happy surprise, there would appear the miracle of a little grove of green trees, and grasses, and even flowers, in the midst of the desert's desolation. It was an oasis. There was living green; there was beauty and refreshment. And all because there was water there. Oh, beloved, the water makes the difference.

So is the church, the garden of Jesus, an oasis in the desert of this world of sin. And what makes her so is the water in the midst of her – Jesus, the water of eternal life. That living water should flow from her as from a spring, or a fountain; and, under her ministry, thirsty and sin-sick souls should be brought to that living water, that they may drink and live.

2. *A Garden is designed for a special and peculiar purpose.* When a man lays out and plans a garden plot he usually has some specific purpose in mind for that garden; otherwise it would not be chosen out and prepared with such minute care. All of the surrounding area may be as a wilderness, or wasteland; he does not give the same

attention to the other land, as to the chosen plot. He knows exactly why he has selected that particular place for his garden; he knows just what his ultimate purpose is therewith, and he has a definite plan in mind by which he expects to come to the realization of that purpose.

For the nucleus of His church Jesus chose material which had been prepared under the ministry of John the Baptist; and in setting up this church, He had an unalterable purpose for her existence. That purpose was a very simple one, and easy to understand from the Bible. It was three-fold: to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them the truth of the scriptures. The great commission given in Matthew 28:18-20 bears this out.

We might simplify the divine purpose for the church to a single statement: to make Christ known in the world, or to give Christ to the world.

In I Peter 2:9, we have a very clear-cut statement as to the purpose of God with His people: **“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”**

After the resurrection of Jesus, He stood in the midst of His church one Sunday Evening, and talked to them about His great purpose for that church:

Luke 24:46-48 **“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.”**

Beloved, I would impress it upon your heart if I could: Jesus has called us out from the world and saved us by His grace; we owe Him our life, our all. We are not here to dream, to drift, to idle away our time; we are here to serve God. God has a purpose with His church, and that purpose is not that she shall sit down on the stool of do-nothing in her own little world, and be satisfied within herself. She is to show forth His praise; she is to bring forth fruit unto Him.

Jesus speaking to the charter members of His church in John 15:16 **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”**

Jesus planted His garden (established His church) for the purpose of producing spiritual fruit.

3. *Christ's garden, is enclosed by the wall of His protection.* A garden plot is generally enclosed by some sort of wall or fence. But why? Why put a fence around it at all? Why not just go out and stake out a place in the wide open spaces, and cultivate and plant it? Why, friend, if you were to do so, there is a great possibility that your neighbor's chickens

would scratch up your seed. Or, perhaps, the hogs would come in and root it to pieces. It might be that the cows would come in and eat up all of your corn and beans. Then, of course, there are the rabbits, and other wild animals, they would all have free access to your garden. I fear there would not be much left to gather at harvest time.

No, a man fences his garden against the intrusion of the enemy, or destroyer. And for the same thing has God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, provided protection for the church. It is protected by all of the resources and power of God.

Matthew 16:18 “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

He has kept His church against the enemy for more than nineteen centuries, now. The devil has tried in every conceivable way through the ages to destroy her, both from without, and within, but he has failed. He kept her through the dark ages, and she has stood the tests of both physical violence, and the fifth column activities of traitors within her midst. She has been sabotaged by the infiltration of Satan’s false apostles of which Paul warns in II Corinthians 11:13-15:

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

She has been slandered, and ridiculed, and her robes have often been stained with martyrs’ blood, but, thank God, she lives, she marches on! She still can sing:

“On the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation’s walls surrounded,
thou canst smile at all thy foes.”

Jesus put the wall of protection around His church, but we are the keepers of the gates. If we leave the gates open, and unwatched, the enemy will come in. You might have the best fence in the world about your garden; you can put posts twenty-five feet high, and set them deep in the ground, and stretch poultry wire with one-inch mesh upon them; yet if you get careless about the gate, if you leave it open, and unwatched, you will get up some morning and find your garden in ruins.

Let us not blame God in such a case. He put the wall about the church, and expected us to have sense enough, and interest enough, to keep the gates.

There has never been a time when it was so important to guard the doors of the

churches as today. We had better make it our business to know what comes in, lest we find ourselves one day lamenting when it is too late.

What most churches need is a periodic inspection, for termites, and a prompt eradication of the same.

4. *Christ's garden is given to specially chosen plants.* Certainly no one has a garden just for the production of things which naturally grow, or spring up of themselves. The plants in our garden are carefully chosen as a variety and kind, because we know just what fruit, or vegetables, it will take to satisfy our needs and desires.

So the Lord does not propose to give His garden over to the production of a nondescript collection of weeds, briars, bushes, and worthless plants.

Suppose you go out and build a fence around an acre of ground, then call your neighbors to come look at your garden.

Well, I come up and look over the fence, and I see an overgrown, wild, untilled piece of land, and I say, "Man, what kind of garden do you call that? That is no more than a patch of rag-weeds, dog-fennel, and saw-briars."

"Well," you reply, "I just decided that I would have me a garden, and I fenced me one off, so there it is."

That is quite a ridiculous illustration. But what I am saying is, that a man plants the kind of seed in a garden that will produce the kind of fruit, or vegetables he wants. If he likes beans, he will plant beans; if he prefers potatoes, he will plant potatoes; and if he desires tomatoes, then he will plant tomatoes. More than that: he will pull up the weeds, cut out the grass, and till the soil.

I tell you, Jesus Christ is expecting something better from His church than you will find in the outside world. The church is not a place for unbelievers; the church is not a place for gamblers; the church is not a place for bootleggers, and drunkards, and thieves, and murderers. The church is a spiritual home on earth for the "born again" children of God. If you are not saved, then you don't have any business in the membership of the church. The church is supposed to be composed of righteous people, and for the purpose of producing the fruit of righteousness unto God.

Men's unregenerated hearts are desperately wicked. Apart from the grace of God, they can only bring forth fruit unto death.

Romans 6:20-22 **"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."**

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul tells us just what we may expect to see produced

naturally from the depraved natures of men: Galatians 5:19-21,

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Jesus did not design His church garden in order to product such vile things as these. All of these spring up naturally of themselves. He intended for the church to bring forth spiritual fruit unto God. And in this same letter and chapter, verses 22-23, we are told just what is the fruit of the Spirit:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Our Lord’s Church is not to be thrown open to the world, that anything, and everything that comes along, may come into her membership. Such would only be an amalgamated mess, like a garden of weeds. His garden is supposed to be planted with His plants.

Matthew 15:13 Jesus talking to His disciples, **“...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”**

5. *Christ’s garden has a variety of plants.* As a rule, when one plants a garden, he has quite a variety of plants therein. He does not expect to grow corn exclusively, or to plant the whole garden in beans. Can you imagine one growing nothing but onions, or cucumbers? Neither does Jesus expect to turn His whole church to the production of but a single kind of good thing. It is true, that He has one great, general purpose for His church, but He plans for a great variety of good things therefrom.

The gifts and callings of God are many, and different.

Romans 12:4-8 **“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy, according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”**

I Corinthians 12:4-6 **“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”**

One Holy Spirit administers the affairs of Christ throughout His church; howbeit, He

gives many different gifts, and exercises His administration through a variety of channels, verse 11 **“...dividing to every man severally as he will.”**

6. *Jesus expects a harvest of fruit from His garden.* When one plants a garden, and gives it the proper care, he has every right in the world to expect something from it in return.

If I were to go out and prepare me a garden plot, plant and tend it well, and it produced nothing, I would probably try it again, with a little extra care. Maybe I would fertilize it better, and work harder with it; however, if it produced nothing the second year, more than likely, I would be changing my garden spot. I plant a garden for the purpose of reaping a harvest of fruit or vegetables from it.

And, I tell you, my friend, Jesus Christ expects something from His church. When the singers sing in their places; and the Sunday School Teachers teach in their places; and the personal workers work in their places; and the preacher preaches in his place; and all of the individuals faithfully fill their places in the service of the church; there will be much fruit to the glory of God. The church will move in power. But when one part of the body ceases to function it hurts the whole body. The Holy Spirit has given each of us our place, and God expects us to fill that place faithfully. I Corinthians 4:2 **“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”**

The Lord's church must bear fruit. If a local body of Christ does not bear fruit, He may one day say, as in the parable which Jesus spoke of the barren fig tree in Luke 13:7 **“...cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”**

A church which scorns, or squanders its God-given opportunities, may lose them.

Jesus said to the church in Ephesus, in Revelation 2:5 **“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”**

Speaking of Israel as Jehovah's vineyard, in Isaiah 5:1-7, the Prophet shows us the tragic outcome of the failure in fruit-bearing.

“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall

be eaten up; and brake down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” The same truths apply to the church, Christ’s garden.

7. Jesus has supplied His garden (the church) with every means necessary to a bountiful production.

He has chosen her fallow ground of human hearts and lives; and, in the deep of His judgments, has broken it up with the plow of His providential dealings.

He has planted the seed of His eternal truth in that prepared soil.

He has watered His garden with many showers of spiritual refreshment.

He has sent forth the warmth and sunshine of His unfailing love.

He has put the wall of His protecting power about His garden.

There lacks no resource conducive to a bountiful return.

There is no reason, nor excuse that she should fail.

II.

The Fruit of the Bridegroom’s Garden

Having observed the various characteristics of the garden itself, we shall now turn our attention briefly to some consideration of the different kinds of fruit, here given, as growing in the Bridegroom’s garden. We have already discussed the fact that the essential purpose of the garden is to produce fruit, or vegetables – in other words, a usable harvest. Now we shall see the significance of the plants listed here.

There are nine distinctive varieties of plants mentioned in verses 13-14 in our text, as produced in this garden:

1. *Pomegranates.*

“Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits...”

We discussed the pomegranate, at some length, in the preceding chapter of this volume; therefore a brief statement will be sufficient here.

The pomegranate fruit grows on a small tree, or shrub which is common to tropical Asia and Africa. The shrub itself has glossy leaves and large red flowers. The fruit, which is something like an orange, is beautiful, sweet, and very edible. The rind is used in medicine.

I would suggest that, in a general sense, the pomegranate represents both the beauty, and the spiritual nourishment given forth from the church of Jesus Christ, – particularly nourishment.

2. *Camphire*. We have also previously discussed camphire. As for that matter, all of the items in this list of garden plants have already been referred to, but our indulgence in a little repetition will not be out of order.

Camphire, or henna, is an Old World tropical shrub which produced beautiful, fragrant white flowers. As used here, it may well represent the beauty and fragrance, or sweetness of character, seen in the church of Jesus Christ.

3. *Spikenard*. Spikenard was a fine perfume, which was highly prized by the ancients. It was the product of a medicinal plant.

4. *Saffron*. This was a yellow flavoring, or seasoning, made from the crushed petals of the crocus flower.

The most natural, or logical application of this type to the ministry of Christ's church in the world will be seen in the words of Jesus, Matthew 5:13,

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

That which the church of Jesus has to give to this sinful world is what seasons life here, and makes it bearable.

5. *Calamus*. This is a peculiar sweet cane, the extract of which was used in the preparation of the anointing oils. It is also used in making lacquers and paints. In the Bible the anointing oil typifies both grace, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

6. *Cinnamon*. Cinnamon is such a well-known spice, that it needs little comment here. It is the bark of the cinnamon bush, and has a spicy sweet flavor and odor. It is used extensively in foods, either in the piece, or ground. Its significance in this study lies in the fact that it, too, was much used in the anointing oils.

7. *Frankincense*. Frankincense is a resin which diffuses strong fragrance in burning. Oriental frankincense was highly esteemed by the ancient Jews, Greeks, and Romans, in fumigation, and embalming. So purification, and preservation are the main characteristic ideas here, in relation to the fruit of the Bridegroom's garden, which is the church.

8. *Myrrh*. We have already found myrrh mentioned several times in our study, and have given some discussion of its ancient uses. We might add here that it was also an important ingredient in the preparation of the embalming fluids.

9. *Aloes*. This was a perfumed wood, highly prized in ancient days for its many medicinal values. It is said that, at one time, this wood was worth its weight in gold. It

certainly does not take a great Bible Student to connect the use of the aloes wood, with its medicinal properties, to the purposes of Jesus with His church here in the world. Simply stated, the church has God's remedy for a sin-sick world. That remedy is Jesus Christ. He is God's complete remedy for man's complete ruin.

Now to summarize the spiritual truths revealed in all of these plants which grow in the Bridegroom's garden, we would have about the following:

Pomegranates – nourishment.

Camphire – beauty.

Spikenard – perfume.

Saffron – seasoning.

Calamus and Cinnamon – anointing, typifying grace and power.

Frankincense and Myrrh – preserving.

Aloes – healing.

The reader can take these suggested meanings as a sort of outline, and go from here into many wonderful things concerning the character, and work of our Lord's church here in the world. May we herein be inspired to strive as never before to bring forth a bountiful harvest of spiritual fruit unto Him.

Attention must be called to one more thing in connection with the fruit of the garden: In the list of all the above plants, verse 14 ends with the statement, “**...with all the chief spices.**”

Whatever else may be said of the Bridegroom's garden, He declares that all of the chief spices, the very best, can be found there. And, friend, I declare unto you that *the best things in the world are found in the churches of Jesus Christ.*

Sometimes we hear old ungodly sinners stand around belly-aching, and criticizing the church, and saying, “There are too many hypocrites in the church.”

Well, we all realize there may be a hypocrite in the church now and then, and maybe a devil, too. There was one in the first church, – and the Lord knew he was there. The fellow who is always running around, saying that the church is made up of crooks, hypocrites, etc., is just a liar. He is on the road to hell, and he is just trying to find an excuse for it; he is trying to lay the blame on the church.

Yes, there may be some counterfeits in the church; there are in everything else in the world, but a man doesn't quit trying to get hold of money because a “bogus” dollar was palmed off on him one time. The best people on God's green earth are found in His churches. I defy, and challenge the world, and the devil and his crowd to dispute it.

The best people this side of heaven are members of New Testament Churches. Oh, the church cannot save them. They are not saved because they are in the church; but they

are in the church because they are saved.

A man can be saved and never be a member of a church; but he can't be saved and stay out of a Scriptural church, and be one of the best, because if he was the kind of Christian the Lord would have him to be, he would desire to become a member of one of the Lord's true churches.

This whole study concerns the love of Jesus to His church, and His ordained purpose for her in this age. The church is His. He established it; He loves the church as His Bride, and He will one day present her unto Himself in glory. Any person who loves Jesus as he should, and who wants to honour, obey, and serve Him, will seek a place in the membership of a New Testament church without delay.

Yes, the best things there are in the world can be found in the church of Jesus Christ.

III.

The Bridegroom's Garden Is Made Fruitful By the Wind of the Holy Spirit Which Blows Upon It.

Verse 16: **“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”**

Both time and space fail me here to make a complete study of the many wonderful truths incorporated in the above statement. One does not have to be an expert to understand that both the south wind, and the north wind, in their respective times and places, are necessary to the fruitful production of a garden. Ever since I can remember, I have heard old-time farmers speak of how a hard, cold winter was conducive to good crop conditions in the spring and summer.

It takes the soft south winds that bring warm showers in summer to make a garden fruitful; but it also takes the freezing north winds to condition the soil.

Contrary to the views of some Bible Teachers, it is the Bridegroom who here calls, or commands the north and the south winds to blow upon the garden, **“...that the spices thereof may flow out...”** The garden certainly belongs to Him, and it is His desire and purpose that the garden shall bring forth fruit.

Now the wind is the very breath of God. It typifies the Holy Spirit. There are many places in the Bible where this fact is shown:

Genesis 1:2 **“...And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”**

Acts 2:1-4 **“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one**

accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

In Ezekiel’s vision of the “valley of dry bones,” after the bones had all come together in their respective places, they were covered with sinews, and flesh, and skin, as men, but there was no breath in them.

Ezekiel 37:9-10 “Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the LORD GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”

In John 20:22, where Jesus appeared in the upper room with his disciples, after His resurrection, **“...he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”**

When Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and Jesus told him about the mystery of the New Birth, He spake of the Holy Spirit thus:

John 3:8 “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

From these, and other scriptures, we see that the wind typifies the Holy Spirit; and, as both the north and the south wind are necessary to cause the spices to flow out of the Bridegroom’s garden, so the work of the Holy Spirit in the church makes possible the production of spiritual fruit unto God.

Apart from the work and power of the Holy Spirit, there will be no fruit come from the Church to bless the world. It is when the church is walking under the power and leadership of the Spirit of God that she is pleasing to Him, and really justifies her claims to a divine ministry in the world.

Churches not Spirit-filled are impotent, deficient, debilitated, and so long as this condition exists, their ministry will continue to be quite insignificant. We must have the power of the Holy Spirit, or fail.

Furthermore the workings of the Holy Spirit are strange, mysterious, and wonderful. We have witnessed His power in the services of the church at times when He moved with the force and fury of a winter storm – like the north wind; at other times He has stirred softly like the gentle, southern breezes of springtime. But it takes all of His varied ministrations in the

church, Christ's garden, to make the sweet fragrant spices flow out. Some of the greatest public church services that we have ever been privileged to take part in have not necessarily been the "old-time shouting" kind, but just a quiet deep stirring of hearts and lives by the gentle influence of the Spirit of God.

He works in, and through the church to exalt, magnify, and glorify Christ; and under His power, through the ministry of the church, lost souls are brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus. See John 15:26-27; also John 16:7-15.

IV.

The Sweet Communion of the Bridegroom and His Bride

They Share the Fruit of the Garden

In the last part of verse 16, and the 1st verse of chapter 5, we see the sweet communion of The Bridegroom and His Bride as they share the fruit of the garden.

"...Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

The foregoing part of our text divides into three parts:

1. First, we have the Bride's invitation to the Bridegroom to **"...come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."**

Jesus has established the church as His garden; He has hedged her about with the wall of His protecting power; He has made her a gate that she could open, or keep barred, at her discretion; He has appointed her a glorious ministry, and has given her every recourse necessary to be fruitful. He has called, "Oh, Holy Spirit, come and abide with my church, fill her, comfort her, empower her, enable her to bear fruit."

Is it not wonderful when the church can conscientiously invite Him, "Come, Lord, come into Your garden; here is the fruit which I have borne for Thee; here are Your sheaves; here are the precious souls that I have won for Thee. Come, eat Your pleasant fruit; it is the evidence of my true love."

2. Next, you will notice Jesus acceptance of the Bride's invitation. It is as though Jesus says to His church, "I am come to thee, and I take great delight in all of this wonderful fruit which you have so faithfully borne for me. I will dwell in your midst; I will bless you with my presence; I will walk with you, because you have been faithful and obedient."

Yes, Jesus blesses the faithful church with His presence and power. As we see this

beautiful picture, do we honestly feel that the churches of today really have room for Jesus, amidst the clutter of a thousand foreign things contained in most of them? Can we invite Him into our church today? Could we truly say, "Lord, come in to this Your faithful church; come see these praying, consecrated people; come see these soul-winners, and the souls that we have won?" Oh, that it might be so.

3. The last thing we note here is The Bridegroom's invitation to His "beloved," and to the "friends," to eat and drink with Him. He desires fellowship with them; He offers to "sup" with them.

In Jesus' message to the Laodicean Church we see this very thing; Revelation 3:20 **"Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."**

You will note that His invitation here is not only to the church, but also to "any man." Thank God, whosoever will may come!

Isaiah 55:1 **"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."**

CHAPTER NINE

THE BRIDE'S CONFESSION OF NEGLIGENCE

Song of Solomon 5:2-7

It has been previously stated that every truth revealed in The New Testament, or, as for that matter, in all of the Word of God, concerning the relationship of Jesus and His church, is found in The Song of Solomon. We have already found some really wonderful things in this study, and there are many more to come.

In chapter 5, verses 2-6, of our text, we shall find some things which may be a true reflection of our own experiences. In these verses the Bride makes an honest confession of an inexcusable occurrence of gross negligence. She tells of an occasion when she failed her Beloved in such a manner, and to such an extent, as to cause her trouble of mind and heart, as well as deep regret, in the days that followed. She fell into a serious state of spiritual apathy, such as many a church has experienced, and from this incident she came to learn some valuable lessons.

“I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.”

I could almost wish that some of the things found in this scripture were not true, but we shall find them to be all too commonly characteristic of the average church today.

The Bride Sleeps, But Claims That Her Heart Is Awake.

Back in the first part of the 3rd chapter of the text, we observed the Bride in a state of lethargy and ease upon her couch, wishing for the presence of her Beloved, but doing nothing about it. Here, however, the situation is quite different: she is in a state of semi-slumber, not wholly unconscious, yet not awake enough to give the attention to the Bridegroom that His relationship and love demands.

We hear her say, **“I sleep, but my heart waketh...”** Now we are well aware of the fact that even the true churches of Jesus often fall into a state of spiritual fatigue. Even the most zealous of churches may become weary, and temporarily falter, when it is urgent that they remain alert.

It is like a man driving a car along the highway at night, when he becomes tired and sleepy. He may be able to see the ribbon of road ahead of him; he may see the danger which he is rapidly approaching up ahead; yet he lacks the will-power to take the action necessary to avert it. He just cannot arouse himself from his stupor. Consequently he finds himself in the middle of a bad wreck, or he returns to consciousness in some hospital. If he is fortunate enough to live, later, in thinking back over the events that led up to the wreck, he may upbraid himself because he allowed himself to fall into such a sleepy condition. At the first sign of sleepiness he should have stopped and aroused himself to an alert condition.

People are being deceived when they think that they can become negligent in their work for Christ, yet at the same time, have their heart on fire for His cause. Such a condition cannot exist. Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also; and where his heart is, his interest, and action, and service will more than likely be found.

I have often been amused, and vexed, as well, when I have had people come to me and say, “Pastor, I am very sorry that I could not be at church last Sunday, but, you know, I had to visit my sister. I had not seen her for a couple of weeks. But, I'll tell you, my heart was there.”

Or someone else would say, “Oh, I wanted to attend the revival last week, but my third cousin, and his family came to visit us, and we had to take the children to the zoo. Then another day we had a picnic on the lake. They don't get to visit us but three or four times a year, and we have to show them a good time when they come. We don't want them to get offended. I couldn't be there but my heart was right there.”

The only thing wrong with such statements as that is that they are false. A person does not neglect his duty to God, go off on a lark somewhere, yet have his heart at God's house. A man's heart is usually where he is. It is true, that sometimes a person may be providentially hindered from going to church, and in such a case, his thoughts and interests may be with the service; but in most instances, such statements are merely used as alibis for backsliders.

I certainly have no desire to stand on the platform of the church on Sundays and face a bunch of hearts scattered up and down the pews. If people cannot bring their heads, and hands, and feet, and their bodies along with their hearts, then let them stay at home. God can't use disembodied hearts. Such a thought is sickening.

The Bridegroom Knocks and Seeks Entrance at Her Door

As the Bride lies upon her bed, almost asleep, enjoying her sweet repose, she becomes aware of the voice of her Beloved calling to her from outside the door; she hears His persistent knocking upon the door. His voice is very tender, and very pleading.

“...Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled...”

Oh yes, she is conscious enough to hear, and to recognize His voice; oh yes, she loves Him dearly, she believes, and she would never be unkind to Him, but she is more concerned, just now, with her weariness of the flesh, and the satisfaction of her fleshly desires. Let Him wait; there are other things more pressing.

We are again reminded here of the words of Jesus to the Laodicean Church, Revelation 3:20:

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Mind you, these words were spoken to a church, a church which felt all-sufficient within itself. It is a pathetic picture of Christ standing on the outside of the church, seeking entrance, and finding none. He will not force an entrance into the church; He knocks, He calls, He makes His tender, loving promises, He lays bare His very heart of love for His church, but she must voluntarily open the door to Him. The proper place for Jesus is “in the midst of the churches.” The tragedy of the age is that many churches have no room for Him.

Notice the endearing terms He uses in addressing her; how tenderly He calls: **“...my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled...”**

There is every reason in the world that the Bride should be awake, and alert to the presence of the Bridegroom. Oh, how many times Jesus commanded His church to “Watch, watch, watch.”

We are reminded of that tragic night, Mark 14:32-33,37-38 **“And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy...And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray...”**

In the scene from our text, we judge that the Bridegroom has been out most of the night; no doubt, the morning is close at hand. The Bride was to be awake and on guard, as she waited, not knowing the hour when He would return. But why should He be coming in at

this time of the night, seeking entrance to the privacy of her bed-chamber? Where could He have been, and what engaged in through the long hours of the night?

He told her, **"...my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."**

Oh, my friends, He has been occupied in the sacred, sacrificial service that is His to perform. He has been giving Himself unselfishly to bless the lives of men; He has been about His Father's business. Or perhaps He has been spending a night alone in prayer on the mountain, as He was wont to do. Luke 22:39 **"And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives..."**

One of the most pathetic scenes in the life of Jesus is found in the 7th chapter of John, verse 53, and in the 8th chapter, verse 1. There Jesus was wearied Him-self all day long, teaching the people, preaching to them, and blessing them with His loving ministry of grace. But as the evening shadows gather, and day's end is near, we see a heart-touching thing: John 7:53 **"And every man went unto his own house."** John 8:1 **"Jesus went unto the mount of Olives."**

He had spent Himself in love for the people, now, they go to the warmth, and love, of home, while Jesus, who has not a place to lay His head, must go to the Mount of Olives to spend the night – maybe in prayer for those He came to save. There was no room for Jesus, no open door of welcome, no friendly smiles. He was a man in the world of men, yet lonely. All around Him were the people of His own nation and blood, yet they knew Him not.

John 1:10-11 **"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not."**

Matthew 8:19-20 **And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."**

Oh, Blessed Saviour! We wonder how Thy people can truly love Thee, yet be so indifferent to Thy appeals. We wonder why we are so faithless to Thee. We mean to be watchful; we mean to be true; we mean to be on guard. But, e'er we are aware of it, fleshly weariness has overcome us, and we find ourselves drifting, idling, dozing, with little will and energy to open the door.

I am reminded of my young daughter, who, the last thing before going to bed at night, always insists that her mother call her real early next morning. When morning comes, and she is called, she always replies to the call, saying that she will arise in a little while; however the temptation to indulge in a little more sleep overcomes her good intentions, and

she turns over for another nap. Needless to say, that she sometimes has to be called again and again. Her intentions are above reproach, when she retires at night, but come morning, they have somehow lost their force.

This is about the condition of our Lord's church, the Bride, as seen here: her intentions are the best, but she is so nearly asleep, that she can hardly be dissatisfied with her own failures.

The Bride Makes Excuses

“I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?”

In other words, she is saying, “I have already undressed, and gotten ready for bed; I just cannot get up now to open the door, I washed my feet before retirement; if I arise now and walk upon the floor, my feet will get dirty, and I will have to wash them again.” Thus she puts Him off, while He pleads in vain.

It is like a church which is more concerned with the perfection of its organization, or the sufficiency of its finances, or the educational standards of its constituency, or its social standing in the community, than with the presence and fellowship of Jesus Christ. It is a Laodicean condition – a condition of self-satisfaction, and self-sufficiency. However the presence and power of Jesus, and true intimacy with Him, is the greatest thing that can ever happen to a church.

Jesus is the Head of the church; He is her husband. And He has a perfect right to call for entrance to her bedchamber at any hour.

As the Bride lingers in her sleepiness, while He continues to call tenderly at the door, she opens her eyes to look toward the door. A sight meets her gaze that touches her heart with a feeling of tender compassion. She sees the Bridegroom's hand as He reaches through the hole in the door near the latch. He is trying to reach the latch to open the door, but is unable to reach it.

“My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.”

Here is a great and basic truth concerning Jesus and His church: He will never break down the door against her will to impose His presence upon her; on the other hand, He cannot come in to her unless she willingly gives Him entrance. She must unlatch the door. If a church is not interested enough to give Jesus an entrance, and to make room for Him in her heart and life, then He will remain on the outside. That is sure.

The Self-Indictment of the Bride:

Another thing that we must not overlook is the Bride's indictment of herself. She confesses that she was awake enough to be able to hear His voice. She heard Him call in tender tones and plead for her to open the door. He who had been out in the night was also wearied, and it was only natural that He should turn to His dearest love for rest and refreshment. The one person in all the world, He felt, who should be ready to receive and comfort Him, was His blood-bought Bride. Now she fails Him. She could not plead the excuse that she was asleep, and did not know that He was at the door. She heard Him knock; she heard Him call.

More than that, she confesses that she was awake enough that she could see His hand thrust in through the hole in the door in an attempt to reach the latch. She could hear His voice, she could see His hand, she knew His identity, and she felt compassion for Him. All of this she admits freely; yet she did nothing about it. Hence she brings a serious indictment upon herself.

Knowledge brings responsibility. In John 13:17, where Jesus is teaching His disciples of humility in service, He says, **"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."**

Knowledge without obedience is worse than ignorance; and to know and do not is the greater sin.

James 4:17 **"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."**

It is not that the Bride does not love the Bridegroom. She does. It is not that she does not wish to have Him near her. She does. It is not that she has no interest in the things that are dearest to His heart; she does have an interest. The trouble is that

The Bride Wants To Set Her Own Times

She is pampering herself with the comforts of her bed. She has had her bath, and has put on her night garments; now she does not want to be bothered about other things until her own time. To her it is a little thing to keep Him outside in the chill of the night, until she is ready to arise and open the door. Let Him wait.

Beloved, the reason that so many churches are cold and powerless today is that they are putting Christ off. They want to set their own time, and place to serve. It is not that all of the people are gone to the devil; it is not because there are none who still love the Lord and the church – there are many who do. It is because people want to put so many things before the claims of Jesus.

People love the Lord and the church more than anything else in the world, and they burn with the fire of holy zeal, until something else comes up that appeals to the flesh – like a birthday dinner, or picnic, or some other kind of frolic on Sunday – then away they are gone. It is as though they are saying, “Lord, we love You, and we love Your church, we want to serve You; but you just hold everything as it is until we get back. When we get around to it, we will do what You want.” People are saying, “Go away, now. Don’t arouse me, I’m tired and sleepy. Let me rest.”

So the Bride is too satisfied with her bed. Now if the door is opened, it will be opened from the inside. If the door to spiritual revival and power, and far-reaching, victorious service, is opened, it will be opened by the praying, alert, obedient church, who can put Christ first, and act when He commands.

The Bridegroom Withdraws Himself

Well, in her own good time, after she had finished her rest, the Bride decided that she would get up and let Him in, but, to her consternation and grief, when she finally opened the door, there was no one there. Her Beloved had gone.

5:5, **“I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.”**

Oh yes, she is all honey and sweetness now. Just give her her own time; wait until she is pleased to act, then she is full of love. But she cannot treat her Lord in any such manner; she is about to learn her lesson.

Verse 6, **“I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.”**

When she threw open the door, there was no familiar form there; when she looked out into the early morning light, He was not to be seen. She rushes out, and calls His name. She cries, “Oh, my Beloved, come back, I am ready to let You in now.” But there is no answer. He is gone. She is grief-stricken now, and almost frantic – but she knows who is to blame.

What is the picture?

It is this, my friend: We cannot put the Lord off, or ignore His will until we get good and ready, then expect Him to be waiting out there in the cold, ready to jump at our bidding. It may seem a little thing to us to want to handle things our own way; it may seem insignificant that we can push Christ’s purposes aside, ignore His will, and belittle His call, while we are wrapped up in secular interests of life; but we can not get away with it. Like

the Bride in our text, one day, after we are filled with our self-indulgences, we shall wake up to the fact that our Lord became wearied with waiting, and got Him away.

Yea, the church which persists in putting every-thing before Christ's will and work one day finds herself stripped of spiritual power, and unable to get through to God in prayer. No sir, we can not treat the Lord just any way in the world that we may wish, and expect that we can snap our finger when we want Him to do something for us, and that He will be obligated to come running.

His presence and power is the key to victory. He said in John 15:5 **"...for without me ye can do nothing."**

We may have ever so great a church outwardly, with a well trained choir, and plenty of money, and a big church house; we can have an able preacher, who may stand up and preach himself to death; but if we do not have the presence and power of God with us, then we shall miserably fail. Let Jesus withdraw Himself from our midst and we are sunk.

Hear the voice of Wisdom, Proverbs 1:24-31 **"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."**

When the Bride fully realizes just what she has done, how she has wounded the heart of her Beloved, how she has failed Him, then her heart is much disturbed. Her "soul failed" Him when He spake to her at the door; now she longs for His presence, but He is gone.

The Bride Is Now Persecuted

Verse 7 **"The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me."** The universal, age-old law of the harvest is here applied: Galatians 6:7 **"...whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."** The Bride has failed her Beloved, when He called, now she must pay the price, she must suffer the consequences. She longs for Him now, she needs Him, she seeks Him, but she cannot find Him.

She goes out into the city in search of her Beloved, and there she meets the watchmen of the city. They have no kindness for her now, they have no mercy. They lift their hands

against her, to smite and wound her. And she must bear her reproach.

In our study of a previous reference to “the watchmen,” in chapter 3, verse 3 of our text, we found that they seem to indicate those who are in the seats of authority, forces of human government, et cetera, et cetera. Therefore the scene here is that of the persecution of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. She goes out in the name of her Beloved, and those in power set upon her, to do her harm.

Satan’s organized forces in the world have been against Christ’s church since the day that He established her, because Satan has been, and is, against Christ. He knows that the New Testament churches, and they alone, are appointed as the witnesses of Jesus in the world, and he would destroy that witness, if possible.

Satan has been against the church of Jesus, and has persecuted her, as he was against Israel, and persecuted her in the ages past. Out of Israel was to come the Saviour, and through the church He was to be made known; therefore Satan hated them both, and set himself to destroy them.

This 7th verse of our text brings to mind all of the persecutions and troubles imposed upon the New Testament church since the day of her beginning, until the present time. Her’s is indeed a history of blood and tears, of turmoil and trouble, of loneliness and death. Time and space would here fail us to retrace her “trail of blood” through the centuries, but there has been no other like it.

Her adherents have been left to die in dungeon cells, they have been burned at the stake, sawn asunder, and tormented in every conceivable manner. They have been beheaded under official decrees, and by official authority have been slain in every diabolical manner, which Satan was capable of inaugurating.

Jesus designated Satan as “**...the prince of this world...**” John 12:31, and, as such, he has had the organization of world powers, and governments under his dominion most of the time through the ages. Being a usurper of thrones, kingdoms, and powers, that rightly belong to Christ, he has used that authority to perpetrate every persecution against the churches of Jesus that could be imagined.

The watchmen have smitten, and wounded the Bride, and stained her robes with martyrs’ blood, but she has come through it all with unsubdued spirit, and unbowed head. Thank God, she marches on!

CHAPTER TEN

THE BRIDE DECLARES THE EXCELLENCIES OF HER BELOVED

Song of Solomon 5:8-6:3

In the close of the preceding chapter of our discussion, we left the Bride wandering in the streets sorrowfully seeking her Beloved, who had departed, after she had failed to arise and open the door for Him. She has come into contact with “the watchmen,” who have smitten, wounded, and abused her, and have taken away her veil.

Beginning with verse 8, she speaks again to the “daughters of Jerusalem,” whom we have already shown to be the Jews.

“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.”

The Bride thus expresses her heart sickness, “**...I am sick of love.**” This really intends to convey her longing for the presence of her Beloved, and her heart-heaviness at having failed Him when He came to her. “I am sick because of my love for Him,” is really what she is saying.

To have failed someone we love with all of our heart; to have been found wanting in a time of His great need; to have snubbed that one, and let Him go away with hurt and disappointment; then to go out expecting to try to make it up to Him for our failure, and not be able to find Him, is indeed enough to make us sick in our heart.

The Bride, having awakened to a realization of the immensity of her failure, now has no other thoughts than of Him whom she loves. She is like a school-girl in the enthusiasm and intensity of her love; she desires to talk only of her Beloved. The singleness of her heart becomes quite obvious to everyone she meets.

How like most of us in life: We see the magnitude of an opportunity after we have let it go by; we see the significance of a moment after it has passed into eternity; We seem not to grasp the beauty of the rainbow until it has faded in the clouds, nor the glory of the sunset until the shades of night are drawn. We take our children for granted, until one day, we awake to the realization that the halls are silent, and we hear no more the patter of little feet. The years have come and gone, and with them, our little ones have grown to manhood, and womanhood, and have flown the home nest. Now we sit down with the sweet memories of their childhood – memories mingled with regrets for what we might have done, yet failed to do, and in our loneliness, and our brooding over the past, we feel that if we could just roll back the years, and live them over again, we would live them differently. But the past is gone from us. And our regrets avail us nothing now, only that they serve to

remind us, that we had better cherish life's blessings while they are in our hands. The memories of our failures in the past, may help us to avoid the same again.

I can never forget an incident in my earlier life, which seems to illustrate, in some measure, what I have been speaking of: My mother left Dad at home with the girls, while she went away to visit some of her relations. She felt that he was well, and doing fine, and she rarely got to visit any of her people; consequently she extended her visit quite a bit to what she had intended. The girls said, that Dad was very lonely, and restless while Mother was gone; they had not been separated much through the years. Shortly after she returned home – possibly no more than a week – Dad took suddenly ill one night, and, in a few hours was dead. It seemed that everything went out of life for Mother. I can remember in the years that followed, how often in her grief, Mother would express her deep regret that she stayed away from Dad so long on her visit just before his death. Had she realized that so few days remained for them to spend together, she would not have left his side. She would have cherished each day with him.

So, beloved, the Bride, having let the golden opportunities pass unused, now regrets her failures, and determines that she will keep His image before her heart. She cannot talk of Him enough. She witnesses for her Beloved to everyone she meets.

The Pertinent Question Asked The Bride

Verse 9 **“What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?”**

The above question actually resolves into two important questions having to do with the ministry of the church. These we shall discuss briefly. The first question we might state in the following manner:

What does the church have to offer to the world that cannot be found somewhere else?

There is found in the churches today a tendency – which is much to be regretted – to drift into worldly enterprises; churches are more and more edging into a field of competition with worldly institutions and organizations. In so doing, a church becomes more of an imitator of the world, and loses its distinctiveness as a minister of spiritual things. Whatever the church has to offer to the world, it is of a spiritual nature; and to enter into the realm of secular things is to lose that separated pilgrim character so important to a church or an individual Christian life.

What has the church more to offer, than the world? *Not education*; although there is a trend among present day churches toward a major in education. It was not in the beginning, nor is it today Christ's purpose with the church to educate the world, except in the things of divine truth.

The church cannot compete with the world in the field of secular education. The world can do a better job of it than the church is able to do. The reason is obvious: In the field of education the church is out of her divinely appointed place and work. Those who seek an education go to the schools and colleges, to the universities, and to the institutions of academic, and vocational training. They don't go to the church. The ministry of the church is spiritual, not educational.

What has the church to offer that the world cannot give? *Not athletics*. The world is so far ahead of the churches in the field of athletics, that there is no competition at all.

It is utterly disgusting that a great many churches today have turned their church plants into sports arenas, and are sponsoring so many different "teams" among their membership, that it is a wonder they have any time left for preaching the gospel. They have the recreation rooms in the basement for their "ping pong," "bingo," and what have you. They have their kitchens and dining rooms for their "gobble feasts," and they can't meet to pray, without having a feast. They have their bowling teams, basketball teams, tennis teams, and everything but soul-winning teams; and, as an excuse for all of this, they say, "Oh, we must do something to draw, and to hold our young people to the church."

Brother, how long will it take us to realize, that if our young people want athletics, they will go to the world to seek them; they can find a more interesting brand there, than at the church. When we try to imitate the devil, we are not much better than he.

What has the church more to offer? *Not entertainment*. If the world wants entertainment, they will go to the world to get it. The world can beat the church anytime in entertaining the fleshly natures of men. If people want a moving picture show they will go to some movie theater, or else to some drive-in, where they can sit in a car enjoying the coolness of the night, listen to soft music, and feed their carnal appetites on filth. Or else they will go to a bull-fight, a wild west rodeo, or to some beach, where they can lie in the sun half-naked on the sand. Some churches are already trying the drive-in brand of church service.

No, there is little sense in the churches trying to compete with the world in the realm of entertainment. People who are seeking such, will not seek it in a church. Jesus did not set up the church for that purpose.

What has the church more to give than can be found in the world? *Not philosophy*. The church is to be a witness of truth, not of the brain-spun speculations of men. When people

want philosophy they go to the writings of great philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, or Bacon; they do not go to church to hear philosophy spouted from the pulpit.

What has the church to give that cannot be found in the world? *Not science*. People do not go to church to hear some professor discuss the latest scientific discoveries, or advance some new theory. Men who want a knowledge of science go to the halls of scientific learning or research, not to the pews of God's house.

Some years ago, I read an article, in which a man told of his experiences in making a survey of Christian Schools, in which survey he interviewed the students of these schools. One important question which he asked all of the persons interviewed was this:

"What does the church have to offer to the world today, that the world cannot get somewhere else?"

He said, that he received many and varied answers to the question, but none that seemed to be the right one.

Finally, one day, when he was talking to a group of young men – some of them ministerial students – he raised his question. At the back of the group stood a quiet, sober mannered young man, who put up his hand, desiring to speak.

He said, "Yes, I know the one thing which the church has to give to the world, that cannot be found, anywhere else; *it is Jesus Christ*. It is the supreme business of the church to give Jesus to a lost world in the glorious gospel. It is her task alone. The world cannot find Him elsewhere."

My friend, that is the answer. The world cannot find Jesus in the halls of science. The world cannot find Him in the institutions of secular education. He cannot be found at the feet of philosophers, nor in the foolish entertainments of the world. It is given to The New Testament Churches to make Him known. And the business of those churches is to make disciples through preaching Christ to all the world, to administer the ordinance of baptism to those who become disciples, and to teach them the truth of the Bible – the "**...all things whatsoever I have commanded you...**" Matthew 28:20

Jesus is to be magnified and exalted before all men. We are to "brag" on Him, so to speak. If the churches would spend more of their time magnifying the excellencies of Jesus, then they would not find it necessary to resort to a lot of worldly tricks and attractions in order to draw people to the church, and to hold them.

John 12:30,32 "**Jesus answered and said...And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.**"

When we exalt Jesus, then people are drawn unto Him; and when they are drawn unto Him we do not have to draw them to the church, for they will come.

Oh, we cannot over-emphasize the fact, that the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ is

not educational, not cultural, not social, not political, not scientific, not economic, not recreational, but eternally spiritual.

The second, and most fundamental question in our text is just as stated:

Verse 9, **“What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?”**

The Bride is now speaking so enthusiastically of her Beloved to everyone she meets, that they are asking, “What is so wonderful about your Beloved? What fine qualities, and commendable characteristics does He have that can’t be found to an equal degree in others? To hear you talk, one would think that there is no other in the world, but He.”

Notice here how the “daughters of Jerusalem” address the Bride: **“...O thou fairest among women?...”** When she magnifies Jesus, His glory is upon her, she partakes of His likeness, and His beauty and attractions become her’s. As we look upon His glory, we become like Him.

II Corinthians 3:18 **“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**

There is no church quite so superb, so beautiful, as she who puts Christ in the forefront, and endeavors to win souls for Him.

If the world ever acquires knowledge of the superior virtues, and supreme excellencies of Jesus, it will be the true churches of Jesus Christ who will declare that truth; if lost souls are ever brought to Jesus for salvation, they will be brought through the ministry of His church, who is “the fairest among women.”

The Bride Gives The Answer

The Bride says, “Oh, have you seen my Beloved? Do you know my Saviour?”

They make reply, “Who is your Beloved? What is He more than another? What is your Saviour more than our rulers, or our dictators, our presidents, or kings? What is your Beloved more than the head of our lodge, or the chairman of our board? What is he more than any other great world leader? Why do you say that he is more wonderful than any other bridegroom?”

Then she begins to tell of His wonders. But how can human tongue, and human speech, adequately describe the glory and attractions of Jesus? All of the adjectives in the human vocabulary would not suffice.

Verses 10-16, **“My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.**

His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

We know that the beauty, and the attraction of Jesus does not lie in His physical person, and there is no scripture to warrant such a claim.

Isaiah 53:2 **“...he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”**

The Bride’s discourse on the excellencies of her Beloved consists mainly of lofty descriptions of His physical features; however, these feature-sketches, themselves, are but suggestive of His magnanimous character.

Verse 10, **“My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.”** Is this not a strange expression? She says that He is “white,” also “ruddy.” Now ruddy is reddish; how can He be white and reddish at the same time? As we have already stated, it is indicative of His character: white representing purity, and ruddy indicating a salubrious condition.

“...chiefest among ten thousand.” elevates Him to a position far above the rank and file of men.

Verse 11, **“His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.”** We have already found that gold represents Deity. Her Beloved, Jesus, being a man, yet is Divine. His fine, bushy, raven-black hair indicates youthfulness and strength. Where the Bible shows Him in His glorified being, as we shall see Him at His return, His hair is “white like wool.” Revelation 1:14. There His glory and majesty are shown; but here in our text, we see Him as the Lover, and Bridegroom.

Verse 12, **“His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.”** The eyes reveal the soul within; we can read a man’s character, to some extent, in his eyes. The Bridegroom’s eyes were as the eyes of doves, meaning tenderness, love, and peace. The “rivers of waters” refers to life – eternal life – which He gives to believers; while the “milk” is that nourishment which He supplies daily from the living Word.

In His eyes is revealed His attitude toward the woman He loves – His dear church. There is love-light and infinite tenderness there.

Verse 13, **“His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.”** Spices and sweet flowers mean fragrance and beauty, all of which have to do with the sweetness, and acceptability of His character. His lips, which are like lilies, and which drop sweet smelling myrrh, show us the pure and good Word that He gives. His teachings are wonderful; His instructions to the Bride should be cherished in her heart.

Psalm 12:6 **“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”**

The New Testament is full of love letters which He has written to her, and she should take them to her bosom, hide them in her heart; yea, she should read them o’er, and o’er, and ever be reminded of that glad day when He will return.

Verse 14, **“His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.”** Here we have a list of precious things:

Gold – Deity.

Rings – perfect, unending circles, which are emblems of eternity.

Beryl – a bluish-green silicate of great hardness – durability.

Ivory – This is the hard, creamy-white, opaque, fine-grained dentine, composing elephant tusks. It is very valuable, and noted for its beauty, and lasting qualities.

Sapphires – a precious stone of transparent, rich blue color. It represents that which is heavenly.

All of these things describe His hands – beautiful hands, blessed hands.

These are *Divine Hands*, that hold us in eternal security, so that we can never fall.

These are *Merciful Hands*, stretched out in pity and compassion to the lost.

These are *Ministering Hands*: They touch the burning brow, and the fever is gone; they touch the blinded eyes, and sight returns; they touch the lifeless body, and it comes alive; they touch the trembling soul, and fear departs.

These are *Guiding Hands*: They lead us safely through the unknown wilderness of this world; they guide our feet into the paths of peace.

These are *Mighty Hands*: Psalm 19:1 **“...and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”** Isaiah 40:12 **“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span...”** They control the destinies of nations.

These are *Nail-scarred Hands*: Oh, thank God for them! They were nailed to the Cross of Calvary for my sins; they were pierced that I might not perish. These hands were mutilated in the blood-bought redemption of His Bride. These are the hands which He showed to His disciples in the upper room. John 20:20,27 **“And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side...Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither**

thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”

These are Beckoning Hands: They beckon us on to **“the land that is fairer than day,”** and to that glad wedding occasion, when the Bride shall place her hand in His, and go in to the Marriage Supper with Him.

Verse 15, **“His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.”** Marble is one of the finest of stones, smooth and hard. It suggests strength. The sockets of fine gold, here, as elsewhere, mean Deity. The marble and gold together mean divine strength. His excellency as the cedars of Lebanon indicates the superiority of His character.

Verse 16, **“His mouth is most sweet...”** Here again she speaks of the tenderness of His love, the sweetness of His kiss. In chapter 1, verse 2, of the text, she desired “the kisses of His mouth.” The thought here is somewhat the same. This intimacy of such a kiss should be experienced only where there is pure and perfect love, a love that is to be consummated in marriage.

The Bride now, apparently having exhausted her terms of description of the Bridegroom’s beauty and virtues, tries to sum it all up in these words: **“...yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”**

Yes, Beloved, it is the church’s business to tell an unbelieving world just how wonderful Jesus is, and how boundless His love.

He is altogether lovely. There is no other like Him; the world has never seen another like Jesus. How can we aptly describe Him? How can we find words to tell of His greatness? He is our Beloved; He is our Friend.

The Superiorities of Jesus

The great and fundamental question which the daughters of Jerusalem put to the Bride was, “What is thy beloved more than another beloved?”

We can think of it as the question of the world put to the church of Jesus Christ today. What is Jesus, the Beloved of His church, more than any other of the great and illustrious characters who have marched across the pages of world history? The answer, my friend, is too extensive, too infinite, to attempt an exhaustive reply; yet it is quite obvious to all those who are truly acquainted with Him.

As a *Physician* He is greater than all of the physicians the world ever knew. He healed

the diseases, and destroyed the maladies; that they could never touch; yet He made no charge for His services.

Matthew 8:2-3 **“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: by thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”**

Mark 10:46,51,52 **“And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Thimaeus, sat by the highway side begging...And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”**

Mark 2:3-5,11 **“And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee...I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.”**

Mark 5:22,35,41,42 **“And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name... Thy daughter is dead...And he (Jesus) took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talithacumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked...”**

When He stood by the tomb of Lazarus, John 11:39,43,44 **“Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days...And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”**

And on and on we might go, if time and space permitted, telling the wonderful works of Jesus, the Great Physician.

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He is more than the world's greatest *Psychiatrists*. They, with their psychotherapeutic methods of analysis, seek to bring out the repressions of the sub-conscious mind; while Jesus, knowing the deepest secrets of the minds and hearts of men, and knowing the evil spirits often in control of those minds and hearts, brought deliverance by the word of His power. He spake, and it was done.

Mark 5:1-8,13 **“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit...And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine...”**

When the people came out of the city to see what was done, they found the man, who had been a raving maniac, now clothed, and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He is more than the so-called *“Good Men”* of the world. Every man has his flaws, his failures, his weak-nesses, his wrongs, but Jesus had none. He knew no sin; He was as pure as God, for He was God clothed in a robe of human flesh. No man could ever accuse Him justly, for no man could ever find anything wrong with Him. Having examined Jesus closely, Pilate stood before the Jews and declared, **“I find no fault in him.”**

He was the only good man the world has ever known; yet all men everywhere who put their faith in Him are reckoned good (justified) in His goodness.

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He is more than the world's *Benefactors*. They have given of their earthly treasures, and have earned their mortal glory; but Jesus gave life, and hope, and peace, and heaven. They gave some; Jesus gave all. They gave of what they held in their hands; He gave His life, His blood. With the passing of the years, their names lie almost forgotten on the moldy pages of history; His Blessed Name lives on through eternity. What they have given is for the momentary ease and pleasure of mortal life; what Jesus gives is eternal salvation, and hope that knows no dying.

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He is more as a *Leader of Men*. There have been many great organizers, social leaders, military geniuses, and renowned generals in the history of mankind, but Jesus far outranks them all.

He walked by the sea, and, seeing two brothers casting their nets, Matthew 4:19 **“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”** Dropping

everything immediately, they followed, even unto death.

One day He saw two other brothers mending their nets, and when He said, "**Follow me,**" they left all to follow Him.

He walked through the officers of a wealthy tax collector and said, "Follow me," and he left his lucrative business to walk a path of poverty with Jesus.

The publicans and sinners opened their homes to Him, and the harlots wept at His feet. His love and compassionate pity drew people to Him from every class of society.

As the Captain of our Salvation, He has marshalled the greatest army of soldiers of the cross the world has ever known. Washington's men walked through the snows of Valley Forge with frozen feet; but the followers of Jesus Christ have walked with Him along the bloody paths of martyrdom. His call breaks through the shell of mortal concern to reach the hearts of men, and they leave their earthly interests to answer that call. It is as the Bride has spoken, in the 1st chapter, and 4th verse of our text, "**Draw me, we will run after thee...**" No other character of history has been such a leader of human lives as Jesus.

Yes, our Beloved is more than another Beloved.

He is greater than all the *Promoters of Peace*. The nations of the world are spending fortunes in man-made programs for peace, and more fortunes for war; yet there is no peace. Every human plan has failed; but He does not fail. He is the Prince of Peace.

Job 22:21 "**Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace...**"

In John 14:27, Jesus makes the bequest of peace to His people when He says "**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**"

Again in Philippians 4:6-7, He gives us a formula for peace: "**Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**"

In our Beloved, Psalm 85:10 "**Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.**"

Oh yes, the only real peace there is for men is in Him. Isaiah 26:3 "**Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.**"

All of the world's promoters of peace have failed; but He will not fail. Micah tells the story of universal peace through Him in the fourth and fifth chapters of Micah. Go read it, and hear Him say, in the 5th verse of chapter 5, "**And this man shall be the peace...**"

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He is more as a *Teacher*, than all of the great teachers of history. He was not just a philosopher, full of brain-spun speculations about life, or groping blindly in a search for

knowledge. He is life, and He is truth. No teacher ever unfolded the mysteries of life and death, of God and man, of time and eternity, as He. He is the revealer of it all, and truly, **"Never man spake as this man."**

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He is more as a *Preacher*. There have been many able and illustrious preachers through the centuries; there have been preachers with extraordinary oratorical powers and captivating personalities. There have been, and are, men who stand before vast audiences, and hold the attention of the throngs with their humorous stories, their catchy illustrations, and their silver-tongued oratory. But there has never been a preacher who could stand in a little boat on the sea and face the multitudes on the shore, and preach the truths of the kingdom of heaven in quiet tones, with such transforming power as Jesus.

There has never been a man among the Charles H. Spurgeons, the Dwight L. Moodys, the George W. Truitts, the Billy Sundays, the Billy Grahams, and all of the other great preachers of the past and present, who could deliver such a message as The Sermon on the Mount, or who could hold an audience of five thousand men, not counting the women and children, all day long on the mountain, and serve all of them a full and satisfying lunch with five loaves and two fishes.

They thronged Him wherever He went, and He had to go aside into a desert place to seek rest for His weary body. He preached in language they could understand, and with such compassion of heart as melted their hearts of stone.

He could take a little child tenderly in His arms, and use it to illustrate the truth of His sermon. Matthew 18:3 **"...Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."**

He could point His finger of accusation into the faces of the Scribes and Pharisees, and denounce their hypocrisy and unbelief in boldest terms; or He could stand on Mount Olivet's brow, and look down upon the cobblestone streets of Jerusalem, and see the smoke of burning sacrifices rising from the temple of the Jews, and weep out His heart over the lost estate of His people.

He preached the fundamental message, Mark 1:15 **"...repent ye, and believe the gospel."**

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He is more as a *King*. John called Him **"the prince of the kings of the earth."** All of the glory of the ancient kings and their empires were as nothing compared to Jesus who is "King of the Jews," King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

No royal crown ever represented the glory revealed in His "crown of thorns," and no kingdom of earth could compare with the Millennial kingdom over which He will one day

reign on the earth. Thank God, we shall reign with Him! We must go on.

Yes, our Beloved is more than another beloved.

He was more in His birth, more in life, more in character, more in love, more in power, and more in purpose than any other who ever lived.

He was poor of the poorest; yet the whole world was His, for He was its Creator. He claimed no earthly estate, but was satisfied to assume the role of poverty, that we, through His poverty might be rich.

He has been the theme of innumerable songs, and the inspiration of poets. John 21:25 **“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”** His wisdom surpasses all. There is no friend as He, He **“sticketh closer than a brother.”**

“He is altogether lovely.” He is my Beloved, He is my Friend, He is my Saviour. And, in the words of that great song, *What A Saviour*, written by Marvin P. Dalton, my heart cries out,

“O what a Saviour, O hallelujah,
His heart was broken on Calvary;
His hands were nail-scarred, His side was riven
He gave His life-blood for even me.”

The Bride’s Praise of the Bridegroom Arouses the Desire of Others to Know Him

Chapter 6, verse 1 of our text: **“Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.”**

The primary business of the church is to tell the world about Jesus – His great love, His magnificent person, His marvelous grace, His wondrous works, His eternal salvation. Now, I would like to emphasize the fact that when the Bride begins to talk of her Beloved to the daughters of Jerusalem, when she begins to magnify Him and all of His wonders, there is created in them a great desire to look upon, and become acquainted with, this marvelous Character.

“Where is He?” they cry; “if He is as wonderful as you say, then we want to know Him. You have told us how He loves sinners; you have told us how He bled and died on Calvary’s cross, that we might be saved; you have told us that ‘He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him;’ you have told us that He has gone away to prepare a place for His own, and that He will one day come again to receive them unto

Himself. We would see Him. Come, now, and lead us to Him without delay.”

Oh, my friends, when we “put on” the Lord Jesus Christ in our daily life; when the churches put Him in the forefront in all of their activities and service, so the world can see Him instead of the people; when we live what we profess, and practice what we preach; then the cry of souls on every hand will be: “I want that kind of faith and hope, I want a religion like that. Lead me to Jesus, that I may know Him too.

John 6:44 “**No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...” John 6:63 “**It is the spirit that quickeneth...**” However Jesus put the witness of His church on an equal plane with the witness of the Holy Spirit: John 15:26,27 “**But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.**”**

Therefore it is imperative that we preach “**Christ crucified**” to the world. I Corinthians 1:21 For “**...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**”

The Bride Directs the Seekers to Her Beloved

In response to the Bride’s description of her Beloved, the daughters of Jerusalem have asked, “Where is He? Where is thy Beloved gone?”

In chapter 6, verse 2 of our text, she tells them where to find Him. “**My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.**”

Having followed our studies up to this point, the reader should have no difficulty in comprehending this verse. We have already found, in chapter 4 of the text, that the Lord’s church is likened unto a garden, and that in His garden He has planted all of the chief spices. He planted these things with the expectation of gathering fruits of His planting in due time.

You will observe that both, the church as an institution, and the churches as local congregations, are in view here: The Bride’s Beloved had gone down into “**His garden**” (singular); and He was feeding in “**the gardens**” (plural). “**His garden**” (his church) may refer to any garden (any true New Testament Church), or to no particular local congregation. We explained the common usage, and meaning of these terms in the first

chapter of this volume.

The picture presented here is that of Jesus in His rightful place, in His churches, feeding upon, or reaping the harvest of good things (spiritual fruit) produced therein. We have already discussed the spices of the garden.

One thing more we wish to note briefly in this verse which we are examining: The Bride said, that her Beloved was in the gardens **“to gather lilies.”**

In the Song of Solomon 2:2 the Bride was likened unto **“a lily among thorns.”** We found that the lily represents purity, peace, righteousness, faithfulness, and beauty. Such is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ to Him; and His **gathering lilies**, and **feeding in the gardens**, indicates the sweet communion and fellowship he shares with his churches.

Also, to **“gather lilies”** may suggest the multiplying of His churches. We know that Jesus established but one church; however that church was set up with the capability of, and divine purpose for, bringing forth after its kind. It was to produce other churches, which in turn would produce still others, and so on and on, until the end of the age. As the principal fruit of a Christian is another Christian, so the fruit of a new Testament church is another church of the same kind. The church which Jesus built has so multiplied through the centuries that it now numbers thousands and thousands of its kind throughout the world.

Verse 3 **“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.”**

Here is the reaffirmation of the love and relation of the Bride and the Bridegroom; here again is the declaration of their unity; here is a renewal of the vows of eternal fidelity.

“...He feedeth among the lilies.” Jesus desires to be in the midst of His churches. That is where old John, on Patmos saw Him – **“in the midst of the golden candlesticks.”** Then we can tell a lost, dying, sin-sick world, not only of His loveliness, but where He may be found.

“Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ONE BRIDE ONLY

Song of Solomon 6:4-13

The primary theme in this chapter of our study is well stated in the above heading, and this portion of the discussion will revolve mainly around that theme; however, there are numerous other things, both leading up to, and following after that central truth, to which we must give some attention.

In this part of our text, it is the Bridegroom who speaks; He addresses His remarks to the Bride:

I

The Bride's Beauty

Verses 4-7 **“Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.”**

In the 4th chapter of the text – the sixth chapter of this volume – in our discussion of The Seven Wonders Of The Bride, we found about the same things stated about the Bride as we find here. Therefore I shall not make extensive comments on some of these things.

In verse 4 He praises her beauty: *“beautiful as Tirzah.”* Tirzah was a town in Samaria. The name itself means: benevolent, complaisant, or pleasantness. These terms, of course, indicate that the beauty to which the attention of the Bridegroom is directed is mainly inward beauty, or beauty of character. Her spirit is one of benevolence; and she has a characteristic nature that is very pleasing and agreeable.

“Comely as Jerusalem.” The name Jerusalem means: “pleasing to the sight.” In this statement it is the outward beauty of the Bride, rather than beauty of character, that is indicated.

Verse 5 is quite interesting and significant: He says, **“Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me...”** Looking into the depth of her eyes He can see the reflections of her soul therein revealed. He sees her true character, and He loves her. He likewise sees the tenderness and love-light in her eyes which express the sincere

reciprocation of His love.

In these verses the Bridegroom once more speaks of the eyes, hair, teeth, and temples of His Bride. It is not necessary that we should discuss these things again here. It is practically the same as we found in chapter 4, verses 1-4.

The reader may refer to the sixth chapter of this volume for the spiritual meaning of these things.

In the verses given above it is the Bride's beauty – inward and outward – which occupies the attention of the Bridegroom; while in the verses that follow, it is quite another matter.

II.

The Bride's Distinctiveness

Verses 8-9, **“There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.”**

The Bridegroom here rejoices in the magnanimity of the woman He loves; and He emphasizes the fact of her dissimilarity from, and her superiority to, all others. She stands alone in her class. She is not to be considered as others, but stands so far removed from all, and so much greater than they, as to be utterly unapproachable. He sets her far above all queens, all concubines, and all virgins. So is the church of Jesus Christ, compared with the institutions of the world, many of them claiming a right to the title “Church,” yet none of them being able to establish divine origin.

“There are threescore queens...” And who might these queens be?

Why, beloved, we may think of them as organizations and institutions in the world, many of them financially strong, many of them remarkably influential, and, really, many of them worthy and commendable in the scope of their ministrations, but never to be compared with the church which Jesus Christ established on earth more than nineteen centuries ago.

We have many mercy organizations, as The Red Cross, The Salvation Army, and various others too numerous to mention; organizations that do a wonderful work of aid and assistance to needy and unfortunate people; organizations which are worthy of the support and encouragement of the populace. But all of these are merely man-made, and, in most instances, motivated by a spirit of philanthropy, and must never be compared to the Church of Jesus Christ.

There are also Lodges, Brotherhoods, and Fraternal Orders of men, many of which lay

claim to being founded upon the Bible. The fact of the matter is, every worthy deed or enterprise in the world is based upon the teachings of truth given in the Bible, for, apart from those teachings, there is nothing worthy or good. But we certainly cannot attribute to these man-made organizations such origin, such honor, or such authority as that of The New Testament Church.

All of these institutions and organizations together can never do the work of, nor take the place of Christ's Church. Thousands of people use them as a substitute for the one and only institution which Jesus set up, and appointed as His representative and witness here on earth. There are many people who think that it is just as right to be a faithful member of some lodge, as to be "born again," and to hold membership in a New Testament Church.

Oh, yes, there are many queens in the world, and we do not mean to censure, nor condemn anything that is good; however we must assert that these queens are less than nothing in comparison with the Lord's Bride, the church.

There are "**...fourscore concubines...**" A concubine is a woman, who, though not legally a wife, lives with a man, and has a recognized position in his household. Really, it is little short of whoredom. In days of old, a concubine might possibly occupy a position almost equal, in honor and authority, to the legal wife. I have found nothing in the Bible, however, that commended the practice.

Beloved, Jesus has never practiced spiritual concubine, and has given no indication of His approval of the same. He does not require, nor allow His Bride to share His favor with spiritual harlots.

Now, with all due respect to other religions, denominations, and so-called churches, I am compelled by truth to say, that they are but man-made organizations, trying to occupy a place as spiritual concubines of Jesus. And He has no concubines. These organizations endeavor to hold the position and authority in His household which is the Bride's alone.

There are "**...virgins without number...**" He says. Virginity is a state of moral purity, a state of un-defilement; and in the world, as we have already said, there are many man-made institutions and organizations with lofty ideals, and worthy purposes. They may stand for clean living, noble ideals, and general human betterment; but they do not, they cannot fill the place, nor perform the service, to which Jesus has appointed His one and only love, His church.

Queens, concubines, virgins, you can find plenty of them all, but none are like His chosen one. All of the so-called churches, and denominations in the world can be traced back just a little way in history to their origin, under the leadership of some ordinary man; only the true New Testament Church can claim its beginning under the personal ministry of

Jesus Christ.

“My dove, my undefiled is but one...”

The Catholic Church is the oldest of the harlot institutions, called churches, and it came through a gradual perversion and corruption. No trace of a Pope, or Universal Father, can be found during the first 300 years of this Christian Era. The full establishment of the Roman system of Popery did not come until the end of the Fifth Century.

Most of the other Protestant churches came as daughters, or granddaughters of Romanism. Baptists did not; they are not Protestants, and never had any part or parcel with Roman Catholics.

The Lutheran Church was founded by Martin Luther, and no earlier than 1520 A.D. It came about as a revolt against the Catholic Church. This was nearly 1500 years after Jesus established His Church, as plainly stated in Matthew 16:18, Luke 6:13, and I Corinthians 12:28.

Likewise the *Church of England, or Episcopal Church*, was founded by Henry the VIII in the early part of the 16th Century, or 1534 years after Jesus founded His Church.

The Presbyterian Church was founded by John Calvin in 1536. Hence it originated more than 1500 years after Christ's Church was set up.

The three great Catholic-Protestant denominations, then, are Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. There are two others outstanding, which are off-springs of the Episcopalians: the *Congregationalists*, and *Methodists*.

The church, whose adherents later became known as Congregationalists, was founded by Robert Brown in 1580 – a granddaughter of the Roman Catholic Church.

The protestant movement, which arose in the Episcopal Church, and which later resulted in the establishment of the *Methodist-Episcopal Church*, was led by the Wesley Brothers, John and Charles. This movement began about 1729, and this denomination was also a granddaughter of Roman Catholics.

There is one more denomination that we might mention here, that is the so-called “*Christian Church*,” commonly called “Campbellites,” after the name of their founder, Alexander Campbell. The beginning of this sect as a denomination dates back to about 1827, or nearly eighteen centuries too late to lay claim to being the Church of Jesus Christ.

There are many other off-shoot sects and denominations, called “churches” today. They are too numerous to mention, and it is not in keeping with our purpose here to discuss them.

The church with which we are chiefly concerned in this discussion is the true New Testament Church, the one established by Jesus Christ, Himself, in the days of His public ministry, and in accordance with the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:18,

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The history of *Baptists* goes back to that time, when Jesus took of the material which had been prepared under the ministry of John The Baptist, and established His (Christ's) church. As before stated, that church was so established as to be able to bring forth after its kind; and that is exactly what has been taking place through the centuries. The one church which Jesus built, has, through the passing of the centuries, become many, many thousands of local bodies, each bearing the nature, likeness, and fundamental characteristics of the Mother Church.

Once more just here I would like to remind the reader, that the aggregation of all of these true churches will make up the Bride, when Jesus comes. His church as an institution is manifested in visible, local bodies, each one, in its respective locality, the Church of Jesus Christ. Fundamentally, the same things that enter into the relationship of Jesus and His church, the Bride, are found true in the relationship of Jesus and His local churches.

When we use the term “*the church*,” or “*His church*,” we mean either the completed Bride, or the church as an institution, or yet indefinitely any local New Testament body, as the particular occasion may indicate.

Upon the basis of our text, and other scriptures, I must affirm, that the church of Jesus Christ is *distinctive* – separate and apart from all other institutions and organizations. He says, **“My dove, my undefiled is but one...”**

Jesus never established but one church; there is but *one kind* of Bible Church. I do not mean to show unkindness, or disrespect; I am simply declaring the truth. In no sense do I mean to imply that people of the various denominations, or so-called churches, are not saved. Every individual, who by faith in Jesus Christ is under the blood, who is “born again” by His Spirit, is saved, regardless of what church he may be in – or if he is in no church at all.

No doubt, there are many in all denominations who have not had a real genuine experience of salvation; without question there are many whose names are on the membership rolls of Baptist churches, who have never had an experience of grace. However, I must declare to you upon the authority of God's eternal Word, that Jesus Christ did not establish a dozen different kinds of churches – only one.

He had one kind of church. And the organization – no matter by what name it may be called – which does not measure up to the pattern of that one church, is false. I do not deny that much good may be done by other organizations; but the only place where we can be under the full favors of our Lord is in His perfect will.

There are many concubine churches in the world. They draw from Christ's blessings, nourish themselves with His spiritual food, use His Name, claim His authority, and yet they have never been married to Him, they are not betrothed.

Paul said to the Corinthian Church in II Corinthians 11:2 **"...for I have espoused you to one husband..."**All true New Testament Churches practice monogamy – they have but one husband, Jesus.

Jesus, the Bridegroom declares, **"My dove is but one."** Jesus is a monogamist – He has but one Bride.

Yes, The New Testament Church is distinctive. We shall briefly note a few points of her distinctiveness:

1. *She is distinctive in her origin.* The church came of divine love, she was the product of infinite wisdom. Jesus was her founder, and she was the only one He founded. Our text says,

"...she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her..."

We have previously shown that her mother was the Gentile world (see chapter 2); and we must say, that she is the only institution in the world that Jesus established while He was here on earth; and she is the only institution in the world that He ever laid claim to as His own. He called her, "My church."

2. *She is distinctive in her ordinances.* She has only two: Baptism and The Memorial Supper. These are beautiful and significant. *She immerses in water only those who give evidence of an experience of salvation;* and *she only administers the Lord's Supper to those baptized ones who are members of her local congregation.* There may be violations of, and departures from, this rule by some local congregations, but such are violations of the Word of God, and are not practiced by the obedient churches.

3. *She is distinctive in her doctrine.* Time and space do not permit us to discuss the doctrine of Baptists here. Someone has rightly said, "If it is in the Bible, then it is Baptist doctrine; and if it is Baptist doctrine, you can find it in the Bible.

We can say here, that Baptists are the only people in the world who believe, and teach salvation wholly "by grace, through faith." The message of Christ's Church is the message of eternal salvation through the blood of the cross, to all who believe.

4. *She is distinctive in her responsibility.* She alone is the custodian of the faith; it is given to her to preach the gospel, baptize believers, and teach the **"all things"** which He has commanded. The world-wide mission task is hers alone to carry out, for The Great Commission was given only to her.

5. *She is distinctive in her promised security.* Of no other institution, organization, or so-called church in the world did Jesus ever say, **"The gates of hell shall not prevail against**

it.” Thank God, she lives and marches on. All of the combined forces of Satan have never been able to destroy her, and never will, for Jesus guaranteed her perpetuity.

6. *She is distinctive in her ultimate destiny.* She will be awaiting Him, all dressed in her wedding garments, when He returns one day, and will go in with Him to the Marriage Supper, where she will reign as Queen at His table.

I love my church – the church of which I am a member. I believe that she is a church of Jesus Christ, a New Testament Church. I believe that she has a mission, and a message given her from above. I believe that she is the most important thing in the community; and I believe that she is worthy of my faithfulness, loyalty, and support, for Jesus loves her. And, because I love Him, I cannot but love His church. She is not perfect, because she is made up of imperfect people; but, one day, as a part of the Bride of Jesus, she will be presented to Him without blemish, and without spot. Then all that she may have suffered in an unfriendly world will be forgotten in the joys of His delightful presence.

Yes, there are queens, concubines, and virgins, but none to be compared with the Bride of Jesus.

“...The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.”

She stands alone in the world; both hated, and admired; persecuted, yet praised.

III.

The Bride’s Glory

Verse 10; **“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?”**

In the eyes of the Bridegroom the Bride stands glorified in the freshness of her youthful beauty – beauty of her outward appearance, and inward beauty of spirit, soul, and character.

He describes her as **“...she that looketh forth as the morning...”** Literally: she has the freshness of the dawn, and glory of the sunrise. In our thoughts we associate the dawning of the day with a freshness, a newness of life, with sparkling dew-drops on the grass, the pink glory of the sunrise in the Eastern sky, and the sweet songs of the mockingbird outside the window. It is as though we begin life all over again with the dawn of each new day. The dark loneliness of the night is gone; the failures of yesterday are forgotten. Life has a freshness, a newness in the morning, that no other time affords: each new day is like a resurrection.

Not only does the Bride *appear* in all of the brightness and glory of the dawn, but she *looks for* the morning, and the sunrise; while the brightness of anticipation and hope shines

upon her face.

In Isaiah 21:11-12, the call to the Watchman, “...**He calleth to me out of Seir**, (which means: *tempest*) is, “**Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh...**”

The church lives, and labors in hope of the morning. The storms are on, and she is in darkness and gloom now, but there come faint streaks of grey in the Eastern sky, and this betokens that the morning is near at hand.

In John 21:4, after Peter, and his companions, had spent a fruitless, and discouraging night of toil with their nets, it is said, “**But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore...**”

The appearance of the Bride is as the brightness and beauty of a new day, but more than that: she is looking for that new day, and the glory of the return of her Beloved.

Furthermore, her appearance is as the softness of the moonlight. He describes her as “**...fair as the moon...**”

It is well understood that the moon only reflects the light of the sun, she has no light of her own. We may be just as sure that the church has no light of her own; her light is Christ, and His purpose is that she reflect that light to the world.

When Jesus said in Matthew 5:14,16 “**Ye are the light of the world...**” and “**Let your light so shine before men...**” He was simply instructing us to let Him shine forth in our lives.

Jesus’ church is fair, with the soft beauty of the moon, which is God’s lesser light.

Continuing His description of the glory and beauty of His Bride, He says, that she is “**...clear as the sun...**”

Jesus, Himself, is the Sun. And He is saying, that her light is His light; her life is His life; and her glory is His glory bestowed upon her.

Yes, the Bride’s glory is in her beauty. But what makes her beautiful?

She stands beautiful in the eyes of her Beloved, because she is clothed in the garments of His imputed righteousness. In herself she had nothing. He saw her one day in the gutters of sin, unclean; she had no covering but the filthy rags of her own righteousness:

Isaiah 64:6 “**But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...**”

Isaiah 61:10 “**I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.**”

Seeing her, He loved her, then He took away her filthy garments, and clothed her with a

change of raiment, and she became His forever. See Zechariah 3:1-7. Also Philipians 3:7-9.

Not only does she stand clothed in the purity of His imputed righteousness, but she is beautiful in the righteous garments with which she is being adorned daily. There is an *instantaneous sanctification* (Hebrews 10:10); and there is a *progressive sanctification* (Hebrews 10:14).

According to Revelation 19:7-8, “**...for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness (literally: righteousnesses, plural) of saints.**”

The Bride is as fresh as the morning; she has the soft beauty of the moonlight; and she shines with the glory of the noonday sun. But there is something yet more wonderful:

She is “**...terrible as an army with banners?**”

The Bride terrible as an army with banners, or flags? Is this not a strange thing to say of a beautiful Bride – that she is terrible, and like an army?

Ah, dear reader, this is unimpeachable evidence that these things are written about the church of Jesus Christ, and no other; they could not be true of any other.

Her glory is seen in her illustrious history of uncompromising conflict. Thank God for her soul-inspiring record through these nineteen centuries, and more, since Jesus founded her. Like a mighty army she has marched on; she has never known retreat, she has never dipped her colors.

Her robes have been stained with martyrs' blood; she has been the object of ridicule and hatred; nations, kingdoms, and powers have arrayed themselves against her; yet she has not fallen nor failed.

Skeptics, agnostics, infidels, and atheists, have tried to discredit her; the devil, himself, has tried to destroy her, first by persecution, then by infiltration. But they have all failed, and she marches on. She is a mighty army of Christian Soldiers, marching as to war.

We stand and watch thousands of uniformed men parade on the field, or march down the street, stepping in perfect rhythm to the beat of drums, or music of a band. Tier after tier, rank after rank, they pass, and their many feet in perfect accord make muffled thunder on the street. Here and there over their ranks waves the flag of our country with its stars and stripes. The sight stirs us to the depth of our being; we feel the blood beat strong in our temples, a strange lump comes in our throat, and a spirit of patriotism fills our heart.

Let me say to you, beloved, that this army of the cross has faced more enemies, fought more battles, shed more blood, yet won more, and greater victories, than all of the armies of the world. Hers may not be especially a conflict against flesh and blood, but she stands,

“...against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:12. Also II Corinthians 10:4 **“(For the weapons of our (her) war-fare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)”**

Go back through the pages of history; call up all of the great generals of the past, Napoleon, Washington, and all of the others; let them gather their mighty armies together into one; let them pool their conquests and victories; yet we know that the sum total of what they have done has not had the far-reaching effect upon the lives and destinies of men as this army of the Lord.

When all of the armed forces of the world, with their missiles, their atomic weapons, and their machines of destruction, lie scattered amidst the wreckage and ruin of our boasted civilization, bless God, the banner of His terrible army, the church, will wave triumphant o'er the field of conflict.

One other thing we must mention here. He tells us that His church is as an army with banners. A banner is a flag – a flag which represents a cause and a kingdom. Psalm 60:4 **“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth.”**

The church of Jesus Christ has a banner, and it represents a cause and a kingdom greater than all of the kingdoms of history. It is the blood-stained banner of the cross. Yea, the cross of Calvary is the banner which He has given to His church; and that banner is to be displayed. She does not need to fight with worldly powers; it is hers to hold high the cross, and He will do the rest.

Jesus said in John 12:32 **“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”**

IV.

The Bride's Ultimate Victory

Verses 11-13 **“I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.”**

In the 11th verse, the Bridegroom goes down into His garden to see about His fruit, or to make an inspection of things. Jesus makes it His business to keep check on His churches. He knows all their works; He knows just what is going on all the time. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, where He speaks to the Seven Churches of Asia, we hear Him declare in His message to each of them, ***“I know thy works.”*** They must all render the account of their stewardship to Him.

I would ask the reader to go back and read again the 2nd chapter of The Song of Solomon, verses 10-13. There the Bridegroom is speaking to His Bride about the near approach of springtime, which, as we showed in our discussion of that part of the text, indicated the time of His returning, and their wedding day. There He speaks of the vines, and the tender grapes, and the fragrance of the garden, all of which bespoke the glad truth that the time for the happy occasion was very near.

Now, in the 11th verse above, it seems that He is watching very closely, and with great eagerness, to see the flourishing of the vine, the budding of the pomegranates, and all of the other harbingers of the resurrection season, and of their happy rendezvous. Jesus is more eager for that glad day, than His churches. Too many of them have fallen asleep.

Verse 12 ***“Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”*** This literally means: “set me on the chariots of My willing people.”

It is as though He is saying, “I went down into My garden, which is the church, and the first thing I knew, I was riding upon the chariots of My people who were willing for Me to be their Captain, their Commander, and to lead them to victory.”

The church is His terrible army with banners, but He is the Head, the Commander-in-Chief of that army. If they are willing, if they will give Him a chance, He will ride their chariots in the conflict; He will be their Charioteer. Yea, by His power He will lead His church to victory.

Though all the world, the flesh, and the devil, convene to engage against His church, they cannot stop her. She marches on; she will come to ultimate victory.

Matthew 16:18 ***“...the gates of hell shall not prevail against...”*** her.

I Corinthians 15:57 ***“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Now the Bride cries in verse 13: ***“Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee...”***

Shulamite means “peacefulness.” No doubt, it refers to Jesus, who is The Prince of Peace. His Bride is calling unto Him, “Return, return.”

Such should be the attitude, such should be the heart-cry of the churches of Jesus Christ today. We are in the most crucial time of the world’s history; there is no other

escape; there is no other hope.

The response of the heart of Old John on Patmos, after God had given him a preview of things to come – the certainty and solemnity of Judgment, the horrors of Hell, and the glories of Heaven – was voiced in almost the last words of this Bible: Revelation 22:20 “**...Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**”

As the Bride cries, “**Return, return, O Shulamite...**” the great question is raised, “**what will ye see in the Shulamite?**”

What do we see in Jesus, the Shulamite, today? What a question for the individual who may read these lines. How much does Jesus mean to our hearts and lives? I fear that to many He is no more than a “fire-escape,” by whom they merely hope to escape the eternal fires of Hell. However to some He is Saviour and Friend, Lord and Master, One who is worthy of our deepest love, and our most faithful obedience. Christ, our All, in all.

“What will ye see in the Shulamite?” the question is asked.

The reply is given, “**...As it were the company of two armies.**”

The phrase, “*of two armies*” really is “*Mahanaim*,” –and means: “*two hosts, or bands.*” This is the same word that Jacob used when, returning home after many years of absence, and faced with the dreaded ordeal of meeting his brother Esau, whom he had wronged, he was met by the angels of God.

Genesis 32:1-2 “**And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.**”

Jacob was facing a crucial time in his life, and God sent His band of angels to help him. He had one band of his own, but they were not enough; it took God’s band to lead him through.

So Jesus, our Shulamite, is the One, and only One who can, and will lead His beloved church to ultimate and certain victory.

“**Return, return, O Shulamite; return...**”

The church has been hated, mocked, spit upon, persecuted, cast into prison, humiliated, and despised, by the enemies of Christ. In it all she has been sustained, somewhat, by her hope, and the joy of her anticipation of His return. He promised, and she believes. By His grace she will carry His blood-stained banner of redemption to a lost world until that day when He shall come to take her home.

Thank God, for her beauty, her distinctiveness, her glory, and the blessed assurance of her ultimate victory.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE BRIDE'S BEAUTY AND GLORY IN THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL

Song of Solomon 7:1-13

Song of Solomon 7:1-9 **“How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman. Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins. Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus. Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries. How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes. I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples; And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.”**

Throughout most of the 6th chapter of our text the Bridegroom has been extolling the superior virtues of the Bride, her beauty, distinctiveness, glory, etc. He continues this strain of praise into, and through the first nine verses of chapter 7. Some parts of these nine verses we shall pass over with little, or no comment, because some of the things that are spoken about the Bride here have been found and discussed already in earlier parts of the text.

This whole 7th chapter deals, in a larger sense, with the *Ministry of Christ’s Church*; however we shall break it down somewhat into sub-topics for the purpose of clarity.

I. ***The Bride’s Ministry***

Among the points of beauty, character, and glory of the Bride, none is quite so praiseworthy as her faithful ministry in the representation of her Beloved here in a sin-sick world. She is most beautiful when she is telling the world the good news about Him. In other words, the church is most beautiful and great when she is faithfully engaged in carrying out her world-wide mission task to which Jesus commissioned her before He went back to glory.

In the first verse He identifies her with royalty: “**...O prince’s daughter!**” The daughter of a prince is a member of the royal family; so is the Church of Jesus: she is the daughter of a prince, and the Bride of a King. If that does not make her of royal blood, and royal position, then I cannot imagine what would.

It is quite thrilling to observe the beautiful similarity in the birth of Jesus, and the birth of the New Testament Church; Jesus came from the womb of a human mother, yet He was begotten by the divine person of the Holy Spirit – God was his Father; Christ’s Church came from the womb of a world of human beings, and was likewise fathered by Deity. In a sense we can say, that the Church was born of a Jewish womb (Israel’s), even as Jesus was born of the same, for the twelve apostles whom Jesus made the charter members of His church were Jews.

Furthermore, just as Jesus, coming to the Jews first, and being rejected of them, then turned to offer His grace and salvation to the Gentiles; so the church which He established was rejected, and opposed by the Jews, hence Jesus turned her ministry to the Gentiles. Though first established with Jews, she is His Gentile Bride, and this is her day – the “church age.” This church age has already continued for more than nineteen centuries; how much longer it will go on we cannot say; however it will continue until He comes to receive His own in the First Resurrection, and The Rapture. Thank God, the “signs of the times” indicate that it cannot be long.

In the latter part of the first verse, the Bridegroom speaks of the well-formed thighs of His Bride. They indicate strength and endurance: two important qualities in carrying out her appointed task of world-wide witnessing. Also He says of her structure, that it is “**...the work of the hands of a cunning workman.**”

The whole church, in every phase of its organization and work, might be well described in those words. She is, indeed, the work of the hands of a cunning, or skilled workman, the most skilled workman of all eternity. With all of the executive, and organizational ability found among men, there is none which could have conceived of such a wonderful thing as the New Testament Church. Oh, there have been many imitations – the devil has set up many counterfeits – but there must be an original, before there can be an imitation. Likewise, all of those set up by men and the devil, are but puny, inadequate attempts at reproduction. The church of Jesus Christ is the work of the hands of a skilled workman.

The hands that formed and set up His church are the hands that made the heavens and the earth. They are the hands that made a man from the dust of the ground; they measured the waters of the seas, meted out the heavens with a span, and weighed the hills in a balance; their fingers placed the sun, moon, and stars in their respective places, and stretched out the milky way across the heavens. Those hands painted the colors of the

rainbow, and the glory of the sunset; they threw up the snow-capped mountains toward the sky, and tinted the soft beauty of the desert flowers; they made the great wild beasts that roam through the forests' vastnesses, and the tiny ants that scurry under our feet; they laid the earth under a soft blanket of winter snows, and place the diamond dew-drops on the summer grass. Those hands are skilled, they are the hands of a cunning workman, and only they could mold the beauty and greatness of the church, His Bride.

Back-tracking, so to speak, in this first verse of our text, we find a logical order: The Bride, a product of the work of skilled hands; the Bride, a member of the Royal Family; and the Bride, beautiful in her gospel ministry for her Beloved, **"How beautiful are thy feet with shoes..."**

The gospel ministry of the church of Jesus Christ is here in view. And she, who carries this gospel to the world, is the most beautiful one in the world. Of all of the characteristic points of the Bride's beauty, this, her ministry, is the most wonderful. Her feet are beautiful because of the sacred mission on which they carry her, a mission of mercy and of grace for sin-sick souls who are on the road to hell.

The scriptures given above concerning the beauty of her feet bring to our mind other passages in God's Word, which have to do with the same thoughts, and which will, no doubt; shed more light upon that given here.

Many things press my mind for utterance, which limited space does not permit my discussing. I think of the dusty and defiled feet of the disciples being washed by the hands of Jesus, as in the 13th chapter of John, and I am reminded that the Bride's feet are beautiful because they have been cleansed by the hands of her Lord. We shall go on shortly to see also, that her feet are beautiful because of the shoes upon them. However, let us notice some other scriptures:

In Isaiah 52:7, where God, through the lips of the prophet, is speaking of the ministry of the Jews during the kingdom age, we read: **"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"**

God says, that the feet of them who carry the good news of peace and salvation are beautiful; that is the message of our Lord's Church, hence He commends the beauty of her feet. The message of salvation, and the attending blessings thereof, given the New Testament Church to carry to all the world, make her the most beautiful messenger that the world ever saw.

Nahum 1:15, **"Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!..."**

The two passages of scripture given above, of course, have to do with good tidings to

the Jews; however they emphasize the beauty and attraction of any divinely commissioned messenger who goes with His good news of salvation. And, as we have repeatedly emphasized, The New Testament Church is the only one ordained of God, in this age, to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

In Romans 10:13-17, Paul is declaring how absolutely necessary it is for people to hear the gospel in order to be saved. He says, that whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved; but they cannot call upon Him in whom they have no faith; and they cannot have faith in Him if they have not heard of Him. Likewise they cannot hear of Him unless someone preaches the Word to them; but no one can preach the Word except he be sent of God. If He sends them however, then, Verse 15 “**...How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**”

Jesus commissioned His church alone to preach this gospel in its purity; no other can fill her place. She, and she alone, holds “**...the keys of the kingdom of heaven...**” Matthew 16:19. This does not mean that she has the power to save; neither does it mean that a person has to hold membership in a New Testament Church in order to be saved. It means that Jesus made her His one, and only, sacred messenger, and if the work is done, it will be she who does it. Thank God, it will be done!

Our text says, that the Bride’s feet are “**Beautiful with shoes.**” Please bear in mind that the Bride is not bare-footed in this scene as in the 5th chapter of the text, where she is seen reposing in her bed; nor is she wearing sandals, as one might who is engaged in the casual and ordinary affairs of the day. But she is wearing shoes, as one who has a great deal of traveling to do. She must run with the message, and her journeying may be in paths that are rough and steep, in the highways and hedges, on the mountains, and in the valleys; but she must run, and run, for the message of redemption must be told, and the time is short.

Now, it is no secret as to what kind of shoes the Bride must wear upon her feet. We find the answer in Ephesians 6:15. Here, where the Apostle is listing the gear, or armor of the Christian Soldier, he says: “**And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.**”

So, my beloved, the feet of the Bride, the church, must be shod with the shoes of the gospel of peace, that is the gospel of Calvary, apart from which no soul has ever been saved, and none will ever be. Concerning that gospel, Paul wrote the Corinthian Church in I Corinthians 15:1-4 “**Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how**

that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

Jesus crucified, buried, risen, and coming again, is the heart of the good news message which she has to carry to a lost world. She is messenger of mercy, a harbinger of hope and heaven. She has a mission, she has a method, and she has a message:

I Corinthians 1:23 “**...we preach Christ crucified...**”

I Corinthians 2:2 “**...Jesus Christ and him crucified.**”

I Corinthians 1:18 “**...the preaching of the cross...**”

II Corinthians 4:3-7, Verse 4 “**...the glorious gospel of Christ...**”

Her greatest beauty lies in her faithful fulfillment of her Christ given task. Acts 5:42 “**...they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.**”

I feel to pass over verses 2,3, and 4, of the text without comment. Some of the similes used here were commented on earlier in this study; others are so vague, that I am afraid the attempt to interpret them will confuse, more than help.

There are some beautiful thoughts in verse 5: “**Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.**”

Where the Bride was describing the beauty of the Bridegroom to the daughters of Jerusalem, she spake of His head as being like the most fine gold. (5:11) We found that it indicated His deity. His locks were bushy, and black as a raven. This was manly beauty.

How strangely different is His description of the Bride. Her head is like Carmel. *Carmel means: crimson*; it also means: “*lamb*, and “*harvest*.”

These truths are very much in keeping with the nature of her ministry. Crimson speaks of blood. Her business is to point lost souls to the “crimson flow” from Calvary. Like John the Baptist (John 1:29), she cries, “**...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**” And she is in the soul-harvesting business.

Then – strangest of all – He says, that the *hair* of her head is “*like purple*.” It is well understood by all – and we have previously discussed it – that purple represents kingliness. We have seen the hangings of purple in the tabernacle, and in the temple; we have read of the purple of royalty worn by kings; we have seen Jesus clothed with purple robes, by Roman soldiers, that they might mock Him as king of the Jews. The purple of the Bride’s hair, no doubt, speaks of the kingliness of Jesus whom she represents, just as her “head like Carmel: is indicative of the blood of redemption; however she, too, is of the Royal Family of God, being Christ’s Queen; furthermore, God’s Word says, in Revelation 1:6 “**And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father...**”

One point which we must not overlook is this: Purple is not a natural color of human hair. There are many shades of red and brown, various types of blond, and very dark hair,

which we may call black; but no one ever saw human hair that was naturally purple. It is true, that the modern women dye, or tint their hair most every color in the book, and you may see many of them with hair of a purple hue; but you will never see one who is given such color by nature.

The application is obvious. The purple of the Bride's hair, which speaks of royalty – both hers and His – is not hers by nature, for she is “**...by nature the children of wrath, even as others.**” Ephesians 2:3. Her royal position is given her from above, Amen. It is an endowment of His “amazing grace.”

So in the *crimson head*, and *purple hair* of the Bride, we see two things: *redemption, and kingliness, or royalty.* This speaks of both, the message of the New Testament Church, which is redemption through Jesus Christ, and the royal position of His church, which is only by the grace of God.

The third great truth in this verse is found in its last clause: “**...the king is held in the galleries.**” It is as though the king, from His high vantage point in the galleries, looks down upon His Bride, and watches her. He sees her beautiful feet shod with the shoes of the gospel of peace; He sees her fine form, her full developed breasts, her beautiful neck and nose; He sees her head like crimson, and her hair like purple, with all of her womanly beauty and strength: and seeing her thus, His heart swells with such love as never another man felt for a woman. The king cannot tear His eyes away from the sight of her; He is held in the galleries.

Being literally captivated by her charms, and most overwhelmed by His ardent affection, He is constrained to cry out, as in verse 6, “**How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!**”

He feels that His greatest pleasure would be to be with her forever, that they might share life and love together.

When a man loves a woman with a pure and sacred love, he wants to be with her more than anything else in the world. Beyond a doubt, the desire, and eagerness of Jesus to come for His bride, the church, is greater by far than her longing for His return.

II.

The Bride's Stature

Verse 7: “**This thy stature is like to a palm tree...**”

In this statement, we have a lead into so many far-reaching truths about the church of Jesus Christ, that we shall only be able to touch upon them in a very brief way in this volume. I pray God, that I may be able, by these brief references, to provoke our readers

to more intense study of God's Word. If such is the result, than I shall not have labored in vain.

In Psalm 92:12 the righteous, in general, are referred to as like unto the palm tree. **“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”**

In the 7th verse of our text, it is the Bride, the church of Jesus Christ who is likened unto a palm tree.

I want to drop a thought here, which is worthy of, at least, some consideration: If the church is a palm tree, as in our text; and the saved flourish *like*, or *as* the palm tree, as in Psalm 92:12; then can we not say, that saved people flourish in their spiritual life only as the church flourishes? The church is to be a spiritual home for saved people while on this earth. All who are saved by His grace should become members of New Testament Churches somewhere. There is just one thing wrong with the shop-worn claim we hear so many people make, that one can live just as good a Christian life out of the church, as in it; it just is not true. It is a totally false claim. A person can be saved, and not be a member of any church; but a person cannot live a *Christian* life at all, and not be a member of a church of Jesus Christ. To say that one can is to give the lie to Jesus who established the church, and to belittle, and despise her who is more to Him than anything in the world.

If we love Jesus, than we love her whom He loves, His church. I John 5:1 **“...every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”**

People should quit kidding themselves, and face the truth.

When we begin to pursue the study of the spiritual significance of the palm tree as a picture, or likeness of Christ's Church, we run into such a variety of leads, that we find it very difficult, in a study such as this, to trace them all out.

There are at least 1500 species of palm trees in the world, and many are the characteristics, uses, and benefits of them. In this study we shall have to confine our observations to seven or eight important things that have to do with the character, nature, and ministry of the church, as represented by the palm tree.

1. *Beauty*. One value of the palm tree is for beauty, or decoration. This fact needs little discussion. All over the world they are prized for their lofty beauty, and are used extensively in schemes of decoration. Their likenesses were inscribed in the gold of Solomon's Temple, and are also found in the decor of the future millennial temple, as seen in the visions of Ezekiel. Ezekiel 41, 42, and 43.

The fact of the beauty of the church of Jesus is not questioned. He has declared it over, and over again. He sees in her the stateliness and majesty of a magnificent palm tree.

2. *Shade and Refreshment*. The palm tree was a source of shade and refreshment to

the weary traveler in the desert. Here and there an oasis might be found, where there were palm trees, and where the caravans might pause to rest, and find protection from the burning desert sun. This is, indeed, a picture of the church.

Within its portals, and under its gracious spiritual ministrations, weary souls should find the way of life and truth, and real spiritual refreshment. Men find themselves weary, sin-sick, and defeated, in their trek through the sinful deserts of this world; but a true church can introduce them to Jesus, in whom they find new life, new hope, new courage, and new strength, to press on to the end of the journey.

3. *Water.* One thing we can be assured of, wherever we find a palm tree, there is water near at hand. It may be deep in the desert sand, but it is near enough that the palm tree may draw life-giving strength. The oasis in the midst of the desert is a place where there is water, and, though all of the area around may be burned and barren, where the precious liquid life is, there is always refreshing green. The grass grows green, the flowers bloom, and all is verdant where the waters flow.

The stature of the church is like a palm tree. Christ's Church is an oasis in the desert of life because of the water flowing there. The water is her life, and the water is Jesus Christ.

Read again the story of The Samaritan Woman at the well, in the 4th chapter of John. There is the answer. The church has the water of life, hence she can flourish like the palm tree. Jesus said, that the water of life would become a well of water in the believer, springing up like an artesian well; so a whole church of believers, gathered together in one body, becomes an oasis, indeed.

Speaking of the true believer, Psalm 1:3 **“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”**

Jeremiah, the Prophet, speaking of that same kind of man, in contrast with him who depends upon man, rather than God. Jeremiah 17:7-8 **“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”**

In the 47th chapter of Ezekiel, where the Prophet shows us God's river of grace, flowing from the sanctuary eastward, and becoming a great stream. Verses 7-8, **“Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.”**

Oh, how very wonderful! The waters flow east-ward, toward the sunrise. They flow into the sea (symbolic of “...peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Revelation 17:15), and the waters of the sea are healed. It is the business of the church of Jesus to carry the living waters of God’s grace into the sea of the world of lost souls. Someday I hope to write more extensively of these wonderful things.

Ezekiel 47:9, “**And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.**”

Lack of space forbids us to go on with this, as much as we should like to do so. Suffice to say, that Christ’s Church is like the palm tree, because she has the water of life; she grows by the river.

4. *A Landmark for Travelers.* The palm tree was often a landmark, or guide for travelers across the trackless wastes of desert sands. In many places, where the desert winds constantly shifted the sand by day and by night, there were no permanent trails across the long, lonely miles. The desert caravans often had to find their way, and also water which was so vital in sustaining life, by the palm tree landmarks, which not only guided them in the right direction, but also indicated the place where water could be found.

The churches of Jesus, like the palm tree, are landmarks in the deserts of life. They show wandering souls the way through the desert, and point them to the water of life, without which they all must surely perish. A soul cannot find his way alone to God; he must have the message of the gospel, and the quickening of the Holy Spirit. These are “the keys of the kingdom,” and Jesus gave them to His Church. Matthew 16:19.

I Corinthians 1:21, “**...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**”

Apart from the grace of God all souls are lost; and, without hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ they will certainly continue to be lost. And the commission to preach His gospel was given to His Church.

5. *Fruit.* Another essential value of many palm trees is their fruit-bearing. There are date-palms which provide luscious, delectable fruit used all over the world. Also there are some species which provide important oils.

In its fruit-bearing qualities the palm tree pictures The New Testament Church. To produce “spiritual fruit unto God” is fundamentally Christ’s purpose with His Church, and the most wonderful of that fruit consists of new-born souls. The wise man said,

Proverbs 11:30 “**The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.**”

6. The palm tree was also associated with the thought of *Worship*. Solomon, in the construction of the magnificent temple of God, used carved figures of the palm tree extensively in its decor. See I Kings 6:29-35, etc.

Also in Ezekiel's vision of the millennial temple, in Ezekiel 40 and 41, we see the same figures of palm trees. This becomes even more significant, when we consider the use of palms in the Feast of the Tabernacles, which was one of the great National Feasts of Israel. See Leviticus 23:40, and Nehemiah 8:15.

When Jesus set up His Church, and gave His kingdom work into her hands, He intended – and made the fact plain – that she should be the center of the highest order of worship. I must maintain, that no person, who refuses to worship in His Church, or who belittles His church by ignoring it, can worship God acceptably anywhere.

In the days of old, the tabernacle was the place God chose to set His Name, and to meet His people in a special way. Their highest worship was there. Later it was in His temple that He met and blessed His people. Then, more than nineteen centuries ago, Jesus established His church. And I must declare, that the highest, and most acceptable order of worship is as a member of, and in company with, a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The palm tree is also mentioned as a place of judgment. In Judges 4:5 we read of Deborah, the Prophetess, who judged Israel at that time: “**And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.**”

Likewise the city of Jericho was known as “The City of Palms.” See II Chronicles 28:15, Judges 1:16 and 3:13, and Deuteronomy 34:3.

7. *Joy in Victory*. Palms were used in setting forth the thought of joy and happiness in the realization of triumph. Two instances will suffice to establish this fact:

In John 12:13, where Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass, the people “**Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.**”

This is but a fore-token of that great day when He shall come again to Jerusalem, down the pathless skies in glory and triumph, as John saw Him in Revelation 19:11-16. The branches of palm trees seemed to bear in some way the idea of victory.

The other instance is found in Revelation 7:9-10. There we see the tribulation saints rejoicing in deliverance: “**After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;**

And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

So, my friend, the church of Jesus, which is likened unto a palm tree, is a true symbol of victory which shall come through Him, and of the fullness of joy which will be known in that glad day, when He brings His Bride into “the banqueting house.”

Her stature is like to a palm tree – she stands tall. And like the palm tree, she has a wonderful versatility; she meets many, many needs. The simile used here is beautiful and true.

The Bridegroom declares His intention of coming close to the Bride, and laying His hands upon her. The touch of His hand upon her, in love and approval, gives her blessed assurance.

“...I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof...”

The Bridegroom likens the breasts of His Bride to “**...clusters of grapes.**” verse 7; and “**...as clusters of the vine...**” verse 8.

As we have previously shown of the Bride, her breasts suggest her ability to feed, or to nourish those who need spiritual food.

Grapes, and wine, represent the blood of Jesus shed for the remission of sin. The “fruit of the vine” used in the Lord’s Supper bears out this truth. The whole thing cries out of God’s Grace. The message of The Book is a message of the revelation of that grace in Jesus Christ; and the marvelous mission and ministry of the church is to bear witness of that grace to those who are lost in sin.

The breasts of the Bride are fully developed, and like whole clusters of the vine. There is sufficient room for all who need comfort; there is nourishment enough at her breasts for all who hunger. The nourishment which she has to give is from the clusters of the vine. And Jesus is that vine.

In John 15:1, we hear Him say, “**I am the true vine...**”

Jesus is the vine. The vine bears the clusters of grapes. The juice of the grapes is the blood, the blood is the life; all of this in the hands of His Church.

Verse 9 of our text, “**And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.**”

The best wine is given to His Beloved, the wine that tastes so sweet in the taking. The wine of God’s grace is the sweetest thing on earth. Nothing in the world is so satisfying to the true churches of Jesus as the pure, unadulterated message of “Amazing Grace.” There is no substitute; nothing else will do. Let us have “The Old, Old Story of Jesus and His Love.”

He says, that the best wine “**...goeth down sweetly...**” In other words, it is so pleasant

to partake of the riches of God's grace each day. His grace is sufficient for the bright days, when the sun shines, and all is happy and gay; but it is also sufficient for the dark days, when the clouds hang low, and the storms beat upon us. His grace is sufficient when we walk through the meadows of peace and serenity; but it is also enough, thank God, when we are in the midst of the blood and tears of life's battlefields. His grace is enough for the sunshine at noon-day, and the darkness of the midnight. In sickness, in health, in poverty, or in wealth, the sweetness of His grace satisfies every hunger and every need.

Our text says, furthermore, that this "best wine," going down sweetly, "...**causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.**" What a wonderful thought! God's grace, more than anything else in the world, makes the sleeping ones awake, and causes the silent lips to speak.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he gives the reason for a faithful ministry under such opposing pressure as was put upon him, and his fellow workers. Why will one go to such lengths, and suffer such hard-ships in the service of Christ? He gives the only answer:

II Corinthians 5:14-15 **"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."**

The Bride awakes from her sleep, her lips speak abroad the praises of her Beloved, she goes forth in faithful and sacrificial service, not because she is afraid, not simply to gain reward, but because she loves Him. His grace is sweet.

I Corinthians 15:10 **"But by the grace of God I am what I am..."** When we have received of His grace in salvation, then our lips, in truth, have a message to proclaim.

III

The Bride's Invitation

Our text verses 10-13: **"I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved."**

In the first nine verses of this chapter of our text, the Bridegroom has been singing the praises of His Bride. In these last four verses, it is the Bride responding with tender

overtures of love.

Verse 10 really seems to be addressed to no one in particular, but to the world at large; or it may be but the happy musings of her own heart, as she thinks of her Beloved, and thrills to the fact, that His deepest love is for her alone. Among all of the daughters, the queens, the concubines, and the virgins, she is His one and only love.

“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.” This is true of both the individual believer, and the church.

I belong to Jesus. He redeemed my soul; He purchased me with His own blood.

I Corinthians 6:19-20 **“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”**

I Corinthians 7:23 **“Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.”**

He purchased the church with His own blood also, for it is made up of blood-bought, Spirit-born souls. Ephesians 5:25 says, that He gave Himself for the church. And He knows His own, II Timothy 2:19; and He keeps His own, John 10:27-29.

“...his desire is toward me.” His desire is toward His church for her *safety* and *security*. He promised, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against her.

His desire is toward His church for her *happiness*. Philippians 4:4 **“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”**

His desire is toward His church for her *fruitfulness*.

John 15:8, **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”**

John 15:16 **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”**

His desire is toward His church for her *fellowship*, both here, and hereafter:

I John 1:3 **“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellow-ship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”**

John 17:24 **“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”**

Yes, Jesus’ desire is that His Bride shall share His eternal glory with Him, in that place which He has gone to prepare. When He returns for her, she will go out to meet Him, in the First Resurrection and the Rapture, and will later return with Him to earth to reign.

Verses 11 and 12 in our text are very beautiful and touching. The Bride longs to be with her Beloved. She invites Him to come and go with her into the field; lodge with her in the villages; accompany her through the vineyards. She wishes to examine the vines, to see if they flourish in their new growth; she is anxious to know if the young grapes have appeared; she desires to see if the pomegranates, are putting forth their buds.

Why? Why, beloved, because all of these things will indicate whether, or not, the wedding day is near. Jesus said,

Matthew 24:32-33 **“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”**

The Bride, having given an eager invitation to her Beloved to go with her into the fields, the villages, and the vineyards – in other words, Luke 14:23 **“...into the highways and hedges...”** – promises there to lavish her greatest love upon him. **“There will I give thee my loves.”**

The greatest manifestation of true love that the church can give to Jesus is in her faithful, obedient, missionary service. **“...Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in...”**

Verse 13: **“The mandrakes give a smell...”** In the United States, the common may-apple is sometimes called mandrake; however the mandrake mentioned here refers to a plant native to Southern Europe, and Northern Africa, especially common to the area around the Mediterranean Sea. It had ovate leaves and whitish, or violet-purple flowers. There was some superstition about its large forked root, the eating of which was supposed to promote conception. The flowers of this plant gave off a fetid narcotic smell.

“...at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.” Laying up fruit for Jesus is the highest concept of the ministry of The New Testament Church. She proves her love by the service she renders, by the fruit she bears; and the most precious fruits of all are the souls that she wins for Him. At her gates she hoards her fruit, and it is only for Him, for her Beloved. When He comes for her He will be gratified with her love gifts. She loves Him; she lives for Him; she works for Him; she dreams of Him; she waits for Him; she longs for His return.

The greatest joy which she, His church, will know, the greatest reward that she can ever hope to receive, will be to lay down her trophies at the feet of her Blessed Lord, and hear Him say, “Well done.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“LOVE IS STRONG AS DEATH”

Song of Solomon 8:1-7

As we come into the study of this last chapter of our text, we sense a growing eagerness, and increasing impatience, on the part of both the Bride and the Bridegroom. They are thinking of, and longing for the glad day when they shall meet in the consummation of their love. They long for that time when they can come into the marriage supper together, and can sit down with all of the saints and patriarchs of old in eternal fellowship – fellowship which can never be broken again by separation.

I.

The Bride’s Eagerness

In this 8th chapter, verses 1-4, we hear the Bride speaking out of the eagerness of her heart.

“O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother’s house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.”

All the way through The Song of Solomon, from the first verse of the first chapter to the last verse of chapter eight, we have a progressive unfolding of precious truth. Each message has brought us nearer to the climax. The Bride and Bridegroom have avowed their love for each other again, and again. In glowing words and beautiful similes, they have described each other’s beauty and attraction. We have heard the Bridegroom appealing to the Bride for faithfulness in service, and patience in waiting; and we have heard the Bride again and again declare her love, and promise her loyalty, even though there are times when she grows careless, or falls asleep.

We have seen her persecuted and abused, yet, in it all, proclaiming the excellencies of her Beloved on every hand. However, as we come to the last chapter, and the last exchanges of dialogue between them, we begin to see the Bride’s weariness in waiting, her loneliness and longing. She is becoming homesick and impatient; she is wondering how long, how long, how long e’er that time will come for which she has looked, and for which

she has been waiting through the centuries.

She has tried to console herself with His promises to return; she has tried to hold on, and to carry the conflict to the gates of the enemy; she has tried to hold up the blood-stained banner of the cross for her Beloved, and to exalt His precious name before a sin-sick world. Her pathway has been one of storms, of conflict, of blood, of sacrifice; she has been misunderstood, scorned, criticized, and hated; she has been mocked by the world, and hounded day and night by the devil who hates her; her adherents have been burned at the stake, and sawn asunder; she has been forced to live in caves and dens of the earth; yet her head has not bowed before her enemies; she has not dipped her colors; now, after nineteen centuries of toil and tears, she is more eager than ever before for His return.

Though still confident, though still full of faith, and courage, and determination, she is now weary, and growing impatient for the end of the long journey. And every indication is that it will not be long.

“O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother!...”

What a thought! Her love for Him is as pure and unsullied as the love of a sister for her brother. I said, when I read these blessed words, that that is exactly what He is to me, a Brother. This Old Book reveals the glorious fact, that Jesus Christ is our beloved Brother.

Romans 8:16-17 **“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”**

Jesus Himself called us His brethren, and He was not ashamed of the fact, either.

Hebrews 2:11-12 **“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”**

So the relationship of Jesus Christ and His church is more than just that of a bride and a bridegroom; it is the relationship of a brother and sister. They are begotten by the same Father; they are born of the same Spirit; they have the same life.

That is the reason that Jesus can look upon His Bride and say, “My sister, my spouse.”

And that is the reason that the Bride, in the outreach of her love to Him, can say, “O my brother, thou who hast been nourished at the breast of my mother.”

Not only is Jesus the Founder of His church, the Head of His church, and the Husband of His church, but He is the Brother of His church. And He is “a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

John 15:14-15 **“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth:**

but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

Now when we think of the sister and brother relationship of the church and Jesus, it means that they share all things alike; there is a strange and marvelous equality – we are joint-heirs with Him.

If we, and Jesus, have the same Father, God, if we have the same life – eternal life – if we have an equality as “joint-heirs,” and He is our Brother, then in some spiritual sense, we shall have to think of the breasts that gave us suck as the Holy Spirit. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God nourishes and sustains us.

Among the revealing names of God used in the Bible, there is one with unusually tender meaning: *El Shaddai*. This is “God of the breasts,” or “The Breasted One.” Genesis 17:1. He is the nourisher, the strength-giver, and the satisfier of His children. Those divine breasts nourished Jesus, the only begotten Son, and they nourish the blood-bought, Spirit-born brethren whom He is not ashamed to own.

We have a Father – the Great Eternal God; we have a Brother – Jesus Christ the Son; and we have One who acts as a spiritual Mother – the blessed Holy Spirit – who watches over us with tender care.

Thus thinking of Jesus, her Beloved, her Brother, her Husband, the Bride declares; **“...when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.”**

In substance, she is saying, “Oh, if I could only meet my Brother Jesus today, I would embrace Him; I would put my arms around Him; I would kiss Him tenderly.”

It would not be the kiss of a traitor betraying Him for thirty pieces of silver, but it would be a kiss of purest, holiest love. In it would be fulfilled all of the waiting, and longing, and hungering of her heart through the centuries, since the day that He left her on Olivet’s brow so long ago.

That day the wondering disciples stood and watched Him rise slowly toward the heavens, until a cloud received Him out of their sight. Then, as they stood speechless, gazing steadfastly toward the place whither He had disappeared, two angels stood by them, and reminded them that he would come back again. Acts 1:9-11.

The sad-hearted disciples turned away from that hallowed spot, which was sacred because His blessed feet had stood there, and faced the long road ahead, not knowing when, but believing that He would come again.

As we have stated before, a kiss should only be used as an expression of pure love. Such would be the kiss of the Bride in the meeting with her Beloved. **“...I would kiss thee:”** she said, **“yea, I should not be despised.”**

The words of the Bride in these few verses may well hold for us a two-fold significance:

On the one hand, we may think of the Bride as desiring the presence of the Bridegroom, and resolving in her heart that she would bring Him into her mother's house – that is to say, that she would diligently endeavor to give Him to the world (Gentile world). We have suggested in an earlier chapter, that His church is a Gentile Bride; therefore her "mother's house" would indicate the Gentiles. The statement made above, about the church being nourished by the Holy Spirit, was, of course, looking at the matter from the spiritual standpoint. From the standpoint of earthly relationship, the Bride of Jesus Christ is called out from a Gentile world. To lead Him, and to bring Him into her mother's house, therefore, would be the church active in her God-given mission of making Christ known to a lost world.

On the other hand, however – and this, I think, is the real message – she is longing for His return, and is speaking of how joyously she will receive Him when He comes. She says, **"...I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate."**

In the last verse of the preceding chapter she spoke of all the pleasant fruits which she had laid up for Him at her gates, and here she is thinking of how she will lead Him into her mother's house, when He comes, that He may partake of those pleasant fruits. Her mother (spiritual mother – the Holy Spirit), she says, would instruct her. Yea, the Holy Spirit is her Instructor. See John 14:6, also 16:13-14.

Verse 3 of the text expresses the Bride's desire to be in the embrace of her Beloved.

In Verse 4 – for the third time in The Song of Solomon – we hear the Bride admonishing the "daughters of Jerusalem" not to stir up, nor awake her love until He please.

"I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please."

Having discussed this statement in an earlier chapter, I shall not dwell upon it at length here. Suffice, to say again, that now is the church age; this is the age of grace to the Gentiles; this is the time of Israel's blindness; this is God's "small moment" of Isaiah 54:7-8. And He shall not be stirred up, nor awakened to the spiritual need of Israel, until such a time as He please, which will be when He comes again in the revelation of His glory, and they who pierced Him shall look upon Him, and, in the spirit of outpoured grace, shall repent, and believe. All of the Jews who may be saved until that time are but a remnant according to His grace. See Zechariah 12:10 to 13:1; also Zechariah 13:8-9; Romans 11:26-27, etc.

II.

The Bride Coming Out Of The Wilderness

Verse 5 **“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.”**

The first part of verse 5 may be anticipative, or prophetic in import. The question, **“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?”** does not necessarily indicate doubt, or uncertainty, as to her identity. The question is rather a means of calling attention to her, and to the circumstances of the occasion.

Beyond a doubt, the scene looks ahead anticipatively to the time when Jesus shall return for His own, and the first resurrection and the rapture shall take place; then His waiting church, the Bride shall come up from the wilderness of this world leaning upon the arm of her Beloved.

That this world without Jesus is likened unto a wilderness, none will deny, for a wilderness is a wild waste land. See Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 3:3, and there are many other scriptures which bear out this idea.

This world is like a place of emptiness and desolation to the Bride so long as her Beloved is gone. It is a tangled wilderness, a barren desert, a lonely place; and the only way she can console her own heart is in His blessed promises to return.

Here then, in the prophetic picture, we see her coming up from the wilderness leaning upon Jesus' arm. The fulfillment of this anticipated occasion is found in I Thessalonians 4:16-17:

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

The Bridegroom's words here are reminiscent of the Bride's past. He thinks back to the time of her beginning; she has always been His, for He gave her being.

“...I raised thee up under the apple tree...”

This carries us back to the 2nd chapter and 3rd verse of our text, in which He, Jesus, was likened unto **“...the apple tree among the trees of the wood...”**

“...there (under the apple tree) thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.” The church was established by Jesus, and founded upon Jesus.

Matthew 16:18 **“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock (Jesus) I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”**

Also here in our text the thought of the spiritual conception, and birth of those who make up the Bride is again brought in view. He speaks of her mother who brought her forth

under the apple tree, and of “her that bear” the Bride.

We can see that it is not the Gentile world, out of which the Bride is called, that is indicated here, but her spiritual mother. She was born of the Holy Spirit, and brought up in Christ. Her life is His life, imparted to her in the regenerating work of the Spirit of God.

The church was established by Jesus, founded upon Jesus, brought up in Jesus, and ultimately to be presented to Jesus, when He shall come to take her up out of this wilderness of sin and sorrow, until the tribulation is over.

Isaiah, the Prophet, foretold this in Isaiah 26:20-21:

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”

We also hear Jesus speaking to the Philadelphian Church, in Revelation 3:10,

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

Yes, beloved, before the tribulation, and the outpouring of God’s wrath upon the earth, Jesus will come, as a thief in the night, and lead His beloved Bride out of the wilderness of this sinful world.

III.

The Seal Of The Bridegroom

Verses 6-7 **“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”**

We must remember that all of the beautiful truths concerning Jesus and His church are set forth under the types of human experiences, things which we ordinarily see in our daily lives, things which we can understand. And among these experiences of love, courtship; and marriage, there is a practice known as “engagement,” or “being engaged.” What we in the modern world call “the engagement” of a man and woman is really the counter-part of the Bible meaning of “betrothal.” It is simply a mutual contract for a future marriage. And where there is real love between the parties involved, that contract is a sacred thing. In the

Bible sense of the matter, “betrothal,” or “espousal,” was almost, equivalent to marriage. The fact of the matter is, it was legally as binding, and only lacked the actual consummation of the marriage to be complete.

The Bible tells us that Joseph was espoused to Mary, who was a virgin; she had never known a man. And when it was known that she was with child, he, thinking that she had proved untrue to that espousal, or marriage contract, was about to put her away privately, until God revealed to him that she was to become the mother of Jesus, who had been begotten by the miraculous power of God. The marriage relation of Joseph and Mary was never consummated until after the birth of Jesus; however, it was a sacred and binding thing, and their love was real and true. See Matthew 1:18-25.

So an engagement, or betrothal of a man and woman should be based only upon true love, and should be honored and cherished as a sacred contract. It is a sad fact that, all too often, these matters are treated very lightly by many people in our generation. Love and marriage have almost become a joke.

The most common practice in betrothal, or engagement is for the man to place an engagement ring upon the finger of his bride-to-be, which ring is to become a seal, or sign, of their sworn love and fidelity, while awaiting their wedding day. The ring, an endless circle, is an emblem of eternity, and should neither be given, nor received lightly. Wherever the woman may go, the ring upon her finger should speak the silent message to all: “He loves me more than all others, and I have returned that love; we have pledged our eternal faithfulness to each other; I am his, and he is mine; one day we shall come together in marriage, and make a home together until death do us part.” The ring is the outward seal of the inward love.

Thus we can see the meaning of the Bridegroom’s words, as He speaks to His Bride-to-be, **“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm...”**

This seal is the seal of the Holy Spirit, who imprints the very image of Jesus upon the heart, and upon the life of believers. The seal upon the heart is the inward work of the Holy Spirit, in which the life and nature of Jesus becomes our very won; and the seal upon the arm is Jesus put on outwardly: in a ceremonial way in baptism, and morally in the new Christian conduct of the believer. We see this in II Corinthians 3:18.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Romans 8:29, **“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”**

Romans 13:14 **“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ...”**

Galatians 3:27 **“For as many of you as have been baptized into (in reference to) Christ have put on Christ.”**

Now the Lord Jesus Christ gave both an inward and an outward seal of love, and espousal to His Bride – expressed, of course, through the individual believers who make up the Bride.

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart...”He says. And, of course, we know that His seal is the seal of the Holy Spirit. The following scriptures verify this:

Ephesians 1:13-14 **“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”**

Ephesians 4:30 **“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

II Corinthians 1:21-22 **“Now he which stablish-eth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”**

Then comes that great triumphant declaration in Paul’s second letter to Timothy:

II Timothy 2:19 **“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord know-eth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”**

In all of the above scriptures we have the engagement, the betrothal, of Jesus and His own, proved by His seal of the Holy Spirit within the heart, and signified by the seal of His ceremonials without.

The Bride need not fret, nor fear; she must not doubt, for He will surely return for her. She has His seal to give assurance.

There are five wonderful truths in the above scriptures, which I shall discuss briefly – five things concerning the Bridegroom’s seal, or the seal of the Holy Spirit:

1. The seal of the Holy Spirit means *Ownership*. When one hears the gospel, and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, then, according to these scriptures, that one is sealed unto God by the Holy Spirit. In other words, he is “born again.” The Holy Spirit has imparted the life and nature of Jesus Himself in that heart.

Paul speaks of a great mystery, Colossians 1:27 **“...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”**

Colossians 2:10 **“And ye are complete in him...”**

Colossians 3:3 **“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”**

The seal of the Holy Spirit is the mark of God’s ownership. It shows His authority.

Legal documents usually have an official seal upon them. A document of the Federal Government will have the official seal of that government stamped upon it. So God's official seal of the Holy Spirit is upon the heart of every believer.

It is as though Jesus is saying, *"This is my possession; I purchased this with my own blood; the official seal of my ownership is upon this soul, it belongs only to me."*

2. The seal of the Holy Spirit means *Identification*. When a person believes on Christ, and is sealed unto God, then he is a separate person – separate and distinct from the world. In John 17:16, Jesus is praying for His own, **"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."**

John 15:19 **"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, there-fore the world hateth you."**

The seal of the Holy Spirit identifies the believer with Christ. **"The Lord knoweth them that are His;"** He has His mark upon them.

When I was a boy, we lived up in Lyon County, Kentucky, in an area lying along the Cumberland River. There was a great section of the country that was mainly woodland, and, being owned by a company, it was unfenced – just a wild timbered area which, for some strange reason unknown to me, was called "The Colons." There were no stock laws at that time, and most everyone allowed their stock to range free throughout the area. There was fine grazing for stock in the many little thickets, vales, and woodland meadows. In the early spring we would turn the cattle out and let them go.

However, we did not fear but that we would get every one of our own back in the fall, for, before they went out of the lot gate, and began mixing with other cattle, we clamped tags in their ears, and upon those tags was imprinted the name of the owner.

They might go out as calves, and grow to be cows before we got them back; they might go out poor and ragged, and in the autumn we would drive them in fat and fine; but we did not fear that we would lose them, for they bore a mark of identification.

John 10:27 Jesus said, **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."**

3. The seal of the Holy Spirit means *Security, or Preservation*. It is like women sealing the fruit which they can, or preserve; they seal it that it may not spoil. When it is properly put up, and properly sealed, it will keep indefinitely. So the Holy Spirit seals, or secures us, unto God, in Christ.

Speaking of His sheep who are known of Him, Jesus further declares, John 10:28-29 **"And I give unto them ETERNAL life; and they shall NEVER perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all;**

and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

He did not say, that He would give them life for a long time; He did not say, that He would give them life if they produced enough good works; He did not say, that He would give them life if they held out faithful. Oh, go read it. Brother, He said, **"...I give unto them eternal life, and they shall NEVER perish..."**

John 5:24 **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent, me, hath EVERLASTING life, and SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION, but is passed from death unto life."**

In John 3:15, it is "ETERNAL life;" in John 3:16 "EVERLASTING life;" and in John 3:36 "EVERLASTING life," and so on, and on.

Mark 3:27 **"No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."**

Those are Jesus' own words. Beloved, before Satan can spoil, or destroy the works of Christ, he must first be able to bind Christ, and that he is not able to do. God's seal of the Holy Spirit is upon the believer's soul, and that is His guarantee of eternal security. The duration of that seal is seen in Ephesians 1:14, **"...until the redemption of the purchased possession..."** and in Ephesians 4:30, **"...ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."**

With all of my heart and soul I must stand upon the precious doctrine of The Eternal Security of The Believer, as taught in this Bible. However, we cannot make an exhaustive study of this doctrine in this volume. A few suggestive thoughts as we go along is the most we can give here.

4. The seal of the Holy Spirit means *Assurance* – it is a *Pledge*. II Corinthians 1:22 tells us, that God has sealed us, and **"...given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."**

Now, that word "earnest" means pledge. God has put His pledge in our hearts, indicating that we are His, and giving us blessed assurance that we are saved.

Romans 8:16 **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."**

In II Corinthians 5:5 we are told, that God **"...also hath given unto us the earnest (pledge) of the Spirit."** And for that reason (verse 5) *"we are always confident."*

In Ephesians 1:14 we are again told of **"...the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession..."**

These, and many other scriptures, such as I John 2:20, and 27, bear out the fact, that the seal of the Holy Spirit means assurance.

The position, the security, the assurance of the believer is only in Christ. We are in Him, and He is in us.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul speaks of **"...Christ in you, the hope of glory."**

1:27; **“perfect in Christ Jesus...”** 1:28; **“And ye are complete in him...”**
2:10.

Then he declares in I Corinthians 6:17, **“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”**

In the 1st chapter of Ephesians alone, twelve times we see the believer’s position *in Christ*: Verse 1: **“...to the faithful IN CHRIST Jesus...”** verse 2: We see peace FROM CHRIST; verse 3: we are blessed “IN CHRIST;” verse 4, we are chosen “IN HIM;” verse 5 predestinated “BY JESUS CHRIST;” verse 6: “accepted IN THE BELOVED;” verse 7: “IN WHOM we have redemption;” verse 10: He will gather together in one all things “IN CHRIST;” verse 11: “IN WHOM” we have an inheritance; verse 12: we “trusted IN CHRIST;” verse 13: hearing followed by faith IN CHRIST; and “sealed” in Him.

5. Finally, in this seal of the Holy Spirit we have *An incentive to Faithfulness*. In II Timothy 2:19, where He speaks of the sureness of the seal, He then admonishes, **“...Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”** If the image of our loving, merciful, crucified, risen, living Lord, imprinted in our hearts is not enough to incite, and to inspire us to faithfulness, and obedience, then I do not know what will.

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart...” He says to His Bride. “You are mine; I purchased you with my own blood. The seal of my ownership is upon your heart, so there can be no question as to your identity. My seal is your security; you need not be afraid, for no one shall ever be able to take you away from me. Let my seal be my pledge of assurance to you, that I will come again. And let this assurance, and this hope, be an incentive to you to be true to me, and to my love. Comfort yourself with my promises, and press on in the conflict, for I will come again.

I have seen a woman, whose fiancé was called away to war for an indefinite time, and whose wedding plans were thus necessarily postponed – I have seen such a woman carry a cherished photograph of her absent lover, and keep it ever near her, in her bosom, or over her heart. The image of his face kept close to her heart seemed always to remind her of her sacred vows, and to comfort her heart with the hope that he would return one day. But what a tragedy if she shall prove untrue, and when he returns he finds that she has failed him. Surely it would break his heart.

We love Jesus, but sometimes we do not prove it. We cry, “Lord, Lord,” and then fail to do what He says.

We sing, “Oh how I love Jesus,” then go out to walk in forbidden paths, and bring reproach and shame upon His dear Name.

One day He whispered down to a lost, and sin-sick world, and said, “I love you.” Then He went and proved that love with every drop of His life blood which ran down upon the

cross of Calvary. He loved His Betrothed, and gave Himself for her; His image is implanted in her heart; surely she will be true and faithful until He returns.

We must not overlook the outward aspects of this seal of Jesus: Not only did He beseech His loved one to set Him as a seal upon her heart, but He likewise said, “...**as a seal upon thine arm...**” This is her outward identification; this is like the engagement ring upon a woman’s finger. It says to all who may look upon her, “I am not in the market; I am spoken for; I belong to another. I shall one day become the Bride of my Beloved, who pledged His troth with this ring; I cannot go out to play, and to flirt with the world, for it would be untrue to Him.”

As Jesus gave the seal of the Holy Spirit in the heart, so He gave the outward mark of identification, which is the ordinance of scriptural Baptism. We cannot enter into a full study of the doctrine of Baptism here, but we must take some notice of it, because it is the outward seal, or sign of the inward experience of grace in salvation.

Jesus gave the ordinance of Baptism to His church, and she alone has the right to administer it. No one but the Bride-to-be has a right to wear the engagement ring; and no one but a New Testament Church (a church of Jesus Christ) has a right to administer the ordinance of Baptism.

To be scriptural, Baptism must be: *only by immersion in water, only by the authority of a New Testament Church, only administered to one who has been saved* – sealed by the Holy Spirit, and *only as an act of obedience*, to show that individual’s faith in Jesus, who died, was buried, and who rose again.

In addition to the ordinance of Baptism, Jesus gave His church the Memorial Supper (The Lord’s Supper). This, too, is strictly a church ordinance, to be administered, and observed, by the local New Testament Congregation only.

These two ordinances show four great cardinal facts of the gospel: the death, burial, resurrection, and coming again of Jesus. These are the things that mean so much to the Bride.

She wears the seal of the Holy Spirit in her heart, and the sign of Baptism in her outward life. That ordinance of Baptism says to the world, “I am my Beloved’s, and He is mine; I belong to Jesus my Saviour; He is coming again for me one day, and together we shall go into The Marriage Supper in glory.”

IV. The Eternity of Love

In connection with the seal, which the Bridegroom admonishes the Bride to wear in her

heart, and on her arm, He speaks of love – His love, her love, all true love. “...for love is strong as death...”

He has thus pledged to her His undying love. Love is the greatest thing in the world, I John 4:8 “...for God is love.”

The marriage relationship of Jesus and His Bride is bound in that eternal love. No marriage should be made on any other basis. It is a beautiful thing for a man and woman to truly love each other, and to enter into marriage and home-building together. One of the greatest tragedies in this modern age is that so many people enter into marriage lightly, and without love. Love may be an old-fashioned thing, but it lives, and holds, when other things have died.

True love transcends death; it cannot be buried in the tomb; it does not fade with the fading flowers.

“**Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it...**” This is what the Bridegroom is saying to His Bride, in the avowal of His eternal, unchanging love for her. True love lives through the storm, and flame, and flood, and poverty; it does not see the ugliness and blemishes; it bears patiently with the faults and weaknesses.

It is “the more excellent way.” so fittingly described in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians. That last great verse speaks of the three things which are uppermost in the relation of Jesus and His church: verse 13 “**And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.**”

True love cannot be bought with silver and gold; it has no price; it knows no bribes. You may buy services, you may buy favors and return privileges, but you cannot buy the true love of a person’s heart. It can only be freely given. He said, “...if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”

The love of Christ falls into three channels: His love to us, our love to Him, and His love in us, expressed to others.

Jesus loved us first, and we did not merit that love. He proved His love with every drop of His precious blood shed for our sins on Calvary.

I John 4:19 “**We love him, because he first loved us.**” Because we love and trust Him we do not fear.

I John 4:18 “**There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear...**”

The Bride knows that she is the object of His love; therefore she has no fear. She does not doubt that he will come again for her one day. There is nothing that makes us feel quite so secure as the knowledge that we are truly loved.

His love in our hearts makes us love others. I John 3:14 “**We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...**” I John 5:1 “...every one

that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

Jesus loves His Bride; the Bride loves Him in return; and because of this mutual affection, this oneness with Him, she loves a lost world that He loves. *“The love of Christ constraineth”* her.

Such love, such longing, such tender affection as theirs, bridges the chasm of the centuries, reaches, like Jacob’s Ladder, from earth to heaven, weathers the tempests of life, withstands the onslaughts of Satan, and presses on in patient, faithful service, in anticipation of a glad reunion day.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE BRIDE'S "LITTLE SISTER"

Song of Solomon 8:8-9

Beginning chapter fourteen of this volume, we have a couple of verses for consideration which are possibly more obscure than any other part of The Song of Solomon. And, though I may not be able to assist the reader in arriving at wholly satisfactory conclusions, I hope to suggest some leads that may provoke to greater study.

"We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar."

As stated above, these verses are possibly more obscure than any other part of our text, and in all of our research through the years, we have found little, if any comment on this part. Various questions would normally press our minds for an answer here. One of the first, and probably the key question, is: What possible connection can there be between the Bridegroom's discussion of His seal, and His declaration of eternal love, and the "little sister" mentioned here?

Then, of course, we are challenged with the question of the identity of the little sister who has no breasts.

Through my more than thirty-six years of study in the scriptures, and in the great deal of time devoted to a study of The Song of Solomon, I have thought much upon these two verses, and I have arrived at, what to me is, the only logical conclusion. This I shall proceed to offer you here.

I am not dogmatic in what I offer on these two verses; neither am I trying to force my own interpretations upon others. I can only say, that my own mind is satisfied; I believe that the Spirit of God has directed me in these studies; so I pass them on to you. If these thoughts can be of any help to others, then may all glory be to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

I.

The Identity of the Little Sister

"We have a little sister..." Now who can this little sister be? Who can be a sister of the Gentile Bride of Christ?

To me, the only logical answer is, "*Israel.*" I do not speak of National Israel. For by far

the majority of those who are of the Jewish Nation will never be saved; the same is true of the Jews in their past history. There has ever been, and is, a true remnant, but the vast majority of the Jews are lost, and that because of unbelief. Go back to the 3rd chapter of Hebrews, and read the account of God's dealings with those rebellious, unbelieving Jews in the wilderness:

Hebrews 3:17-19 **“But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?”**

The Jews were not saved simply because they were of Jewish nationality; but “by grace, through faith,” just like anyone else. They boasted that they were Abraham's children, and, therefore not in bondage; however, Jesus settled that matter in short order, in John 8:31-44. He showed them that, even though they might be of the lineage of Abraham by birth, spiritually they were of their father, the Devil. I cannot give all of the scripture quotations here, but I urge the reader to look up, and to read each of the references given.

We must not over-look the fact, Romans 10:12-13 **“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

The relationship of the Bride and the “little sister” is a spiritual relationship. For two people to be truly sisters they must be begotten by the same father, and given birth by the same mother; they must be of the same blood; they must have the same characteristic inward nature and they must be born to the same inheritance.

These things are definitely true of the church, the Bride of Jesus, and of Israel, the “little sister.” There are so many scriptures that deal with this relationship, that we shall find it impossible to examine them all in this study; however we shall look into a few of them as space permits.

In the 2nd chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church, beginning with the 11th verse, and thereafter, he discusses the relation of Jew and Gentile to God's covenants of promise.

He calls attention to the former estate of the Gentiles, that they were:

1. Without identification – in uncircumcision.
2. Without a Saviour – **“...at that time ye were without Christ...”**
3. Without citizenship – **“...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel...”**
4. Without a covenant – **“...strangers from the covenants of promise...”**
5. Without hope – **“...having no hope...”**
6. Without a God – **“...without God in the world.”**
7. Without prospect – “ye were far off.”

All of these conditions were changed, however, in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:13 **“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”**

Ephesians 2:19 **“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”**

Verses 14-18 in this selection of scripture tell us many things. We cannot quote all of them here, but will try to point out a few facts:

Verse 14 tells us that Jesus has broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and has made both one.

Verses 15 and 16 tell us that Jesus fulfilled, and did away with the demands of the law in His own flesh – that is, through the sacrifice of Himself on the cross of Calvary He met, and satisfied every claim of the law, and thereby established through Himself one common relation to God of both Jew and Gentile.

Verse 17 shows us, that peace was the product of the cross for Jew and Gentile alike.

Then verse 18 clinches the whole thing; it is more significant than all. **“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**

Spiritually, both the Jews and the Gentiles are saved through the same blood, of the same Jesus, and are born of the same Holy Spirit, unto the same Father, God. They belong to the same Royal Family, and are of the same kingdom; hence, in every sense of the word, they are sisters. Jesus, the Saviour of Israel is the Founder and Saviour of The New Testament Church.

As previously stated, it is spiritual Israel, not just the Jews as a nationality, that we are speaking of. The Bible makes it plain that there is a vast difference in national, and spiritual Israel.

In the 9th chapter of Romans, Paul speaks of his great heart-burden for his “brethren,” his “kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Romans 9:3-5 **“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”**

Even though they had all of these special advantages, yet the apostle made it plain, that, generally speaking, he considered them a lost people. And the burden of his heart was so great for them, that he could wish himself accursed from Christ if it would mean their salvation.

Romans 10:1-4 **“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not**

according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

So we can plainly see that national Israel were many, but spiritual Israel were few – only Romans 11:5 **"...a remnant according to the election of grace."**

In Romans 9:6-8 we are shown the difference in national, and spiritual Israel – our proposition is, that spiritual Israel is the "little sister." **"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."**

Now let us notice some other scriptures that shed light upon this matter:

Galatians 3:7-9 **"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (Gentiles) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith (Jew or Gentile) are blessed with faithful Abraham."**

Galatians 3:13 tells us of our redemption from the curse of the law through the death of Jesus on Calvary. The 14th verse tells us why: **"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."**

Galatians 3:26,29 **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus...And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

All of these scriptures verify, and sustain the proposition, that spiritual Israel is the "little sister." As we go on, it will become more obvious why she is thus designated the lesser one. Also we shall see that, according to the infinite purpose and plan of God, *"all of national Israel shall ultimately become spiritual Israel."*

II.

The Little Sister's Immaturity

"...she hath no breasts..."

This description of the little sister, as having no breasts, really means that she is not yet grown up; she is immature; she is not yet ready for marriage.

May the reader please keep in mind that we are not looking here at national Israel, as the adulterous wife of Jehovah; but we are looking at spiritual Israel, who one day will blossom out into a beautiful woman, and will be spoken for, as we shall show – but only after the marriage of the Lamb with His Gentile Bride. I repeat: national Israel shall ultimately become spiritual Israel.

The little sister is not yet developed into a woman; therefore she will not be spoken for, nor become the object of marital love, until some time yet future. She is still a child, so, of course, does not have the form, the figure, nor the breasts of a woman who is ready for marriage, as does the Bride.

I refer the reader to chapter 4 of our text, chapter 7 of this volume, in which the breasts of the Bride are discussed in detail. It is generally considered that the bust, or breast of a woman is one primary focal point of feminine beauty. The full, well-developed breasts are characteristic of the more beautiful forms of the feminine body. Therefore, one point in which the Bride excels the “little sister” is in her beauty.

The Bride, who is Christ’s Church, has been spoken for; the “little sister,” who is Israel, has been given up until after the marriage of the Lamb.

Israel’s development into full-grown womanhood will come about through testing and trials, culminating in the great tribulation. She must go unnoticed now, in a sense; another, who is more ready for marriage, has taken her place.

It would be very profitable to the reader just here to study the 9th, and the 11th chapters of Romans.

The Bride, whose breasts are fully developed – she being a full-grown, beautiful woman – is able to provide a sufficiency of spiritual nourishment; but the “little sister” is just a child, she has no breasts; therefore she has no spiritual nourishment to give. In other words, the Church of Jesus Christ has a spiritual ministry in which to bless the world today, that Israel, in her blindness, can never give.

III.

The Little Sister Spoken For

“...what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?”

We have said that the little sister is Israel. She is small, insignificant, and unnoticed, as far as the world is concerned. Likewise she is given up by the Lord Jesus Christ until that day, unknown to us, when He shall have come for His chosen Bride, and then, together with her, after the marriage supper, He shall come to earth to rescue and save Israel. This will be after the tribulation, through which Israel shall have been prepared for Jesus’ second

offer of Himself to her. The little sister shall have grown up to womanhood through testing and trials, and she will be spoken for in that day.

Here the words of Jesus to the Jews, Matthew 23:37-39 **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”**

He is here giving them up. And He is saying in so many words, that for a time they are to be forsaken. But the day will come when Israel is prepared to be a true wife; then she will be spoken for.

We have said, that only a minority of national Israel shall come through the tribulation, and stand finally in full-grown womanhood as the sister to be spoken for. This is made plain in the words of the Prophet, Zechariah.

Zechariah 13:8-9 **“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.”**

This plainly indicates that the third part of Israel remaining after the great tribulation will be saved. Zechariah 12:10 to 13:1 tells us of how the spirit of grace shall be poured out upon them; of how they will mourn in true repentance when they look upon Him whom they pierced; and of the fountain of salvation opened to them for sin and uncleanness.

The 14th chapter of Zechariah tells of the return of Jesus to the Mount of Olives, in the revelation of His glory, to rescue the “little sister” from complete destruction. This is after the marriage of the Lamb with His Bride, the church, which event will take place somewhere above in glory. This is when He returns with His saints to earth at the end of the great tribulation. This is the time when the “little sister” will be spoken for by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every Jew who helps to make up the remnant of the Jewish Nation at that time will be saved. A nation will be born in a day. The Prophet, Isaiah makes this very clear:

Isaiah 66:8-12 **“Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye**

that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.”

Reading on through this 66th chapter of Isaiah, we find that, after Israel is spoken for, or saved, in that day, then she shall begin to really fill the place, and fulfill the purpose which God had for her in the beginning.

In the Book of Romans, particularly chapters 9 and 11, Paul tells us about all of these things: the cutting off of Israel, the turning to the Gentiles, and the ultimate salvation of the Jews, when national Israel becomes spiritual Israel. Yes, the “little sister” will be spoken for, and at that time she will be ready for marriage.

Romans 11:23 **“And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.”**

Romans 11:25 makes still clearer the fact that spiritual Israel – that is the saved remnant – is the “little sister” of the Bride, unspoken for as yet, but to be chosen after Christ’s marriage to the Gentile Bride. **“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”**

Paul tells us, that all Israel shall be saved – that is, all who are spared through the tribulation – and he also tells us when this shall take place:

Romans 11:26 **“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”**

The time of this glorious occasion is when the Deliverer (Christ) comes from glory, as we have shown in the preceding scriptures.

After the First Resurrection and The Rapture, after the marriage of Christ and His Bride in glory, and at the time of the very peak of the Great Tribulation, in which the Jewish Nation is in the darkest hour of their history, then Jesus will come with His saints, and all of the heavenly hosts, and will overthrow the Man of Sin and all of his forces. Then the Jews remaining on earth shall look upon Him (Jesus), and at last recognize Him as their Messiah. Like the brethren of Joseph down in Egypt recognized him, whom they had sold into slavery so long ago, and fell at his feet in true penitence to beg his forgiveness; so will the nation who delivered Jesus up to be crucified, realize at last their terrible sin, and will cry for His forgiveness; and as Joseph put his arms around his guilty brethren and forgave them freely, even so will Jesus freely forgive the Jews, and will take them forever to His

heart.

Yes, this is when the Bride's "little sister" will be spoken for.

IV.

What Shall Be Done For The Little Sister?

We have learned the identity of the "little sister" who has no breasts; and we have found that one day she will be ready for marriage, and will be spoken for by the Lord – after The Marriage of the Lamb with His Bride, the church. Now the Bride's question is – and she is speaking to the Bridegroom – **"...what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?"** In other words, what is going to happen to her in that day? What place will she fill in God's great household?

There is unlimited information to be found in the revelation of God's Book, the Bible, on the answer to these questions; however we must forego the temptation to make an extensive study of these things in this volume, lest it become too voluminous. We must confine our discussion to a few simple things, and pray God that the reader may be incited to a more eager and earnest search after the treasures of truth.

The Bridegroom answers the question of the Bride in the 9th verse of the text: **"If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar."**

A wall signifies a number of things: It may mean privacy, protection, security, separation, et cetera, et cetera. We have often seen a high wall built around an estate to insure privacy for the owners; to get inside the enclosure one must pass through some aperture in the wall. Now this thought can lead us into some interesting meditations concerning God's ultimate purpose with Israel.

In singing of Jerusalem, the Holy City, the seat of the kingdom, David said in Psalm 122:5-8 **"For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."**

Throughout the scriptures the thought of the peace and prosperity of the kingdom is always definitely associated with God's purpose for the restoration and salvation of Israel.

In our text the Bridegroom says, that if the "little sister" be a wall, then a palace of silver will be built upon her. We have already observed that silver represents, or symbolizes redemption; so to build upon her a palace of silver is to indicate the certainty of her ultimate salvation. That fact we have already discussed at some length.

Speaking of this day of Israel's salvation, or the day in which she shall be spoken for,

Isaiah, the prophet says in Isaiah 26:1-2 **“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.”**

There are so many scriptures which teach of the future glory of redeemed Israel, and of their triumph in the kingdom, that it is impossible to discuss them here.

Zechariah 8:22-23 **“Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”**

In these scriptures we can see the sense in which the Jews (the “little sister”) become “a wall” in the kingdom age. Perhaps the most beautiful and comprehensive of all of the prophecies of these things is given in the 60th chapter of Isaiah, a goodly portion of which we quote as follows:

Isaiah 60:1-5 **“Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.”**

Verses 10-22 **“And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night: that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck**

the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.”

A careful study of the above scriptures will, I feel sure, bear out the interpretation which we have given concerning the “little sister.”

Not only do we see the “wall” aspect of her character – that is, as a medium of divine blessing and protection to the world in the kingdom age – but we see her as a medium of access. The Bridegroom says, **“...if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.”**

In that day of Israel’s salvation she will be a wall unto God in the kingdom. And, because it will be seen by all the world that God is with her, all men will try to be in her favor. Likewise in that day (the kingdom age) she will be like a door of access; for then Israel will have come at last to fill the place that God originally purposed for her: to be His witnesses. See Isaiah 43:10-12.

Inclosed “with boards of cedar” speaks of her eternal security in Christ.

This; my friends, is the truth as I, by God’s help, am able to see it.

First, the time of Jesus’ courtship of His Gentile Bride, the church; then His return for her, when they will go in to The Marriage Supper together; and after that, His return to the earth to take unto Himself the “little sister,” Israel, and to reign with these His loved ones in the peace and glory of the millennial kingdom.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WATCHING FOR THE BRIDEGROOM'S RETURN

Song of Solomon 8:10-14

“I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”

In the preceding chapter we heard the Bride and the Bridegroom discussing the future of the “little sister,” Israel. It was suggested that, in the day when she should be spoken for, and taken in marriage – the day in which Israel will be saved – she would be like a wall, or door. In other words, it will mean security, because God will be with the Jews in a special way; and it will mean access, or entrance into the blessings of the kingdom, for God will deal with the nations through the ministry of the Jews, his witnesses in that age. The throne upon which Jesus shall reign as King of Kings will be the Davidic throne, as promised of God through the ages. The scriptures on this are too numerous to give here.

I.

The Bride's Favour in the Bridegroom's Sight

The Bridegroom having foretold of the future glory of the “little sister,” Israel, who will, after her marriage one day, be as a wall, the Bride immediately calls attention to the fact that she (the church) is already a wall, and her breasts are like towers.

“I am a wall...” she says. If Israel is destined to be a medium of special blessings to the world somewhere in the future; then let us not overlook the fact that the church of Jesus Christ fills that role today. She is now Christ's agency of blessing; hers is the ministry of hope and life; hers is the responsibility of the kingdom work. She is indeed “a wall” – a wall of security and protection – and for her sake the long-suffering of Christ continues in a

world of iniquity.

The Bride seeks to draw the attention of the Bridegroom to her beauty and importance now. She wants Him to give His loving care and interest to her, rather than to talk of the future excellencies of the little sister. She is saying, "Look upon me. I am a full grown, fully matured woman; I am ready for marriage now; my breasts are like towers. I can give love and companion-ship to my husband; I can nourish my children, and satisfy their needs of motherly care and comfort. I can fill the role of a wife and mother; I should be sought for love and marriage now."

Thus she appeals to her Beloved; she uses her feminine attractions to draw forth His love and interest. She is eager for the wedding day – that special day for which every young bride-to-be plans with such happy excitement.

Now notice, as she stands in her virgin beauty of young womanhood, with such character and quality, so well equipped to fill the role of wife and mother. He looks upon her with such love and tenderness, as was never lavished upon a woman. And she can say, **"...then was I in his eyes as one that found favour."**

She, Christ's Church, found favour in His eyes. The word "favour" used here means: peace. Throughout the Bible that favour is revealed; it is His "Amazing Grace." And in that grace we stand accepted. His favour is upon His church. She is beautiful and most dear to Him. She is His Bride. She is to mother His children.

As the virgin Mary, who knew no man after the flesh, conceived by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, and brought forth and mothered the Son of God; so the virgin Bride of Christ, His church, not in her self, but by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, working through her gospel ministry here in the world, brings forth, and mothers; the children of her Lord.

In the sight of Jesus, she, who is a wall, and whose breasts are like towers, stands favoured with His first and greatest love.

II.

The Bride A Keeper Of His Vineyard

We have previously discussed the fact that King Solomon is found to be a type of Jesus. Certainly there is no exception to the rule in verses 11 and 12 in our text. It will be noted that only one vineyard is mentioned:

"Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon..."

Now there are many observations which could be made here, and many scriptures bearing upon them; however I do not consider it necessary to take up a lot of time and

space in discussing this. The most casual reader cannot fail to observe that the vineyard is that realm, or scope of God's kingdom work here on the earth. The purpose of a vineyard is that it shall bring forth fruit. Now our Lord desires spiritual fruit from His vineyard, and fundamentally that fruit is composed of redeemed souls. In other words, Christ wants souls. Every means of Grace that He has ordained for use in His vineyard here is that souls be saved. Children of God are the fruit of the vineyard.

Our text says, **"...he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver."** We know, without question, that silver represents redemption in the Bible; it is the price of redemption; hence, as used here, it indicates that Jesus, the owner of the vineyard, requires a return of souls from the keepers for the use thereof. We reap the fulness of divine blessings from God's kingdom here in the earth. He furnishes all of the capital resources; we feed upon the fruit thereof; and He asks for souls as hire.

But who are the keepers? They, beloved, are the individual, local, New Testament Churches, into whose hands have been given the affairs of the kingdom of God here in the world. Each local New Testament Church is a keeper of some part of God's moral vineyard, and is responsible in a special way for the returns unto God of that particular portion of the vineyard. As we have said numerous times before, the aggregation of these true, local, New Testament Churches will make up the Bride of Christ in the final analysis. When we use the term "church" in a general sense, we either mean the church as she will one day be, the completed Bride, or the church as an institution, which may apply to any, or every, true local body. It can never mean a universal, invisible something. Such a thing is unknown to the Bible.

What a challenge there is today to the local churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, as keepers of His vineyard. I fear that the returns from most of them are small.

Now in the 12th verse of the text, the Bride, in a general way, assumes the responsibility of the whole vineyard. She sees the world as a missionary challenge.

"My vineyard, which is mine, is before me..."

World-wide missions is the mission of the church – the true church of Jesus Christ. And remember this: He said, that there are many queens, concubines and virgins, but only one true love. There are many commendable organizations of the world, and many institutions which call themselves churches; but Jesus established but one kind of church, and to her alone He promised perpetuity. She continues today in the persons of many, many local churches made after the likeness of the first one, preaching the same doctrine, and carrying on the same great missionary program that He gave to His church in the beginning. He is looking to her, and to her alone, to take care of His vineyard. She must

not be lured away by these false ones to look after the vineyards of the world, and neglect the vineyard of her Lord.

She eagerly awaits His return, and she hopes to please Him with a faithful account of her stewardship.

III.

The Bride's Increasing Eagerness

The Bride begins to experience an increasing eagerness, a growing impatience for the return of her Beloved. It has been so long, and she has become so lonely. In her dreams she envisions His beloved face, and in her waking hours she listens for the sound of His tender voice.

“Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.”

In her prayers she has whispered across the pathless skies to Him; and in the glory-gilded pages of the Bible He has spoken to her, also in the still small voice within her soul. They have thus communed with one another. But she longs to see Him face to face; she hungers for the audible sound of His voice; she aches for the comfort of His caresses. In her longing she cries out in the silence of the night.

“Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”

She has waited so long for His return – more than nineteen centuries – and His promises have been her hope. He told her to watch, and wait, and be faithful; He promised that, after He had prepared a place for her, He would return for the wedding, and they would be happy together for evermore.

Oh yes, He is coming again. She believes it with all of her heart. He said that He would come, and she trusts Him implicitly; He will not fail her.

HE IS COMING AGAIN!

The Patriarchs believed it.

The Prophets foretold it.

Jesus Himself promised it.

The Apostles preached it.

The Apostolic Churches served and suffered in the constant expectation of it.

The Angels declared it.

The Bride is full of the promises of it.

The heart of every consecrated Christian longs for it.

It is said that 1500 references to this glorious doctrine occur in the Old Testament alone, and 318 in the New Testament, or an average of one verse in twenty-five.

Every book and writer in the New Testament mentions it except Galatians and Philemon.

Every chapter in I Thessalonians ends with it.

Paul gives fifty direct references to it, while only fifteen to baptism.

The theme of both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, and of the whole Book of Revelation, is Christ's coming again.

Titus 2:12-13 **"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."**

Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming again, literally, bodily, personally, pre-millennially.

The Bride does not doubt that He will come. In the midnight she listens for the sound of His chariot wheels rolling down the pathless skies, in the dawning of the morning, in the noonday sun, and as the evening shadows fall, she is ever waiting to hear His foot fall at the door, or the whisper of her name.

She knows that her Beloved will come for her; and it seems that the signs on every hand indicate that it will not be long.

One day in Jerusalem, when Jesus had been teaching, as He and the disciples went out, Jesus fore-told the destruction of the temple. Later, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, His disciples came to Him with three important questions:

Matthew 24:3 **"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying. Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"**

1. "When shall these things be?"
2. "What shall be the signs of Thy coming?"
3. "And of the end of the world?"

The 24th chapter of Matthew, together with the parallel passages in the 21st chapter of Luke, will disclose the answers to these questions. Jesus describes the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the temple, which came to pass within the First Century. He set forth the signs which are to precede His return, and which will signalize that glorious event to His waiting Bride; yet He does not tell her "the day, nor the hour."

Matthew 24:32-33 **"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So like-wise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."**

Luke 21:28 **“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”**

We cannot here make a study of these “signs of the times,” but they are on every hand. And they are not given to a wicked, and adulterous generation. Matthew 16:1-4. They are given to the people of God.

1. There are signs in the world of finance.
2. There are signs in the religious world: apostasy of professing churches, cold formalism, etc.
3. Signs in modern transportation.
4. Signs of increasing and abounding sin - a great falling away.
5. Signs of war.
6. Missionary signs.
7. Signs of international confusion.
8. Signs of world education, and science.
9. Geographical signs - earthquakes, etc.
10. Signs in the Jewish world.
11. The world-sweep of communism. Ezekiel 38 and 39 etc.
12. General preparation for Armageddon.

And there are many more, all of which say to the waiting, anxious Bride, that her Beloved will soon return. He commands her to be ready day and night:

Matthew 24:44 **“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”**

The Bride is now making herself ready for the wedding day; her attendants, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit, are helping her in the preparations.

There are so many scriptures bearing upon this, that we might just go on, and on, without exhausting the study; however, in bringing this treatise to a close, I wish to give some attention to two wonderful selections of scripture, which I think will fittingly terminate this volume:

The first of these scriptures is in the 45th Psalm. In this great Psalm we see Jesus, the Bridegroom-King, coming out of the ivory palaces of heaven, in all of the fragrance and beauty of His holiness, returning for His beloved Bride.

Psalm 45:8-9 **“All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.”**

Here we see the Bride, as queen, standing at the Bridegroom’s right hand, and dressed in all the finery of the bridal garments. The gold of Ophir indicates her divine

righteousness, and her royal standing. The honor-able women are her attendants at the wedding. They are saved, but not of the Bride; they will be at the wedding, but will not have the place of honor.

In the eyes of the Bridegroom-King, the beauty of the Bride stands out. She is the most beautiful thing in the world to Him.

Verse 11 **“So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.”**

Back in the 10th verse the Bride is urged to turn her back now upon the world from which she was chosen, to forget the past, and to concentrate upon her eternal future with the King in glory.

Verse 10 **“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house.”**

Then we see the Bride arrayed in all of her beautiful garments, which have been wrought, not given.

Verses 13-14 **“The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.”**

These are not the garments of imputed righteousness with which the believer is clothed of God, upon the exercise of his faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. This is a raiment of needlework which she, the Bride, has patiently and carefully wrought, stitch at a time, through the years, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and by the Word of God. She has been making herself ready for this wedding day; and each stitch in her wedding garments has been sewn with tender love, and fondest anticipation. She has done it all for Him, her Beloved.

The 15th verse anticipates the joy of the occasion:

“With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace.”

Then notice the joy of her motherhood, and the endless honor of her name:

Verses 16-17 **“Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.”**

The foregoing scriptures are anticipative. They look ahead, and visualize the joyous occasion of the Bridegroom’s return, and the presentation of the Bride to Him in all of her beauty. She wants so much to merit His approval; she is so eager to please Him with her appearance in the garments which she has wrought with such loving care.

The last scripture which I shall offer for examination is found in Revelation 19:7-9:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

It will be noted that this, too, is looking ahead to the marriage of the Lamb with His Bride, the church, which event will take place out there sometime in the indefinite future.

In this scripture, as in the 45th Psalm, we see the self-wrought garments of the Bride, in which she is clothing herself in readiness for the return of Jesus. Literally, the 8th verse says, **“...for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”** This is in the plural – righteous acts, or deeds of saints.

“...Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb...”

There is rejoicing now in the heart of the Bride as she anticipates the nearness of that glad day; and there will be such rejoicing then as we have never known. Heaven will ring with hallelujahs.

He is coming again! Hallelujah, hallelujah! She flushes with joy at the thought of it. I think that I can see her hurrying about the place, nervously rushing from one thing to another in her last minute preparations. Now and then she looks out the window, or runs to the door to look up the road, to see if He is coming. Frequently she pauses to listen a moment, hoping to hear the sound of His chariot wheels. Again and again she goes to face herself in her mirror – the mirror of God’s Word – to see if she looks just right. She wants so much for Him to be proud of her when she meets Him.

“Oh, what is keeping Him so long? Why does He not come? How can I wait? I am so weary; I am so lonely; I am so tired of waiting.”

Our text verse 14, **“Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”**

Oh yes, He will come. It may be when the evening shadows fall, at sunset, or in the twilight dim. It may be in the blackness of the midnight, as she tosses impatiently upon her pillows. It may be in the dawning of the day, at the sunrise, when the dew is sparkling on the grass. It may be in the heat of the noon-day sun, as the world is seething with meaningless activity. But whenever He comes, it will be sunrise in glory for her who has waited so long.

Isaiah 21:11-12 **“...He calleth to me out of Seir (tempest), Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night...”**

Dear friend, are you ready to meet Him? Is He your Saviour?

Can you honestly say with the Bride, His church, "Make haste, my beloved?"

He will come for His Bride and she, together with all of the saved, will go out to meet Him. They will go into God's great banqueting hall together and will sit down with the saints of all ages to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Here we must close; for there are no words to describe that heavenly scene.

I Corinthians 2:9 **"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."**

Revelation 22:20 **"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."**

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