

Psalm 45: The Greatest Wedding in History

OUTLINE

The Bridegroom
The bride

INTRODUCTION

We are in love with love. God has made us for the greatest love story ever told, the story of His love for us and we being His people; of He being our Bridegroom and we His bride. It is no mistake that the Bible begins with a wedding and ends with a wedding. We are creatures of love, because God has written it upon our hearts, fitting us for the love story of God and His people. The loneliness we feel when we are not in love is not the greatest tragedy, but rather it points to the greater tragedy of not having God as our God. Loneliness hurts because God has made our love in marriage to reflect the greater love between Christ and His bride. Today we are going to look at one of the Bible's great love songs, Psalm 45. It is a love song about a wedding, in fact it is a love song about the wedding, the wedding of Christ and the church. This is one of the Messianic psalms. Christ revealed that the whole bible pointed forward to Him, but there are certain portions of scripture that are more full of Christ, Psalm 45 is just such a portion. There are certain of the psalms that have hints of Christ woven into them, and there are others that are almost exclusively about Christ, Psalm 2; 22 and 110 come to mind, and we can add 45 to that number. Even the title is full of the theme of Christ and His bride. 'To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah; a love song.' The song is addressed to the one who is going to coordinate and rouse others to sing, the choirmaster. The tune it is to be sung by is called Lilies, it has been pointed out that the church is called the Lily of the valley, Song of Sol. 2:1-2. Maskil is likely a musical or liturgical term. But note that it blatantly states that it is a love song. As we come to this psalm we are not merely here to distract ourselves with some sentimentalism as we treat this psalm like some do a rom-com. It is interesting to me that the book of the Bible that most characterizes the church as a suffering martyr who is trodden underfoot it also the book that most talks about the church as the bride of Christ and the final wedding where we see our Savior and are united to Him forever. The purpose of this love song is not to provide some diverting entertainment to add some colour to a drab day but to grip your heart and drive it towards the great thing we are all made for, to take those inner longings for love and direct them to their great fulfillment in Christ.

What is interesting about this psalm is that the original royal wedding that it was originally written for is unknown. Was this written for Solomon; or another Davidic king? We are not told, the historical situation that gave occasion to this song is lost to us but the beauty of Christ and the bride is apparent. What happens to us then as we read it is that we begin with the ANE situation of a royal songwriter addressing the king and discharging his duty to write a love song for a royal wedding, but we quickly find ourselves standing before Christ adoring Him, standing in the shoes of the bride with our own sense of anticipating and longing stirred. We will approach this psalm under two simple points, the Bridegroom; and the bride.

The Bridegroom

V1, 'My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.' Our psalm begins with a heart exploding with enthusiasm setting the emotional tone for us. The thought of a wedding can make one happy, the thought of a royal wedding can bring great anticipation, but knowing that we are talking about Christ and His bride finally married after the long and tragic separation of sin, finally overcome, the peak of all of our emotions are called upon to try and respond in a fitting fashion to these realities. His emotional readiness is a test for our own hearts. Are you more excited about the next season of your favorite show about to drop or the thought of seeing Christ. What is your heart delighting in? So many of the psalms teach us about how our hearts should be directed, this one teaches us to direct our hearts forward towards that great day when Christ and bride unite.

V2, 'You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever.' The psalmist turns our attention to the Bridegroom and talks about His beauty. As with many other Messianic prophecies what would be poetic hyperbole or empty flattery becomes perfectly true when it comes to Christ. Where the psalmist would be crediting the groom with looking sharp on his wedding day, and being a good ruler who gives good laws and so is therefore favored by God, means so much more when it comes to Christ. On that day, the eye of every believer, will be turned towards Christ and He will be the most beautiful, most glorious, most adored. When we see Him not in His incarnation where He cloaks His glory but when He fully reveals Himself as resurrected and the God-man, we will not be admiring our own glorified bodies or looking for the best looking person in the room, our intense focus will be set upon Him alone.

'Grace is poured upon your lips' seems so pitiful a description of the gospel of grace that Christ has communicated, and given His life to secure. On His wedding Day, grace is the superlative attribute that is highlighted as Christ will be revealed the Savior of sinners. When it becomes apparent that one so divine and glorious has done so much to those so undeserving, we will praise Him for His grace. The scars of His crucifixion that He glorified body will bear will shout of His grace.

'Therefore God has blessed you forever.' The day that Christ comes again, the day He comes to take us to Himself, is also the day when the Father gets to glorify His Son for all that He has done, to honor Him before every seeing eye. Every Jew will hear God's words of approval; every worshipper in every false religion will see the truth. Every believer will have their own praise and adoration of Christ amplified as they echo the Father's own love and commendation of His Son. The pitiful praise we have given to Christ for His work will be revealed against the light of the Father's own exalting of His Son. Greater than the praise of the Bride, the ecstatic praise of the angels and the worship of all creation, the greatest due given to Christ will be by the Father. As the Father presents Him as king, every knee will bow and every tongue confess. There is no more sure testimony to Christ's glory than the blessing of the Father. Right now we have no idea about the glory that will be revealed on that day.

V3-5, 'Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty! In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds! Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you.' The king was a man of war who had a sword to judge his enemies and it was a symbol of his strength to enforce his laws. It might seem odd that one would talk about strapping on a sword on the wedding day. Today we might see

a ceremonial sword with jewels that would be useless in battle, but we remember that our wedding day comes after a battle. Christ the returning King is a mighty the, the mightiest one, no one can resist His power. Rev. 19:21 describes the rebellious nations as being slain by the sword that comes from His mouth. Our wedding day is a rescue as well as a wedding. Salvation comes as it so often does in the bible by way of justice upon God's enemies.

The victory of the King is assumed as he comes to bring truth for lies; meekness for pride, and righteousness for unrighteousness. Truth for our minds, humility for our hearts, and righteousness for our actions.

The terror of that day for God's enemies is underlined by the words, 'let your right hand teach you awesome/terrible deeds.'

The finality and universal success of that day is portrayed by an area of effect attack as thousands of arrows fall from the sky to mow down large groups of people, they are sharp and effective that they penetrate to the heart.

We have seen the glory of the king; we have seen the power of the king, now we are given a glimpse of His royal court. V6-7, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.' At first these verses sound like praise towards God and then from that a promise that God will anoint the king with gladness. And no doubt OT Jews would likely have read it this way. But these verses you will know are quoted in Heb. 1:8-9 in the context of proving that the Son is God, is divine, is greater than angels. This raises the question of how the NT quotes to the OT. We are sometimes surprised by the way the OT quotes the NT. Sometimes it appears as if the ordinarily rules of interpretation are ignored as interpretations we would never come up with are put forward. We all agree that the NT is an inspired commentary of the OT. Are we to simply go with whatever the NT says an OT text is saying, even if an alternative interpretation seems more natural? The answer is of course yes, and sometimes we do take things in the NT as truth even though because we do not have all the info we cannot see how this interpretation would work. But in this instance I think I can see why the author of Hebrews sees God as the speaker speaking to this King as God. If you go to the end of the Psalm v16-17, 'In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.' Now at first these verses appear to be psalmist giving assurances to the Bride, but the word 'your' is masculine meaning that the Bridegroom and not the bride is the person being addressed. If we then notice that the I of v17 is promising the king's name to be remembered forever, we can see that these words are not spoken by the psalmist to the bride; nor the Bridegroom to the bride; nor the bride to the Bridegroom. It can only be God making a promise to the Bridegroom. So we see the Father directly addressing the Son. The author of Hebrews I believe noticed this and read those other words of direct address as from the Father to the Son. Add to this that the king spoken of it blessed forever and is guaranteed victory, it can be no one else but Christ being spoken of, this all points to God speaking to the God-man who is king making these statements. More than that there is no other king whose throne will last forever but the Son, and there is no other who can make this promise to be true but the Father.

Christ will rule over all things forever, on an eternal throne; Christ is more fitted to rule than any other king having the power to rule with a scepter of righteousness, and having the moral character to rule hating wickedness and

loving righteousness. It is because of who Christ is and what He has accomplished that God has anointed Him, set Him apart for this kingly role. We cannot help but think of those glorious promises of Is. 61, 1-2, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.' But the oil which so often represents the Spirit is not only for office but for joy and gladness. The solemnity of this scene is crowned with joy and gladness. Christ Himself will experience joy beyond His companions. We know that for the joy set before Him He endured the cross; but if all of heaven rejoices at the salvation of one soul, here we are told that His joy in the salvation of sinners and the glory of God is greater than theirs.

Elements of that courtly scene are told, v8-9, 'your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.' A rich courtly scene as the freshly anointed king still has the smell of the ingredients used in the oil of consecration, Ex. 30:23-24. His royal court is filled with music as heaven will be filled with praise. The royal court is populated not with poor slaves but princesses in attendance, just as heaven will be filled with royal priests. And of course there is the queen, the bride, at His right hand, ready for the wedding. We move now from the Bridegroom to the bride.

The bride

Many a bride gets wedding day jitters, the scene before us unfolds as the new Father of the bride addressing her as daughter and giving her advice. V10-12, 'Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him. The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people.' She is told to forget her past; obey her king, and look with hope to her future. A man must leave his father's house and cleave to his wife, and a wife must leave her father's house and cleave to her husband. The Son left heaven to come down to earth to be joined to His bride. We when we come to Christ must forget our past, we need to put away the meat pots of Egypt and not long for them; we are not to be like Lot's wife who looked back. Jesus Himself said, Luke 14:26-27, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.' We repent, we turn our backs on sin, we commit ourselves and covenant ourselves to Christ. A wife submits to her husband, a subject to her king, and as Christians we obey Christ. Christ is our King, our lives are His, we must give all our allegiance and willing obedience to Him alone. This is not a judgement but liberty, we are married to the best of men, to the most loving, most gracious, who rules us for our good. The bride is also encouraged to think of her future position. We gain more by being married to Christ than if we gained the whole world.

We are then taken to the moment of consummation where the king and queen will go into the bridal chamber and be united, v13-15, 'All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her. With joy and

gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.' Every bride is fixed on her dress, here we are told that the bride will be adorned with glorious and beautiful robes. We know that this is the righteousness of Christ, the garment of salvation He provides with which we are fitted. None can be at the wedding feasts are not wearing wedding garments and the bride, the church will be dressed fit to dwell in the presence of God forever. We will arise in resurrected bodies, confirmed in righteousness, freed from sin, perfect in His sight. We see the mention of virgin companions. In the ancient world the wedding would begin with the bridegroom along with his friends making a formal procession to the bride's house to escort her and her virgin companions to the wedding feast at his house. The parable of the virgins is set in this sort of scene. The bridegroom is on His way, and the virgins are to await His arrival, keeping oil in their lamps being ready for Him. this scene too has this aspect to it with the presence of the virgins reminding us of that parable and its challenges to be ready. Joy and gladness describe this moment when king and queen are married. That day when we see Him will not be a day of fear and trembling but joy and gladness, the greatest joy we have ever known. We see that the queen is brought into her husband's house, but it is more than a house it is a palace. We could fill in here, and they lived happily ever after.

The psalm ends with words from the Father to the Son, v16-17, 'In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.' Every king dreams of sons to continue his lineage, here God promises this king sons who will reign in all the earth. This of course translates into many children of God in His kingdom reigning in the new creation forever. God also promises an eternal name and eternal praise. This will be not only the regard of a nation for its ruler, but the worship of saved sinners for its God-king.

What a psalm, I can barely think of a portion of the OT which is so rich in portraying the glory of Christ on the day that we will see Him. it will be a day of great joy, a day where we who deserve nothing but shame and punishment will be raised up, adorned, honored, enriched and know the greatest joy and satisfaction. We will be beautiful in our eyes, and He will be everything to us. This is incentive then to forget the past; obey our King and live looking to the future with hope.