

The Bride

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

The Bride”

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DEDICATED

To the Lord Jesus Christ,
our heavenly Bridegroom,
and to my dear wife Audrey,
who has been such a loving bride to me.

Acknowledgments

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Contents

<i>Prologue</i>	
<i>Preface</i>	
<i>Introduction</i>	15
PART A - THE SONG OF SONGS	
<i>Chapter 1 - First Love Renewed</i>	19
<i>Chapter 2 - The Wilderness Journey</i>	43
<i>Chapter 3 - The Garden Enclosed</i>	55
<i>Chapter 4 - The Mighty Army</i>	77
<i>Chapter 5 - The Abundant Harvest</i>	108
PART B - THE HOLY CITY	
<i>Chapter 6 - The New Jerusalem</i>	118
<i>Chapter 7 - The Mountain of Zion</i>	135
PART C - THE HOLY STATE OF MATRIMONY	
<i>Chapter 8 - Marriage</i>	137
<i>Chapter 9 - The Mystical Union</i>	139
PART D - OTHER TYPES OF THE BRIDE	
<i>Chapter 10 - Old Testament Types of the Bride</i>	141
<i>Chapter 11 - New Testament Illustrations</i>	144
<i>Epilogue</i>	149

Prologue

Throughout all ages, God the Father has been seeking those who will become members of the corporate body called “The Bride.” This Bride, or “many-membered body” will, in the timing and wisdom of the Father, be given to His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This truth is seen and illustrated by numerous types within the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

In the beginning God created a bride from the side of the first man, Adam. This woman was called Eve. Later in the history of the human race, we find Abraham who sought a bride for his only son, Isaac. In this situation, Abraham represented God the Father, who was seeking a bride for the son of promise, Isaac. Isaac symbolized the only begotten Son of the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. The servant Eliezer, commissioned by Abraham to find the right bride for his beloved son, typified the Holy Spirit.

Another illustration of this beautiful revelation is seen in the peculiar relationship between Israel and the Lord. The nation of Israel has always understood that the special relationship she had toward Jehovah was that of a bride toward her bridegroom. Thus, we read in Isaiah 54:5, “For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.”

In Jeremiah 3:14 God pleads, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.” It is repeated in Hosea 2:16, “And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi [my husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [my

lord].” Hosea continues this theme by saying, “And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies” (Hos. 2:19).

It is also of special interest to note that Jerusalem and the Lord Jesus Christ are called by the same name in the Millennium. This is because they are reunited in marriage as in the days of old. (Compare Jeremiah 23:6 with Jeremiah 33:16.)

God promised Israel a new covenant, but reminded them that even with the commencement of the old covenant, He was a husband unto them. “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them” (Jer. 31:32).

Thus, one of the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, is the Bridegroom. This title also carries over into the New Testament.

The Bridegroom is seen in Matthew 9:15, “And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.”

He is seen again in 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.”

This book is presented, beloved reader, with the prayer that we may examine together what Holy Scripture teaches concerning the Bride of Christ. Our main source of reference is the Song of Songs, with selected portions of the Book of Revelation to aid in this pursuit. To complement the exposition of the Song of Solomon, we encourage you to study Psalm 45, another important portion of Scripture in our study of the Bride of Christ. This Psalm flows together with the Song of Songs, harmonizing beautifully to form a complete picture of Christ's lovely Bride.

Preface

The Song of Songs is composed of five distinct songs. They are the last five mentioned in 1 Kings 4:32b. King Solomon is credited with having written 1,005 songs.

The titles of the songs are:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. The First Love Renewed | 1:1 - 2:7 |
| 2. The Wilderness Journey | 2:8 - 3:5 |
| 3. The Garden Enclosed - Bride's Beauty | 3:6 - 5:1 |
| 4. The Mighty Army | 5:2 - 8:4 |
| 5. The Abundant Harvest | 8:5 - 8:14 |

There are three main divisions of time:

1. The first two songs take place at night
2. The third song takes place in the daytime
3. The last two songs take place at night again

There are four vineyards or gardens:

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. Mine Own Vineyard - neglected | 1:6 |
| 2. A Garden Enclosed - cared for | 4:12 |
| 3. The Garden of Nuts - gifts, fruits | 6:11 |
| 4. Vineyard at Baal-Hamon - great harvest | 8:11 |

There are four mountains:

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. Mountain of Bether - Separation | 2:17 |
| 2. Mount Gilead - Healing | 4:1 |
| 3. Mountain of Myrrh - Meekness | 4:6 |
| 4. Hill of Frankincense - Trial of Faith | 4:6 |

The principle reason we have chosen the Song of Songs as the basis for our study of the Bride of Christ is because this book is an expression of the unfolding beauty of Christ. As a believer receives the revelation of Christ, whether it comes as a rhema, either from His Word, directly from the Spirit, or as a quickening from the preaching of the Word, the power of God is always present to do a transforming work. This, of course, can be proven from many parts of Scripture.

For example, the thought contained in 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “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.” Moreover, in 1 John 3:2 we are told, “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.” Therefore, the key to being transformed is to have a progressive revelation of the beauty and character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we come to understand His character and are transformed into His likeness, we will attain the privilege of being a part of His Bride. Dear reader, may God grant you His wisdom and revelation as you seek a deeper knowledge of the person of Christ, through the pages of this book.

Introduction

The Song of Solomon is different from the other books of the Bible. There are three acceptable interpretations of the Song of Songs. First, there is the authentic rabbinical interpretation which states that this book is a portrayal of the relationship between Jehovah and Israel. It purports that the Song of Solomon is an allegory which sets forth God's choice and guidance of His ancient people whom He led out of Egypt. It also pictures their journey through the wilderness and into Canaan where they are left looking for the Messiah.

Second, there is an interpretation which states that the Song of Solomon is an allegory setting forth the relationship and love between Christ and His Church. This interpretation begins a short time before the birth of Christ, closes with the call of the Gentiles, and leaves the Church waiting and looking for the return of Christ. This view is extended to apply to the Church throughout this dispensation, which closes at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This, too, is a very authentic interpretation of the Song of Solomon.

The third interpretation, the one that we will study in this book, is a revelation of the life, the dealings, and the relationship between Christ and each believer who will make up His Bride. Christ is looking for a Bride—and we must seek to be a part of that company of believers who will make up His heavenly Bride.

The Song of Songs is a series of cameos or pictures that graphically describe a spiritual truth that the Lord wishes to work

out in our lives. Throughout the book, there is also a progressive revelation of the union and communion between the Lord and His Bride. It is important to observe and study this progression.

Some points are repeated because of the seasons in the Song of Solomon. In the natural, we know that seasons repeat themselves—the spring brings rain and thus, new growth; the summer is the season where the crop matures; the fall brings the harvest; and the winter when there is apparently no growth, yet during which time something unseen is happening deep within the earth.

In our own spiritual lives, this is a very important principle—we have four seasons that continually revolve. Within these periods God never does exactly the same work in our lives, but continually changes that work with the seasons.

The Lord may deal with us for one week or one month on a certain truth in our lives. Then He might change the focus to a different truth. After that, He takes up another truth and still another. Eventually, God will come back to that first truth, perhaps several years in the future, because He wants to bring that truth into a more mature growth in our lives. Why? He does not want one aspect of our character to mature to the detriment of another.

God has a time for everything! We see this clearly in Ecclesiastes 3:1, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” God has a time to heal, a time to cast away, and a time to gather together, etc. That is why we must submit constantly to the leading of the Holy Spirit, thereby permitting Him to guide us into all truth according to His prescribed seasons.

We must learn to walk in the Spirit, especially in our emotional life. Then He can develop deeply within us the joy of heaven, as well as an understanding of the agony the Godhead experiences. The Godhead knows great anguish since in all our afflictions He is afflicted (Isa. 63:9), even as an earthly father is afflicted when his children suffer.

In Proverbs 21:1 King Solomon says, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” Like King Solomon, we are being prepared to sit upon the throne. Therefore, our hearts must be like water so that the Lord can pour us into one experience after another, and in that way develop what He desires in our lives until we are completely changed into His image.

It is interesting to note that both “Solomon” and “Shulamite” have the same meaning of “peaceful” (6:13). Solomon is a type of the “Prince of Peace,” and representative of Christ reigning in the Millennium. Also, he is a type of “Beulah Land.” The “Beulah Land” experience represents a time when the Kingdom and the believer shall be married to the Lord. Isaiah 62:4 states, “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.”

Throughout the Word of God, Israel understood the beautiful truth expressed by Isaiah in 54:5, “For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.”

They understood their relationship to Jehovah—He was the Bridegroom, and they were His Bride.

The Apostle Paul continues the same message in the New Testament when he likens marriage in Ephesians 5:32 to the blessed union between Christ and His Church. There are many such Scriptures in the Word of God. Earlier we looked at Jeremiah 3:14 where the Lord pleaded with the Israelites, “[Return to me] for I am married unto you.”

The marriage union we enjoy here on earth was given so that we might understand and comprehend the true communion that the Creator desires with us, His Church. Revelation 4:11 declares we were created by the Lord Jesus Christ, for Him, and for His good pleasure. This depicts the role of a woman in marriage, for she was created out of man, for man, and for his good pleasure.

There is something else very interesting in the setting of the Song of Solomon. In the Bible, it is placed after the book of Ecclesiastes, and we know Ecclesiastes opens with: “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” We have the thought in Ecclesiastes of the dissatisfaction of worldly wisdom. In the Song of Songs, however, this mentality is contrasted with the satisfied and blessed state of the one who is married to the Lord. In reality, true satisfaction is only obtained in the marriage union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we study, let us remember it is grace alone that can teach us the wonderful truths contained in this small, but powerful book, and it is experience alone that can help us apply them.

Part A - The Song of Songs

Chapter One

First Loved Renewed (1:1 - 2:7)

The Song of Solomon is a progression of the spiritual life of the believer. It does not begin at salvation but after a Christian has served the Lord for perhaps a number of years and has lost his first love (Rev. 2:1-4). This is an essential truth that must be known and believed for an accurate study of the Song of Solomon.

1:1-2 - *“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.”*

The renewal of love begins in these two verses. Here we have the revelation of the love of Christ given to the Christian. At times like these, when we are humbled and overwhelmed by the fresh revelation of the amazing depths and endless heights of His love, it is natural for us to express our appreciation as did the Shulamite, saying, “Thy love is better than wine.” Because the Song of Songs is written as an allegory, we must look at these phrases together in order to find the true meaning.

Wine is a type of joy in the Word of God. Thus, as Christ meets her again she says, “Your love exceeds all the joys of this world!” These words begin a fresh and new encounter with the lover of her soul. This fresh touch of His love will cause her to say, “The other joys of this world, and even my spiritual experiences, are nothing compared to Your love.”

Psalm 4 helps us to understand, at least in part, the love of Christ and the true joy that He can give. This is a psalm of restoration which King David wrote after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. He penned this psalm when, as her new husband, he was fleeing for his life from Absalom in the wilderness of Judah. Yet, in the middle of all this he could still say to the Lord, “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Ps. 4:7). The Israelites formerly were agriculturalists—shepherds, herdsmen, and farmers. Their happiest time was during harvest when their corn and wine increased, when they would rejoice and celebrate with great feasts.

The comparison David used reveals the depth of joy and gladness that the Lord graciously restored to him. It was a joy that came after his restoration prayer, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation” (Ps. 51:12). In His mercy, God had forgiven David’s iniquity and granted him complete restoration.

He could truly say in the midst of all his trouble, “Oh Lord, You have renewed my joy, and it far exceeds anything we have when there is a good harvest.” God wants to restore and give us a joy that surpasses all imagination—not simply the joy of salvation, but the joy of being wondrously restored. Praise the Lord!

1:3 - *“Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.”* Psalm 45:8 helps us better understand these ointments which are associated with the presence of the Lord, “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces,

whereby they have made thee glad.” It is a fact that spiritual beings carry the odor of their nature. This is true for the kingdom of Satan as well as the kingdom of God. We can sometimes discern demonic powers by the odor which emanates from them. Depending on the demon, the odor is different, but always vile.

However, Jesus’ presence bears with it the beautiful scent of His character and nature. When the presence of the Lord comes, sometimes our spiritual senses are opened, and we can smell the fragrance of His presence. This wonderful perfume is actually “myrrh, and aloes, and cassia,” and these ingredients all have spiritual significance.

These fragrances are associated with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Myrrh always speaks of meekness. Aloes symbolizes temperance or self-control. Cassia signifies humility. (This is examined further in Song of Solomon 4:13-14.) Therefore, she is saying, “Thy name is as ointment poured forth. Thy name speaks of meekness, self-control, and humility.” It is clearly God’s desire for His Bride to be infused with these odors.

She goes on in verse 3 to say, “Therefore do the virgins love thee.” The word “virgin” is important because we have to understand the Scriptural meaning of virgin, rather than the typical meaning we normally give to the name. It actually means “one who is pure, or undefiled, also one who is demure.”

When my wife, Audrey, and I were in Malawi a number of years ago, we stayed at a Presbyterian rest home. While we were there, we became very interested in one of the Africans whose duty

was to wait on anyone who came to the rest home was assigned to us. While talking to him, we found out that he had seven children. He went on to tell us that he had a 15 year-old daughter, and Audrey felt the Lord gently impressing upon her to give one of her dresses and a pair of shoes to this girl.

The following day, we had just finished breakfast when we looked out the window and noticed the young girl wearing Audrey's dress. She just stood by the window, waiting to be recognized. Audrey and I went out to ask her if she liked the dress.

When we finished talking with her, we came back in, and the Lord began to speak to us. He said, "I want you to notice the attitude of the daughter. She waited to be recognized." God said, "It is pleasing sometimes in My sight if you will wait to be recognized before you rush into My presence." There is a beauty in this attitude that speaks of the "hidden ones."

This thought also brings us to Martha and Mary. In John 11, we can read the well-known story of the death and resurrection of Lazarus. When the Lord was on His way to Bethany, Martha came out to meet Him (Jn. 11:20). Mary, on the other hand, waited to be called. There is a difference. The "hidden ones" quietly wait upon the Lord to be called into His presence.

Yes, there is a time when you press on into God's presence, but there is also a time when you wait to be recognized by the King of kings and ushered into His presence. David said in Psalm 40:1, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me." There are times when we must quietly wait and say, "Lord, would

you extend your graciousness to me, and cause me to come into your presence” (Ps. 65:4.) When we sit and wait, as a virgin with purity of heart, it allows the Lord to do a deep work of humility and meekness in lives.

1:4 - *“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.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ brought it out beautifully when He declared, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Jn. 6:44). We cannot come into His presence, increase our knowledge of Him, or grow in our relationship with Him unless He sovereignly draws us.

In revival, everything starts with God. Everything! Too frequently people testify, “I lived a past sinful life, and then I found Him.” Beloved, you did not find Him, He found you! Others will say, “Then I sought for the baptism of the Holy Ghost and I received it.” It was the Lord who baptized you with the Holy Ghost (Lk. 3:16).

We need to realize it is by grace, and grace alone that we come to Him and progress in our spiritual walk with Him. 1 John 4:19 states, “We love him, because he first loved us.” The Lord always initiates and gives the desire, but we must have an open heart and a right attitude to respond to His promptings.

John Wesley expressed it this way, “All the desires of holiness are Thine, and Thine alone.” The Shulamite recognized this truth, crying out, “Draw me.” The key is to understand this truth—if

God will draw us, if His Spirit will draw us, then new growth can occur. Sometimes this drawing requires waiting upon the Lord and crying out to Him constantly, “Lord, draw me that I might desire You and move on with You. Please, Lord, I do not want to continue at my present level. Draw me to fresh heights.”

Another important truth in this attitude of “draw me” is that she assumes a position of leadership. The verse says, “*Draw me, we will run after Thee.*” It is only as the shepherd is drawn that the sheep will also be drawn, because the shepherd always leads the way. The people in a group, a church, or a family, many times, will not go beyond the experience we as leaders have with the Lord. When things are not going well in the church and we want the Spirit to move, you and I must cry out, “Lord, draw me.”

Then those under us who seem to have plateaued in their spiritual life will gain fresh desire and momentum to move on with the Lord. Knowing this truth is very important in our households, especially if there is someone who is unsaved. 1 Peter 3:1-2 says that an unbelieving husband may be won to the Lord through the nature and character of Christ displayed in his wife’s conversation. As a wife or husband is drawn to the Lord, then their unbelieving spouse may be drawn as well.

Continuing in verse 4, we read, “*The king hath brought me into his chambers.*” We cannot come into the presence of a reigning monarch unless he bids us enter. The Shulamite did not simply choose to go into his chambers; it was only with his permission that she was brought before the beauty of his manifest presence. Thus, this is the key to moving on in our spiritual life—the Lord

Himself must bring us in. This truth is a gateway to understanding the following chapters. In the last part of verse 4 she speaks in the plural form, “*We will be glad and rejoice in thee...*” Yes, the King has brought her into His chambers, but who is glad? “*We will be glad and rejoice in thee.*” When one person meets God in a new way, others rejoice because they receive the blessing of the presence and word of the Lord.

There is a definite order throughout the Word of God, as well as in our own spiritual lives. First, the Lord appears. He makes the first overtures, either by His Spirit, by an anointing, by a drawing, or by the Word of God. With this revelation comes a deep, almost overwhelming sense of the beauty and graciousness of the Lord to us.

When we meet the Lord, there is a certain aspect of His beauty that He wants to permeate our lives with; thus, He will manifest Himself in that particular form. For example, if that aspect is healing, we will see Him as the Healer. He will recreate organs, open stopped ears, and cause the lame to walk. We will become so conscious of Christ as the Healer that we will know deep in our hearts that He can do anything.

“*We will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.*” Again comes this thought of being upright. We cannot love the Lord if we are not upright for only the upright love Him in sincerity and truth. We cannot appreciate the Song of Songs or the love of God if our hearts do not have a desire for that purity. When our hearts have been cleansed, we will experience true joy in worshipping the Lord.

1:5 - *“I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.”* When she saw the Lord in all His beauty, she then saw herself in all her needs. Likewise, when we become conscious of His beauty and the particular aspect of His character He is trying to impress upon us, we are also given a further revelation of how “black” we are.

When Isaiah saw the Lord, he also saw himself. We read, “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:5). Another godly man who experienced this was Job. After he saw the Lord, he humbly said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job. 42:5-6).

Continuing in verse 5 we read, *“As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.”* Kedar was one of the sons of Ishmael, and became one of the tribes who wandered. There are some very beautiful thoughts associated with these tents. Ishmael, father of Kedar, was the son of Hagar who was a type of the Law (Gal. 4:21-31).

So often, in our search for true holiness, we wander through the Law just like the tribe of Kedar. When we see the Lord we will see ourselves in the light of His glory and cry out, “I am black.” The tents of Kedar were made from the goats of the desert, which are black, as indeed is the goat’s hair covering the Tabernacle of Moses. Black is the covering of most clergy a sign of separation from the world unto God.

1:6 - *“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.”* She cries out in shame because *“my mother’s children were angry with me...”* Here is a truth we want to look at carefully. To understand the deeper meaning here, we must understand that the mother always symbolizes the Church. “Mother” in the Word of God always refers to the true or false Church (Gal. 4:26, Rev. 17:5).

The children of the mother or the Church obviously have authority over the Shulamite, telling her what to do. Therefore, they must represent those in authority in the Church. It is possible they were directing her in all matters such as who to oversee, who to disciple, where to go, etc. All she was doing was “works,” and more “works” at the dictate of the hierarchy. When she met with Christ it was not her “works” that confronted her. Rather, it was the realization that she had neglected her own “*vineyard*” (heart) in her busyness.

Beloved, we have to watch our own hearts. We can do so much work in the Kingdom, and yet neglect our own hearts. I knew a pastor in France who did everything in the church, including the menial tasks that should rightfully have been done by others. For example, if anyone wanted a pane of glass put in, he was there with his hammer and nails. However, he would arrive at the church meetings completely exhausted, and almost had to crawl to the pulpit to go through the ritual of reading the Word or teaching. His congregation pleaded with him, saying, “Pastor, you are our shepherd. Just study the Word, pray, and give us

God's counsel. The deacons and others will help us with all the menial tasks." Unfortunately, he never got the message, and remained spiritually barren. Thus, we must be very careful to first watch our own vineyards before we watch others (1 Tim. 4:16; Acts. 20:28). Scripture warns us repeatedly to take heed to ourselves first before ministering to others.

1:7 - *"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?"* She is speaking to her Heavenly Bridegroom, and these words are so important and precious to God. This is what He wants to hear more than anything else. He wants to know that we love Him just as He commanded, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5; cf. Matt. 22:37).

She then asks a most important question, *"Tell me...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?"* In other words she was saying, "Lord, where do You feed? I do not want to be stuck somewhere and be fed by those who do not have Your Word. I want to be ministered to and fed by You. I do not want to have a neglected vineyard any longer. Lord, I want to be nourished by the Shepherd of my soul." The important thing is this—she had a discerning heart; may God grant us the same discernment.

1:8 - *"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.” Here we find the answer to her question in verse 7 concerning where the Lord goes to feed, and thus where we should be. The Shulamite was told, “Be where the shepherds are. Live the life they lead, and then you will be nourished likewise by Me.”

How important it is to understand this truth! As we walk where the true shepherds of God walk, follow their example, then we shall be nourished by the Lord. We do not want to be pushed aside or stumbled by the companions of verse seven.

The Shulamite is referred to repeatedly as the “*fairest among women.*” Psalm 45:2 flows very beautifully with this: “Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.” What a revelation of the grace of God! As His grace is poured into our lives, we want to receive it and be transformed, so that when He beholds us, we are fair in His eyes.

1:9 - “*I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*” Here we see another truth. A company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots speaks of a disciplined life. I read a beautiful exposé about the horses of the Emperors of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. They were reared with great care, because horses that drew the chariots of the emperor had to be very gentle and docile, and above all, they had to be under the complete command of the coachman.

They had to be well fed and well treated, but they also had to be secluded. Seclusion was an important part of their training

for it develops meekness of character, as do desert and prison periods in the lives of God's saints. In order to walk in the Spirit, we, too, will have periods of preparation that seclude us from a busy life, perhaps even from the church. So often, training must take place in the quietness of seclusion. There are times when God cuts away or prunes much of our ministry to others and says, "I want to speak to you." Thus, seclusion is the way we learn the disciplined life. Sometimes this may mean taking a sabbatical from active ministry, cutting down on our speaking schedule, or if we do not have a speaking ministry, removing our work duties for a time.

We have an example of this in the life of the Apostle Paul. After his conversion, the Lord called him to separate himself from the brethren and come away to the isolation of the Arabian Desert where he was taught by the Lord Jesus Himself. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days" (Gal. 1:15-18).

To further explain the principle of a truly disciplined life, let me relate a personal story. A number of years ago the Lord spoke to my wife and me to start walking in the Spirit. At the time, we were pastors and we were passing through a difficult period. However, the Lord had been meeting Audrey and me wonderfully as we

were praying. When He started to speak to us about being led by the Spirit, it was glorious! He said, "I do not want you to do anything before you ask Me." This sounded very good, indeed. Shortly after, we received an invitation to a seminar in a nearby city, and we thought this was just what we needed. Then we remembered the Lord's clear word that we were to check with Him before we did anything, so we placed the matter before the Lord.

"Lord, this is where we are going, is it all right?" Promptly He replied, "No, it is not. I don't want you there." We were rather surprised that attending a conference would upset the Lord, but of course, we did not know who would be at that conference, and He did. We found out later that the scheduled speakers were involved in many doctrinal errors.

Then He gave me a vision of a horse in a corral. The horse ran to one gate and back, then to the other gate and back. The master saw this, opened the gate, and the colt bounded out and ran happily to the pastureland. When evening came, the colt came back to a door that was now shut to him. That is where the vision stopped.

The Lord said, "If you keep asking Me, you will get what you want, but you will not get back in the corral again. You either stay under my discipline or you leave, it is up to you." The Lord desires us to ask Him to reveal to us what we should do, and then walk in obedience to His word. We must be careful to stay on the path He has placed before us. Thus, the Lord was teaching us to ask for His will, not permission to fulfill our desires.

1:10 - *“Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.”* Cheeks, of course, are the symbol of love, as a young girl in love always blushes. In a sense, we could say that her cheeks are covered with rows of jewels. In other words, her love for the Lord was now blooming. The neck is a symbol of strength, and so along with love, strength was now developing (Job 41:2).

1:11 - *“We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.”* In order to understand this verse properly, we need to look at Isaiah 54:11-14, “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. I will establish you.”

Many of us can relate to this kind of affliction during various periods of our life. Some might even be going through it now. Rather than letting us be tossed here and there, God wants to meet with us in our difficulties and make us stable. We need these words to become a quickened rhema in our lives during these times. Borders speak of boundaries that are placed on us by the Lord for our protection.

1:12 - *“While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”* Spikenard is a costly herb that symbolizes peace. There are times when we sit in the Lord in an attitude of peaceful contentment, even as David went in to sit before the Lord in the tabernacle on Mount Zion. There are times in our prayer life, too, when we should just sit before the Lord

and recognize God's grace in our lives. These moments are very pleasing to the Lord, as we wait there before Him and muse over the wonderful things He has done for us. This is our "spikenard" experience. The perfume of our heart rises up before Him as we acknowledge in true contentment and rest in our spirit, "O Lord you have done all these wonderful things for me, I thank you with all my heart."

1:13 - *"A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts."* Myrrh is a symbol of meekness, and it is one of the themes that run throughout the Song of Solomon.

My wife and I were in Jerusalem a number of years ago at Christ's tomb. I knelt before the tomb and said, "Lord, will you speak to me? Would you be gracious and speak to me?" He said only one word, "Meekness." That, I believe, is the quality the Lord prizes perhaps more than any other fruit of the Spirit. He tells us in His Word that He is meek and lowly. Thus, He wants to work out His meekness in our hearts and in our lives.

Meekness is of such wonderful value in God's sight. Sometimes, for the sake of meekness, we must "lie all night" while sleep is taken away from us so that we can have an understanding of His meekness. This quality is many times illustrated by the nature of a lamb. In the natural cycle, a lamb or sheep grows a thick coat of wool for the winter months, but before the heat of summer it must be sheared. In this shearing, everything is stripped from a sheep until it becomes almost unrecognizable. This truth in the natural carries over into the spiritual lives of believers. Isaiah

declared that the Lamb of God “opened not His mouth” when He was sheared (Isa. 53:7), and there are times in our lives when we, too, must be sheared.

Years ago, I was with a brother when he experienced this. We were in Austria, and my friend had an American car. Somehow, through a little deviousness, the pastors of this particular church in the United States managed to alter the documents for his car, and he was quite surprised to receive a letter saying, “We are giving your car to another person.” Actually, they had decided to give this car to another pastor.

I asked my friend what he was going to do, and he quickly responded that the Lord had already spoken to him. His said, “The shearers have come and they have sheared my car from me and I must not open my mouth.” Therefore, in spite of his disappointment, when the representative from the States arrived, my friend invited his shearer into his home. He heaped coals of fire upon his shearer’s head by giving him cups of tea and doughnuts, sprinkled with politeness and mercy and then gave him the keys to his car. When our shearers come around, beloved, we must react in like manner, as little lambs.

1:14 - *“My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.”* Now we see a complete change. No longer is she embracing her Beloved as myrrh or meekness. He has now become unto her as a cluster of camphire (symbolic of joy). If we are willing to train for meekness, God will pour in His joy. Isaiah 29:19 promises, “The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy

One of Israel.” The Shulamite uses a beautiful phrase in this verse, “*in the vineyard of Engedi.*” A vineyard represents wine (which is also a symbol of joy), yet it is the name of the vineyard that is the key to this truth. Engedi was David’s fortress of strength (1 Sam. 23:29).

The order given in this verse is very important—first we must embrace myrrh, then we follow by embracing camphire in the vineyards of Engedi. We are told in Nehemiah 8:10, “...the joy of the LORD is your strength.” Meekness leads to joy, and joy leads to strength. If, in meekness, we allow the shearers to come in, we will then have God’s joy, which will become our strength.

1:15 - “*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes.*” Here the Beloved is eulogizing His bride. Doves are mentioned often in the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit Himself is likened to a dove (Mt. 3:16). One important characteristic of a dove is that it has no gall, which symbolizes bitterness (Acts 8:23). It is one of the only creatures in God’s creation that has no bitterness. Moreover, a dove is frightened very easily at any sign of the enemy.

God wants us to be so sensitive to evil that as it approaches, we fly to the stronghold of God. It is soft and tender, and faithful to one mate throughout its life. Therefore, the Beloved tells His love, “You are just like a dove. You are so constant in your love toward me and your eyes are so soft and tender and clear.”

1:16 - “*Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.*” This is her response to him. “Beloved” always

refers to Christ; however, Christ is never mentioned by name in the Song of Solomon. A beautiful truth is expressed here in that we rarely call someone we love by his or her proper name; more often, we use terms of endearment and it is simply understood to whom we are speaking. The Song of Songs is for the mature believers, because they know of whom she is speaking.

She goes on to say, “*our bed is green.*” The thought here is from Psalms 23:2, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.” She is saying, “Oh, Lord, You lead me by green pastures, You restore my soul, You give me rest.” Often Jesus drew His disciples aside to rest and talk with Him.

Rest is so important in our spiritual growth. There must be God-ordained periods of rest in our lives; we cannot keep going all the time. If we are led of the Spirit, God will lead us into periods of rest, where we will feed upon green pastures and lie down and rest with Him. We may appreciate this thought of rest even in creation. God created a seven-day week so that man would be able to rest on the Sabbath and be refreshed to work for the next six days, just as He rested from His work of creation (Gen. 2:2-3). The Lord Jesus reiterates the necessity of rest in Matthew 11:28-29, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

1:17 - “*The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*” She is now speaking of the house again. In other words, she is saying, “You have caused me to rest in a secure house and to become strong in our relationship. We are not wandering as

though we lived in tents, for You have become my sure habitation.” The beams of this spiritual house were made of cedar, which speaks of strength. The “rafters of fir,” from other translations, are symbolic of blood. The fragrant wood has a reddish hue (Gesenius). Rafters do not support the walls of a structure, but are the covering, supporting the roof. She is saying, “The atoning blood is over us and covering us.” The repetition of the possessive pronoun “our” symbolizes a wonderful sense of oneness between the Lord and His Bride.

2:1 - *“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”* In chapter two, her Beloved introduces Himself afresh. “I AM” is one of the Lord’s titles. He is showing her a new aspect of His character.

The rose of Sharon is a preeminent flower along the fertile plains of the Mediterranean, renowned for its beauty and fragrance. In telling her that He is the Rose of Sharon He is saying, “I want you to have a fresh glimpse of My beauty.” He then adds that He is *“the lily of the valley.”* The lily is a symbol of purity as the lily is white in color. “I want you to see the beauty of My purity.” The secret of the ongoing Christian life with a deeper revelation of Him is desire. This truth is vital for us to understand! Desire is so often birthed through what we see, for what we see is what we desire. That is the reason so much money is spent on advertising.

Television is a prime example of this. Someone who watches much television is bombarded with advertisements for many different products, causing a constant change in his desires

according to what is being shown. That is why some of us need to go to a country like Africa where we will see nothing. Our desires would then be purified immediately! Our desires must be so purified so that we can cry out as King David in Psalm 27:4, “One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”

I offer the key we, my wife and I, found to be so effective in this area. My wife Audrey and I have an understanding concerning this matter called “desire versus need.” It has been customary between my wife and me, before we buy something or do anything, to always ask the Lord, and check with each other first. Sometimes it has surprised us what the Lord approves.

On one trip to Central America, Audrey thought that she should buy a certain woven skirt made by the local people. She asked me if I thought that it was suitable, to which I responded, “Have you asked the Lord?” She replied, “Oh yes! He said yes.” I was a little doubtful so I asked the Lord, “Do you want Audrey to have that skirt?” To my amazement He answered, “Yes, it is a necessity.” Dear Audrey got her skirt. For my wife and me, we believe the Lord uses this custom of asking the Lord and clearing it with each other to purify our desires little by little, until the things of the world grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace. Therefore, in every situation and circumstance we are learning to say, “Lord, choose Thou for us.”

2:2 - *“As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”* He pays her a tremendous compliment. As we have already said, the lily is a type of holiness or purity. Holiness is actually composed of two attributes—separation and joining. It is being separated from the thinking and lusts of this world, and being joined to the Lord. In actuality, it is impossible to be holy if one is only separated from the world. Holiness is an attribute of God and only as we are joined to God can we be holy (Rev. 15:4; John 17:3,16,21). We must be separated from the world, but we are made holy by virtue of the fact that we are joined to Him.

Wherever the Lord is—that place becomes holy for He is holy. For example, when God was in the burning bush, Moses was told, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Ex. 3:5). That piece of ground was no different from any other. Only the fact that this ground was joined to God at that particular moment made it holy. Anything or anyone who is joined to God is immediately holy. That is why Paul calls us “holy and beloved” in Colossians 3:12, because we are joined to God.

2:3 - *“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.”* This is her response to the love her Beloved has poured upon her. The apple tree is a fruit tree, and as such, it is greatly valued, more than other trees of the forest. Trees, of course, are a symbol of men (Ps. 1:3; Isa. 61:3). She is declaring to him, “Oh, Your worth is so much greater than that of any other man.”

This is an important truth for us to realize, for she is placing Christ above any earthly level. Most assuredly, every Christian must come to that place where he or she chooses who has first place in his or her heart. Is your wife before Christ? Is your husband before Christ? Is Christ “*the apple tree among the trees of the woods*” to you?

Every one of us is tested in this area. Perhaps, one day someone will come into your life and you will hear the Lord say, “This person is not My will for your life.” Then comes the battle. Will you choose Christ and His will, or will you choose the one you want to marry?

It is essential to understand this truth as the Shulamite did. As we place our desires at the feet of the Lord and put Him above all others, we shall receive grace to fight that battle through. When first place has been given to Jesus, and all desires are submitted to Him, He is free to join us to the one He chose for us before the foundations of the world!

“I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” The picture of sitting down under His shadow shows Him as a strength to the poor and the needy; He is our refuge from the storm as well as a shade from the heat.

“And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32:2). That man, of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes when the heat of the storm rages around us, all we want to do is

come into His presence and be under His shelter. How important it is then to sit at His feet and let the peace of God overshadow us. We must not continue on in our journey devoid of peace, but rather come aside and rest under His shadow; after receiving His refreshing strength we can go out to meet the problems. If we neglect this communion with the Lord, we will not have strength for the battle.

2:4-5 - *“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”* What she is really saying is, “I have not got the capacity to contain Your love.” Often, there are times in our lives when the presence of the Lord is so great that we simply do not have the capacity to receive Him or His love. Nevertheless, I believe with all my heart that if we press in, God will increase our capacity until we can come to a place where we can “be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19).

2:6-7 - *“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.”* We have the beautiful thought that she is choosing once again just to be alone with Him.

This is what marriage is all about — desiring to be alone with our mate. We want to jump in our car and speed away from the crowds, to be alone with our beloved. This is the quietness and spice of marriage. It is togetherness; yet it is

aloneness. This truth is beautifully expressed here. “Oh please do not interfere with me while I am in His presence because that means everything to me.” I have said that the title or theme of this first song is “The First Love Renewed.” There needs to be the same kind of renewal in many marriages. Many couples have lost their first love for each other and no longer desire to have that intimate aloneness. Frequently, they would rather have a whole crowd of people with them. Too many times it seems easier, even in spiritual matters, to become involved in activity rather than waiting in the presence of the Lord.

Beloved, we are not going to progress in our spiritual walk until we have our first love restored. God said to the Ephesian Church, “Thou hast left thy first love. Repent...or I will remove thy candlestick” (Rev. 2:5). In other words the Lord was warning, “I will take the revelation and the anointing away, because all these blessings depend upon your love relationship with Me.” We cannot expect to go on unless Christ is everything to us, and our greatest delight is to be alone with Him and receive from Him. We must come to a place where that which we desire, above everything else, is Him and Him alone.

Thus, we discover the purpose of the first song. God wants to renew that first love in each one of our hearts. The prayer, “Draw me, Jesus! Draw me, draw me to You.” is the key for going on with God. It is crucial that we not only listen to the Word of God, but also put it into practice. Let us pray, “Lord, I want to have a renewal of that first love. I have lost that first love, but I want to have an awakening, even as the Shulamite. Lord, please draw me.”

Chapter Two

The Wilderness Journey (2:8 - 3:5)

As we have already said, the Song of Solomon is a compilation of five songs. “The Wilderness Journey” begins in chapter 2:8.

2:8 - *“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, showing himself through the lattice.”*

Remember, the first song ended in a position of rest where the Shulamite said, *“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”* (Song. 2:7).

However, the second song opens up with a fresh visitation; what we might call a fresh commissioning as she hears the voice of her beloved. It is worth noting that when the Lord Jesus Christ emphatically stated in John 10:26 that His sheep hear His voice. He never said, “My lambs know my voice.” He said, “My sheep.” So there is a certain sense of maturity necessary in our Christian experience in order to hear the voice of the Lord.

A very beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us in this verse: *“He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills...”* It portrays perfectly His beautiful and graceful movements, and epitomizes the strength that the Lord gives to His messengers. When we have a message from God, He will provide the beautiful strength and coordination we

need to complete our mission. As it is written in Isaiah 52:7, “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!”

2:9 - *“My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.”* We should take careful note of the fact that He did not enter into the house. The Lord abounds towards us in all wisdom and seeks to gently draw us, but He never forces Himself upon us (Rev. 3:20). His desire is that we respond to His leading out of a heart of love.

2:10 - *“My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”* He has been at a period of rest and now He stands outside the house calling her. When God will call us, if we are willing to listen and leave our present place, we will move on in God. There must always be a continual moving on in God.

We must be very sensitive to His command to move on. Here He says, “Come away.” He calls from outside, and if we are to continue our relationship with the Lord, then we must leave the place or the plateau we are on. We must move on!

In heaven there are different levels of glory, and even there, there is a continuous progression throughout eternity because God is life and life is motion and progression. Unless water flows, it stagnates. Similarly, unless the Christian flows on into a continual

unfolding revelation of Christ, there comes a stagnation even of that life which we have already received. Thus, we must be open to moving on in God.

2:11 - *“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.”*

Now he is telling her about the beginning of the new season. There are four natural seasons—winter, spring, summer, and fall. As previously mentioned, these seasons are also in our own Christian experience.

Seasons repeat, and in the same way, God repeats experiences in our own life. Winter experiences are sometimes very perplexing to the Christian because winter is a time when everything lies dormant. During our winter experience, we look at ourselves and think we are *not* moving on. We wonder what has happened. During these times confusion and even condemnation may come into our hearts.

In our distress, we might ask others for counsel saying, “I am not moving on; can you help me?” The problem that arises is this—they cannot discern the season in which God has placed us. Therefore, unless they wait upon the Lord and get the mind of the Lord in the matter, they will just cause more confusion as they offer all kinds of remedies that will not work.

We must remember that there is still a work going on deep in our hearts when God draws us aside in our wintertime experiences, it is not a time to become depressed or to feel sorry for ourselves. Rather, it is a time to seek the Lord, a time to be engaged in intercession and waiting before Him.

Psalm 65:10 says, “Thou makest [the earth] soft with showers.” He softens the earth with showers. There is a breaking up of our hearts, and a tenderizing process that takes place so that we can receive fresh seed.

2:12-13 - *“The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle(dove) 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.”* The winter is past and the rain has gone and she is entering the springtime experience. A fresh meeting with the Lord always brings new growth into our lives just as new blossoming comes after winter. So often, a fresh song springs up within our hearts, giving us understanding of that which the Lord now desires to do in and through us.

2:14 - *“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.”* We are now presented with another cameo. The Lord is saying, “I want to see your face. I want to hear your voice.” Love is a two-way communication system.

A man cannot love his wife unless she loves him. There must be a love flowing between them; and so it is with the Lord. He loves to see us and hear our voices. When we are alone with Him, He loves to see our faces lifted up toward Him. Oh, how we need to lift our voices up to the Lord in those secret places! To illustrate this point I want to mention an interesting vision given to a lady pastor friend of ours. For a certain number of

days, she prayed and cried out to the Lord, “Lord, do you hear me? Do you hear me?” She repeated this same prayer every morning around eight o’clock as she went to the church. Kneeling at the altar, she would ask, “Lord, do you hear me?”

On one particular morning, however, she looked up toward a window just off the platform area and she saw the Lord looking through that window. She was excited to notice that His hand was cupped to His ear, and He was obviously listening to her with an attitude of attentiveness. With joy she cried out, “Oh, now I know you are listening!” Although we may not always have experiences like that, it is important to remember that He is always listening.

In the times of our most difficult struggles when it seems as though God is far off or indifferent to our prayer, remember that He is listening intently and observing not only our words, but also every cry of our hearts.

In this verse, we find another important principle for our consideration, “*For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*” Regrettably, because of a lack of understanding of this principle, many churches miss out on a visitation from God. As we have already mentioned, chapter one shows us a fresh visitation of the Lord to the Christian worker who had grown cold in heart because of constant work and a loss of communion with the Lord.

Throughout chapters one and two there has been an encouragement given by the Lord. The Shulamite was brought

into His banqueting house. She has feasted upon Him, enjoyed His beautiful presence, and been encouraged to go on with God. We need to realize the importance of spending time simply communing with the Lord, beholding His glorious countenance, and hearing His sweet voice.

2:15 - *“Take us the little foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.”* Here an important truth of order is revealed as the Lord begins to deal with issues in the heart of the Shulamite. He first reveals Himself to her in His beauty, capturing her heart and renewing her love, before He brings these problems in her heart to light.

To emphasize my point, think of that first communion service when the disciples were with Jesus in the upper room (John 13:4-5). Jesus first sat with them and broke bread; they fellowshiped together. Afterwards, the Lord arose and washed their feet. First communion, then washing. This is an important principle.

In the 1960s and 1970s, sometimes called the hippy generation, the Lord moved upon those people, bringing them into His kingdom with all their problems, their long hair and awful smelling clothes. Unfortunately, during that time many churches reversed the proper order.

They said, “Wash up and then you can come in.” The churches who said, “Come as you are and sup with us” received the multitudes in that generation! They were blessed with the multiplication, because after the hippies had tasted and seen

that the Lord was good, they wanted to change. They started to wash, clean up, and cut their hair. It is so important to remember the divine order. The Lord invites us to sup, then He washes and cleans us up. Do not try to clean your fish before you catch them.

Therefore, after drawing her into a new love and relationship with Him, He starts to examine her heart and gently addresses some cherished “little foxes” which represent inordinate desires (c.f. Lk. 13:31-32). He tells her to rid herself of these little foxes—the desires and habits that have sprung up in her life. The Lord says that these things must be taken away or they will spoil the vine (Col. 3:5). Jesus is called the True Vine (Jn. 15:1), and the vine, of course, is the life of Christ within us. If we allow these habits to remain, they will eat and destroy the life of Christ within our hearts.

Looking again at this verse, we can see there is a difference between a fox and a little fox. Obviously, both are speaking of habits. A grown fox is a long-standing habit that may have been there for generations. We know the Lord referred to King Herod as “that fox” (Lk. 13:32). The inordinate desires of this wicked ruler had come to maturity.

I remember speaking at a Women’s Aglow Fellowship meeting in New Zealand several years ago. God gave me a vision of three generations of women. I saw the grandmother with a tiny weed in her heart. Then I saw the mother with a bush in her heart. Finally, I saw the daughter’s heart, and that bush had become a mighty tree that was dominating her life. The Lord

spoke to me so very clearly in this vision. If the grandmother had only allowed that weed to be taken out of her heart, it would never have been passed down to the next generation. Unfortunately, with each passing generation these weeds (or little foxes), become stronger and stronger. Little foxes, if they are not dealt with, grow up into big foxes.

As parents, it is crucial to ask God to cleanse our hearts so that the weeds of iniquity or bondage are not passed on from generation to generation. Sometimes these bondages skip a generation in the line, but they will continue to reappear until they are recognized and dealt with by the grace of God.

2:16 - *“My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.”* We have a little phrase that is repeated later in the fourth song. Here she declares, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Many years ago my wife and I were pastoring a certain church. We had just come to the church and were beginning to get to know the people. Among those in the congregation was a dominant lady whom we decided to get acquainted with one day. We asked her name, and she told us. “Are you married?” we asked. “Yes, and there he is,” she stated emphatically as she pointed to a diminutive man. Then she said something that surprised us both as she continued to point to him: “He belongs to me.” Well, after a few weeks, we had little doubt about that! Oh, beloved, a marriage cannot long exist with that kind of possessiveness.

We must grasp the correct order as the Shulamite says, “Christ is mine and I am His, too.” Our attitude at salvation so often is,

“I have discovered Christ and now I have a boundless supply opened up for me and whatever I need, I have.” Unfortunately, many Christians keep that attitude for the rest of their spiritual lives, never moving on. Beloved, we must understand this viewpoint is only for the beginning of our walk of salvation. Afterwards, it should take an about-face because we are created for Him and for His good pleasure, not the other way around. The bride was created for the bridegroom (Rev. 4:11). Thus, as we progress in our walk with the Lord, our perspective should slowly but steadily change from “Christ is mine” to “I am my Beloved’s.”

“He feedeth among the lilies.” Lilies, as we have already mentioned, symbolize purity. Therefore, He always feeds where there is purity and where there is spiritual hunger.

2:17 - *“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.”* This is the first of the four mountains spoken of in this book. The “Mountain of Bether” is the mountain of separation (Young’s Dictionary). She is saying to him, “I will separate myself from the foxes, from the little foxes, and I am going to separate myself to be with You.” Each time the Lord speaks to us concerning problems in our hearts, He wants us to go up to the Mountain of Bether, the mountain of separation. He wants us to be utterly separated from those negative things He is touching in our lives.

3:1 - *“By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not”* Now in chapter three, but still

in the second song, she says, “By night.” The Song of Solomon spans both night and day; thus, here is another nighttime experience. In the first song, and also in the beginning of the second song, it was Christ who made the overtures. He came to the Shulamite, just as He comes to the Christian; but now the order is reversed. She is starting to seek Him. At the beginning of our experience with the Lord, we feel Him so close to us and enjoy His presence and appearance; it is so very wonderful. However, there comes a time when we find the Lord no longer coming to us. This is because He wants us to start seeking Him. We cannot stay in a state of rest. We must move on to find Him.

3:2 - *“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 are to seek the Lord with all our heart. However, from this passage we see that the price for seeking Him afresh is quite high, as she did not find Him. Often in the beginning of our Christian experience we cry out to God and He is there!

As we mature in our walk with Him, there will come a time when we cry out and He does not seem to come immediately. God wants to develop within our hearts a deeper hunger and thirst for Him, and a greater appreciation of His presence, none of which would be possible if He appeared immediately whenever we called.

3:3 - *“The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?”* The watchmen can represent the elders or the deacons of the church. She asks, “How

can I find Him? Where can I find Him?” We need to understand that we will come to a place in our walk with Jesus when He wants us to learn to seek Him for ourselves, to press in for personal revelation and communion with Him. He wants us to come beyond the necessity of always being fed by others. Each of us must learn to hear from God, to eat of the Bread of Life for ourselves. Sometimes we have to go beyond the experiences of others, and beyond the place where we can get the answers from the elders, the deacons, even the pastor may not have the answer and we have to persevere on our own to press into the Lord.

There will even come times when we will be on our own. Perhaps the pastor will be on a trip and we need an answer right away. The point I am trying to make is that we will have many experiences when the pastor is not around, and the Lord uses these times to draw us on. We can hear Him urging, “Come and seek Me for yourself.”

3:4 - *“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.”* We see He allowed the Shulamite to find Him quickly, and her deep appreciation for the Lord when He finally comes!

At the beginning of our Christian experience we cry and He comes, but because of this, many times we do not hold on to Him. Yet, when we have had to seek the Lord and find Him on our own, we do not quickly let Him go. We become like Jacob, who at Peniel said, “I will not let thee go until thou

bless me” (Gen. 32:26). This is the attitude that God wants to develop within our hearts.

There is another point that is very important, for it has to do with where she brings Him after finding 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.*” Simply stated, when we break through into a fresh experience with Jesus, we need to bring that experience back to our church, or mother’s house, to share with our fellow believers.

3:5 - *“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.”* Now the Shulamite wants to spend time alone with the Lord until it is His good pleasure to move off again. It is important, when we have met the Lord in a new way, to spend time with Him. We must be completely saturated with the truth He has revealed to us through that experience.

Chapter Three

The Garden Enclosed (3:6 - 5:1)

The Bride's Beauty

3:6 - *“Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?”* Now we have another view of the Lord, as we move into the third song.

In our spiritual walk with Christ, we will face wilderness experiences. For example, after the Lord Jesus Christ received the Holy Ghost, He was driven into the wilderness (Mt. 4:1). The children of Israel, after the experience of Mount Sinai (a type of the baptism of the Holy Ghost) entered into the wilderness.

They arrived at Mount Sinai on the third month, which is at the time of the Feast of Pentecost. We must be very honest with people when they are baptized in the Holy Ghost. For we know the baptism of the Holy Spirit is given to us to have strength to go through the wilderness and experience the particular trials of that time.

The purpose of the wilderness is to produce meekness and faith in our lives, expressed by the perfumes of myrrh and frankincense in this verse. Myrrh represents meekness and frankincense represents faith, and it is God who develops His faith and His meekness in the hard places of the wilderness.

In a recent trial when my wife had very serious surgery, the Lord showed me something very important. It began when He asked me, “What are you trying to do?” I said, “Lord, I am trying to get through this tunnel as quickly as I possibly can. I am trying to get my wife healed and move out of this trial quickly.”

Quietly, the Lord spoke to my heart. “Now look, all you are interested in is getting out of this dark experience, is that right?” “Yes, Lord,” I replied. Patiently, He began again: “In darkness there are treasures—treasures that are only found in darkness, in the wilderness experience (Isa. 45:3). So, instead of rushing through this experience too quickly, gather up as many treasures of darkness as you can. In that way you will not come out of this experience empty-handed.”

Perhaps, some of you have read the book entitled, *“Don’t Waste Your Sorrows,”* by Paul E. Billheimer. As the title suggests, God has an eternal purpose for each Christian in the midst of life’s greatest adversities. Remember, there are treasures we must look for and gather as we pass through these times of sorrow or agony.

We must not keep our eyes only on the end of the tunnel or wilderness. Rather, we must say, “Lord Jesus, what do you desire to do in my heart during this time?” I thought it was so wonderful when I was at Bible school and the Lord quickened to me Isaiah 45:3, “I will give you the treasures of darkness.” I promptly responded, “Thank you, Lord.” Yet, it was not long before I realized that these treasures cannot be received unless one is placed in darkness.

3:7-8 - *“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.”* This is a description of the darkness. In darkness we may meet demonic personalities, even as the Lord met Satan in the wilderness. Some Christians meet great opposition in the wilderness. At times, there may be manifestations of the enemy, and we may feel very much alone. Yet, this is where we learn to fight.

The baptism in the Holy Ghost is given to us for this very reason, so that we can develop our spiritual armor. This baptism makes us strong, gives us discernment concerning the wiles of the enemy and enables us to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God more effectively (See Eph. 6:12-18). The wilderness is where we become an expert in war in order to conquer the enemy that we will encounter later in the promised land of our inheritance.

When I was a staff member of a Christian camp in England, we had a person who was demon possessed at the camp; he was creating quite a problem. Well, when some of the other staff members realized that I had just completed my demonology course in Bible school, they said to me, “Brian, we don’t know what to do. Would you be willing to take care of this demon possessed person?” I said, “Oh, surely, I have just completed my demonology lectures and I would be delighted to. I am sure I will be able to take care of him.” I felt very confident as I slept with this fellow in the tent, and waited for my opportunity to use what I had learned. Well, one evening my opportunity finally

came as he reared up at me. My demonology lectures paid off as I shouted, "In the name of Jesus, lie down!" Much to my delight, he obeyed, and all was soon quiet again. Everything continued to go smoothly for some time, and I could not understand why the more experienced counselors were still a little bit nervous about him.

However, the situation with this young man did not get any better. Eventually, an ambulance was called to take him about 400 miles to his home. The ambulance people were a bit frightened by him, and because I had been so successful with him, they thought it best that I ride along. I, too, thought that I had been doing well, and I felt all right about it. After all, I had completed all my demonology lectures.

As we were traveling the long distance with him to his home in the ambulance, he reared up again. I simply repeated with much authority, "In the name of Jesus, lie down," and it worked once again. We arrived at his home with no more major complications, and after conversing with his mother, we discovered that she was a spiritist medium. Then, we understood the reason for his madness.

Later on that day, I returned to the camp feeling very victorious. Peacefully, I went to sleep, and I wish I could say that this was the end of the story. However, I soon found that there were huge demons all around me. At that moment all the demonology lectures went out the window and I was frightened. Just as suddenly, I saw the Lord on the other side of the room, and He began to teach me many valuable lessons about demons. In

essence, the Lord taught me not to deal with demons without the absolute certainty that He was directing me. Remember, God is going to develop you and teach you warfare in the darkness of the wilderness.

“They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.” In our time of darkness, there will also be much fear. Fear may be categorized into two main sections—fear of the known and fear of the unknown. Within these sections, fear can be broken down further into two categories of fear of man and fear of circumstances. Fear, especially the fear of man, is a snare (Prov. 29:25).

This passage is not intended to be a treatise on fear, but is meant simply to say that fear is very real. Nevertheless, God never intended for us to live in the grip of fear; He has made a way to overcome it. 1 John 4:18 tells us, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

King David, a man who experienced great opposition in his long sojourn in the wilderness, said in Psalm 23:4, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4). Again, in Psalm 27:3, “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.”

David could be confident in the Lord’s love and His saving power because in Psalm 27:4, he had set his heart upon the Lord and

Him alone. This moved the Lord to say, “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him. . .” Therefore, we may say that in the times of darkness victory is attained by a loving trust in the Lord and a holy determination not to fear man or circumstances, real or perceived.

3:9-10 - *“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.”* In the midst of the dryness and trials of the wilderness, the Shulamite was carried in the chariot of the Lord, though she may not have known it. What a beautiful picture! This portrays such a wonderful truth. It is such a comfort to know that in the difficult wilderness journey, in reality, we are riding in the chariot of the Lord.

Look at the beautiful description of this chariot: *“He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple.”* Pillars speak of strength. As we know, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. . .” speaking of the Lord upholding us (Deut. 33:27). Gold speaks of His Deity, and purple speaks of royalty, for we are all called to be kings to reign with Him in His kingdom (Rev. 5:10).

“The midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.” I would like to dwell on just one aspect of love. During a particular trial I asked, “Lord, what do you want to work out in our lives?” for He was showing us many things at the time. He said, “One thing I want to work out in your life is love.” I inquired, “Lord, what is love?” He gently replied, “Love

suffereth long and is kind.” He further explained, “Some experiences cannot be shortened. The only way I can develop love is through a period of prolonged suffering. Therefore, your attitude in suffering is very important because there must be kindness. Longsuffering plus kindness equals love. There is not going to be a short road in this experience. By this, you will learn to be kind, and that is the only way I can develop My love in your heart.”

3:11 - *“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.”* This is a cry to the daughters of Zion. This is the time the Christian enters into the marriage relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. After coming out of the wilderness, she is joined unto Him in a very meaningful way.

SEVEN ASPECTS OF FEMININE BEAUTY

In chapter four we have seven aspects of feminine beauty as seen through the eyes of the people in the Middle East. Seven speaks of completeness. For example, the work of the Lord in creation was completed in seven days (Gen. 2:1-3). These seven aspects of feminine beauty are allegorical to reveal the beauty of the Bride of Christ. However, it is the spiritual interpretation of this beauty that we want to focus on. The Bride is a type of Zion, called “the perfection of beauty” (Ps. 50:2).

4:1-5 - *“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.”

Here the Lord is looking upon His bride and saying, “O, you are altogether beautiful, you are altogether lovely.” Then He becomes very specific with these seven points:

1. *“Thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks.”* Dove’s eyes are a symbol of faithfulness as the dove only mates once in life. She has eyes only for Him. When one mate dies, the other mate pines away. A dove has neither bitterness nor guile; it is easily frightened by evil. A dove is the only bird included in the Levitical sacrifices. It is also a type of peace. The main thought here is of the eyes—eyes only for the Lord Himself, eyes that are at peace, eyes that are one with Him.

2. *“Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.”* Hair is a symbol of submission as shown in 1 Corinthians 11:6-11. Long hair on a woman is a mark of submission to a man, even as the hair of a Nazarite marked his submission, obedience, and separation to God. Notice that Mount Gilead is mentioned in this verse. Mount Gilead was the place of reconciliation between Jacob and Esau. The Lord is saying to

His Bride, “Your hair is a symbol of your inner consecration and submission, and sweet reconciliation to the will of God.” The Lord wants us to be adorned with this meek submissiveness in the inner man. He wants that reality of an inner consecration to Him—a sweet reconciliation. He is not talking about the outward appearance, but the spirit that is revealed through these seven aspects of beauty (1 Pet. 3:4).

3. *“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.”* Teeth speak of eating, and represent feeding upon the Lord, the Bread of Life.

There were two requirements for a pure animal sacrifice in the Word of God. First, they were to have cloven hooves, which speaks of a separated walk. Second, they had to chew the cud, which is the thought of meditating upon the Word of the Lord, or feeding upon Christ. If we meditate upon the Lord and continually feed upon Him, everything we do will prosper (Ps. 1).

“Up from the washing” is the thought that the teeth are washed from all the dead food of yesterday, and that we are living off today’s manna, meditating on His Word and hearing from Him daily. We also see the expression, “even shorn.” Those who have been on sheep farms know that sheep have to be shorn and all surplus wool is cut off from them. In other words, there is a cleansing. Another very important fact, not to be overlooked, is that they “bear twins.” This wonderful truth means they will break forth on the left and on the right, speaking of fruitfulness (Isa. 54:3). In addition, they will enter into the blessing of the

firstborn, for the firstborn received a double portion of the inheritance of the father (Deut. 21:17).

4. *“Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely.”* We will find all through the Book of Proverbs that the lips of the righteous bring forth life (Pr. 10:21; 11:30). Our words are so important in our Christian experience. Psalm 50:23 states, “To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.” Our conversation determines how much we are going to receive from God, for He is very particular about our speech.

When the Lord Jesus Christ spoke, His words were always so very gracious. Thus, our words should also be gracious, for He is our pattern and our example. How very important it is for us to present the truth in an attitude of graciousness! It is only the words, but also the attitude and tone of a person which will reveal his character.

The Lord Jesus made this very clear when He said, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mt. 12:34-37). Moreover, how we speak to others determines how God will speak with us. This is confirmed in Psalm 18:25-26, “With the merciful thou wilt show thyself

merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.” We must watch our lips, so that they will be like a “thread of scarlet,” and will bring forth life.

5. “*Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.*” The pomegranate is the fruit that symbolizes love (Song. 4:13, Gal 5:22), and the temples are associated with the mind and thoughts. He is really saying, “Your thoughts are continually filled with love.” It is so important to watch our thought life. Once again, this reflects the two commandments^{3/4}our minds must be filled constantly with thoughts of love first toward the Lord and then towards others (Mt. 22:37-40).

When the Lord described Himself to Moses, He said, “*I am the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*” (Ex. 34:6). When we look at a person or think upon a person, we must think only thoughts of goodness toward them. In this way, our thoughts will bless them because our thoughts can be *carriers*, either of good or evil. The Lord was going to judge the Israelites according to “the fruit of their thoughts” (Jer. 6:19); thus we see the tremendous affects of our thoughts upon our own lives and upon the lives of others.

For example, if a mother would love and think kindly upon her daughter, she could transform her and make her very beautiful just by her thought life. Oh, how many daughters suffer terrible rejection because their mother’s thoughts toward them are not thoughts of kindness. There is such power in thoughts.

Our God is such a loving Father who holds such wonderful thoughts towards us as we read “The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps. 33:11). The Lord Himself comforted us concerning this in Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

6. *“Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury.”* The key here is the neck, which is the symbol of strength (Psa. 18:40). Christ wants His Bride to be strong. Every man wants his wife to be strong spiritually, not one who is weak and faltering in her Christian walk. The Lord, as well as every man, wants one who takes the initiative to break through, and who can fight the powers of the enemy herself. The Bride of Christ must have tremendous strength.

7. *“Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.”* The breasts are a source of nourishment, and the fact that there are two speaks of faith and love. These two virtues are found often linked in Scripture. In the eight steps up the mountain of perfection, faith is the foundation or source of our Christian experience and love the goal, the bond of perfection (2 Pet. 1:5-8, Col. 3:14).

Paul again links these two virtues, but reverses their order in Philemon 1:5, showing that once we have reached the pinnacle of love, we are to come down that mountain to minister to others. The thought here is that they can feed the young with faith, the pure doctrine, and they can also love, the fruit of faith. We see

again the thought of lilies, speaking of purity. Thus, faith and love enveloped in purity is the symbol of the Bride of Christ as she nourishes the young.

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.”* Simply stated, this means that until God brings light into our situation, we must spend all the time we can in these mountains. The mountain of myrrh represents the mountains of sorrows. The hill of frankincense envelops the thought of difficulties. Since myrrh is the embalming fluid for the dead and therefore used in a time of bereavement. Frankincense has to be placed into fire in order to bring forth its aroma and so we are chosen in the furnace of affliction (Isa. 48:10).

When we are in a time of darkness, we must spend all the time we can in those sorrows and difficulties. For they are working out the beautiful perfume and fragrance of Christ in our lives. They are producing His meekness and His faith. He said, *“Until the day break,”* and this is what we must purpose to do. We must say with Him, “Until He comes forth afresh in my life, I will not fear the darkness; I will take all I can from it.”

Do not try to get out of your “darkness” prematurely. Gather up as many treasures as you can. Allow God to develop the beautiful perfume and fragrance of Christ in your life. There is a warning in Isaiah 50:10-11, not to try to escape our darkness, for then there will be great consequences. There is a solemn warning in the Word of God against trying to get out of our darkness before the time, given in Isaiah 50:10-11: “Who is among you that

feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

There is nothing wrong with walking in darkness if it is a darkness directed by the Lord. If we are walking with the Lord there will be periods of darkness in our lives. Beloved, if we try to get out of that darkness or difficulty by our own maneuvering before the day breaks, we shall lose that precious myrrh and frankincense. Furthermore, we shall have sorrow instead of joy when the light comes. Let us not attempt to create our own light when we are in a God-ordained darkness. Instead, cry out to God to provide the necessary grace to walk through it and receive all those wonderful treasures of darkness.

4:7 - *“Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”* In Jude 23, we are urged to be like those who “hate even the garment spotted by the flesh.” The thought in Ephesians 5:27 is that Christ will wash us so thoroughly that there will not be spot or wrinkle or any such thing in us. Christ loves purity. The purpose of many of our trials is to work out His purity in us. Trials are like fire that purifies the gold, and water that washes and cleanses us from all impurities.

4:8 - *“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.” This is another of the four mountains found in Song of Solomon. We have to understand the geography of Israel to appreciate this verse; these mountains were the frontier outposts of Israel. In essence, this is what He is saying to His bride, “Come away from those danger points. Come away from the world.”

There is a story that illustrates this point. There was a little old lady who lived in a house by the side of a road which ran along a very deep ravine. She advertised for a coachman, and three men applied. She asked the first one, “How good a coachman are you?” Confidently, he replied, “I can run the wheels within inches of the edge and not fall over.” She politely thanked the first man and went on to the next. When she questioned the next man, he, too, answered, “I can run the wheels just on the edge and not fall over.” She dismissed him and went on to the third man. This time, however, she changed her question. “How near can you get to the edge?” she inquired. With humility he responded, “Ma’am, I don’t see how near I can get to the edge, but how far I can stay away from the edge.” She said, “You are my coachman.”

This is what the Lord is saying to us! Do not see how near you can get to sin and still stay saved, but rather how far you can get from it. Come away from those mountains of danger. Come away from the frontiers of this world. Instead, come as close to Jesus as you can.

4:9 - *“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.”* In other words, He is telling her, “I can see in your

eyes singleness of purpose. It is an eye that does not stray but has singleness of purpose.” The chain is a symbol of authority, which the Bride is now acquiring (c.f. Dan. 5:29).

4:10 - *“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!”* He is now speaking to her. In the beginning she was saying to her Beloved, *“Thy love is better than wine, it is better than all the joys of the world.”* Now, we see how it is reversed as He says, *“Oh, my Bride is above all the joys of the kingdom that my Father has given me.”* This refers to the joy of Christ. This is the reason there is such tremendous joy in heaven.

His joy is not over the many mansions or the many beautiful buildings there are in heaven. No, His joy is in His bride. When a man is married, his possessions do not matter to him, for his joy is in his wife. Here the Lord says, *“How much more is thy love than all the other joys I can receive.”* The joy of Jesus lies in His bride who means more to Him than anything else (Zeph. 3:17).

4:11 - *“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.”* He is commending her for her ministry saying, *“When you minister, your lips bring forth honey and life, and this milk is the sincere doctrine of the Word of God”* (Prov. 16:24; 25:11).

4:12 - *“A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”* Now we come to another beautiful

thought. One of the first visions I received was of a piece of ground filled with all kinds of stones and weeds. I saw the Lord Jesus Christ come to this plot of ground and I understood that this piece of ground, with all the stones and all the weeds upon it, was the unregenerate heart of man. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into that heart, the very first thing He did was to build a wall around it. This is spoken of in Job 1:10 when Satan said to the Lord concerning Job, “Thou hast put a hedge around him.” The Lord speaks of “our walls” being the walls of His salvation (Isa. 60:18). Therefore, when we are saved, a wall is put around us to prevent the enemy invading the ground bought by the Lord. The garden of our heart must be protected very carefully.

4:13-14 - *“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.”* The nine plants spoken of here are analogous to the nine fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. The spiritual interpretation of these nine plants is as follows: pomegranate is *love*, camphire is *joy*, spikenard is *peace*, saffron is *longsuffering*, calamus is *gentleness*, cinnamon is *goodness*, frankincense is *faith*, myrrh is *meekness*, and aloes is *temperance*.

There is something else concerning this garden. The garden has to be weeded. The stones, which are areas of hardness and rebellion (Ezek. 36:26) have to be taken out. As the Lord gave me a vision of this garden, I saw Him begin to replace all the weeds in this garden with beautiful plants, the fruit of the Spirit. It is clear in Scripture that the Lord loves gardens. At creation,

we see that He planted a garden upon the earth and placed man into the garden. After the fall, man was driven out of the garden, and ever since that time the Lord has sought to put that garden back into man.

4:15 - “*A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*” All gardens must have a source of water in order to thrive. The Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jn. 4:14). We must be so very diligent to ensure the well of springing water within our hearts continues to bubble up. In that way, we will refresh the fruit of the Spirit in the garden of our heart.

4:16 - “*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.*” We are going to experience difficult circumstances that will break us, even as the alabaster box was broken to pour forth that beautiful oil upon Jesus (Mk. 14:3). Unless the severe cold of the north wind comes, and we have those cold, harsh experiences, our fragrance is not going to flow out: the fragrance is only brought forth through the breaking and the suffering. Nevertheless, we must also have the south wind, for its gentle warmth restores our souls so we are not destroyed by the bitter north wind. Both experiences are essential for the fragrance of our lives to flow out, pleasing in the sight of our Beloved.

(There is an excellent example of this truth in the book of Esther.)

During the purification process to become queen, Esther was given treatments for six months with bitter herbs and six months with sweet oils (Esth. 2:12). This is symbolic of the types of experiences necessary in the Christian life. We must have both the bitter and the sweet in our lives to cause the fragrance of Christ and His goodness to flow out from us.

The whole purpose of the garden enclosed (Song. 4:12-5:1) is this: *“Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”* It is to prepare the garden of our hearts for the Lord, the Gardener who loves His garden. The invitation is now given. *“Oh, may it please my beloved to come into his garden and eat His pleasant fruits.”*

5:1 - *“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.”* This is His response in the last verse of the third song. The invitation is accepted, and the Lord comes afresh into the garden of His love.

The first fruit mentioned is myrrh, and this is consistently spoken of throughout the Song of Songs as well as the whole of the Word of God. Jesus said, *“I am meek and lowly”* (Mt. 11:29). This is one of the hardest fruits to produce. God puts such emphasis on meekness because it is of great price in His sight; He loves it.

“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.” Honey speaks of life (1 Sam. 14:29). Jesus said in John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” We must always seek that fresh release of life within us. Life begets life; life attracts life. Christ is the source of the life of the Spirit.

Milk speaks of the Word of God (1 Pet. 2:2). “*I have drunk my wine with my milk.*” Wine represents joy and the fruit of the Spirit. When the Lord comes to us, He wants to find us deeply rooted in the Word of God, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Then He continues, “*Eat, O friends.*” The Bridegroom’s purpose in our garden is not simply to come and enjoy our fruit in solitude, but to nourish His friends upon the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. He wants to use us, and the work He has done in our lives, to bring life to others. We must nourish His friends with the fruit from our garden. His friends are those who walk with Him as did John the Baptist (Jn. 3:29) and His disciples (Jn. 15:15).

“*Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved...*” This gives us the understanding of the spiritual development in the life of the Shulamite to this point. “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). If we combine this Scripture with 4:16 and 5:1, we come to an understanding of what the Lord is seeking to do in our lives. He is speaking to people who are baptized in the Holy Ghost. However, He is speaking of a fresh experience. He wants us to be totally strengthened in our innermost being by His Spirit. In Ephesians 3:17, Paul’s desire

is “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” He is actually telling us in this passage that Christ wants to come into our life, into our garden, through His faith. We must first be strengthened by His Spirit for this work to be accomplished. It is then that we will be able to receive the revelation of “Christ in us the hope of glory.” When this happens, there is a far greater impartation of Christ in us than at the initial experience of salvation.

Continuing in Ephesians chapter three, “That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, [rooted and grounded refers to our garden] may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (3:17-18). Love is one of the things that the Lord seeks to impart unto us; He wants us to know it in all its dimensions—to know the breadth, length, depth, and height of His love.

The Apostle Paul goes on to say, “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19). God’s desire is that we might be filled with all His fullness. However, there are steps to receiving this: if we open our hearts to Him, if we give Him access to our garden, then the Lord Himself will enter in (Rev. 3:20). We will then be strengthened by His Spirit, and Christ will be free to dwell in our hearts by faith. As this process continues, we will be rooted and grounded in love; we will be able to comprehend the love that passes all understanding, and thereby be filled with all the fullness of God.

In the last days, the word of the Lord through Moses shall surely be fulfilled: “And I will walk among you, and will be your God,

and ye shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12). We are going to see Christ revealed in a way we have never thought possible in these last days. Christ will manifest Himself in and through the living temples of His body. He will manifest Himself unto the nations through the gardens of our hearts.

May our prayer be: “Oh, God, please grant us the ability to expose our hearts to You. Please take away the foxes, large and small, all the things that are displeasing to You. Father, enable us to come up to the mountain of separation, so that we may come away from the things of the world. Give us an eye that has one single purpose, to please our Heavenly Bridegroom. Delight in us, dear Lord. Amen!”

Chapter Four

The Mighty Army (5:2 - 8:4)

As we have already said, the Song of Solomon is a progression of the relationship and walk of the bride with her Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:2 - *“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.”* We begin the fourth song with these words *“I sleep.”* In our Christian experience, we must never be afraid of times of rest because sleep is natural for growth. Even in times of rest, the fruit of the Spirit is being developed in our lives. These periods of rest are very necessary after having climactic experiences with the Lord.

In the previous song, the Shulamite had been brought to a position of sanctification and holiness. Now she is asleep, but her heart is awake. Likewise, our hearts must always be attuned to hear the voice of the Lord. Her Beloved is coming to the Shulamite from the outside, while she is inside sleeping, yet listening for His voice.

Dew is used as a type for several things in the Word of God. Deuteronomy 32:2 speaks of dew as a type of doctrine and the Word of God, *“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass”* (Num. 11:9; Jn. 6:31-33).

The dew comes at the dawn of the morning, speaking of a new day coming. It also speaks of the blessing and favor of God (Ps. 133:3; Prov. 19:12).

Accordingly, He comes to her just before the dawning of day, speaking a new word to her, and bringing a greater blessing than she has known. This suggests He now has a ministry for her that is going to take her beyond the scope of her present experiences. In the previous songs, the Lord had been doing a deep work in the heart of the Shulamite. Now, however, He is calling her to come out of her safe environment where He had been ministering to her alone, and causing her to join Him in ministering that life she has received to others, thus entering a new sphere of ministry.

5:3 - *“I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?”* Observe her reply, for it is typical of many Christians who make holiness their goal. She is looking only inward, at her own heart. There is an appropriate time to examine ourselves, a time for God to work deeply in our hearts and thought life. When this is what God is speaking, it is good to consider our need for purity. However, we must not let this focus consume us to the neglect of ministering the life Christ has given us to others.

Holiness is not an end in itself. Frequently, when God has dealt with certain areas in our lives, and developed a certain degree of sanctification in us, the thought is, “Well, this is the goal and this is what I will work at constantly.” However, the Lord desires to keep moving us onward and upward the mountain of perfection. In Second Peter 1:5-7, godliness is not the pinnacle

achievement; the next virtue we are told to add to godliness is brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness we are to add the bond of perfection, which is love. However, even love is not the end of the matter, for in verse eight, we are told that the purpose of these virtues is to produce much fruit for the Kingdom of God. Thus, one reason Jesus moves us onward is so that we might minister to others.

Romans 15:27 says, “For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them. . .” Also in Matthew 25:44-45 the Lord taught: “Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

However, the Shulamite is so concerned about the work of holiness and sanctification in her own heart that she says, “How can I minister to others? I have put off my coat. I have washed my feet, how can I be defiled in the world?”

5:4 - *“My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.”* He now moves to touch the door of her heart, and as He does, her whole being responds with a yearning for His presence.

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.”* She says, “I rose up” for Him. Here we

see that Christ is more important to her than the work of holiness. Sadly, in some churches, the work of holiness takes the place of Christ; an experience becomes more important than the Lord Himself. The “*sweet smelling myrrh*” refers to the sweet aroma of a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4).

5:6 - *“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.”* At the beginning of this song Christ had made the overtures. He came to her door and spoke to her, and she responded to Him. Suddenly, however, He was not there, and she had to persevere in seeking to find Him again. The Lord wants to stir up our desires for Him and develop in us a seeking nature, so that we persevere in seeking until He chooses to reveal Himself to us again. He wants to develop a hunger and thirst, a desperation for Him that cannot be accomplished unless He withdraws Himself.

Thus, at times He must withdraw Himself for long periods. We are being tested to see if we are living for “experiences” or for Christ Himself! He wants to know if we love and are serving Him for who He is, or only for blessings. We are being tested, even as the Shulamite who said in her darkness, “I could not find Him, I called Him, but He gave no answer.”

5:7 - *“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.”* There is coming a time in our lives, beloved, when we will be misunderstood in our search for Christ, even by

the elders, deacons, and pastors of our churches. As we mentioned earlier, in these times we will have to go beyond their experience. In this test the watchmen took away her veil, symbolizing her reputation (c.f. Gen. 24:65). Sometimes our reputation is taken away, perhaps by other Christians, elders, or even at times by a minister. Perhaps you may hear something like, “You know, she is a little bit too eccentric. She does not understand.” Sometimes it is far worse than that. Yet, we must be prepared to have the veil, our reputation, taken away for the sake of our Beloved.

5:8 - *“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.”* Because of her intense desire to find her Beloved, she took counsel with others (the daughters of Zion) who were in preparation as she was. Desperately she whispered, “Where can I find him? Help me, please.”

5:9 - *“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?”* As we see from this response, the others in the church may say, “What do you see in Christ that we have not seen?”

5:10 - *“My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.”* Their question brings a beautiful revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ that we want to try to develop and give the spiritual interpretation. She tells them, “My beloved is white and ruddy.” White speaks of absolute purity, and ruddy speaks of freshness and life as it is a natural assumption of good health (Isa. 1:18, Rev. 19:8, 14).

In our unfolding revelation of the Lord, there is always a sense of the freshness, life, and vibrancy of Christ. In His ministry upon earth, Jesus was not sedentary, but constantly moving. He is a Man of action, finding His meat and drink in doing the will of His Father (Jn. 4:23).

No matter how much we grow in our knowledge of Christ, we will always be amazed at each new aspect of His nature as it is revealed to us. This thought is brought out in Revelation 4:8, for the living creatures “rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” It is as if they constantly are shown another facet of the beauty of Christ, causing them to cry continually, “Holy, holy, holy...” as their understanding is opened to the character of Jesus.

“The chiefest among ten thousand.” Of course, no one compares with Him. He is the leader par excellence.

5:11 - *“His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.”* Gold speaks of deity. The description of His head being made of gold speaks to us of the wisdom of the Deity, as the head makes the decisions and all His decisions are done with wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Him (Col. 2:3).

The description of His hair in this verse is very interesting because He previously described the Shulamite’s hair as long and flowing, which speaks of submission (1 Cor. 11:15). Yet we are told here, “His locks are bushy.” Bushy locks speak of leadership and authority, of vibrancy of life, as it is a symbol of manliness.

Also, this is in direct contrast to her. The head covered with long hair speaks of being under authority. The head uncovered speaks of authority. Most theologians agree that bushy is emblematic of authority likewise.

His hair is spoken of as black; there is no gray. This means that He is always in the prime of manhood with hair as *“bushy, and black as a raven.”* The raven is a symbol of judgment (Prov. 30:17; Isa. 34:11). Here we have a revelation of Christ as the Judge of the whole world in all His majesty.

5:12 - *“His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.”* Here she says that He has dove’s eyes, which are symbolic of peace. The phrase *“By the rivers of water,”* gives us the thought of peace like a river (Isa. 66:12). He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) and His peace just flows out to us.

“Washed with milk” brings to mind the early life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah the prophet, speaking of Christ said, *“Butter and honey shall he eat that he might know to refuse the evil and to choose the good”* (Isa. 7:15).

Peace is developed through righteousness, and righteousness through obedience to the Word of God. Isaiah 48:18 bears this out, *“O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea...”* Also in James 3:18, *“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”* Thus, the thought here is that His eyes are continually washed with the Word of

God. “*And fitly set*” carries the connotation of eyes that are not roving about, but are fixed upon the goal.

5:13 - “*His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*” This verse continues to describe the bride’s Beloved. Cheeks are, generally speaking, the symbol of love. “*His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh,*” show that His speech and attitude are pure and gracious, and His whole demeanor is one of meekness.

5:14 - “*His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*” Hands speak of ability (c.f. Song 7:1, Ex. 35:35), and the “*gold rings set with the beryl*” speak of the fact that Christ performed the works that were foreordained by the Father for Him to do, as gold signifies deity. A ring speaks of authority, as seen from Genesis 41:42, when Pharaoh gave Joseph his own ring, and made Joseph the second ruler in Egypt.

This ring of authority can also speak of sonship, as related in the parable of the prodigal son. When the son returned to his father’s house, the father restored him to his former position, putting a ring upon his hand (Lk. 15:22). Thus, Christ is the Son of God, and bears the authority of the Father (Jn. 13:3).

“*His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*” The belly is the seat of life (Jn. 7:38). Sapphires are representative of the Word of God because they are heavenly blue in color. Therefore, we can safely say it is obedience to the Word of God that causes life to flow out from God (Deut. 30:20; Jn. 7:38).

5:15 - *“His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.”* Concerning pillars, the Lord Jesus gives this promise to the overcomers of the Philadelphian church in Revelation 3:12, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out...”

A pillar is built to bear great weight and pressure, to stand steady, unwavering. Lebanon and cedars are symbolic of strength. There is tremendous strength of purpose and stability of character in the Lord. Isaiah 50:7 records that Christ set His face as a flint to do the will of His Father. He never wavered from His course in His life and ministry.

5:16 - *“His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”* When He preached, His words were full of grace and truth. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14).

Then the Shulamite says, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend.” It is a great privilege to be called the friend of God. Being called a friend of God is predicated upon obedience to His word: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (Jn. 15:14). Abraham and Moses were called the friends of God, for they were faithful to obey Him (Jas. 2:23; Gen. 18:19; Ex. 33:11; Num. 12:7). John 15:15 says, “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.” The Lord Jesus Christ will make known to his friends all that He has learned of His Father.

6:1 - *“Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.”* The Shulamite’s description of the manifold beauty of her Beloved kindled a desire in the daughters of Jerusalem to join her in her search for Christ. This is the answer to the Shulamite’s prayer in chapter 1:4, *“Draw me and we will run after thee.”* It is important to realize here that these are redeemed people, but they see Him in His bride as they have never seen Him before.

This beautiful revelation of Christ through the bride caused them to entreat her to tell them all about Him. This is the key to leadership. When the Lord Jesus draws us and we enter into fresh experiences with Him, it will create a hunger and thirst in others. The Shulamite has revealed the beauty of Christ that she has known personally, and they now say, “We want to seek Him with you!”

6:2 - *“My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.”* We will always find the Lord in a garden, for He delights in the fruits of His gardens; He delights in purity.

6:3 - *“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.”* There are three stages of Christian development. These stages are very important because they apply

not only to our relationship with the Lord Himself, but also to our marriage relationship as husband and wife here on earth.

In chapter 2:16 she says, “*My beloved is mine, and I am his,*” but notice how it changes in chapter 6:3, “*I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.*” This is how it should be, because the woman was created for the man, not vice versa. Revelation 4:11 shows the proper order: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” We are created for Christ and for His pleasure. However, there is a stage beyond even this; with further spiritual growth, her testimony in chapter 7:10 becomes, “*I am my beloved’s, and His desire is toward me.*” This will be developed in chapter seven.

“*He feedeth among the lilies.*” As brought out earlier, the Lamb of God feeds where there is purity, because He is pure.

6:4 - “*Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*” Here, the Lord describes His bride and speaks to her lovingly. Of course, a husband desires his wife to be beautiful. In His description, the Lord graciously places Tirzah before Jerusalem. Through this order, the Lord develops the thought of restoration, for Tirzah was the capital of the backslidden Northern Kingdom of Israel, but Jerusalem was the capital of faithful Judah. Thus, it seems clear that the bride will comprise not only the faithful, but also the restored. Thus, in His graciousness, He places the restored before the faithful in this passage.

“Terrible [or awe-inspiring] as an army with banners.” The Lord is a mighty man of war, and so His bride must also be mighty in battle. In essence, He has said, “I remember the many victories you have won.” The Bride is a soldier as evidenced by Ephesians 6:12-17 where Paul likens the Christian to being clothed upon spiritually with the armor of a Roman soldier.

6:5 - *“Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.”* He continues to praise her. We know the eyes are the very light and life of the body as they reveal the innermost depths of the soul (Mt. 6:22-23). The hair represents separation. Hair covers our temples, and the temples speak of our thoughts. God wants our thoughts to be separated unto Him. The Lord loves a separated people who have consecrated thoughts. This is confirmed in Leviticus 20:24 when the Lord spoke, “I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people.” Moreover, the Apostle Paul brings out, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). Gilead is the place where healing salve is produced, indicating that a separated life also brings healing (Jer. 8:22).

6:6 - *“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.”* This was previously discussed in chapter 4:1-7, in the description of seven points of feminine beauty by the Bridegroom. Whenever there is repetition in the Word of God, it is to emphasize the truths He desires us to seek, and to reveal an increased depth in each truth.

The teeth, of course, speak of our meditation, like the chewing of the cud by a cow. The Lord loves it when we meditate on His Word. Psalm 63:5-6 speaks of the blessings of meditating on the Lord: “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.” This thought of bearing twins illustrates that we prosper in the spiritual as well as in the natural through such meditation upon Him. Like Abraham who had both natural seed as the sand upon the seashore and the spiritual seed as the stars of the heavens (Gen. 22:17).

6:7 - *“As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy lock.”* In this verse, pomegranates have a dual connotation. We stated previously that this fruit speaks of love, but it also signifies fruitfulness, for a pomegranate contains many seeds (Song 4:13-14; Gal. 5:22-23). Temples, represent our thoughts, and being covered by hair, speak of separation. Thus, the thought in this verse is that separation protects fruitful thoughts of love.

6:8 - *“There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.”* The three tiers in the spiritual hierarchy mentioned here may be compared to the three levels in the Tabernacle of Moses. The queens have come within the veil of the Holy of Holies, to dwell in the literal presence and glory of Christ.

The concubines have entered the Holy Place, experiencing Christ as the Bread of Life, the ministry of the Seven Spirits of the Lord, and the intercessory prayer of the altar of incense. The

virgins have come into the Outer Court, receiving Christ as Savior, and coming into water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (For further studies, please see our book entitled *The Tabernacle of Moses*.) However, we know the Bride is preferred above them all (Song 6:9).

6:9 - *“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.”* In His eyes, no one can compare with His bride, for she is absolutely outstanding.

6:10 - *“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?”* Now the daughters of Jerusalem are speaking. They are looking upon the anointed of the Lord, the bride who is glorious in the anointing, *“[awe-inspiring] as an army with banners.”* This army is spoken of many times because in the last days the Church of Jesus Christ is going to be like a mighty army that performs tremendous and miraculous exploits. At that time strength will be vitally important.

6:11 - *“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.”* Chapter four mentioned the first garden, which was “the garden enclosed.” This speaks of the garden of the individual believer’s heart. However, in this verse, the bride goes to see the fruit of the valley, or the garden of nuts. This speaks of fruit that is maturing. The garden of nuts is a garden of promises. In the natural, nuts are surrounded by a hard outer

shell that must be pierced or broken in order to reveal the meat or fruit. Often, this means experiencing suffering, a breaking, before seeing the promises of God brought to pass in our lives.

6:12 - *“Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”* The thought contained here concerning the chariots of Amminadib is about the zeal of the Lord of the Hosts. This is the anointing that gives a tremendous zeal to accomplish a certain task for the Lord. This is evidenced strikingly in two men, Elijah and the Lord Jesus Himself.

This anointing came upon Elijah after he announced the end of the drought in Israel to King Ahab: “And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel” (1 Ki. 18:46). Elijah literally ran before the chariots of the king, racing back to the city before the storm broke. The second example of this anointing was in the life of Christ when He fulfilled the Scripture, “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up...” in cleansing the temple and driving out the money changers (Ps. 69:9; Jn. 2:14-17).

6:13 - *“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.”* “Shulamite,” incidentally, is the feminine form of Solomon, and it means “the princess of peace.” Thus, one of the characteristics of the Bride is that she reveals the peace of the Lord. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and

if there be any praise, think on these things. . .and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil.4:8-9). As the daughters of Jerusalem look upon the Shulamite, what do they see in this princess of peace? They see “the company of two armies.” This comes from the Hebrew word “Mahanaim” found in Genesis 32:2 when Jacob returned from his Uncle Laban’s to the land of promise. “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,” meaning the place of two armies.

There is a beautiful truth here—as we go in the strength of the Lord, we eventually become aware of the heavenly hosts that surround us. This occurred in the account of Elisha and his servant Gehazi when the Syrian army encircled the town of Dothan.

Gehazi was troubled and said, “Alas, my master! what shall we do?” Elisha besought the Lord, saying, “Lord, please open the young man’s eyes,” and he beheld the whole mountain of Dothan covered with the chariots of the Lord (2 Ki. 6:14-17). Oh, make no mistake, beloved, the armies of the Lord are very real, and they are all around us! Elisha responded to his servant, saying, “They that be with us are more than they that be with them.” Therefore, our enemies are outnumbered.

Judges chapter 5 records the prophetic song of Deborah and recounts the battle between Barak, captain of the Israelite army, and Sisera, the captain of the enemy army. In Judges 5:20 Deborah says, “They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” It is important to realize that there

are always two battles and two armies. There is a battle being fought upon the earth and a battle being fought in the heavenlies at the same time. These two armies must move in harmony.

This is why the Lord gave David direction in the battle plan when David went out to fight. In 2 Samuel 5:23-25, we read, “And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.”

Essentially, the Lord’s direction was, “When you hear the footsteps in the mulberry trees, or more to the point, when you hear the heavenly hosts going forward—you go forward, too.” From this we see that we must never go into combat unless we are very certain that we are moving in concert with the heavenly army!

Returning to verse 13, the daughters of Jerusalem said, “What will you see in the Shulamite?” [We see] “The company of two armies.” Their description of a company of two armies speaks of the Shulamite’s walk with God, as she moves with Him in perfect synchronization, the armies of heaven and earth move in unison. This is what the Lord wants to produce in His Church—a unity with Him so faultless that we move in one accord with the heavenly army, invincible to the enemy.

When Joshua was going out against Jericho, he met the Lord Jesus Christ as the Captain of the Lord's host. The Lord Himself, as Captain of the host, was going to direct the battle (Josh. 5:13-15). Therefore, not only were the armies of Israel encamped around Jericho, but the heavenly hosts also surrounded that city.

More and more, we need to realize it is not only a question of winning the battles on the earth, but of overcoming the powers in heavenly places. Paul strongly warns us of this in Ephesians 6:12, "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."

This truth applies to all situations, whether traveling to another country, leading someone to salvation, or delivering someone from bondage or demonic oppression. We have to know what God is doing so that we do not move too quickly. We have to know God's timing for a person's salvation, for deliverance, for a fresh move of His Spirit. The two armies must move together.

7:1 - "*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.*" In chapter seven, the Bride is described through the eyes of her Beloved. The feet represent the evangelist. This is one of the ministries of the Bride of Christ—to bring forth the message of the Lord. Isaiah declares, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings" (Isa. 52:7). "*The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.*" The Lord continued His description speaking of her joints, which signify graceful

movement. He was saying to her, “Oh, the beauty of your movements, you move so easily in the Spirit.”

7:2 - *“Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.”* The thought here is of wine or joy, as the belly is a symbol of life as she brings forth joy. Those who minister the Word of God know at times the travail that comes, almost like birth pangs, to bring forth the revelation of the truth of the Word of God to feed the people. Jesus said, “He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:38). The repetition of the thought of lilies shows that purity must be interwoven into everything we do.

7:3 - *“Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.”* We have already said that the breasts symbolize feeding—the ability to nourish those who are young in the faith. They are a sign of maturity and represent faith and love.

7:4 - *“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.”* The neck is a symbol of great strength (Psa. 18:40). Bathrabbim means a city of multitude. This depicts the thought of a very lively, rushing, noisy city, with distractions everywhere. Positioned just outside the gates of this city lay the fishpools in Heshbon. These fishpools were very deep and very still; and they are one of the symbols of peace. The description of her eyes as such gives such a beautiful connotation. Therefore, the picture given here is the Bride of Christ at the center of activity, surrounded by confusion and

distractions; yet, her eyes are filled with the peace of Christ. In the midst of all activity she manifests the peace of her Lord.

Usually we think we can only have peace if we go to a tranquil place away from everyone else. In actuality, the peace of God is manifested in both circumstances of quiet and chaos. The peace of God is available no matter what the situation may be. Jesus said 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 in Isaiah 26:3 we read, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Peace is not dependent upon our circumstances, but upon the Prince of Peace Himself, and our choice to trust Him.

The Bride of Christ is symbolic of the deep peace of God. Perhaps some of us are in a difficult situation at home. During times filled with distractions or confusion, we might be tempted to say, "If only I were somewhere else." However, the Bride is found in the city of Bathrabbim, the city of confusion, manifesting and portraying the peace of Jesus.

This verse continues, "Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus." Damascus is the traditional enemy of Lebanon, even in modern times. The nose is the instrument of scent. In other words, the Bride can quickly smell trouble when the enemy is moving. We want to be very quick to smell the movement of the enemy. We want to be able to sense him from afar off. We want to smell what he is going to do, even before he moves.

7:5 - *“Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.”* The Beloved declares, “Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel. Your hair is like royal tapestry, and the king is held captive by its tresses.” Mount Carmel is the mountain of strength, and purple represents royalty, or the royal demeanor of the Bride. *“The king is held in the galleries [or held captive by its tresses].”* He is saying to her, “I, the king, am so captivated by you that I always want to be with you!”

7:6-7 - *“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.”* The palm tree is always a symbol of righteousness or straightness (Isa. 61:3, 1 Ki. 6:29, Ezek. 40:16). In our lives, and in the Church as a whole, the Lord will allow a shaking like an earthquake to occur, to separate what is of God and what is not.

Psalm 46:1-3 speaks of something similar, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.” Let us seek God to become trees of righteousness, with our roots sunk deep in the foundation of Christ and His Word, so we will not fall.

The result of building our foundations in God is found in the thought of “breasts to clusters of grapes.” The thought here is that joy is the outcome of a righteous life. As grapes produce

wine, and wine is a symbol of joy (Jdg. 9:13). “Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Ps. 45:7). Again, after the foundations have been tried and proven, we find in Psalm 46:4, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”

7:8 - *“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...”* Again, the thought of righteousness and joy being joined together is voiced. Then He comments on her nose again, but this time in a different sense. In verse four, He was commenting on the fact that her nose could quickly sense the enemy, but this time He is saying that “the smell of thy nose [is] like apples.”

In chapter 2:3, she likens Him to an apple tree. From this statement we see that the Bride is quickly able to pick up the scent of the presence of Christ, and she is sensitive to His heart.

The thought conveyed here is that of Isaiah 11:3-4: “[The Spirit of the Lord] shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

The Spirit of the Lord makes us of quick understanding in the fear of God, and this holy anointing gives us a quick sense of what pleases or displeases the Lord. The Bride had a good sense of smell. She could discern the Lord's presence and intuitively knew what was upon His heart. This passage also speaks to us of a beautiful balance in the things of the Spirit. We need to be able to sense the presence of the enemy, but we also need to be able to discern the presence of the Lord. Too frequently we major on only one side. We concentrate so much on the presence of the enemy that we forget about the Lord's presence. At other times, we can be so consumed with the Lord that we are unaware of the enemy causing devastation behind us.

7:9 - *“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.”*

Some translations suggest that this verse could be divided into two parts. In the first part the Lord finishes His praises of her, saying, “The roof of thy mouth is like the best wine.” Then she interrupts, saying, “That goeth down smoothly for my Beloved, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak” (ASV).

There are times when we receive a word from God and as we meditate upon it, we can feel the touch of that beautiful warmth in our mouth as it goes right down into our heart. Sometimes, when we meditate on the Word of the Lord or when we rest in His presence, we feel as if we have just drunk sweet wine. It has such a beautiful taste. Thus, the Bride was experiencing His presence in a unique and beautiful way. The beauty of this verse

lies in the truth that wine, speaking of joy, causes those who are asleep to speak. When the wine of joy comes into churches that are sleeping soundly, those who are asleep come alive in the joy of the Lord and praise flows from their lips. The greater the flow of wine or joy, the greater the praise and adulation of the Beloved becomes. Thus, the Bride has the ability to cause those who are asleep to speak when she experiences the sweet wine of the Lord and ministers it to others. This is also true in marriage, for when wives allow the wine of joy to flow from them, their husbands awake to the joy and sweetness of the Lord.

7:10 - *“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.”* This is the third step in our progression as a mature Christian. The first step is seen in chapter 2:16, *“My beloved is mine, and I am his.”* In this first stage she could see that Christ belonged to her and whatever she needed He would provide. The second phase of maturity is found in chapter 6:3, *“I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”* She began to realize that she really belonged to Him, and He was also hers. However, we have now come to the third and most important step, *“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.”* Here all possessiveness is gone. Her attitude is that she was created for her Beloved and for His good pleasure (Rev. 4:11); there is nothing of self left in her thoughts.

Let us develop this thought for a few moments by referring to Genesis 29 and 30. Jacob had two wives and the description of these two women is very interesting. Genesis 29:17 tells us, *“Leah was tender eyed.”* This could mean that she had weak eyes or that she squinted. However, this verse also records, *“But Rachel was beautiful and well favored.”* In other words, Leah was not

comely, but Rachel was very beautiful. We also know that Jacob loved Rachel but hated Leah. Genesis 29:31-32 continues, “And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.” Reuben means “see ye a son” (Strong’s H7205).

Leah believed that because she gave her husband a son, Jacob would love her. How little she knew! We see her cry out again after Levi, her third son, is born, “Now this time will my husband be joined unto me” (Gen. 29:34). The story goes on and on this way. Rachel, envious of her sister, gave her maid to Jacob to obtain children by her. However, out of this act of indiscretion Dan, who is a type of the Antichrist, was born (Gen. 30:1-6). Dan is the one who appears like the True Ones but in effect destroys the people of God (Gen. 49:16-17).

What a terrible situation! Significantly, nearly all the children were named after the emotions of the mothers. In Genesis 30:8 we read, “And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.” This constant competition for the love of Jacob through child-bearing continues for several more verses.

Leah could never win Jacob’s love and affections. She mistakenly thought that by having more children, she could gain his love. Sadly, many married people think this way. They strive to win the affections of their spouses by works, or seek to buy it through possessions. However, this kind of striving never works. My

wife and I have seen marriages where wives have received diamonds so big they can hardly hold up their hands. Unfortunately, it has been obvious that these husbands were trying to win their wives by works.

Here is the key, “*I am my beloved’s and his desire is toward me.*” The desire of Christ is toward the Bride because He sees her beauty! It is not how much we give, what we do, or even our ministry that impresses Him. Rather, it is the inner beauty, the life of the Spirit that wins the presence of Christ. This beauty is what makes Him desire us, and this is the whole key to our Christian life. Oh, that His desire might be toward us!

Repeatedly, this beauty is extolled in the Shulamite, demonstrating us the qualities that attract Christ—lilies (*purity*), palm trees (*righteousness*), myrrh (*meekness*), and wine (*joy*). He sees the beauty of the Spirit in us when we are content to stay in the difficult situations until His sacred work is done, choosing to trust Him, glorify Him, rejoice in Him, to love Him through it all. This is what attracts the attention of Christ and wins His overwhelming affections. By doing this, we become beautiful in His sight and He clothes us with His glory.

Even in marriage, inner beauty is what attracts our spouses. Many people fall into the trap of thinking they can transform themselves by wearing certain clothes. However, Jesus said in Luke 12:27, “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” It is not the outward apparel, but the heart that attracts (1 Pet. 3:1-6). The

whole key is to attract Christ, to cause Him to desire us, by the beauty of the life of the Spirit in us. "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me."

7:11-12 - *"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."*

Metaphorically she is saying, "Let us go forth and see the fruit of our union and communion. Let us see the other gardens, the lives who have been touched by our love. Let us see our spiritual children together."

7:13 - *"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."* The mandrakes are a symbol of love as is shown by the fact that mandrakes were exchanged for love as seen in Genesis 30:14-15.

In marriage, the husband and wife are partners and share all they have. This was certainly true of my own marriage. When my wife and I purchased a car several years ago, we both signed the title. After I had signed, the previous owner turned to Audrey and said, "You must also sign as a part owner." We now affectionately refer to her as P.O. (Part Owner). Every time we get into the car, she knows that she is part owner of the car. In the same way, the Shulamite refers to the gates as "our gates." With the thought of community property, she says, "Let us go and see the mandrakes because they give a

pleasant smell at our gates.” The two of them are united. This phrase, “*At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old,*” contains a beautiful thought. Fruits must be fresh and new, as well as mature. Spiritually speaking, we must have new truth continually springing up within our lives that brings forth fruit, as well as the old truths we have received over the years coming to higher levels of maturity (Mt. 13:52). Therefore, she is actually saying, “There is all manner of truth, both new and old, that I want you to see, that I have prepared and laid up for You.”

Her statement, “which I have laid up for thee,” reveals the whole purpose of our lives and ministry. When we stand before God to give an account of our lives on the Day of Judgment, we must not come before Him empty-handed. This affects everything we do. The whole reason we minister, dig into the Word of God, and pray for the anointing is that we might have fruit to offer Him. This is the whole purpose of life—in order to have fruit to present to the Lord for His glory. Our heart’s cry should be, “Lord, I want to offer fruit to you constantly, new and old.”

In the Old Testament, the Lord instructed the Israelites to come before Him three times a year. It was mandatory to appear before Him at the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). No one was allowed to come before Him empty-handed. The paragraph below explains the meaning of these three appearances before the Lord.

The Feast of Passover speaks of salvation (Ex. 12:5; 1 Pet. 1:19; Heb. 9:28). On the day of reckoning, we must come before the

Lord to present those we have led to Christ: those we have begotten into the Kingdom of God. The Feast of Pentecost represents the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:1-4). We want to present to the Lord people we have prayed for and have brought into the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the spiritual gifts. The Feast of Tabernacles is representative of fullness and maturity. We want to be able to present before Him the men and women we have influenced and brought into maturity. The whole thought of fruit is this—"Here are the works of my life, Lord. I have done this for You, and I did it Your way." (Please refer to our book entitled The Journey of Israel for further studies.)

When we are in love, all our thoughts and desires are centered upon the one we love. This is the relationship developed in marriage. In everything we do, we want to please our spouses. This is also true in the spiritual life; all we should be concerned about is pleasing Christ our Beloved. We should do everything with Him in mind. More than anything else, we should want to see that smile on His face and to hear the words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant" (Mt. 25:21, c.f. Mt. 7:21-23).

8:1 - *"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."*

She was saying, "If you were like my brother I could walk around with you and I would not be despised." So often, when we are wholehearted for Christ and we seek Him out, we are the odd one in the crowd. Unfortunately, we are often considered peculiar even in church. Her heart's cry was simply, "I wish this reproach

would be taken away. I wish this reproach did not have to be.”

This reproach came upon Jesus because He dared to claim equality with His Father. That is the reason He experienced the reproach. Reproach did not come because of His miracles, or even His teaching, which divided soul from spirit. Rather, it was in view of the fact that He claimed the wonderful union and communion with the Father. This was the source of Jesus’ reproach, and this reproach broke His heart (Ps. 69:20).

8:2 - *“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.”*

She is saying, “I want to bring You into my mother’s house.” We find this same desire in the life of the Apostle Paul, brought out powerfully 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.” Here, the Apostle is willing to forfeit his own relationship with Christ in order that others may share the joys of salvation.

Every time we meet with Christ afresh and anew, the desire should be to bring that new experience back to the home church (*mother’s house*). This is the true test of spirituality—to must minister that blessing to others rather than staying in our own sphere of blessing, and trying to remain in that experience indefinitely.

I once belonged to a church in England where we had opportunity for testimonies in the meetings quite frequently. The testimonies in these particular meetings, because they were specifically for believers, always revolved around what someone had read in the Word of God, or a new truth they had just received. Everyone was always warmed and thrilled by recounting these experiences of meeting with God and receiving a new revelation of Him. One of the joys of our heart was to learn something new about Christ and then to bring it into our motherhouse, the home church, and share it with someone else.

8:3 - *“His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.”* She is being supported and being loved by the Lord (Deut. 33:27; Isa. 41:10).

8:4 - *“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.”* When we have broken through into the presence of God, we do not want to be disturbed by anyone until it is His pleasure to leave.

Chapter Five

The Abundant Harvest (8:5 - 8:14)

Now we come to the *last song*, which we call “The Abundant Harvest.”

8:5 - “*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 apple has always been associated with the fruits that Eve offered Adam.

There are two wilderness experiences in the Song of Solomon. The first one is found in chapter 3:6, and the second is found in chapter 8:5. Yet the image of the Shulamite coming out of each of these two wilderness experiences is dramatically different.

In the first wilderness journey, the Bride comes up triumphantly in a chariot, like the children of Israel who came up under Moses and Joshua as a mighty army (Josh. 2:9-11; 4:13-14).

However, the second wilderness experience is quite different. The picture presented of the Shulamite coming out of this wilderness is of one who has been weakened. This may be similar to the experience of Jacob, when he was coming back into the Promised Land after his years with his uncle Laban. In Genesis 32:23-32, Jacob, met with God in a powerful way and received a great blessing from the Lord. However, he was also weakened in his thigh and ever after was forced to lean upon his staff,

symbolic of leaning upon the Lord. We find this truth time and time again in the Word of God. For example, Judah, the Southern Kingdom of Israel, went through her second wilderness experience when she was exiled from her homeland into Babylon and then returned. She was purged from idols and returned as a totally transformed nation, compared to the generation that came into the land under Joshua.

In Hosea 2:14, the heart of the Lord is revealed: “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.” His purpose in taking His people through the wilderness is to purge their hearts from all other loves that compete with Him for first place in their hearts. He desires to restore that first love, and renew the fountains of life (Hos. 2:14-17). The Northern Kingdom of Israel also backslid after she came into Canaan, and she has been scattered throughout the countries of the world ever since, however, there is coming a time when she will be restored and brought back into her homeland. She is presently in her second wilderness, but she will come out of that experience with great brokenness of spirit, leaning upon her Beloved, Jesus Christ.

King David is another prime example of the Lord’s dealings in the wilderness. His first wilderness journey was in his youth when he was forced to flee from Saul. The Lord triumphantly brought him through, and he was anointed King of Judah (2 Sam. 2:1-4). Later in life, when he came up from his second wilderness experience after fleeing from Absalom, he returned with a broken and a contrite heart. His second wilderness was because of sin, yet God performed a beautiful work in his heart.

The second wilderness journey may take many forms. It could be a profound sickness as it was with Job (Job 2:6-13). Nevertheless, whatever form it takes, it is a very solemn experience into which God leads us in His infinite wisdom and love.

The second wilderness for Abraham and Sarah took them into old age when all hope of fulfilling the promises of God with their own natural strength was gone. Through that, however, God brought them out and gave them a son, Isaac. Joseph, too, endured the second wilderness, being cast into prison after being falsely accused; but in the end of the matter he became the second ruler in all of Egypt (Gen. 39:17-21; 41:14, 38-43).

Moses' first wilderness began when he fled from Pharaoh as a young man. He came up out of that wilderness at the burning bush, where he was commissioned by God to lead Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 2:15; 3:2 – 4:19). His second wilderness came when he led the Israelites through the wilderness (Ex. 13:18).

I believe we must be very careful on this point of a wilderness because of sin. Although I have quoted several examples where sin brought them into the wilderness, I am cautioning us against sin.

The important point concerning the second wilderness is that when we come up from the wilderness experience the second time, we are "leaning upon our Beloved," and we are broken in spirit (Ps. 51:17). One who has been through the second wilderness is one who has known the breakings of the Lord and

is leaning upon Him total dependence, trusting Him for everything. This is the place God wants to bring us to—the place where we are constantly leaning upon Him.

Continuing in Song of Solomon 8:5, the Lord said, *“I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.”* He is reflecting on her life, and making it clear that even from the very beginning He was always with her. He was always watching over her. Even when she was unaware of His presence, He was there, tenderly looking after her. At times God takes us back over our lives, showing us the time even before we were saved, saying, “I was there watching over you, protecting you, preserving you, instructing you through it all. I was there!”

Without this protection, what disasters would have occurred in our lives! Every one of us has a guardian angel from birth. Jesus said, “Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 18:10). The angels are always there. Otherwise, the mortality rate would be tremendous among children.

I remember listening to the story of a Methodist missionary who had been a missionary to China. He and his family were traveling by boat on the Yangtze River. Without warning, the boat overturned. Quickly, he retrieved his wife. Assured of her safety, they both helped the two older children. Suddenly, in horror, they looked around for the little baby. There, in the midst of this gigantic river a hand—the hand of an angel—was holding the baby above the water. When the father swam toward the baby and touched him, the hand of the angel left. Oh, beloved, the

angels of the Lord are there, even from infancy. Our Lord is watching over us.

8:6 - *“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.”* A seal is a symbol of possession. Hence the thought that Christ possesses us by His seal.

True love and jealousy are inseparable. We can pay no price for love; it must be won! In Proverbs 6:34-35, we read, “For jealousy is the rage of man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will He rest content, though thou givest many gifts.” Nothing can quiet the jealousy of love. Paul uses an illustration here, “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” (2 Cor. 11:2). Love and jealousy always go together. Jealousy is the protectiveness of love. We become very jealous of the Lord’s place in our lives, making sure no other affection competes to take the first place, which rightfully belongs to Him!

8:7 - *“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.”* When we are in love with a person, it does not matter what deep waters or troubles we pass through, for nothing can quench that love.

We have already given an illustration about trying to buy love with gifts. It is impossible! Love must be won. The

unquenchable quality of love is illustrated by Paul in Romans 8:35-39: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

8:8 - *“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?”* The Shulamite desires to help her. The little sister represents a person who is a babe in Christ, or immature.

8:9 - *“If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.”* The Bride answers her own question from the previous verse. Looking upon a little sister in Christ, she is asking the Lord, “What shall we do for our little sister? How are we going to minister to her?” Her answer shows true discernment, “If she is a door, we will do this; or if she is a wall, we will do that.” In other words, “We are not going to try to make her like us! We are going to find out what particular ministry or calling is upon her life, and then we are going to move in that direction.”

This conversation between the Bride and the Bridegroom concerning what they will do to help and prepare their little sister

in the Lord shows a beautiful unity as they flow together. When we have spiritual babes, we must have communion with God in order to know their calling so that we can guide them into the preparation for their particular ministry. We can only receive that knowledge from the Lord, for He alone knows.

8:10 - *“I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.”* The bride said, “I have come to maturity, and I have won the favor of my Lord.” It is maturity—maturity in the fruits of the Spirit, and maturity in the development of ministry, that wins the heart of the Lord.

We can liken this to the farmer. In the month of June, the farmer is very happy with a little apple. As time moves on into July and August, the little apple gets larger. The farmer is very content throughout these months of growth, but when it comes to harvest time in October, he expects a nice, big, mature apple.

The Lord continually views the harvest in this manner, receiving pleasure in the little children and young men of the faith. However, those who delight His heart the most are the mature fathers and mothers in Christ with whom He can commune and share His heart freely. The whole thought is maturity. That little apple in June delights the heart of the farmer, but if it apple remains the same size in later months, then the farmer would be severely disappointed. The Heavenly Husbandman will not truly be satisfied until His people come to full maturity (Jas. 5:7). Maturity brings Him delight. *“Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.”* As we move on in maturity in the given seasons, then we win the favour of the Lord.

8:11 - “*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.*” This verse brings us to the last two parts of the Song of Solomon. “*Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon.*” The thought of Baal-hamon is very beautiful. “Baal” means “Lord,” and “hamon” means “multitude or harvest.” Here she is given a revelation of Christ as the Lord of the Harvest, of whom Solomon is a type. Throughout these songs, she has been developing spiritually and ministering in her church. She has said to the Lord, “Oh, let us come and see the annexes of our ministries that have grown up, and let us see the other ministries we are helping to develop.”

The final revelation of the Lord of the Harvest Himself—the Lord of the multitude is the key to the Feast of Tabernacles, or “the feast of ingathering.” This revelation comes after we have matured and entered into these phases of Christian development and understanding. It comes after we have helped the Church, imparted a hunger and thirst for the Lord to others, working to develop the younger ministries. The purpose of this is to know Christ as the Lord of the multitude. It is to know Him in that place where we can ask of Him and He will give unto us the heathen for our inheritance (Ps. 2:8). So, she announces with a spirit of revelation, “Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon—He is the Lord of the Harvest.”

This verse further unfolds to reveal Christ in His millennial reign on earth. “He let out the vineyard unto keepers; everyone for the fruit thereof was to bring 1000 pieces of silver.” A thousand is a symbol of the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth. The

thought is that we must work toward being “blessed and holy” so that we will have a part in the first resurrection and then rule and reign with Christ for 1000 years (Rev. 20:4-6). This was Paul’s goal. He did everything with this in mind: “[I do all these things that] if by any means I might attain unto the [out] resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:11).

8:12 - *“My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.”* One thousand is the symbol of Christ’s millennial reign, and Solomon is a type of Christ, the Prince of Peace reigning for 1000 years. Two hundred is the number of the faithful servant, and we will find that number around the chapiters of Solomon’s temple. Thus, 200 speaks of the reward of a faithful servant.

8:13 - *“Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.”* The revelation of Christ further unfolds. After having a revelation of the mighty multitudes that are going to be swept into the kingdom, and the vineyards all over the world that are going to bring forth fruit for the Lord, she sees her Beloved as the Lord of the whole earth and returned to Him. As we have already mentioned, there are four gardens spoken of in the Song of Solomon. The most important garden is the enclosed garden, which is the garden of our own heart.

The overall theme of this writing is gardens. This is where we will find Him. With Adam and Eve, He was walking in the cool of the day in the garden (Gen. 3:8). They heard His voice in the

garden. This is where Christ is—in the garden. This verse is the key to Christianity. “*Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it.*” Lord, cause me to hear it, too!

Our heart’s cry to Jesus should be, “Oh my Beloved, come into my garden.” Above all things, we must desire that Christ, in all His fullness, will come into the garden of our hearts. God uses us in whatever capacity is needed to develop gardens. The church is a pleasant garden that develops other churches or annexes that become budding gardens, or gardens of nuts.

The cry of our hearts as we read this beautiful book, should be, “Oh Lord, please work in my heart so that it becomes a delightful garden to You. Give me a clear ear in my heart to hear Your voice as You walk through the garden of my heart.” May God grant that we will constantly hear the voice of our Beloved speaking in our gardens.

8:14 - “*Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*” This cry concludes the Song of Solomon, and reflects the cry throughout the whole Word of God, “Maranatha!” “Come quickly.”

Part B - The Holy City

Chapter Six

The New Jerusalem

In the book of Revelation, the beloved Apostle John recorded a vision that was granted unto him of the Bride, or the Lamb's wife. What he saw when he was carried away in the Spirit to a high mountain was that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

The Bride is a personification of the Holy City of God. As we reverentially and prayerfully seek to study this city, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we can receive much instruction concerning the Bride of Christ. We are given the following facts concerning the Holy City.

1. She has the glory of God: (Rev. 21:10-11)

In the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament, there are distinct references to the glory of the Lord being visibly manifested in the lives of the believers in the End Times. "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" (Isa. 60:1-2). In 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 there are direct comparisons of the glory of the Lord that was manifested through Moses with the glory that is to come. Paul said that the glory manifested through Moses was awesome, but the glory that is yet to be seen far exceeds

what Moses had. Even in the days prior to this visible manifestation, there should be an inner glory and light in the believers' lives described as, "The king's daughter is all glorious within" (Ps. 45:13).

2. She has light emanating from her: (Rev. 21:11)

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Mt. 5:14). It is Christ, the Light of the world who is within her. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

3. She is like a jasper stone—clear as crystal: (Rev. 21:11)

The jasper stone can be of many different colors and hues, but the one mentioned here is as clear as crystal. "Clear as crystal" truly describes the appearance of the Holy City. It speaks of transparency and clarity, being without distortion. Glass without distortion can only be obtained by constant breakings and grindings. Thus, the Bride must be subjected to these breakings even as Job, to whom God said, "By reason of breakings they purify themselves" (Job 41:25). A bride's home is representative of the bride herself. The Bride here is the New Jerusalem. She is transparent, open, clear, and undistorted.

4. She has a wall great and high: (Rev. 21:12)

Walls speak of separation and protection. In Isaiah 60:18 walls are referred to as salvation: "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." In reference to the Bride, this becomes more clear if we looked at Hebrews

7:25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” In other words, she experienced a complete salvation or deliverance from all the bondages of the body, soul, and spirit.

5. She has twelve gates and at the gates, twelve angels with the names of the twelve tribes written thereon: (Rev. 21:12)

To enter the great city, the redeemed of the Church and Israel alike will have to enter through their respective gates. While not wishing to develop this truth too far, we need to understand that there are spiritual coverings, and each tribe represents a specific covering. New Testament believers need to have a spiritual covering just as the Israelites of old were placed under coverings according to their tribes. May I suggest that we ask the Lord to show us to which tribe we belong, for this knowledge will greatly benefit our understanding of His plan and purpose for our lives as we study the prophecies relative to our particular tribe.

6. She has the twelve foundations, and in them are the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb: (Rev. 21:14)

The Apostle Paul said, “[We] 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” (Eph. 2:20-22). Thus, the writings, the lives and the ministries of the apostles and prophets sustain the Holy City or the Bride of Christ. We would do well, then, to heed the whole counsel of God that emanates through these godly examples. Above all, we

should remember that our Beloved Bridegroom is the Chief Cornerstone from whom all measurements are taken.

7. She has specific measurements: (Rev. 21:15-17)

The city is a cube of 12000 furlongs. Twelve is the number of government, since there were 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 Apostles who govern according to the promise of Jesus. We read in Matthew 19:28, “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The number 1000, in this respect, speaks of eternity (Rev. 20:6). Thus, it speaks of the eternal government of the Bride ruling and reigning with her Beloved throughout all the ages of eternity.

This promise and vision of becoming king-priests flows throughout the Word of God. It was first a promise given to Israel at Mount Sinai, “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 19:6).

Israel, however, forfeited that blessing because of disobedience. Yet, God renewed the promise to the Church, saying, “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” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Being made into kings and priests is one of the predominant themes of the Apocalypse. “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever

and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:6). Later in Revelation 5:10, “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

The subject of kings and priests is associated with the blessing of those who will participate in the first resurrection. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

The qualifications for being a king and priest are enunciated in Philippians 3:10-11. “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the [out] resurrection of the dead.” These are the requirements for attaining to the first resurrection and reigning with Christ.

The Apostle Paul clarifies this in his epistle to the Romans when speaking of those who reign in this life. He declares that they must have an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17). We seek to emphasize the great privileges, and therefore, the great qualifications that are required to become a member of this corporate body—the Lamb’s wife.

When we consider the care that is taken by earthly royal families to select a bride suitable for the future monarch, it should not come as a shock, for she must be worthy to assume the position of the queen consort. How much more care should our Heavenly King take in the selection of the bride of His Son?

8. The width of her wall is 144 cubits: (Rev. 21:17)

This translates into 12 x 12. As we mentioned earlier, 12 is the number symbolizing government.

9. Her wall is as jasper and the city is pure gold, like unto clear glass. (Rev. 21:18)

When we were in Africa, we had the privilege of being in the Rand Refinery to see the process by which gold comes from the mine. Gold that is 88% pure is said to be of inferior quality. It is then subjected to the extreme temperature of 1100 degrees centigrade to bring it to a 99.996 % degree of purity.

In spiritual matters, it is the Lord who sits as that refiner. “But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and fuller’s soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3:2-3). The refiner knows that the gold is pure when he can see his face in it. The Lord will have a spotless Bride. He will “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” (Eph. 5:27). The Holy City is like glass, without distortion, that perfectly reflects the image of the Heavenly Bridegroom.

10. The foundations of her wall are garnished with precious stones: (Rev. 21:19-20)

In the Word of God, there are two other lists of precious stones; namely, those on the high priest’s breastplate, and those that

Lucifer walked among on the Holy mountain of God. The first list is found in Exodus 28:17-21, and they correspond to the 12 tribes according to their birth.

1. Sardis	<i>Reuben</i>
2. Topaz	<i>Simeon</i>
3. Carbuncle	<i>Levi</i>
4. Emerald	<i>Judah</i>
5. Sapphire	<i>Dan</i>
6. Diamond	<i>Naphtali</i>
7. Ligure	<i>Gad</i>
8. Agate	<i>Asher</i>
9. Amethyst	<i>Issachar</i>
10. Beryl	<i>Zebulun</i>
11. Onyx	<i>Joseph</i>
12. Jasper	<i>Benjamin</i>

Thus, we should also know our stone or color. The foundation stones differ from the order on the breastplate, but we will attempt to explain the reasons. In Revelation 7:4-8, another order of the tribes is given. From each of these tribes, 12,000 are to be sealed in the End Times. Notice that Judah emerges as number one instead of Reuben. Ephraim is Joseph, and Dan is missing.

1. Judah	7. Simeon
2. Reuben	8. Levi
3. Gad	9. Issachar
4. Asher	10. Zabulon
5. Naphtali	11. Joseph
6. Manasses	12. Benjamin

As we study the Holy Scriptures, we see over the course of generations, even dispensations, that the tribes have been tried by God. Thus, the final position of the tribes at the close of time is no longer according to birthright, but according to merit. Certainly this is seen by the ascendancy of Judah, the tribe of both David and the Lord Jesus.

Other tribes that had more prominence during the course of history, but did not use their privileges in a manner worthy of their high and holy calling, were relegated to lesser positions. Joseph is one of those tribes. Joseph was a tribe that rose to great preeminence because of their holy and undefiled patriarch, yet later was specifically rejected by God. In Psalm 78:67-68 we read, “Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim. But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.” Undoubtedly, this was because of all the abominations that were committed by Ephraim (who represented Joseph), as seen in the book of Hosea.

As we compare the stones by birthright, with the list of the tribes in Revelation 7:4-8, and then with the stones listed in Revelation 21:19-21, we arrive at the conclusion: the tribes are certainly represented by the stones as listed previously by birthright.

THE TRIBAL ENSIGNS AND STONES

The different leaders of the tribes had their own standards (or banners), with crests of their ancestors depicted upon them (Num. 1:52; 2:2-3). On the East, above the tent of Nahshon the firstborn of Judah, there shone a green color. This color was adopted by

him because it was an emerald. The name of his forefather, Judah, was engraved on the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:29). On the standard was depicted a lion, the crest and hieroglyphic of his ancestor Judah whom Jacob, his father, had compared to a lion, saying, “Judah is a lion’s whelp” (Gen. 49:9).

Toward the South, above the tent of Elizur, the son of Reuben, there rose a red standard, having the color of sardius, on which the name of his father, Reuben, was engraved upon the breastplate of the high priest. The symbol depicted upon this standard was a human head, because Reuben was the firstborn and the head of the family. (See Numbers 2:10.)

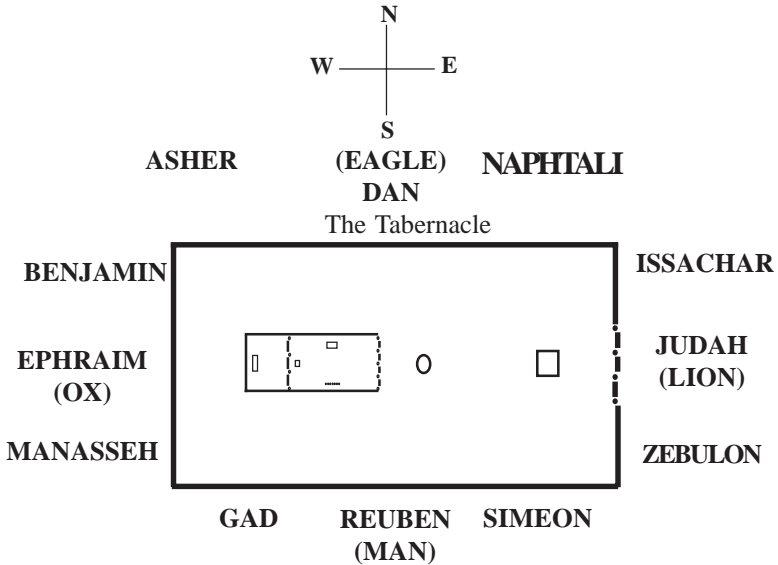
On the West, above the tent of Elishama, the son of Ephraim, there was a golden flag (Num. 2:18). The head of a calf was depicted on this golden flag because it was through the vision of the calves, or oxen, that his ancestor, Joseph, had predicted and provided for the famine in Egypt (See Genesis 41). Hence, Moses, when blessing the tribe of Joseph, said, “*His glory is that of the [firstborn] of a bull*” (Deut. 33:17). The golden splendor of the standard of Ephraim resembled that of chrysolite, in which the name of Ephraim was engraved upon the high priest’s breastplate.

Toward the North, above the tent of Ahiezer, the son of Dan, there flew a standard of red and white, like the carbuncle or jasper (Num. 2:25). The name of Dan was engraved upon the breastplate. The crest upon this was the eagle, the great foe of serpents. This had been chosen by the leader in place of the serpent, because his forefather, Jacob, had compared Dan to a serpent in the path saying in Genesis 49:17, “Dan is a serpent in

the way, an adder [or horned snake] in the way.” Ahiezer substituted the eagle, the destroyer of serpents, because he did not wish to put the serpent upon his flag.

Thus, these four standard bearers (or banners) reflect the heads of the living creatures as described in Ezekiel 1:10. Moreover, the four gospels reflect the characteristics of Christ. Matthew reveals Him as King. Mark reveals Him as the ox, or Priestly Sacrifice. Luke portrays Him as the Son of man, and John reveals Him as the eagle, or the Son of God that soars into heavenly vistas.

THE ORDER OF ISRAEL'S ENCAMPMENT



On each side of the camp were three tribes. The middle tribe was the standard bearer and the symbols of the living creatures were on their flags. They depict the four gospels and Christ.

Judah	Lion	Matthew	Christ as King
Ephraim	Ox	Mark	Christ as Priest
Reuben	Man	Luke	Christ as Son of Man
Dan	Eagle	John	Christ as Son of God

Symbols on flags of countries are revealing as to the nature of those nations. In addition, the beasts and icons on stamps can reflect the spirits in countries. For example, the bear is representative of Russia, and the dragon of China. Israel's flag has two triangles joined together—the Triune God joined together

with triune man. Israel, as a prince, is joined to God. Paul intrinsically links godliness, suffering, and tribulation in his letters. We see this in his second letter to Timothy where he states emphatically, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions” (2 Tim. 3:12). We also see this truth clearly laid out for us in Philippians 3:10, where Paul connects adversity with resurrection life. “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.”

11. She has the twelve gates of pearl: (Rev. 21:21)

The pearl is a symbol of suffering because it is produced at great cost by the oyster, the cost of extreme irritation. Some time ago, we were in a university town church. After the service, students from the university gathered around us asking questions. One question was asked, “Why do some oysters produce pearls and others do not.” The answer I gave was something like this: “Some oysters do not pick up foreign matter which becomes the nuclei around which the oyster secretes, while others do.”

This answer, however, was not sufficient for the students. The next question followed, “Why do some oysters pick up foreign particles and others do not?” It was late at night, but an enterprising student suggested we phone the marine biologist professor, and he most graciously provided the answer. When oysters move and seek to go on, they stir up foreign matter which then penetrates the mantle of the oyster. The oyster that reclines at the bottom of the sea or stream rarely stirs up the foreign matter. Thus, the oyster that wants to go on is the one which will produce the pearl.

So, too, is it with Christians. Those who wish to stay at a particular level may not have the same hardships or sufferings as those who press on in Christ. Those who seek ever to go on in this life, those who would be made more conformable to the Beloved—they are the ones who experience the fellowship of His sufferings.

Acts 14:22 says, "...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Those who share in the sufferings of Christ are qualifying to be among that company called the Bride of Christ (Phil. 3:10). As they qualify, they will produce the beautiful pearls that the Lord desires.

It is conditional—if we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:2). "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" (Rom. 8:17).

We read, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). 2 Timothy 2:12 says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." A chapter later in 2 Timothy, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

Therefore, we may conclude that the gates of the holy city are opened to those who have been partakers of the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10). For He is the Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, His Bride must partake of those selfsame sufferings (Isa. 53:3).

12. She has streets of pure gold: (Rev. 21:21)

Gold speaks of divinity, of the Bride being a partaker of that divine nature that her Heavenly Bridegroom emanates. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Divine nature must be purified from all alloys of the flesh, the world and the devil. This can only be accomplished by the fiery trials of our faith. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7).

13. She has a temple not made by hands in the Holy City: The Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Rev. 21:22-26)

Paul said upon Mars Hill, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:24-28).

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it” (Rev. 21:23-26).

14. She has a pure river of life: (Rev. 22:1)

From the throne of the Lord shall issue forth a pure river, the river of life, which we shall see in the Millennium. There will be a river coming forth from the millennial temple of Ezekiel’s vision. This foreshadows the one in the New Jerusalem in the new earth.

“Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house {stood toward} the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south {side} of the altar. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters {were} to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters {were} to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters {were} to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; {and it was} a river that I could not pass over: for

the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over” (Ezek. 47:1-5).

Those who have had visions of this heavenly river know that we must all pass through it before we enter the kingdom. As we walk through it, however, our hearts are revealed and are cleansed.

15. She has twelve manners of fruit: (Rev. 22:2)

The tree of life on each side of the river brings forth 12 kinds of fruit every month. This speaks again of government in every realm of provision. The curse will be no more, and the leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

16. She has the throne of God in her heart: (Rev. 22:3)

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the Holy City. This fact helps us realize that all true believers must have His throne in their hearts right now. We want Him to be ruling and reigning in our lives during our time on earth.

17. She will serve and reign with Him: (Rev. 22:3)

Again, we have the thought of the priest-king—serving and worshipping, but also reigning with the Heavenly Bridegroom.

18. She will see His face and His name will be upon her forehead: (Rev. 22:4)

She will be like the sons of Zadok, the faithful priests, during the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth that we read about in Ezekiel 44:15-16, “But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister

unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.” Above all, the Bride has her Heavenly Bridegroom’s name written upon her forehead. She bears His name. Just as the infamous worshippers of the beast carry his number in their foreheads, those that “follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth” are called, chosen and faithful to their divine Lord, and they bear His name upon their foreheads.

Chapter Seven

The Mountain of Zion

Another aspect by which we may visualize and comprehend the Bride is through the study of the mountain upon which the Holy City is built. This mountain is called Mount Zion.

Mount Zion is mentioned 153 times in Holy Scripture. After the resurrection, when Jesus appeared to His disciples, the Apostles on the Lake of Galilee caught the same number of fish. Therefore, 153 symbolizes the gematria, or holds the spiritual significance of the mature sons of God. Mount Zion speaks of the abode of just men made perfect as we see in Hebrews 12:22-23, “Ye are come to Mount Zion . . . To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

In two psalms, we have the qualifications for ascending and abiding upon that holy hill to become a part of the Bride of Christ. Psalms 15:1-4 clearly shows us who will come to Mount Zion. “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. {He that} backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” Psalm 24:3-6 provides more insight, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD, or who shall stand in his holy place? He that

hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.”

From the foregoing passages of Scripture, we could enunciate some additional specific qualities of the Bride of Christ. The Bride is renowned for her righteous works and is filled with the righteousness of her Beloved. This is entirely in conformity with Revelation 19:8, “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the [righteous deeds] of the saints.”

There is no backbiting in her as she is described in Proverbs 31:26. “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Thus, we may state that on His holy mountain they shall not hurt nor destroy (Isa. 65:25).

Part C - The Holy State of Matrimony

Chapter Eight

Marriage

The union of man and woman in the holy state of matrimony was instituted by God in the beginning, by the Lord Himself. When He joined Eve to Adam, she was to be his helpmate and enable him to accomplish the will of God for their entire life together. She was taken from his rib, which symbolizes that she was to stand by his side and strengthen him in the purposes of God.

In Genesis 1:28, God Himself pronounced a blessing upon marriage. Likewise in Proverb 18:22, He said, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord.” God also stipulated 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.” Therefore, as the Apostle Paul states in Hebrews 13:4, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

An additional purpose of marriage was stated by God in Genesis 1:28 — husband and wife should “be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.” In Genesis 2:23, Adam declared of his wife, Eve: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

This is repeated by the Apostle Paul again in Ephesians 5:28-29, 31: “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 this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

In Malachi, God declares that He seeks a godly seed produced by the union of man and woman in the holy state of matrimony. He wants to replenish the earth with that godly seed (Gen. 1:28). Also, He seeks a spiritual seed, produced by the union and communion of Christ and His Bride that will “plant” the heavens (Isa. 51:16).

As we examine Scripture, it is interesting to discover that those who are in the Bride are barren or bereft of their spiritual children before the true seed finally comes. Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Manoah’s wife, Ruth, Hannah, and Elizabeth are all examples of this spiritual truth.

Chapter Nine

The Mystical Union Between Christ and His Church

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:30, 32, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones...This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Thus, the Lord would say to Israel in Isaiah 54:5, “For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.”

To illustrate this union, and to make it clear to the prophet Hosea, He caused Hosea to marry an adulterous and unfaithful woman. He wanted the prophet to understand the relationship between God and unfaithful Israel. Throughout history, the desire of the Lord has been to enter into that holy state of matrimony with Israel. He declares His intention in Hosea 2:17, “For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.” Also, Hosea 2:16 reads, “And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi [my husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [my lord].”

Certainly the Lord desires to purify us from natural adulterous tendencies and also spiritual ones. We must not be joined to idols, no matter what form they may take. An idol is anything (a desire, a love, a fear in our heart) that competes for the first place in our lives, which must belong solely to Christ. Idols pollute

and weaken our love for Christ, and thus must be removed so that we can be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ (2 Cor. 11:1-3).

Likewise, the Apostle Paul makes this clear in Romans 7:4: “Ye also are become 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 ye should bring forth fruit unto God.” If we are married to Him, we will bring forth fruit eternal.

Part D - Other Types of the Bride

Chapter Ten

Old Testament Type of the Bride

While there are countless types and illustrations of the Bride in Scripture, the story of Abraham seeking a bride for his only son Isaac is unique. A detailed account is given so that we may appreciate the care with which God the Father selects a bride for His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Bearing in mind that a bride has to be worthy of His Son.

The agency for the selection of a bride is the faithful servant of Abraham, Eliezer. Thus, three persons emerge in this scenario: Abraham, who is a type of God the Father; Isaac, who is a type of his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and Eliezer, who is the type of the Holy Spirit.

The story begins in Genesis 24:3-4 with an injunction to the servant. “And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”

This is in accordance with later instructions concerning the selection of the kings, for we read in Deuteronomy 17:15, “Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set

king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.” Thus, the Bride is to be of the seed of Abraham’s kindred. With the Lord, we are of the seed of Abraham if we are Christ’s.

“And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). Likewise, the Bride is selected and sought out from the kindred of Abraham, from among both the Old and New Testament saints and believers.

The servant set out upon his journey and arrived at the city of Nahor. Scripture records certain details concerning this account for us. The first detail was that he took ten of his master’s camels. Ten is the number of the law, signifying that the one selected to become the bride must fulfill the law as did Christ.

The second detail was a requirement prayerfully presented before the Lord by the servant in Genesis 24:13-14: “Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master.”

This was no small test. An average camel, especially one that has traversed the desert as these had done, is capable of drinking 25 gallons of water at one time. Thus, the servant was asking that the young girl voluntarily furnish as much as 250 gallons of

water. This would be a great test of her disposition, and would show how generous, hospitable, and industrious she would be to her husband.

It has often struck me as noteworthy that the Biblical characters who were used by the Lord were always those who were industrious and rose early in the morning. These qualities are at a premium these days, for the tendency in so many quarters is to demand one's rights and to ensure plenty of free time for pleasure. Such is not the portrait offered us in the Bible concerning the Patriarchs and Apostles. Without exception, we find them tilling the fields, rising up early, and working late. They were men and women who loved to worship the Lord morning, noon, and often at midnight, even into old age. They did not eat the bread of idleness (Pr. 31:27).

Thus, Rebekah, the girl who met the servant, qualified to become Isaac's bride. She offered to give water, not only to the servant upon his request, but went the second mile by offering water for all the camels until they had finished drinking (Mt. 5:41).

Moreover, she was willing to leave her home and follow the Holy Spirit, in the guise of Eliezer, to a land she did not know and marry a man she had not seen. Certainly it was an act of faith that is a type of trust and loving obedience that the Bride of Christ must possess in the spiritual sense.

May the Lord grant that these same qualities be developed in us, through His divine grace and enabling.

Chapter Eleven

New Testament Illustration

The New Testament abounds with illustrations concerning the Bride of Christ, and the Bridegroom is brought into perfect focus by the gospel accounts of His life. We have the many parables that relate to the coming of the Bridegroom, or the marriage supper, which will be studied in the Epilogue.

However, the portion of Scripture that is of singular importance in showing this relationship between the Heavenly Bridegroom and His Bride is surely in Ephesians 5:25-27. “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.”

Here we see the tender, loving care of the Bridegroom for His Bride before marriage. His part is the preparation of His loved one, that tender washing from all defilement of the flesh, soul, and spirit by the water of the Word. How beautiful this truth appears when we consider the Lord’s physical act of love when He washed the disciple’s feet during the Last Supper. “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded” (Jn. 13:4-5).

Jesus had the humility and loving care of a servant of rulers (Isa. 49:7). He had an intimacy and identification with the need of those who had unwashed and dust-begrimed feet. These unpolished Galileans—no doubt, accustomed to walking through the dirt-infested places of their hometowns—were less than careful with what defiled their feet. Even the most fastidious of passer-bys would have been marked by the dirt. Yet, the Lord of glory, who came from ivory mansions in heaven, humbled and abased Himself to wash their feet.

Nonetheless, the defilement of the Apostles' feet could not have been so distasteful as our sin besmirched hearts and souls. One could readily believe that the original sin, which has caused such depravity within our natures, could have just as easily caused the Spotless One to recoil at the very sight of us. In spite of this, He humbly hears our cries to become a partaker of His purity. By His word, He gently and patiently washes us little by little until we, too, can realize the promise in Jude 1:24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." As we diligently approach the throne of mercy to find help in time of need, He speaks, corrects, and washes so that we can, by His grace, become clean from this world's defilement.

The Pillars

Another aspect of the Bride is that she is likened to a pillar in the temple of her God. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of

my God, {which is} new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and {I will write upon him} my new name” (Rev. 3:12). This verse speaks of the qualifications and privileges of the Bride to bear the new name of her heavenly Husband.

Let us look at this thought of a pillar associated with the Temple of Solomon. There were two main pillars at the entrance, named Boaz and Jachin. Boaz signifies “strength.” Jachin means “he will establish.”

“For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about. And he made two chapiters {of} molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapter {was} five cubits, and the height of the other chapter {was} five cubits: {And} nets of checker work, and wreaths of chain work, for the chapiters which {were} upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter. And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapiters that {were} upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapter. And the chapiters that {were} upon the top of the pillars {were} of lily work in the porch, four cubits. And the chapiters upon the two pillars {had pomegranates} also above, over against the belly which {was} by the network: and the pomegranates {were} two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapter. And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz. And upon the top of the pillars {was} lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished”

(1 Ki. 7:15-22). Scriptural Types and Connotations of some of these measurements:

7	<i>Completeness</i>	Pillars must be well rounded.
12	<i>Government</i>	Pillars uphold and execute government.
18	<i>Strength</i>	Pillars must be strong and reliable.
200	<i>A Faithful Servant's Reward</i>	Pillars must be faithful.
Brass	<i>Judgment</i>	Pillars must withstand God's fire.
Pomegranates	<i>Love</i>	Pillars must minister in love.
Lilies (4)	<i>Universal Purity</i>	Pillars must be completely pure.

Pillars also support the interior of the Tabernacle of Moses and the temple. They all have a similar function, and that is to carry a burden. Spiritually, they speak of bearing the burden of the ministry. Therefore, those who will be in the Bride will have to be burden bearers, according to that which our Lord has determined for us.

Strength and beauty are features of the pillars as well as reliability, in that they remain at their appointed posts or tasks. May we never leave to the work that He has given to us to do, but remain faithful even during times of extreme pressures.

I know a beautiful Indian couple who were sent by the Lord to a very difficult area of their country. They spent years in deprivation seeing little fruit for their labors. However, when money was given for their return home, they refused. They would not abandon the field that the Lord had entrusted to their care. After that test of their devotion, the Lord graciously opened up the windows of

heaven; from that time on they have been blessed financially. This enabled them not only to enjoy a more than sufficient income for their own needs and ministry, but they are now channels through whom the Lord most graciously supplies the needs of others who minister in that area. Spiritually they are enjoying an abundance of blessing.

They are examples of faithful pillars, tried and tested, who are supporting the work of the Lord in the corner of His vineyard He allotted them. May we receive grace to stay at our posts in like manner. If we faint not, we shall also reap in due season, even as those two precious laborers.

In marriage, the wife cannot forsake her husband. She is by his side through thick and thin, facing the storms of life with him. She is always there to encourage, strengthen, and stand with him through the years; she will not desert him. Likewise, we, His Bride, must always be found faithfully fulfilling the tasks He has so generously designed to give us. Faithfulness is the hallmark of marriage, and it is among the highest virtues of His Bride.

Epilogue

This book has been presented with the prayer that it will be a blessing to the Lord's people. Moreover, we pray that the Holy Spirit may in some way use it to prepare the Bride for the coming of her beloved Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, this book would be incomplete without mention of the theme of Revelation 19:7, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready." I would like to present two truths:

1. The marriage supper of the Lamb

This little phrase, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9), is one of the seven beatitudes of the book of Revelation. As in any wedding, there is a difference between the guest and the Bride. We must conclude from this that not all believers are in the Bride, and only a select number of believers will be included on the guest list. For this reason, it behooves us to redeem the time and apply ourselves to the race that is set before us if we desire to be part of the Bride of Christ. As Paul writes in Philippians 3:12-14, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

2. The Bride has made herself ready

Throughout His teachings on the Second Coming, the Lord emphasizes this truth of readiness. In a Jewish wedding, the father of the bridegroom is the one who determines the time that the bridegroom should go and take his bride. Thus, the words of the Lord Himself in Acts 1:7 become a solemn reality, “And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the time or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” We read a similar truth in Mark 13:32, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

I believe our attitude should reflect the attitude of a young French Bible student I once taught in Switzerland. Her name was Madeline. In those days, Madeline was singularly drawn of the Lord to seek His face. During this time when we would come down early in the mornings to check on the preparations for meals, we would find Madeline in prayer, earnestly seeking the face of the Lord. This took place during a period of six months, and I had a vision of her clothed in a white robe at that time.

Then Madeline became ill, and the doctors diagnosed cancer of the blood. She was taken to the hospital and we were told that nothing could be done for her. We asked the doctor, who was a fine Christian man, if he would have any objections to bringing Madeline back to the hotel that served as our Bible school and conference center. There she would be surrounded by those who loved her, as well as all the prayers of the saints. He warmly agreed, and he told us he would be able to visit her day by day to

monitor her condition. Her parents also readily expressed their approval, as it gave them an opportunity to be with her constantly.

A conference, attended by over 200 believers, prayed for her throughout the day and night. When Madeline was very low, near death's door, the seven ministers would gather around her bed and pray that the Lord would bring her back. Color would return to her face, her appetite would return, and she would sit up in bed as though in a convalescent state.

Perhaps only two hours would elapse and the ministers would be called again. This went on for several days. Madeline would have a relapse; we would pray, and she would come back again. However, finally after another such session, the senior minister amongst us suggested that we ask God the next time, to heal her or to take her if it was His will. From the patter that was emerging, it seemed that God was continuing to honor our prayers, but we began to wonder if our prayers were going contrary to His will. Madeline and her parents agreed, as did all the ministers.

The next time we were called, Madeline was sinking fast. We all held hands around her bed, and the senior minister prayed, "Lord, we know You can heal, but if it is Your will to take Madeline, we commit her into Your hands and ask that Your holy will shall be done."

I had never experienced such power as at that moment. Clouds of great glory filled the room. The resurrection power of God was there. My eyes were opened and I saw the chariots of Israel swoop down over the bed. Undoubtedly, they were the chariots

that were used when Elijah was parted from Elisha. Then I saw the gates of the Kingdom of God in heaven. From them came a beautiful white path of intense purity that stretched right down to Madeline's bed. Then the Lord Himself, resplendent in a white robe of indescribable beauty, descended and walked with majestic grace upon that path toward her. He arrived at her bed, touched her, and Madeline's spirit came out of her body. Then, with her left arm slipped through His right arm, they lovingly looked at each other and departed arm in arm, as the Lord Jesus took His Bride through the portals of heaven.

A few days later, I saw Madeline twice in visions. She was in heaven, on one occasion, with a group of young girls singing together as they walked through one of heaven's beautiful green fields. On another occasion I saw her seated and playing at a musical instrument. However, the instrument was veiled from my eyes.

At Madeline's funeral, as we laid her to rest in that Swiss village cemetery, we had a tombstone placed over her grave. The French words engraved upon that tombstone were those of Revelation 19:7, "And His wife hath made herself ready." Beloved, are we preparing as Madeline? Are we making ourselves ready? Will we be ready to meet the Bridegroom when He comes? These are questions that we must continually ask ourselves. We must be ready.

The whole purpose of this little book is to seek the Lord while He may be found. We want to encourage you to realize the need to qualify to become His lovely Bride. Our desire must be to

faithfully seek Him and to obey His will, to be ready for Him at whatever time He would choose to come for us.

May God so grant that the truths expressed in this book encourage you to be ready. Praise the Lord! Amen.

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