

Glimpses of the Kingdom

6. The bridegroom and the bride (2) The bride

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“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks” (Song 4:1).

The Ecclesia, the true ‘church’, is the Bride of Christ. She is his body, and the two will become “one flesh” in the Kingdom. Like Esther, she is a fair young virgin, purified over time with sweet odours; if the King delights in her, she shall be called by name. Like Esther, she is fair and beautiful; a footnote against the verse quoted above says that “fair” means ‘nourished’, and the Bride in her preparation has been well-nourished upon the life-giving Word of God. Esther had been adopted by Mordecai, as we hope for the adoption of sons through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Psalm 45, the Gentile bride is also a king’s daughter by adoption, and she has had to forget her earthly father’s house. Once an alien, she has been brought into the Commonwealth of Israel, as Rahab was, and is able to cry, “Abba, Father”! As a founding child, abandoned by godless parents, Israel had become a ward of the Lord God, Who had washed, anointed and clothed her.

Esther was permitted to enter the inner court, and the King held out his golden sceptre to her that she might not be punished with death, but live. This had been preceded by fasting and prayer. The Almighty has extended His grace to us—not according to the law—the only means by which we too might not perish. The Bride in Psalm 45 is not only arrayed in gold, but all-glorious within, adorned with the hidden man of the heart, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, of great price. Her raiment is of needlework, denoting, in the many strands coming together, the complexity of her makeup. It was necessary for her to have free will, for she could be wedded only if it were willingly. Like Rebekah, her journey resulted in meeting the Heir of all things at the close of day. She enters the King’s palace (cp. Song 1:4 with Rev. 22:14). Her name will be remembered, for “a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30). What she has done will be spoken of for a memorial of her.

The Bride is multitudinous. The memorial Name of Yahweh incorporates what He will be, indicating His continuity of purpose in that a future people will come to reflect His Name and glory. The abundance of the pomegranate’s seed, on the hem of the priest’s robe, hinted at the multitude of saints to come. However, this host was not amorphous, but was to be made up of individuals with separate personalities—a diversity of members in the Body, each one endearingly different yet with its own contribution to make, working in harmony and unison. We are made in the image of the Elohim, and meant to reflect, in our multiplicity, the myriad facets of the Divine Name and nature. All the worthies mentioned in Scripture will form part of the Bride, having obtained a good report through faith, and having finally received their inheritance and the homeland they sought. This great cloud of witnesses will surround us, and we will be part of it. We will commune with them and know all that they knew, rejoicing with all the members of the Bride, as many as the stars of the sky in multitude!

The Bride includes those made eunuchs for the Kingdom of heaven’s sake, who neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Earthly marriage will be superfluous for the glorified saints, who will all in figure be wedded to their Lord. They are the wise virgins who were ready with their oil in their lamps, the good and faithful servants who had wisely employed their talents in their Master’s absence, and were permitted to enter into the joy of their Lord. They are the sheep who had been unaware that they had been ministering to their King when they had performed acts of love and service, and had inherited a Kingdom. It is Christ who has presented to himself a glorious Ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish, holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.