

For those of you who are just joining us this morning, we are studying the Song of Songs. We have seen that it is a picture of Christ and the church. We are in Christ and He is in us (2 Corinthians 6:14-16ⁱ; Colossians 1:27ⁱⁱ). Apostle Paul tells us that the mystery of marriage is that it is meant to represent Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32ⁱⁱⁱ).

⁶ *What is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant?* Song of Songs 3:6 Who is arriving? Some say Solomon, others say the bride, and still others both Solomon and the bride. I prefer the KJV and NIV translation of the first line over the usually more accurate ESV and NASB. The first word is almost always translated “who?” Who is this? And “this” is feminine singular. There is an almost identical description in 1 Maccabees. A chariot is arriving with the bride and the bridegroom goes out to meet her with men armed for war. Two more times in this song, 6:10^{iv} and 8:5^v, the question, “Who is this?” is asked. The answer in both cases is the bride. It seems to me that the correct understanding is that Solomon has sent his carriage and guards to bring the Shulamite to the wedding. It is more than a grand entrance, for we see the security and honor Solomon has provided for her. If thieves knew how highly the king prized her, they may attempt to capture her and hold her for ransom. But Solomon has made sure that could not happen. Solomon is marrying a country girl, not the princess of another land or a palace girl; but he honors her as if she were.

The chariot’s arrival is said to be like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense with all the fragrant powders of a merchant. The word translated perfumed is used 115 times as “go up in smoke” referring to smoke of sacrifice ascending. (Carr) Her arrival is like sacrificial incense rising.

The sixty might men of Israel have escorted her to the wedding to be sure that she arrives safely. These are the elite commandos of Solomon’s army, all armed with swords and experts in warfare (Hebrews 1:14^{vi}).

There is a lot to unpack in these few verses. Remember that we are considering the bride as the church and Solomon as our Son of David, Christ Jesus. First let us see that ²⁷ *... God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;* ²⁸ *God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,* ²⁹ *so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.* ³⁰ *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,* ³¹ *so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”* 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 Solomon picked a farmer’s daughter not a princess. She was tanned from the sun, something we favor but, in that day, as in the East today, it was looked down on. God did not choose you because you were beautiful or very religious or wealthy or any other characteristic. He chooses the humble who are willing to recognize their spiritual poverty. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew 5:3^{vii} He chooses those through whom His glory will shine. He sets His love upon us.

It is like the reason He chose Israel. ⁶ *“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”* ⁷ *It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and*

chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, Deuteronomy 7:6-9 God blesses the descendants of those who have placed their faith in Him. The oath to Israel's forefathers was that in Abraham's seed would all the nations be blessed (Genesis 12:3^{viii}). That seed was singular, the same seed promised to come from Eve, Christ Jesus, who would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15^{ix}). He delivers us from the evil one to whom we served when we lived in sin. One like Moses has come from among his brethren who has rescued us for His own glory which He in turn shares with us (2 Thessalonians 2:14^x).

It is thought by some that the column of smoke comes from torches on poles carried by those around the palanquin, here called a litter. You have seen these in movies. It is couch or seat carried on poles with a curtain covering. The torches give light to travel in the night and by day they declare the royalty within the palanquin. In one sense we are hidden in this world. People do not see our royal position. We are royalty because we have been adopted into the family of God (Romans 8:15^{xi}). In this passage we are marrying royalty, the King of kings. They cannot see past the curtain that is our flesh. They simply see the farmer's daughter. But wherever we go we bring the light of life. Jesus said we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14^{xii}). We bring the truth of God's Word. We stand on the moral truth revealed in Scripture and thus we represent our King.

Here the smoke is said to be like the incense of sacrifice. And the fragrance is that fragrance of Christ we carry into the world. To some it is the fragrance of life while to others it is the fragrance of death (2 Corinthians 2:15,16^{xiii}). As a sacrificial fragrance it represents the fact that we offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1^{xiv}). We are often persecuted and even killed for the beautiful message our lives bring. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints (Psalm 116:15^{xv}). Is your life bringing the light and fragrance of Christ to those you meet? That is the fruit of the Spirit and your willingness to speak the truth even when you know it is despised (Mark 16:15^{xvi}).

As we are seeing the woman as the church and Solomon as Jesus and the marriage as our rapture to be forever with Christ, this passage should remind us of that coming day. Jesus will carry us safely through this life to the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:7^{xvii}).

⁷ Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men, some of the mighty men of Israel, ⁸ all of them wearing swords and expert in war; each with his sword at his thigh, against terror by night. Song of Songs 3:7,8 Solomon has sent his own limousine with a security detail to pick up his country bride and bring her to the wedding. Dear brothers and sisters, this reminds me of how the Lord has ordered the days of our lives so that we are drawn to the Lord, divinely kept throughout our earthly pilgrimage, surrounded with angels who are sent to those who will be heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14^{xviii}), knowing those angels are adept at spiritual warfare with the sword of the Spirit, along with our brothers and sisters who are light bearers to guide our path. What care God has ordained for us that we might become the bride! What interventions that we are unaware of. Imagine the circumstances we thought coincidental that encouraged our faith. There are also the obvious ones that we know were God. Sometimes God makes it

so amazingly clear that we say with wonder, “How was that possible!” He even takes our wandering from His path to prepare us for things ahead.

If the veil was lifted and we saw all His works in our lives, our minds would be overwhelmed. He is in all the details. What man means for evil, He uses for good (Genesis 50:20^{xi}). Our missteps become falls forward. Our pain becomes our gain. And when we look back at all He brought us through and how it is changing us we cry, “Glory” (Psalm 29:9^{xx}) Imagine how many times the enemy of our soul had plans for our demise and those angels and prayer warriors intervened. All we may have seen was the close call or the temptation crossing our mind, when behind it was a mighty battle and those expert with the sword of the Spirit thwarting the evil one’s plans.

There are also more obvious warriors, shepherd warriors like David. God raises up men like Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Hendrickson, Palau, and Bill Bright, all expert at war with their swords ready for action. But you might say, yes, but they have passed away. Remember what God told Elijah when he thought he was the only prophet left to guard the truth of God and His people? He said there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee (1 Kings 19:18^{xxi}). Even now God is raising up defenders of the truth and of the bride.

You might say, “Yes, brother Paul, but the seminaries are mostly liberal and caving in to the culture.” Indeed, it is true. But God is refining others and turning hearts back to the foundations of our faith, sharpening the swords of the warriors God is raising up. You can be sure that God will continue to do so until the Antichrist is allowed to make war on the saints and defeat them (Revelation 13:7^{xxii}). On a local level there will always be pastors, which means shepherds and is synonymous with elders, who are equipped with the sword of the Spirit to guard the church against errancy (1 Peter 5:1-3^{xxiii}).

It is import that each of us who are in Christ employ the weapon of prayer and Scripture. Prayer warrior is an apt title, for it is from prayer that the Lord sends angels to their battles. It is in prayer that soldiers are strengthened and prepared for battle, not against flesh and blood, but against false teaching, against spiritual powers of darkness, against the enemy’s schemes (Ephesians 6:12^{xxiv}, 18^{xxv}). We all have a role in protecting the church in our day.

⁹ King Solomon made himself a carriage from the wood of Lebanon. ¹⁰ He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. Song of Songs 3:9,10 The subject now switches to Solomon and his carriage. Not only is he one handsome, powerful, and wealthy man, but he has the nicest of rides. In my high school years we called the nicer cars babe magnets. I got to drive the block in my brother-in-laws’ tricked out ‘56 Chevy Nomad. That turned heads! But Solomon had by far the best ride.

The wood of Lebanon would not rot. Recently some of the beams recycled from the Jewish temple and incorporated into the Al Aqsa mosque were carbon dated. Sure enough, it was Lebanon cedar still solid 2500 years later. It speaks to the imperishable nature of the things that God has prepared for us. The ride had silver posts and a gold back with a purple seat. Silver is symbolic of redemption. Thankfully the posts hold up the covering, redemption. It is the redemption of Christ that has us covered in His righteousness. And of course, the gold represents holiness. We are riding on His holiness, not our own. Daughters of Zion inlaid the palanquin with love. Our service out of love for our king adds beauty to His ride.

Jesus has the best of everything *for us*. Is that hard to believe? ³² *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* Romans 8:32 By this I do not mean material prosperity in this life. God blesses some people with that, but often it can be a distraction from the truly valuable things. But what He has for us in heaven far outweighs anything we endure for Him here (Romans 8:18^{xxvi}).

Here we see that the groom is named clearly. However, a number of commentators suggest that he is used in the poem for descriptive or symbolic purposes only. In other words, this woman thinks of her shepherd husband as her king, and in his own way as wonderful and magnificent as any king. If that is the case, the author uses it as an ironic contrast between Solomon's pageantry and the joy and fulfillment of this couples' unspectacular but committed love life. It would be similar to the way Jesus used Solomon as an example of being wonderfully dressed and yet not nearly as beautiful as a flower of the field (Matthew 6:28,29^{xxvii}). The commentators use 8:12b^{xxviii} as proof of the idea. It appeals to my reasoning that a single woman in a harem of a thousand could not feel like this woman does. But on the other hand, I do not think half a verse proves their conjecture. Nor do I think Solomon wrote these songs about a shepherd's romance.

¹¹ *Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.* Song of Songs 3:11 The day of *our* wedding with the King of kings will be the day of the gladness of His heart. He has been waiting 2000 years and refrained from the fruit of the vine all that time in expectation of that day (Isaiah 62:5^{xxix}; Psalm 104:15^{xxx}; Matthew 26:29^{xxxi}).

The Shulammitte woman is evangelizing the daughters of Zion. "Go out and look at the man I love, the King! Are you not jealous of the fact that he married me, that he was so glad to make *me* his bride?" That is one way to evangelize. Tell of the joy you experience with Jesus, and of His joy when He makes us His own. I would not start a conversation with this symbolism, but for some women that might even be helpful. We often say that if it seems too good to be true, it probably is not. Here is the exception. The undeserved grace and love of God has been lavished on us. ⁷ *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,* ⁸ *which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight* ⁹ *making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ.* Ephesians 1:7-9 It is hard to believe because we know ourselves too well. But here is another mystery: ⁵¹ *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Together we will make up the glorious, spotless bride of Christ!

Go out and look upon our King seems like an evangelistic invitation (John 1:29^{xxiii}). If you truly see Him as He is in all His beauty and glory, if you see the love in His eyes for you, how can you not love Him in return. Spurgeon writes, "*A greater than Solomon is here*". (Mat. 12:42^{xxxiii}; Lk. 11:31^{xxxiv}) *He is the "Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6^{xxxv}), and therefore he is King Solomon going forth. Get up from your beds of sloth; rise from your chambers of ease; go forth, go forth to pray, to labour; to suffer; go forth to live in purity, leaving Babylon behind; go forth to walk with him alone, leaving even your kinsfolk and*

acquaintance if they will not follow with you. Therefore, why do you tarry at home when the King is abroad? “Behold the Bridegroom cometh, come ye forth to meet him” (Mat. 25:6^{xxxvi}), and behold King Solomon. Today, let your eye rest upon him. Let your eye behold the head that today is crowned with glory, wearing many crowns.

Behold, you too, his hands which once were pierced, but are now grasping the sceptre. Look to his girdle where swing the keys of heaven and death and hell. Look to his feet, once pierced with iron, but now set upon the dragon’s head. Behold his legs, like fine brass, as if they glowed in a furnace. Look at his heart, and that bosom which heaves with love for you; and when you have surveyed him from head to foot, exclaim, “Yea, he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely”. (Song 5:16^{xxxvii}) Does sin prevail? Behold King Solomon. Have doubts and fears arisen? Behold King Jesus. Are you troubled, and does your enemy annoy you? Look up to him; behold King Solomon. I pray you to remember the light in which you are to behold him. Do not think that Christ has lost his former power. Behold him as he was at Pentecost, with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. Oh, how glorious was our Lord when the Church crowned him with her zeal, and the arrows went abroad, and three thousand fell slain by his right hand to be made alive by the breath of his mouth! Oh, how these early saints crowned him when they brought of their substance and laid it at the apostle’s feet, neither did any man count that anything he had was his own! They crowned him with their heart’s purest love; the Church had on her brow her bridal-wreath, and her husband wore his nuptial crown. Behold him today as wearing that crown still, for he is the same Christ, and go forth to meet him, and labour for him, and love him as the first saints did.

When we look on Him, let us rejoice that this is to be our glory. We are to put off this sackcloth and put on scarlet and fine linen. The dust is to be wiped from our brow, and the sweat from our face; the shackles are to be taken from our wrist, and the gyves [fetters] from our legs; and we are to be emancipated, ennobled, glorified, made partners with Christ in all his splendour, and taught to reign with him, world without end.

All hail the power of Jesus’ name, Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown him Lord of all. (Edward Perronet)

We will lay aside every fear, and continue all day gazing on our matchless Christ, adoring him, exalting him, and having fellowship with him. For all is well; his travelling chariot is always safe, and soon he will step out of it with his bride at his right hand, and the world will be astonished to behold the beauties of the royal pair when he is exalted, and those that are with him, before the presence of his Father and all the holy angels!^{xxxviii} Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Questions:

- 1 Who is in the chariot?
- 2 Can you relate to the woman in verse 6?
- 3 What may the 60 men represent?
- 4 Can you recall times God has clearly intervened in your life?
- 5 Will God leave us without shepherds?
- 6 What role do we all have in protecting the church?
- 7 Review the imagery and meaning of the parts of the palanquin.
- 8 What is the Shulamite’s way of evangelizing?
- 9 What are the two mysteries Paul writes about?

10 Review Spurgeon's conclusion to this passage commenting on each paragraph.

ⁱ **2 Corinthians 6:14-16 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

ⁱⁱ **Colossians 1:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)**

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

^{iv} **Song of Songs 6:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ "Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?"

^v **Song of Songs 8:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor.

^{vi} **Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

^{vii} **Matthew 5:3 (ESV)**

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

^{viii} **Genesis 12:3 (ESV)**

³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

^{ix} **Genesis 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

^x **2 Thessalonians 2:14 (NIV)**

¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

^{xi} **Romans 8:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

^{xii} **Matthew 5:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."

^{xiii} **2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (ESV)**

¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

^{xiv} **Romans 12:1 (ESV)**

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

^{xv} **Psalms 116:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

^{xvi} **Mark 16:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."

^{xvii} **Revelation 19:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

^{xviii} **Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

^{xix} **Genesis 50:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

xx Psalm 29:9 (ESV)

⁹ The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

xxi 1 Kings 19:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

xxii Revelation 13:7 (ESV)

⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,

xxiii 1 Peter 5:1-3 (ESV)

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

xxiv Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

xxv Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

xxvi Romans 8:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

xxvii Matthew 6:28-29 (ESV)

²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,

²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

xxviii Song of Songs 8:12 (ESV)

^{12b} you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.

xxix Isaiah 62:5 (ESV)

⁵ For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

xxx Psalm 104:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.

xxxi Matthew 26:29 (ESV)

²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

xxxii John 1:29 (ESV)

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

xxxiii Matthew 12:42 (ESV)

⁴² The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

xxxiv Luke 11:31 (ESV)

³¹ The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

xxxv Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

xxxvi Matthew 25:6 (ESV)

⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

xxxvii Song of Songs 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

xxxviii C.H.Spurgeon *THE ROYAL PAIR IN THEIR GLORIOUS CHARIOT*, NO. 484, A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 30TH, 1862, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON