

Consummation

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[0 : 00] Hmm. Question for people today. Is there actually a deep, deep truth that human beings were made for more than this life?

! More than things, but for more than things, for more than things, for more than things, for eternal person-to-person love. Question for us today. Is that actually what people were made for? Not just for this life, not for things, but for an eternal person-to-person love.

That sort of question gets raised by severe illness. You think, what's this life really all about? And the grave side. I think it was Spike Milligan who asked to have written on his grave, is that it then? It's a very good question. Is that it? It's just three score years and ten, is that it? Is there not more? We're not made for more than that? It's a question raised within our consciences and our intuitions, perhaps on a glorious sunset and a beautiful scene. You think there's more to life than just the things that we normally see. And of course, this issue is raised by these words from God in the text before us. What is life really all about? What were we really made for? What is our destination meant to be? Is there a consummation, a fulfilment, a fitting conclusion to life? I even dare to use this word that the

Bible uses, hope. Something beyond this life, beyond the grave, something that we're headed for and can anticipate with gladness and look forward to with joy. So the Song of Songs is where we're going to continue to be looking, as we've been looking before. Let me just do the introduction on this in case you're new to it. We ask the question, is this really a love song for human beings? And it starts off like that, doesn't it? Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. Seems very human. The Bible is not against sex. God invented sex for a reason. Is it embarrassing for a mourning servant? Well, you know, your breasts are like clusters of fruit. Well, yes, perhaps a little bit, not our normal mode of discourse, but it's not meant to be, leave us to be embarrassed, but to let us be stunned by the beauty of this.

And how is this to be interpreted? What are the people? What are the plot? Well, as Steve so well explained, this is about a girl and her bloke, and it seems to me, and I think it makes sense, that she sees him as her King Solomon, like, you know, he's my Prince Harry and she's my Meghan Markle, sort of royalty because they're getting married together. It's about human romance, but human romance is designed to be more than just human romance. It is designed to be an expression of the divine love for his people. And then we asked each week, is it any use? And I say, I think this is totally, really useful, very much use in this world, which is full of confusion about love and sex and gender. And here the Bible unashamedly celebrates the unmatched beauty and glory of a covenanted, meaning to say promised, faithful marriage, in other words, heterosexual, sexual love. That's the Song of Songs. Okay, so far, we looked generally, we looked through the text and we picked up themes like this, love and longing in the first bit, where she says, for example, tell me where you rest your sheep at midday,

[4 : 27] I'd like to come and have my lunch with you. Love and longing. We looked at courtship, how they speak to one another, how they address one another, and we saw that there was a sort of mutuality and an equality, but it's not an interchangeability. She says things to him that he does not say to her, and he says things to her that she does not say to him. So they match. They're not two of the same. They're different, but they match together. And then we looked at the, what I think is a dream sequence, where she's dreaming that she's lost him, and then she regains him. And we looked at that. And what we're going to look at today, as Steve said, is consummation. Consummation.

Now, what does consummation mean? It's a word which means to complete, to fulfil, to bring to its logical or necessary conclusion. So you could be a consummate, I can't remember an example, consummate artist, meaning you're the fulfilment of everything an artist ought to be. But in this

context of man and woman, the consummation that it's all heading towards is the wedding day, where in fairy stories they all live happily ever after. But we actually know life's more complicated than that, and even their lives in the song get more complicated than that.

But the focus of the wedding day, the coming together, and the fulfilment of person-to-person intimacy expressed physically in heterosexual sexual union as a consummation.

So this is what this is about. It's consummation. It's about a fulfilment. It's about finding the lover and having the lover. And that's why this question is raised. Is that actually what we're all made for? I'm not just talking about young people getting engaged. I'm talking about all of us, whatever age, whatever men and women. Is that not what we were made for? To have a relationship with our maker that has a consummation, that has an end point, that has a goal that we look forward to. So I repeat that question. Is there actually a deep, deep truth that human beings were made for more than just this life, more than things, but for an eternal person-to-person love? And of course that raises the question for us sort of day by day. If that's what I'm made for, you know, does that colour the way I live? It's not, this text is not asking the question, what are you doing? But it's saying, what are you desiring? It's not saying, what are you busy with?

It says, what is the key orientation of your heart that you are looking forward to above all? And of course the Apostle Paul would say, if you can be very, very busy doing all sorts of things, that if you have not love, he says you're a clanging symbol, you're a piece of reciprocating machinery, if what you are doing is not motivated by love. It's a challenge, isn't it, to Christian people? Do you remember the risen Jesus says to one of the churches, you do lots of stuff, but I have this against you, you've lost. Do you remember what it lost? Your first love.

[8 : 19] Here's the question this text asked us. Are we busy with the work of the Lord, or is our hearts set on the Lord of the work? They don't have to, you know, which is the prior thing, which is the thing that really drives us? I say this to myself, because a lot of my time is spent looking at a to-do list. I ask myself, is my focus on the work of the Lord, or should it be on the Lord of the work?

So let me just take the text apart for you, or analyse the text if I may. You have it there in front of you, and there are little sections, so the section, who is this coming up from the desert? Now, who is this? Well, that's a question, isn't it? So 1A, I think it's probably the coming of the bride. 1B, then we get this carriage, Solomon's carriage, escorted by 60 warriors.

Looks like the coming of the king. Behold Solomon's coach. Then in 4 onwards, as Steve described to us, the groom, the bridegroom praises the bride. You are beautiful, my darling. Oh, how beautiful. And he says, come with me, verse 8, and he addresses her as a garden. And then in 4, verse 16, we have the bride saying, inviting the north wind to come and blow on the garden. And we have the testimony of the groom, chapter 5, verse 1, I have come into my garden. And then finally, we have the encouragement of the friends who, I think if we were to translate it literally, would say, get tipsy on love. It's politely translated in 5, verse 1, drink your fill, oh lovers. But it seems to be a little bit more extreme statement than that. So that's the text. And what I'd like to do this morning is just go through the text, bearing in mind those are the sections, I will just go through it a bit at a time, make some comments as we go through. Okay? So this is about consummation. This is about the coming together. So let's look at the first verse there. Who is this coming from the desert like a column of smoke perfumed with myrrh and incense made from all the spices of the merchant?

It looks in the translation as though the answer is Solomon's carriage. So Solomon's carriage coming from the desert. It falters a little bit when apparently you look into the Hebrew because the who is, no, the this is feminine. So it looks as though it's saying, who is this lady coming up from the desert? Some of these things are difficult to be sure. I'll go with a lady coming. And she's perfumed. That's a smoke of wonderful perfume. And she's coming.

[11 : 26] And then we also have Solomon coming. This is my, my king is arriving. Verse 7. Behold, it is Solomon's something. Now again, there's a translation issue. Is it a coach? Is it a bed?

Is it a mobile bed? I do remember, as I was looking at this, I remember, it must be 40 years ago. Pastor Les preaching on this and saying the word palanquin. And I didn't know what a palanquin was then. And I still don't know what a palanquin is now. I think it is, I'm guessing it's a sort of litter. Do you know what I mean? With a bed with poles on the end of it and you carry the poles along and therefore you carry the bed along. That's sort of a mobile couch. That seems to make sense to me. So there's Solomon coming along with his wonderfully made carriage and his armed escort. It is Solomon's carriage escorted by 60 warriors, the noblest of Israel, all of them wearing a sword, all experienced for battle.

I mean, what sort of wedding reception are they expecting? They've got these armed men there. Anyway, anyway, perhaps it's for show. They're tough guys, noble warriors, each with his sword at his side, prepared for the terrors of the night or something like that. King Solomon made for himself the carriage. Seems a little unlikely. A king would get out his Black & Decker power tools and be making a carriage. But anyway, it says that the king, you know, this is the king's own carriage. He made it of wood from Lebanon. Its posts he made of silver, its base of gold. Its seat was upholstered with purple, its interior lovingly inlaid by the daughters of Jerusalem. And what it's just saying is splendid, isn't it? You know that the vehicle you have describes something about you? So, I don't know whether you remember this, the Pope used to go around in a Pope-mobile. And the Pope-mobile had, he could stand up in it so he could wave to people, but it had bulletproof glass all around it in case anybody wanted to shoot at him. And you don't go around in a vehicle like that, do you? Not very often.

So, the vehicle says something about the person. And in this case, you've got this rich, wonderful, decorated, glorious conveyance. And I think what this is saying is I'm looking forward to him coming because when he arrives for this wedding, to me it's as if he's arrived in a, you know, golden Rolls Royce painted with, oh, I don't know, go on with that. So, here he arrives and he's coming as well. So, you need them both coming, don't you? And the daughters of Jerusalem, verse 11, are invited. Come out, you daughters of Jerusalem. Look at King Solomon wearing the crown, the crown which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day his heart rejoiced.

So, they're all coming together like this. And you could ask the question, is the bride or the groom coming? And is the litter stationary or mobile? Anyway, let's not worry too much about the analytical details. It's poetry. The emphasis is they're getting together. And isn't it a splendid thing? So, whether they're actually arriving in an old Ford Escort or what? I mean, that's not really the point. They're all arriving and they're getting together. They're coming together. There's a theme in the Bible which is echoed. I'm just going to stand back from this.

[15:11] Last book of the Bible, the Spirit and the Bride say, do you know what they say? Come. It's coming together. And certainly in the book of Revelation, the book is poised with this, yes, come. That's what we're looking for, this coming together of, in the book of Revelation, it's the Lord and his people. Coming together for consummation. So, in this section, anticipation is replaced by present experience. And what is longed for is turned into fulfilment. And what was distant, do you remember the distance, the wall between them? My lover approached the wall and I wouldn't let him in. Distance is turned into union. And what was locked up is opened. And what was hidden in secret is revealed. And what was seen and sensed from afar, do you know, we're distant, but may my perfume remind the king at his table. What was seen and sensed from afar is tasted and interconnected. He is eating the fruit. He's tasting the wine. What was seen and sensed from afar is tasted and interconnected. And so I just want to stop back and say, well, before we get too intense with this, is this a suitable and appropriate and insightful parallel for God and his people?

So have we gone off beam? Let's just check this. Is this on the right track, this idea of coming together, is this a suitable and appropriate and insightful parallel for God and his people? Does the Bible actually say that there is something ahead that we're to long for and it's good and, you know, come, bring that on. So let's just stop back and have a little think. In the Hebrew Scriptures, is there a consummation theme in the Hebrew Scriptures? Is there an aim? Just stop and think, to think what you know about the Old Testament. And I'm going to say that this theme is present, but I'm not, I'm a little bit undecided about how prominent this theme is. So for example, if we go right back to the beginning of the Bible, which Chris took us through the other week, there's an aim right in the beginning, isn't there? It's not actually put as an aim of a marriage, but what we have is God's six days and the seventh day, which you notice in Genesis doesn't end, it's an unending rest. And the idea that creation is built for this aim of an unending rest, a Sabbath that remains for the people of God. So there's an aim. It's not a marriage aim, but it's there. You could think of what in the Hebrew Scriptures is the nature of the relationship between God and his people. And it's largely described as covenant. A covenant. No, this is a relationship, isn't it? Covenant typically says, I will be your God, you will be my people. And we're bound together. And that binding together is given ethical content and, yeah, ethical content, relational content by words which say, what sort of God I am and therefore what sort of people you ought to be. So that's a relationship thing. And it is certainly true that when the language of covenant is used, for example, in the books of Moses, when the people of God don't trust God and don't conform ethically to the ethics of their

God, and if they turn aside to other gods and worship idols, like the horrible idols of the Canaanites or the Moabites or whatever, that God says, that is like adultery. Yeah? So the implication being that the relationship we have is a marriage-type relationship. And if you go off with other gods and love them and trust them and trust them and honour them and serve them, that's prostitution.

We had that in the reading, didn't we, from Ezekiel? That's later on in Israel's history. But you've behaved like a prostitute. There's another aim in the Hebrew Scriptures, which is land. Again, that's not actually marriage as such, is it? But it is a home. So they're not too far away from a marriage. The bride and groom in the Song of Songs say, the beams of our house are cedars, our rafters, our fur.

[20 : 24] So they're looking forward to a home together. So I'm asking the question, is this language of consummation? Does it fit with the main streams of the Hebrew Scriptures? And I say, it's there, but it's not, I wouldn't say it was prominent, but it's not absent. Because the Hebrew Scriptures aim for a relationship of, not just of ethics, but of knowing and loving, as per marriage.

And here's a classic quote on this. This is from the prophet Isaiah. And this is definitely exactly on this line. Isaiah says, your maker is your husband. The Lord Almighty is his name.

The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. He is called the God of all the earth. And the Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted, married young, with deep compassion and everlasting chesed, everlasting kindness. I will bring you back. It's there, isn't it? It's not the whole theme of the Old Testament, but it's there. That the Lord God says to his people, I married you. This has all gone wrong, but I love you and I want to bring you back. And God looks at his people and says, I want to bring you back again with deep compassion. So it's there in the Hebrew Scriptures. Let's just think about the Christian Scriptures, the New Testament. There's some very remarkable features of the New Testament in connection with this. And it's particularly in the person of Jesus. Now, who is Jesus? Who is he really? What is he? Now, you could say he is a teacher. He certainly was a teacher. You could say he understood the Hebrew Scriptures. He understood them profoundly. And he spoke profoundly of the Hebrew Scriptures. But there must be more than that to him. Because when his disciples were challenged about their not showing sadness by fasting, he said, how can the friends of the bridegroom fast when the bridegroom is with them?

You just have a think about that. What is he saying about himself? Is he saying, I'm a good teacher? He must be saying more than that, isn't he? He's saying, I'm the bridegroom.

If I'm here, you can't possibly be sad because it is great that the bridegroom's here. And what's involved in Jesus saying he's the bridegroom? It's a remarkable claim.

[23 : 28] He's almost putting himself on the par with the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. That this marriage thing, says Jesus, is me.

Do you not think that's a remarkable thing? I mean, you shouldn't just skate past that. For him to claim to be the bridegroom is a most remarkable thing. And you get it in various places.

I won't attempt to try and cover everything here. He talks in one of the parables, which I think I probably mentioned before. He likens himself to the bridegroom coming after a delay.

And he says that his people are to be like the wise girls who had enough oil in their lamps so that they could work through the delay until the bridegroom comes.

Do you remember that one? So he does build into this depiction of himself the concept of delay. And many of you will remember the story of Jesus with the woman at the well.

[24 : 39] Remember the story of the woman at the well? It's midday. Jesus is on his own. He's hungry. Sorry, he's hungry. He's tired. He sits beside Jacob's well.

And a woman comes to draw water. A woman's there to draw water. And he thinks it's a really bad time to draw water. All the other women in the village drew water when it was cool.

But this woman obviously doesn't go along with the other women in the village. I think perhaps because she's a bit ashamed. And Jesus starts chatting to this woman. You know the story? Give me something to drink.

And she goes, whew! That's a bit strange. How come you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, to drink? You know that we don't drink out the same cups. You have no association with us Samaritans.

And Jesus says, if you knew who it was who was asking, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. And she says, ooh! Hmm! Are you greater than our father Jacob who dug this well?

[25 : 40] It's very deep, you know. And the conversation goes on like that. And you know, in the Bible, there are certain sort of scenes that go a certain sort of way.

You know, we get this in certain types of literature. You know, at the end of a detective, end of a detective crime story, Poirot gets all the people together and he says, you know, you know what's going to happen.

He gets them all together and says, but who put the poison in? It was you. No, it was not you. It was you. And you know how this all works. You know what's going to happen. And when a man meets a woman at a well in the Bible, they always get married.

And here is Jesus. I mean, it's quite subtle. But, I mean, he doesn't marry this woman, obviously. But there's a sort of romantic engagement type thing going on there.

And here's Jesus wooing his bride. I may not get too carried away with this. But in the Christian scriptures, this is totally Jesus.

[26 : 50] And we've been singing, as the Bible says, in the, where are we headed? A wedding and a feast. Many will sit down on that day with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the banquet in the kingdom to come.

So it's totally in line with the Christian scriptures. And I'll just point out this bit in passing. In *Pride and Prejudice*, when Eliza Bennett married Mr. Darcy, one of the big advantages was not only that Jane Austen could say they all lived happily ever after.

But this solved the problem of Eliza Bennett's poverty because Mr. Darcy was incredibly rich. It's just a rather neat thing.

In case you don't know the story, he's a rich, rich guy. She doesn't like him to begin with, but then they sort of get to accommodate each other and love each other. And she marries this rich man. And the upshot is she becomes rich. Now the Bible, no, I'm sorry, the New Testament specifically picks up this theme of what it is for believers to have Jesus as their sort of husband because they're poor and outcasts and nobodies and they marry this wonderful guy with all his riches, with all his beauty, with all his kingdom and they find that they share it.

[28 : 33] It's called the doctrine of union with Christ. And once you've had your eyes open you think, oh, union with Christ. I wonder if that's in the New Testament. You start reading the New Testament, it's everywhere.

Beginning of Ephesians, praise, thanks to the God who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in him even as he chose us in him to be holy and blameless in his sight and so on and so on.

It's all about belonging to this great husband, union with him. Anyway, so I don't want to go off on the track but my question was is this suitable language, this language of consummation and union, is this suitable to the Hebrew scriptures and to the Christian scriptures and the answer I think is a resounding yes.

So we can take the language of the Song of Solomon and without embarrassment say this will work as Christian language. There are songs that say things like this, echoing the language of the Song of Solomon, I am his and he is mine and all he has is mine.

That's how salvation works, doesn't it? All the riches of his righteousness, his holiness, his wisdom, his standing in God, his throne become ours because of union with him.

[29 : 59] It's a huge and glorious subject that you could almost say it's the key to understanding the Christian gospel. Certainly enormously helpful in understanding why the Bible in the New Testament speaks the way it does.

Let me move on. My question was is it suitable and the answer is yes. So let's follow on. Now let's go back to the text and look at what the, so we're now getting for the praise that the groom, the man, offers to the woman.

I took a picture of this lovely lady at a National Trust, I did get permission, a National Trust, where did we go, where was this one? Ampton, Ampton, or Ampton Ampton or something.

Anyway, so there she is to be a visual aid. How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful. And he praises the different parts of her, doesn't he? Her eyes, she says, are like doves.

Why does he say that? Maybe because doves hide away and they're sort of embedded in the clefts in the rock so that his, your eyes are beautiful but they're sort of hidden.

[31 : 09] And your hair, well the statue lady doesn't have hair like that, it's all put up in a bun at the back, isn't it? But he says, your hair, it's just like, you know, wonderful mountains and the goats, the

black goats sort of leaping down the mountains and that's the way that your black hair leaps down onto your shoulders.

And your teeth, sorry, let me just read it, your hair is like a flock of goats descending or perhaps leaping down from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn coming up from the washing.

I think in those days if you wanted to say something was white, what would you think? White as, we've got white as snow, I guess.

Pardon? Clouds. Clouds, yeah. Assuming you've had any clouds, including they weren't dark clouds. But I think he chose sheep, your sins of the scarlet will be white as wool.

This is something white. And these have just had a shampoo, these sheep, haven't they, coming up from the washing. And they're in pairs, each of it has its twin. Not one of them is alone, like teeth.

[32 : 20] Okay, teeth are white. And then, your lips are like a scarlet ribbon. your mouth is lovely.

Scarlet ribbon. Oh, this photo's gone funny. Your temples. So there's this bit here.

This is the bit where, who is the lady who impaled somebody through that part? Sisera, was it JL?

Who banged a tent peg through this poor guy's temple while he was having a kip.

Leave that. Your temples are like halves or pieces of pomegranate. So Maria bought a pomegranate the other day. A pomegranate looks like, I don't know whether I would dare to say to anybody your temples are like pieces of pomegranate.

One of the things about pomegranate was because it's got so many seeds, it's seen as a symbol of fertility and fruitfulness. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think on the priestly garments it was decorated with pomegranates, wasn't it?

[33 : 40] So it obviously means something which perhaps bypasses us, but your temples are round, fruitful, perhaps the colour is a desirable colour.

Your neck like an elegant tower. Elegant tower reaching up into the clouds is your lovely long neck. And your breasts are like two fawns, two fawns, twin fawns of a gazelle that browse amongst the lilies. I think if you're actually browsing amongst the lilies you probably couldn't see them because they'd be just sort of hinted at, but I've drawn two fawns there.

Your breasts, I think he's saying like shy, beautiful, cute creatures. And he sums it all up and he says you are beautiful. That's nice of him to say that, isn't it?

You are beautiful. There is no flaw in you. You are spotless. There is no blemish in you.

[34 : 43] And he looks at his bride and he says, oh, you know, from the top of your head to the tip of your toes, you're fantastic. And this is how he sees her.

I don't think, you know, if we saw a photograph of her in real life, we, I don't know whether we would all agree, whatever she looked like photographically, this is how he sees her.

That's the thing, isn't it? This is how he sees her. No flaw. When I read the bit, there is no flaw, no spot, no blemish, my mind went to a part of the New Testament, which you can probably imagine.

It's in Ephesians where it talks about Jesus doing much as the Lord God is depicted in Ezekiel, finding his bride who's in her natural state, spotty, obnoxious, outcast, and because he loves her, he picks her up and takes her and makes her beautiful.

That's what it says in Ezekiel, isn't it? You were developed as a woman and the breast bit is where that comes in and you were old enough for love and I loved you and Jesus takes his people who, to begin with, are obnoxious and blemished and broken and sinful and dirty and through a variety of means he cleanses and beautifies and ennobles and transforms into this beautiful bride to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless.

[37 : 00] Isn't that knockout? That's what the Lord has in mind if you're a Christian for you. So what a love story.

He took you, he took me when we were all over the place, ungrateful, didn't know how to hold our knives and forks, didn't know how to reply civilly to this saviour and he wooed us and brought us and his plan is for this consummation when we will be without stain or wrinkle or spot or blemish but holy and blameless in his sight.

That's something, isn't it? That's what he's going to do with us. That's what he is doing with us. I suppose the sort of contemporary application is to say that's what he's doing and hadn't we better be cooperating with this person.

It does say he's doing it. It doesn't say you do it. It says he's doing it. He's presenting her to himself. But how ridiculous of us to be opposing him in this and getting ourselves wrinkly and blemished and spotty when he's in the business of trying to cleanse us from all that.

We're to be willing and cooperative partners. This is how he sees her. Then we go on to verse 8. So I think there's more here about coming together. Come from Lebanon is in verse 8 and there's something about Lebanon in verse 15 as well.

[38 : 42] Now where's where's she coming from? Well from the crest of Amarna from the top of Senir from the summit of Hermon from the lion's dens from the mountain haunts of the leopards from the distant hostile areas come close.

Wherever it is that she's coming from he wants her to leave that place and come to him. So coming from somewhere. And then he says verse 9 you have stolen my heart my sister my bride you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes with one jewel of your necklace.

How delightful is your love my sister my bride much more pleasing is your love than wine. And the fragrance of your perfumes than any spice. So he says you have stolen my heart.

I did look this up in Hebrew. I'm afraid I can't actually remember the details of it but what I wrote down in my notes was you cooked my heart. It seems to be a phrase that you'd use of cakes.

You put them in the oven and heat them up and blah. He says you George you just heated up my heart. You really have. So I put you cooked my heart. Well I mean whatever the correct translation of it.

[40 : 03] There's something heart there. And what he's saying is there's something really deep in the heart being the inner part where I feel things, where I plan things, where the inclination of my life is settled.

And he says that's where it all is. That's where this relationship finds its central gravity if you like. it's my heart.

And then he goes on to say, he goes on to say, I've got to verse 12 now, you are a garden enclosed or a garden locked up, my sister, my bride.

And I, when we were on our holiday I thought ahead and did a picture of a walled garden. So here's a garden enclosed. You enclose a garden, you get a different little microclimate inside it.

You can grow, I think these were apple trees actually. So here's an enclosed garden. We were allowed in because we were national trust members. You wouldn't have been allowed in if you weren't.

[41 : 06] A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed, a well of, the word for flowing water is living water. It has interesting resonances, doesn't it? Living water.

And up to now you are hidden. Up to now it's a secret. Up to now no one enters this garden, no one drinks at this fountain. So here's a picture of something which is not equally available to all comers. This is a garden enclosed and it's going to be open to one person. It's not equally available to all comers but available only to this one lover.

That's the point, isn't it? He comes in but no one else does. To everyone else, enclosed, sealed, and so on.

And this strikes a thought with me and maybe with you too. The Apostle Paul, when he was dealing with the churches, he wanted them to have the same exclusivity of devotion.

[42 : 27] Exclusive to one person, the lover of their souls, Jesus Christ. And he says things like this. I am jealous for you, he says this to the Corinthians, two Corinthians, I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.

I promised you to one husband to Christ so that I may present you as a pure virgin to him but, and he's got a but, and he says but, this is all going squiffy because you seem to be giving your devotion, your attention, your adherence, your openness to a different, well, what he says, a different Jesus.

Hmm. And another gospel. And you're receiving another spirit. And Paul says, you know, I'm aghast at this because you're supposed to be in a garden enclosed and one person comes in and you're opening up to other Jesuses, other gospels, other spirits.

And of course this is, it becomes terribly relevant actually, doesn't it? Because in today's Christian scene there are all sorts of Jesuses.

I guess if you look on YouTube you can find any number of different Jesuses with any number of different characteristics and Christians need to be discerning that we give our love and our

adherence and our following to the real Jesus.

[44 : 04] So there are all sorts of Jesuses. I mean, I've got, for example, a Jesus who is not divine. So that's the Jehovah's Witnesses Jesus, who's not divine. He's a spirit son, but he falls short of being divine.

So when it says in John's Gospel that he's to be worshipped, he who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father. And they get really stuck over that because Jesus is to be honoured as, just as the Father is honoured.

A Jesus who is not divine is not the real Jesus. A Christ who does not suffer on the cross. A Christ who does not suffer wrath on the cross. That's the sort of Jesus that Steve Chalk, famous Baptist minister, would preach.

That's another Jesus. That's not the real Jesus. Or a God who is not holy. A God who doesn't have, for example, sexual ethics.

That's a very common one in the churches now. That's a different God to the real God. Or a God who does not judge sin. A God who says, oh, I love everybody.

[45 : 09] Sin. I mean, he's even less moral than we are, that God, isn't he? That's a different gospel. Or the gospel where the spirit is a spirit of wealth and materialism.

So I know I've been blessed. If my bank account goes up, that's all there is to it. That's not the real gospel. That's the gospel of health and wealth. That's not the real gospel. And Paul would say, I don't want you opening up the garden to that.

It's awful. I've got the spirit of health and wealth and materialism rather than the holy presence of the true Holy Spirit. A pure, what does he say here?

A pure virgin for him and for him alone. It's a challenge on all sorts of levels, isn't it? Let's move on. So now we've got to verse 16. Awake north wind, come south wind, blow on my garden that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and chase its choice fruits.

[46 : 17] And at this point the beloved is saying, I want that consummation, I want that union, I want him to come, bring it on, yes.

And the groom says in the last bit of the text, I have come. And we say, yes, that's what we're waiting for. Now, as we stand in history now, he has not yet, this relationship is not yet consummated.

We are waiting for his full and complete coming. But we still want it, don't we? And the people here say, eat, friends, and drink, drink your fellow lovers.

So I'm going to paraphrase that, and the people said, yeah, enjoy, come. The Bible says, come, Lord Jesus. And I say, do you say that?

So what about your heart? What's cooked your heart? What's cooking in your heart? I ask myself the same question. What's firing up my heart?

[47 : 24] What's firing up your heart? Because the Bible is saying here, it should be this prospect of seeing him face to face, of being with him forever.

That is the fulfilment of all that should have been going on in our hearts all this time. That's what we should be aiming for. Is your deepest heart truly inclined in love to God through Jesus' Son? Because we ought to be saying, like these friends say, yes, you know, like. we ought to be thrilled and pleased at the prospect of this union.

We ought to be saying, that is actually what my heart's been about all the time. That's why I became a Christian. That's why I continue to be a Christian. That's what I'm looking forward to at the heart of being a Christian.

And if you're not a Christian, I want to say, is not this prospect so delightful, so entrancing, does it not, actually, at an intuitive level, echo and say, this is right.

[48 : 40] This is what every human being was made for. This is the design intention to have this consummated, eternal, person-to-person, loving relationship with our maker who becomes our husband.

if you don't have that, I would say, don't stop seeking, checking, pursuing, finding out, don't ask in God, don't stop until you've got there.

You ought to be part of this. Because the Bible, almost one of the last things it says is, blessed are those who were invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.