

Bride of Christ W5

The Rock 29/3/2015 PM

Last week we started with the metaphor of the blind men and the elephant, the synopsis of which was - each of the blind men had a part of the revelation, but not the whole revelation. They had an experience of part of what an elephant was but could not see how their revelation was just part of the bigger picture. I believe it is exactly like this with God and our revelation of Him. We are all blind, feeling out our God, we each have a revelation of who He is, but not the full revelation of who He is.

Yes, He is saviour, but that is not all He is.

Yes, He is Father, but that is not all He is.

Yes, He is Son, but that is not all He is.

Yes, He is Spirit; but that that is not all He is.

Yes, He is King; yes, He is High Priest; Yes, He is prophet; Yes, He is Creator; Yes, He is friend; Yes, He is Lamb; Yes, He is Lion; Yes, He is Lord; Yes, He is Bridegroom. Do you know Him? Or do you just know some aspects of Him, and only to a limited measure? That's where I find myself. Sure, I know Him, but not as much as He wants me to know. He wants to reveal more of Himself, knowing that in that knowledge I will grow in maturity and intimacy, and in my own identity which is found in Him.

So yeah, I know Christ as saviour, but He wants me to know more. I know God as Father, but He wants me to know more. I know God as Creator, but He wants me to know more. And that brings us to this: I don't really know Christ as Bridegroom. There's this whole revelation of Him throughout scripture that I have been blind to. But He wants me to come into that knowledge, that maturity, that intimacy; and not just me, but all of us. And that is why we have been focused on this revelation this month, and over the last couple of years.

I feel like perhaps we misnamed this Furnace model...the "Bride of Christ", because in doing so we have implanted the idea that this is all about the Bride. But it's not about the Bride, it was never about the Bride. It's about the Bridegroom. It's about God, who He is, and what He wants. It's always about Him. The revelation of the Bridegroom and the Bride is about Him. It is a revelation that reveals more of who He is and how He wants us to know Him and engage with Him.

There is something very unique about the revelation of God as a bridegroom, about what this metaphor reveals about His nature and about the way He wants to engage with us.

The metaphor of bride and groom is firstly one of companionship and of partnership, I say firstly because that is the reason God gave for the first marriage in Genesis 2:18-24...

¹⁸ *The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be **alone**. I will make a **helper** suitable for him."*

¹⁹ *Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.* ²⁰ *So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.*

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ *So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.* ²² *Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

²³ *The man said,*

*"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."*

²⁴ *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

Paul takes this verse and clarifies it's eternal purpose in Ephesians 5:31-32...

³¹ *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."* ³² *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.*

Now God is never alone, for in Himself is the eternal community of Father, Son, and Spirit; but it is God's desire to have companionship with us. Likewise, God doesn't need any help to do anything, but it is His desire to partner with us to rule His Kingdom, as we are told in 2 Timothy 2:11-13...

¹¹ *Here is a trustworthy saying:*

*If we died with him,
we will also live with him;*

¹² *if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;*
¹³ *if we are faithless,
he remains faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.*

“Desire” is a significant aspect of the metaphor of bride and groom. Song of Songs gets quite explicit in painting the picture of the desire between the bride and groom. Their relationship was not one of obligation, but of mutual desire.

I mean check this out in chapter four of Song of Songs...

*How beautiful you are, my darling!
Oh, how beautiful!
Your eyes behind your veil are doves.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
descending from the hills of Gilead.
² Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn,
coming up from the washing.
Each has its twin;
not one of them is alone.
³ Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon;
your mouth is lovely.
Your temples behind your veil
are like the halves of a pomegranate.
⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David,
built with courses of stone^[a];
on it hang a thousand shields,
all of them shields of warriors.
⁵ Your breasts are like two fawns,
like twin fawns of a gazelle
that browse among the lilies.
⁶ Until the day breaks
and the shadows flee,
I will go to the mountain of myrrh
and to the hill of incense.
⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my darling;
there is no flaw in you.*

- ⁸ *Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,
come with me from Lebanon.
Descend from the crest of Amana,
from the top of Senir, the summit of Hermon,
from the lions' dens
and the mountain haunts of leopards.*
- ⁹ *You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride;
you have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.*
- ¹⁰ *How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!
How much more pleasing is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your perfume
more than any spice!*
- ¹¹ *Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride;
milk and honey are under your tongue.
The fragrance of your garments
is like the fragrance of Lebanon.*
- ¹² *You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride;
you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.*
- ¹³ *Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates
with choice fruits,
with henna and nard,*
- ¹⁴ *nard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,
with every kind of incense tree,
with myrrh and aloes
and all the finest spices.*
- ¹⁵ *You are a garden fountain,
a well of flowing water
streaming down from Lebanon.*

Who can have this intimacy? Not just anyone, only the bride can be this intimate with the bridegroom.

If you don't seek intimacy with God perhaps you are not His bride at heart. Perhaps you do not love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Perhaps the Bride is those who love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

Who is the Bride? Am I the Bride? Are you? Is it Israel? Is it the Church? Is it the New Jerusalem? Is it a chosen few who have prepared themselves and rendered themselves worthy of such an honour? The revelation that I have received on the matter is that it is irrelevant. The scriptures do not challenge us to seek a marriage with God, just to seek Him. The question we need to be asking is not "What do I have to do to get into this exclusive 'Bride of the lamb club'"? Our question needs to be what is "*Lord, holding me back from knowing you and loving you more?*"

There is nothing I have read in scripture which has in any way declared or inferred that we should seek to be the Bride. The scriptures overwhelmingly implore us to seek the Bridegroom. They tell us time and time again in so many ways, using so many illustrations, parables, and metaphors to seek Christ, to know Him and love Him, honour Him, follow Him, obey Him...and the Father will choose those who are ready, those who are prepared.

The Father will choose the Bride for His Son, it is up to Him; and He won't choose wrong.

Marriage is not supposed to be a burden. Betrothal is not supposed to be a burden. They should be a joy, a hopeful expectation. And the marriage of the Church to the Lamb will be.

The marriage metaphor is not about what we have to do. It's about who God is: He is holy, He is gracious, He is generous, He is strong, and most of all He is love. More than anything else He wants us to know and experience this: His love.

And now Greg is going to come and share some more on that love...