

The Bridegroom, Christ and His Bride, the Church

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[0 : 00] We are going to turn now to the Song of Solomon and you will find that on page 600 of the Church Bible.

And we will just focus on verse 10 where we read the words, I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me.

I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me. Song of Solomon chapter 7 verse 10.

We want to think about this in the context of the bride and the bridegroom. The bridegroom being the Messiah and the bride his people, the Church of Jesus Christ.

And what we notice in this verse, this is only part of the story. The earlier part has to do with the beloved, with the bridegroom himself talking about his view of the bride.

[1 : 23] And then in this part here from verse 9b, the second part of it, you have the Shulamite, that is the bride, talking.

And she declares, I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me. And what we find here in this verse, and we'll look at it in a wee bit more detail for a few minutes, is that the passage helps us to understand the relationship between the bridegroom, that is the Messiah, that is Jesus, and his people.

Now I very well know that a lot has been written on the Song of Solomon. Interpreters have tried to grapple with what it's all about.

And some take a very crass, literalistic view of it, simply about physical relationships. Others see it as a symbolical, spiritual relationship between the Messiah, between the bridegroom, Jesus, and his people, his bride, the Church.

And actually, when you look at the history of interpretation of the Song of Solomon, what you discover is that the early Church, the post-apostolic Church, understood this Song of Solomon to be about the spiritual relationship between the Lord and what we might call his covenant community, his people, his Church.

[3 : 13] And the early Church actually took that understanding from the synagogue, by that I mean from the thinking of the Jewish scholars on the Song of Solomon.

And the early Church was quite content to see it like that, and that has been the predominant view until more recent decades.

Our understanding is that it is imagery that helps us understand the relationship, the loving spiritual relationship between the bridegroom, the Messiah, Jesus, and his people, the bride, the Church.

And that not just because the rabbis said it and the early Church adopted it, but because it seems to me there are clues in our Saviour's own words.

That's why we read in the Gospel of John. And there are clues in the words of John the Baptist too. That's why we read in John's Gospel, I think I should have said Luke 5, where our Saviour talks about himself as a bridegroom.

[4 : 38] In that reference, the whole argument is about fasting. Why do the sons or the disciples of the Pharisees fast and pray?

Why do John the Baptist's disciples fast and pray, and yours just eat and drink? And our Saviour's answer was, the bridegroom is in the midst of them.

Where did he get the notion to call himself the bridegroom? Where's the connection? It's out of the blue, seemingly. But no, it's there in the Song of Solomon.

The reference to himself. And although the reference in Luke 5, 33, the sons of the bride chamber, nevertheless, the indication is they belong.

They comprise the bridegroom. John the Baptist himself talked there in John 3, 29, emphatically about Jesus as the bridegroom and himself as the friend, literally, phylos, the one loved by the

bridegroom.

[6 : 13] And so we've got the emphasis from our Saviour himself that he is the bridegroom.

And his people thought about collectively and totally represent the bride, his bride. Actually, there's a fascinating way in sight in the revelation given to John, the last book of the Bible, when Jesus addresses the sleepy, lethargic, wealthy, self-satisfied church of the Laodiceans.

And he uses the language of the Song of Solomon, of the bride and the groom. He talks about Jesus coming to his careless, self-satisfied church.

Behold, actually Colin quoted in prayer, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And although it might be in a general sense useful to say to every sinner, in the context, it was the church of Laodicea, who was so satisfied with what it had, it had become lethargic about the Saviour.

And if you look in Song of Solomon, chapter 5, verses 2 to 8, you read these words, I slept, but my heart is awake, my beloved is knocking on the door.

[8 : 00] Open for me, my sister, my darling, my love, my perfect one. But she doesn't. And he withdraws to teach her a lesson.

So what we want to do for a wee while is consider these words of the bride concerning the bridegroom.

I am my beloved. She knows it. And wonderfully, his desire is toward me.

Three things then. Hopefully, under God's good hand, the voice will keep up. the bride's sense of belonging is the first thing.

I am my beloved. A tremendous sense of belonging. And actually, this is spoken by the bride, the Shulamite, the bride of the beloved.

[9 : 12] It's spoken in chapter 2, verse 16. My beloved is mine, and I am his. It's spoken in 6, 3, the same thing.

It's referred to in 2, 4. Also, his banner over me is love. She has this sense of belonging to him. And I am inclined to the view that when Paul was speaking as an apostle guided by the Spirit of God as he was, that this whole understanding of the Song of Solomon was very much in his mind. Take for example, Ephesians 5, 25-27. Messiah, the great bridegroom, loved the church, and he gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her and purify her and make her acceptable at last to himself without spot or blemish or anything.

He loved her. And what does he say to us, husbands? Husbands, love your wives like that, and we're groveling in the ground ashamed. Paul is working on the bridegroom and bride scenario.

[10 : 47] Messiah is the bridegroom. Think about his own testimony in Galatians 5, 20. The Son of God loved me and he gave himself for me.

We are to ponder these things. We are to think about what he gave and Colin was referring to it in the prayer. We are to ponder what he did to enrich us, how he impoverished himself, not only by being born in a lowly state, by becoming something he was not eternally.

But when the time came, he gave his back to the smiters and those who plucked off the beard. He gave himself to false trials, one and another and another and yet another.

the judge was in the dock of men, of jealous men, of fearful men, of defective men.

And he embraced that for us. He gave himself to shame and to mocking. He gave himself to Gabbatha, the final judgment of Pilate, and to Golgotha, where he was judged of men to be an unclean thing.

[12 : 34] And where he was judged by God, as we were thinking, as one who, though he knew no sin, became sin for us. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

He embraced all our liabilities. As the hymn writer said, he bled and died to save me. And not alone the gift of life, but his own self he gave me.

Surely, if we appreciate these things, we are to say, like the bride in the song, my beloved is mine, and his desire is toward me.

These truths are there that we may embrace them and be lifted up by them and settled in them and encouraged by them and feel the power of them and know the experience I am my beloved.

The second thing I want to think about for a few moments is the bride's sense of indebtedness.

Sense of belonging, I am my beloved.

[13 : 58] Sense of indebtedness is crafted into the words and his desire is toward me.

Where is it? The bride's sense of indebtedness. Where is it? And his desire is toward me. Think about it.

Think about it. His desire is toward me. Who am I that the king should bleed and die for? Who am I that he should give his dear life for? Toward me, a sinner deserving of God's wrath and curse for me.

What is here in that little personal pronoun is a realization as it should be for us of astonished indebtedness if I can say it.

[15:02] Individuals who think about Jesus as a great messianic bridegroom in his self-giving cannot but say for me marvel that he makes us his own by giving himself for us.

and in giving himself for us he requires us to be wholly his. We are bought with a price for him. I am not my own any longer. I am his. I am indebted to him. I can't begin to pay him back. Thank almighty God we don't need to.

enter into a contract whereby we are paying back our debt. We will never be able to pay our debt back. But we can and ought to see ourselves little me, sinner me, privileged me to serve him.

And our sense of indebtedness has an outworking in that we serve him. Forsaking all we trust him.

[16:21] Forsaking all we serve him. We sing in Psalm 45, which is the song of the wedding of Messiah and his bride.

Oh daughter, take good heed to me and claim your ear. You must forget your father's house. And effectively, all that you hold dear.

that doesn't mean you abandon your responsibilities. No. It means we put others in their place and give him primary place.

That in all things he may have the preeminence. We are his servants if we are his by faith.

If we are part of the bride, we are his servants. And that's what we see in the apostles themselves.

[17:23] They call themselves servants, bond slaves, the doulai, just bond slaves of Jesus Christ. James, the half brother of our Lord.

In his little letters begins it, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doulos. That's how he saw himself.

He didn't say, well, I'm better than the others. I'm a step nearer. No, I'm the same as them. A slave of Christ.

Yes, the bride, but the bride, seeing its indebtedness to him, glad to serve him. And the more we ponder ourselves in relation to him, the more we see the marvel of what he has done for us and what he has given us.

And the deeper our sense of indebtedness. If anything moved the apostle Paul, it was this sense of indebtedness. His appreciation of the desire of Christ toward him.

[18:46] The son of God so loved me, he gave himself for me. I can give everything I am and everything I have for him. Why should I grudge to give up all for him?

One thing about the apostle Paul, he stands before us as someone who simply gave up everything for Christ. And you can't but marvel at the grip he had of that indebtedness.

He understood the love of Christ. His desire is toward me. And you see that motivated. We'll come to that a little further on just to finish with.

But you see the point we're making here. This sense of indebtedness moved him. In fact, in Romans 12 verse 1, Paul says, Brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies, you present yourselves, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto him, which is your reasonable service, or if you like, your spiritual worship.

And the picture is of the burnt offering being offered, which was a burnt offering that was wholly consumed.

[20:18] And the image is of the person presenting himself or herself holy. to the Lord. And Paul is held before us in Scripture as one who exhibited this compelling sense of indebtedness.

But it's there not simply to be admired. If Paul was here beside us just now, he would testify he never wrote a thing of this by the Spirit in order for us to admire him.

But in order to encourage us to imitate him out of a sense of indebtedness, his desire, Messiah's desire, is toward me, the chief of sinners, to me who am less than the least of all the saints of God. he bids us not to admire him, but to imitate his sense of indebtedness to the bridegroom, the Messiah.

And lastly, the bride's knowledge of the bridegroom's love for her. his desire is toward me.

[21:48] As we were saying more or less already, this is here to show us that the love of the bridegroom is such that it moves him constantly to be about the best interests of his people.

It is a love that is stronger than death. And in our Saviour's case, it is a love that took him into death and out of death again.

It brought him again from the dead. His love for us is not idle contemplation. I'd like to do more if I could.

No, he did it all. He moved forward. He became involved. And in due time he took his life again. His desire, the idea of desire here in speaking about his love is his will to do. Remember once reading in Jonathan Edwards in Charity and Its Fruits, which is a good read if you've got the patience and perseverance to do it.

[23 : 08] But it's a very fine word. And he develops the view that true love has far more to do with will than the affections.

because we can have lovely warm feelings and do nothing. But the Saviour willed to do and he got in there and he did.

And therefore Edwards is absolutely spot on that it's about will and it's interesting you see that this is how it's put here. his desire the good pleasure of his will is to do me good.

It's toward me. It's toward me in a way that is effective. It drew me to him. It saved me. It again and again satisfies my longing soul with goodness and grace.

Even this is true going back to the Laodiceans and their lukewarmness as many as I live I rebuke and chasten.

[24 : 33] He corrects us by actually doing something to make us feel hurt and pain and shame. and then repentance.

He knows that sometimes we need it that way. But he is so deeply interested in us in us who believe that he desires to help us and correct us and to bring us on in his way.

And so we're to recognize that he's working at all times even in the dark times in our experience. I love the passage there in the upper room discourse where Jesus might have been excused for thinking entirely about himself just an hour or two down the line he would be taken and beaten and ashamed and mock tried and so on and so on.

He could have been excused for dwelling on himself but you read this great high priestly prayer and he's saying father keep through your own name those you've given me father sanctify them make them holy and set them apart by your truth father don't take them out of the world father keep them from the evil one and his words ring on right down to us here and then he says father I will I desire all this has to do with his desire by the way his desire is towards me father I desire that where I am they may be also that they may behold my glory

I remember years ago up in the north in the hospital talking to a Christian lady who was experiencing the onset of Alzheimer's and sometimes she got very rattled she was known to lift the stick and try to give you a whack other times she was quite settled and I remember her I was asking her whether she on her better days whether she really understood what it was to be a follower of Jesus and what things encouraged her and comforted her and at the time she said these words she was actually quoting a hymn which is a very biblical and it's thinking Jesus lover of my soul let me to thy bosom fly while the nearer waters roll while the tempest still is high hide me oh my savior hide till the storm of life is past oh bring me into thy haven oh receive my soul at last my beloved is mine and his desire is toward me and we will not therefore say by faith in

[28 : 31] Jesus our messiah bridegroom my beloved is mine and his desire is toward me and it then puts everything in perspective it then puts all our difficulties and trials it puts our disappointments our feelings of being deserted maybe we've been deserted it puts our deep feelings of hurt in perspective whoever has done this ill to us let this be true Jesus is my beloved and his desire is always toward me whatever others have done whatever has caused us pain and sorrow and sadness my beloved is mine and his desire is toward me may he bless his own word to us

Amen