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The marriage procession in the Song of Songs

Song 3:6 - 4:7

Introduction

In our country, it is the bride – with her father – who is brought to the wedding in style. She may arrive in a ribboned Rolls Royce, a jet-black Jaguar or a veteran classic. In the case of a royal wedding, she might even arrive in a horse-drawn carriage. Her family and bridesmaids would have preceded her in their various vehicles. In the same way, our passage in the Song of Solomon begins with a vehicle for a royal wedding, but it is *the bridegroom* who is being carried.

The Song of Songs, itself, is an oratorio. That is to say, it is a composition containing several songs and sung by different characters to form a semi-dramatic piece. It is a love song that has a close tie with the characters found in Psalm 45. Therefore, like this psalm, the Song of Solomon prophetically sets forth the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His earthly bride, Zion. Namely, the believing Jews when He appears as King of kings and Lord of lords. However, the Christian and the Church go through many of the bride's experiences that are recorded in the book, so there are lessons that we need to learn from the book today.

We may divide our passage into eight parts:

1. The wilderness.
2. The bed.
3. The valiant men.
4. The chariot.
5. The crown.
6. The sevenfold praise of the bride.
7. The bride's continuing search.
8. The full praise of the bride.

The Wilderness

'Who (or, what) is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders?' (Song 3:6). This question is asked by the daughters of Jerusalem, who can see the rising dust of a procession coming up out of the wilderness. It was normal in the Near East for the bridegroom to come to the home of the bride to take her to his parent's home for the evening meal, called the "marriage supper". This occurred on the day of the wedding. We are reminded of this in Revelation 19, where we find the marriage supper of the Lamb. Christ has come for His Church and taken her to be with Him. The bride makes herself ready and the marriage supper follows.

No doubt, this particular Scripture (Song 3) refers to the future time when Christ will come for His earthly bride, Zion. In order to see the beauty of this, please read Isaiah 62 and Hosea 2. The wilderness, in the past, was a place of probation where God measured faithfulness. This world is often called "a wilderness wide" by Christians. So in the progress of Solomon coming out of the wilderness, we can view the Son of God as the One who has passed through suffering and trial successfully while here upon earth.

Smoke (v. 6) is something brought out and released through the action of fire, as we see in Joel 2:30. It generally symbolizes the testing judgment of God. Where the burnt offerings are concerned, it rises as a sweet aroma to God who appreciates the worth of Christ's perfect sacrifice. Solomon failed, but Christ passed every test of God with flying colors. On the other hand, the pillar speaks of witness,

dependability and strength. We are reminded of the pillars in Solomon's temple – Jachin and Boaz (1 Ki. 7:21). The names mean: "Yahweh will establish", and "In Yahweh is strength". It is in Christ that God will establish His kingdom on earth (Rev. 11:15). The Christian who overcomes will be made by Christ a pillar in the temple of God. That is to say, he will have a dominant place of witness to God.

The mention of "myrrh" points to the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus (myrrh being so called because of its bitter taste). Its fragrance or perfume acknowledges the blessings that are the result of that suffering. "Frankincense" is so called because of its whiteness. It speaks of Christ as the pure One. He did no sin. He knew no sin. There was no sin in Him. He was incapable of sin, because He is God the Son. In the Old Testament, frankincense is for the pleasure of God. The life of Christ rose up to God giving Him delight. Today, Christians have a new nature, a nature that cannot sin. It came about through new birth (John 3). Couple this with the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, and Christians have the ability to live perfect lives. Unfortunately, in practice we fail and do sin. Yet, God says that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

"With all the merchant's fragrant powders", tells us that Christ is indeed the anointed One. In Psalm 45, we find that the garments of the king are fragrant with myrrh, aloes and cassia. These are ingredients of the holy anointing oil. Christ will be seen in the offices of Prophet, Priest and King.

The Bed

"Behold, it is Solomon's couch" (Song 3:7). This is the answer of the Shulamite, the bride of the Song. She has been watching for the coming of her beloved. She directs the gaze of her companions to him. This shall be the case in the future for the redeemed of Israel. They will be looking for their Messiah to appear as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Today, Christians recognize that the next great prophetic event will be the coming of Christ for those who love Him (1 Thess. 4). Even when the Christians have been taken away, the heathen world will not acknowledge the event, because God sends a great delusion that would seemingly explain the disappearance of so many (2 Thess. 2:11-12). That is the reason why there is no salvation then for those who have rejected God's offer of salvation in this age.

The first object to come into clear view was King Solomon's bed or couch. This was for reclining upon whether to sleep or eat. It is a place of rest and refreshment. So we see that King Solomon could still enjoy his rest in spite of the alarms and

warnings of the night that came because of hostile and opposing forces. It reminds us of a triumphant Christ, the true Prince of Peace. Through Him, God has prepared a rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). As Christians, we have peace with God because we have been reconciled, and we have the peace of God in our hearts, knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God. But, while we wait for that day of rest, let us be marked by faithfulness.

The bed is also the place of intimacy. The bride of Solomon was to be fruitful. In Hosea 2:19-20, we find that the Prince of Peace will betroth His bride to Himself in righteousness, judgment, loving-kindness, mercies and faithfulness. The twentieth verse ends with the words: "And you shalt know the LORD". This is the consummation of the marriage. It is really seen in the next chapter of the Song of Songs when the bride becomes the "spouse" or "wife". We Christians today have the same privilege of being possessed by the Lord and knowing Him in a full and complete way through the Holy Spirit, who delights to reveal Him to us through the Scriptures (Luke 24).

The Valiant Men

"With sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night" (Song 3:7-8). These sixty were mighty men of Israel, veterans in warfare. It shows that Solomon was well prepared to deal with any alarms, warnings, or assaults upon his rest that sprang from the powers of darkness. Under Christ's reign of righteousness, the world will experience almost perfect peace (see Ps. 72). Every enemy that rears his head during that thousand year's reign will be put down immediately. Those who rise up against God and His Son at the end of that age will be destroyed immediately (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Today, of course, every Christian is called upon to be a warrior for Christ. In Ephesians 6, we find the whole armor of God listed so that we can be fitted out to stand firm in this evil day. There is the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Finally, there is prayer (Eph. 6:13-18). Do we remember to put on this armor in order to quench the power of the evil one, or do we live complacent lives that Satan can successfully attack regularly?

The Chariot

King Solomon made himself a chariot "of the wood of Lebanon. He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior being paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 3:9-10). This "chariot" would have been a "palanquin"; that is, a covered chair carried by staves resting on the shoulders of living men. However, King Solomon had made it for himself. It was for his pleasure and his transportation. It was made from the wood of Lebanon. The word "Lebanon" means "very white". In Scripture, *wood* speaks of *humanity*. The wood of Lebanon would most likely be cedar. Psalm 92:12 informs us that the righteous will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. So, in this, we see Jesus Christ the Righteous. Interestingly, one of the names of Christ as King is: "The LORD our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6). His earthly bride is called by the same name (Jer. 33:16). Looking at these Scriptures and Genesis 5:2, we can see the origin of why a bride takes her husband's name when married.

The pillars of the chariot were of silver, reminding us of the witness of redemption's glory (silver representing the price of ransom). Today, we know Christ as our Redeemer. The bottom of the chariot was of gold. Gold speaks of the glory of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory. The "covering", which is better translated "seat", was of purple. In Scripture, this is the color of Gentile royalty. It speaks of Christ as the universal King. So He shall be for one thousand years (Rev. 20). Finally, the chariot was patterned within by the daughters of Jerusalem, and this speaks of the love of all believers for Him. Their affections promote His movements and go forth.

The Crown

"Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see king Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart" (Song 3:11). The "daughters of Zion" seem to represent the converts that came as a result of the witness of Zion (the faithful Jewish remnant itself). The crown here is a wedding crown, a crown of rejoicing, which was placed on Solomon by his mother because of his union to the Shulamite. She did so to share in the gladness of his heart.

In a similar way, the Father will share in His Son's joy when the heavenly bride, the Church, is at the side of His Son at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The apostle Paul expresses similar joy when he states: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown

of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19). For Paul and his co-workers to see their converts in the presence of the Lord was their crown of rejoicing. Furthermore, how pleased God will be to see Zion, the earthly bride, on the way to being united to His Anointed.

The Sevenfold Praise of the Bride

The bridegroom praises his bride in the verses that follow. He begins with a summary: "Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair" (Song 4:1). He notes her beauty and the fact that she is his own possession. This reminds us of Ezekiel 16, where we see the action of the Lord in beautifying Jerusalem. In verse 14 of the chapter, the Lord God says: "Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you". True beauty comes through the work of the Lord alone. We can claim none for ourselves. So it is with the Church today. Christ is sanctifying and cleansing it by the washing of water by the Word (Eph. 5:26).

1. The first feature described is her eyes: "You have dove's eyes behind your veil" (Song 4:1). Doves are birds that faithfully keep to one mate throughout their lives. The bride had eyes only for the King. So Zion will be faithful to Christ in the day to come. The Holy Spirit Himself is sometimes likened to a dove. He has the perfection of spiritual insight and keeps the Lord Jesus ever in view. One day soon, the heavenly bride, the Church, will have eyes only for Christ. At the moment, He is being pushed out of the main Christian denominations. The Church is following the world in its tolerance of evil whether in the religious or secular spheres. If we, as Christians, were as faithful as this bride, having a continuing first love, then our spiritual discernment would result in correct decisions because we would know the will of Christ by the power of His Spirit.

The spouse has her eyes "behind her veil". The veil is a head-covering that is a symbol of submission in the creation order of God. Both the heavenly and earthly brides will subject themselves fully to Christ. Today, this order should be seen on earth. If a woman is found praying or prophesying, then her head should be covered (1 Cor. 11). However, in the Church assemblies she should remain silent (1 Cor. 14:34-35). Furthermore, the woman should not usurp authority over the man (1 Tim. 2:12).

- 2. The second feature is her hair:** "Your hair is like a flock of goats, going down from Mount Gilead" (Song 4:1). In Scripture, hair is the personal glory of the woman. It is a major part of her beauty. The woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:44), used her hair to dry the feet of Jesus. She lightly esteemed her own beauty in the presence of the Son of God. Here the hair is likened to a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead.

The imagery is clear, but its spiritual meaning is deeper. The word Gilead means "a hill of witness", and the hair of goats was frequently used in the garments of prophets (Zech. 13:4-5). Hence we have the bride as a witness to the Lord's Anointed as the Prophet who should come – like unto Moses. Hair, long hair, was also symbolic of the devotion of the Nazirite to God in both men and women (Num. 6). The Nazirite was to live a life separated to the Lord. May we do the same (Rom. 12:1-2).

- 3. The third feature is her teeth:** "Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep, which have come up from the washing, every one of which bear twins, and none is barren among them" (Song 4:2). Her teeth were white, uniform and full. Teeth generally speak of attitude in Scripture. The attitude of this bride was pure (white), consistent (uniform) and fruitful (full). In Isaiah 53, the sheep that is dumb before her shearers tells us of meekness. Washing indicates that they are purified by the Word of God. Being fruitful suggests that her attitude showed the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control.
- 4. The fourth feature is her lips:** "Your lips are like a strand of scarlet, and your mouth is lovely" (Song 4:3). Lips are noted in the Bible for their utterances. Here they are linked with speech. Threads of scarlet are found in relation to the firstborn in Genesis 38:28 and in relation to deliverance in Joshua 2:21. The lips of the bride utter praise (cf. Ps. 33:1), praise to the One who is pre-eminent in all things. He is the Firstborn from among the dead; the Firstborn of every creature; and the Firstborn among many brethren. He is the Deliverer.
- 5. The fifth feature is her temples:** "Your temples behind your veil are like a piece of a pomegranate" (Song 4:3). Joel 1:12 indicates that the pomegranate is one of the trees that symbolizes *joy*. In the day to come, Zion, clothed with the garments of salvation and robed in righteousness will greatly rejoice in the Lord and joy in her God (Isa. 61:10). Christians can do this today. The apostle Paul encourages us to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4).

6. **The sixth feature is the neck:** "Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an armory, on which hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men" (Song 4:4). The neck speaks of the manner of life or service; for example, a stiff neck suggests a life lived in rebellion to the will of God. A neck likened to a tower of David built for an armory suggests lasting strength and faithfulness to God. This bride is prepared to stand up for her beloved when assaulted by the enemy of souls. Let us always be ready to make a stand for Christ.
7. **The seventh feature is her breasts:** "Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies" (Song 4:5). Breasts in Scripture have a number of meanings. For example, in many references they provide food for the growth of the young. In Isaiah 66:10-11, we find particular reference to Jerusalem's breasts giving comforts to those who love her and enabling them to delight in the abundance of her glory. This fits in well with the thought of the lilies, whose beauty surpasses the glory of Solomon (Matt. 6:28-29). Finally, in Proverbs 5:19 we find that they are to satisfy the husband as a loving deer or graceful doe. The husband is here to be enraptured with her love.

So the Lord, the One who created the lilies, will be enraptured by the love of this bride, Zion, during the millennial reign. He also will be satisfied by the love of His heavenly bride, the Church, for eternity. In the meanwhile, let us as Christians, love Him who first loved us. Hear His words: "Your love is much better than wine".

The bride's continuing search

The desire of the bride is expressed in the words: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense" (Song 4:6). Here the bride seeks to know her groom with more intimacy than ever before.

So the bride of Christ wishes to discover to a greater extent the blessings that have flowed out through the sufferings of Christ, and more of the wonder of His holy Person. She will do so until the dawn of His appearing as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2).

The full praise of the bride

Our passage finishes with praise for the bride by the bridegroom: "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you" (Song 4:7). The bride is perfected. She is made fit for her lover. So with the Church. Christ will present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:27).

As for Zion, the Lord will keep that promise He made through Isaiah: "I will make you an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations", and "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isa. 60:15; 62:5).

