

“God’s Bride”
Isaiah 61:10–62:5

May 6, 2012

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^C Matthew 1:18-19, Luke 2:5, John 2

^D Isaiah 55:9, Deuteronomy 4:12

^E Song of Songs 5:4

A. Introduction

1. What is heaven like?

a. you have all seen the cartoons

- (A) people sitting on clouds playing harps,
- (B) people looking down to earth to watch their baseball team
- (C) people covering their ears to shut out the incessant singing
- (D) well, that is not the heaven described in the Bible

b. in fact, the Bible itself does not have a lot to say about heaven

- (A) when it does, it is mostly in terms of pictures and figures
- (B) often very difficult to distinguish between what is to be taken in a literal, physical sense
- (C) and what is parabolic, like the parables of Jesus, earthly stories with heavenly meanings; descriptions of heaven in earthly terms conveying a spiritual truth to our earth-bound eyes

c. there are diverse descriptions in the Scriptures

- (A) a simple and revealing picture was given to Abraham of whom Hebrews 11:10 says, *'for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.'* – something that we can readily understand and imagine
- (B) but a more complex picture given by Paul interpreting the words of Isaiah in 1 Corinthians 2:9, *'but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him."'* – showing that heaven is beyond our imagination

d. nevertheless, there is one consistent point about heaven ...

2. God is with His people

a. some Bible expositors are rather adepts at taking Scripture verses or even parts of verses and readily assigning them to the church age, the kingdom age, or the heavenly age; I do not have that particular gift of interpretation ... I expect to be surprised by all that God will do!

b. there is, though, the truth, that just as the instant a person receives Jesus Christ he or she has eternal

- life, so he or she likewise enters into heaven, because God takes up residence in their lives
- c. in the OT this was promised to Israel: *'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.'* (Leviticus 26:12)
 - d. which very same promise is transferred to believers in Christ: *'... For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."'* (2 Corinthians 6:16)
 - e. but what is now, and what will be are two different things
 - f. and this difference is illustrated in the Bible by

B. The Picture of Marriage

1. How is this described in Scripture?

- a. first there came the espousal
 - (A) this was of a much more binding nature than is 'being engaged'
 - (B) it was by a covenant or contract, and, before the law they were in every sense married except for having come together
 - (C) Matthew 1:18-19 describes this, *'Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to put her away secretly.'*
 - (D) literally Mary was Joseph's *'betrothed wife'* (Luke 2:5, NKJV) and this could only be dissolved by *'putting her away'*, that is divorce
 - (E) usually this espousal was arranged by the families of the couple – today in our Bible School class we looked at such an arranged marriage, that between Isaac and Rebekah
 - (F) it was done in a relatively private fashion
- b. then came the marriage
 - (A) John 2 records such a marriage, with all its festivities, as the scene of Jesus Christ's first miracle at Cana of Galilee
 - (B) it was a public declaration of a private agreement; what was before only declared to the family and close friends is now made known, with great rejoicing, to all, friends and stranger alike

- (C) and it is followed by the husband taking – the word for 'marry' in Hebrew has 'possess, make something one's own possession' as one of its meanings, – the wife to live intimately together
- c. one last word before we read our Scripture text for today
 - (A) you will see in this text how this applied to the OT people of God, Judah, as they faced and experienced exile
 - (B) but also how it relates to all God's people as now being espoused to God, but one day being taken as a possession to Himself in an eternal and intimate union

2. Scripture reading – Isaiah 61:10-62:5

- a. In anticipation, the Bride speaks: 10 ¶ I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise To spring up before all the nations.
- b. In promise, the Bridegroom speaks: 62:1 ¶ For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, And her salvation like a torch that is burning. 2 The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the Lord will designate. 3 You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4 It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," And your land, "Married"; For the Lord delights in you, And to Him your land will be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.

3. God is Absolute and Infinite

- a. one thing to remember in looking at any illustration about God
- b. God is holy: that is, He is infinitely above and beyond and separate from His creation, without sin and immaculately pure
- c. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts

than your thoughts.' (Isaiah 55:9)

- d. so any figure whereby we seek to understand Him is deficient
- e. this truth lies behind the command that we not make any image to represent God, because God showed no form of Himself in making Himself known to the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:12)
- f. so, any illustration concerning God, is just that, an illustration
 - (A) this is in part what lies behind the incarnation of Jesus Christ
 - (B) the Godhead, in human form, making Himself known to man
- g. also, this picture we have looked at of marriage
 - (A) is a picture defaced by sin; it involves fallen human nature
 - (B) to understand it more clearly we need to return to the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world
 - (C) to look at God's purpose for marriage and for mankind
 - (D) in Eden, two perfect relationships were established
 - (1) one was between God and man
 - (2) one was between husband and wife
 - (E) the second was to be an example of the first
- h. when Christ returns for the people of God, His bride, sin will be again taken away, and a perfect marriage established; this is ...

C. The Bride's Anticipation 61:10-11

1. it is a joyful anticipation: 'I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God'

- a. Judah in the OT is an espoused wife, a bride to be
- b. the church in the NT is an espoused wife, marriage is still coming
- c. marriage should be a joyful anticipation; often, sadly, it is not
- d. it is joyful in this case, because it takes place in God's will and purpose

2. it is a spiritual anticipation

- a. first of all, it is 'in the Lord' and 'in my God'
- b. consider for a moment, as does the last part of verse 10, any human wedding
 - (A) bride and groom prepare, ornament themselves for the wedding

- (B) the priest wore a beautiful turban when we came before God in worship; 'groom **decks himself with a garland**' means literally 'he **plays the part of a priest**' in the wearing of an ornamental turban
- (C) and the bride decks and adorns herself in her finery – the word translated '**jewels**' encompasses all the articles she wears
- c. so also, in the coming spiritual wedding to God, His people have been ornamented and made ready by the Lord's gracious endowments
 - (A) gifts that are pictured as clothing
 - (B) '**garments of salvation**' and '**a robe of righteousness**'
 - (C) this the marriage raiment provided by God for His people

3. it is a natural anticipation, verse 11

- a. natural, not in the sense of commonplace, but rather in the sense that this is the inevitable outcome
 - (A) it is spring again: '**the earth brings forth its sprouts**'
 - (B) we sow seed: the '**garden causes the things sown in it to spring up**'
 - (C) God created the world in such a fashion that this should happen
- b. so the private covenant of the espousal of God's people to Himself must inevitably on account of the faithfulness of God, the Bridegroom be followed by His public taking of His bride before all the nations
- c. so that His '**righteousness and praise**' may spring up before them
- d. God's eternal purpose of a relationship, of communion and fellowship with mankind, shown in the Garden of Eden, is inevitably going to take place with His people; this is ...

D. The Bridegroom's Promise 62:1-5

1. Communion to be restored, chapter 62:1

- a. The book Song of Songs^{2} is an oriental love poem
 - (A) it depicts the love between a bride and bridegroom
 - (B) and at one point (5:4), the bride occupied with her own comfort, turns away the bridegroom and their communion is broken
- b. Israel and Judah, occupied with sin and following after other gods, found their communion with their husband God broken – in the book of Hosea, the prophet becomes a living commentary on this fact

- c. sadly, both the church as a whole and individual Christians, find their communion with God broken, their abiding in Christ Jesus their Saviour interrupted by sin
- d. but God will not have it to be so; verse 1: **For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, And her salvation like a torch that is burning.**
- e. both those phrases 'not **keep silent**' and 'not **keep quiet, or, not be at rest**' refer not only to speech, but also to action:
- f. God acts whenever communion is broken; for the sake of Zion and Jerusalem; for the sake of His chosen people

2. A public wedding, verses 2-3

- a. **The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the Lord will designate. You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.**
- b. it is a great wedding
 - (A) all of us have probably attended a number of weddings
 - (1) some which are rather small and comfortable
 - (2) but also some with many guests, where you wonder at all the work that involved in the preparations
 - (B) this is a great wedding; made public before the nations and ALL the kings – the invitations have been prepared; all will witness it
- c. it is an ostentatious wedding
 - (A) there is God with His bride, as though she were a beautiful crown in His hand, or a regal turban in His palm – there are quite a number of different terms for turbans or headdresses in Hebrew just as there used to be for hats before our society became hatless
 - (B) He displays them publicly, smiling upon His bride
- d. it is a transforming wedding
 - (A) with this wedding, God's people, the church is forever changed
 - (B) God Himself gives to her a new name

- (C) when God personally steps in to change the status and situation of an individual, He changes their name, as Abram to Abraham, as Sarai to Sarah, as Jacob to Israel; as the believer to Christian
- (D) the new name assures the surety of the new relationship

3. God's people will be fulfilled in His love, verses 4-5

- a. *It will no longer be said to you, 'Forsaken,' Nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate'; But you will be called, 'My delight is in her,' And your land, 'Married'; For the Lord delights in you, And to Him your land will be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you (that is, 'possess Zion and Canaan'); And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.*
- b. God is the King of His people
 - (A) in this verse, two queens are mentioned
 - (1) there is Azubah, the wife of King Asa and mother of King Jehoshaphat, whose name means 'Forsaken'
 - (2) there is Hephzibah, the wife of King Hezekiah of Isaiah's own time, whose name means 'My delight is in her'
 - (B) Judah, God's people, are the Kings's queen, whether in the time of their backsliding when they were Azubah, or in this promised time of the marriage ceremony, when they will be Hephzibah
- c. marriage brings the promised fulfilment of the relationship for which God intended in creating man and specifically His people
- d. Canaan, the promised land, typical of heaven, will finally be the intended possession of God's people
 - (A) the double meaning of the word 'marry', in Hebrew, is here applied by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Isaiah
 - (B) so as God's people become His bride, possessed by Him
 - (C) they in turn will possess the promised land, the heavenly city

E. Conclusion

1. What is heaven like?

- a. it is to be like the completion of the marriage, with the bride being possessed by the bridegroom to live

for ever in intimate union

- b. it is the consummation of the purpose for which man was created – to live in relationship with His Creator and to enjoy Him forever
 - c. it is the righting of wrong for those who have been called by this world: 'Forsaken' and 'Desolate'
 - d. it will be the showering of uninterrupted favour by God upon the one now 'Married,' of whom He says, 'My delight is in her' – Hephzibah
2. but '[Not every one that talks of heaven is going to be there!](#)'
- a. the espousal, the betrothal to Christ must take place first
 - b. Jesus came to earth for this very purpose to make the way to heaven known, to give His life for the church, to make her His holy bride
 - c. accept Christ and know the forgiveness of sin through His death
 - d. when sin abounded, grace did much more abound: love found a way

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AV Authorized (King James) Version

NAS New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)

NIV New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society

NKJV New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;

EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans

K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch

Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site,

www.holwick.com.

2. A great little book on the Song of Songs is '*Union and Communion*,' by J. Hudson Taylor, Moody Colportage Library, and others.