

'For this reason' - Betrothed as a wife to Christ

Notes prepared by Jonathon Wills for state-wide communion ministry Sunday 5th November, 2023

"Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife". And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.' Rev 21:9-11. This is the Jerusalem from above. She is the mother of everyone who is born according to the Spirit.

There is a marriage that is called in the Scriptures *a great mystery*. That is, the mystery of Christ and His bride, the church. This marriage is a great hope for us all. By marriage, we're not looking at a legal covenant between a man and a woman. Rather, **we're looking at the reason for which Christ came**. You would say simply that Christ came to save us from our sin by dying in our place, and well you would say that Christ died in our stead, having become sin for us. But further to this, the reason Christ left His Father's house was to be joined in marriage to His bride, the church and then to be fruitful in marriage by bringing many sons to glory.

Concerning the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.' Isa 7:14. This picture of the virgin bringing forth according to the Spirit is also seen prophetically in the time of the end when the Father takes His seat. A great sign will appear in heaven – a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth.' Rev 12:1-2. In this vision John saw the virgin daughter of Zion which is the remnant church. She was in travail to bring forth a firstfruits multitude in the time of the end.

When it comes to Christ's offering, it has been broadly preached that this offering was only vicarious (on behalf of). That is, He did for me what I could not do for myself. While He did do what only He could do, His offering was always for the purposes of fellowship. The Father joined us all to Christ in the garden of Gethsemane when, because of our sin, He became sin for us. Burning with loving desire to see us become the righteousness of God in Him, He then took us through the complete journey of the cross, defeating every enemy and bringing forth the new creation. In each of His seven wounds we descended with Him in judgment and ascended with Him in merciful overcoming. When Christ declared His offering to be finished, a further step in the fulfilment of His Everlasting Covenant was still to take place.

The Lord God said, ***'It is not good that man (Jesus Christ) should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'***. Gen 2:18. When He said this, He was principally referring to the creation of a comparable helper for Jesus Christ.

The formation of the woman from the rib of Adam while he rested in deep sleep, foreshadowed the establishment of the bride of Christ, on the cross. After Christ committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, He left His now immortal and incorruptible body hanging on the cross and rested in hope. This was just as Adam rested while the Lord God formed *from him*, a helper comparable to him in marriage.

When the soldier drove his spear into the body of Christ, a 'rib' was taken from His side to form a woman, His bride, called the church, 'The heavenly Jerusalem'. This 'rib' was a fountain of blood, water and the Spirit. These three elements continue to flow today as both the fountain for sin and uncleanness and as the river of the water of life flowing from the throne and from the Lamb. Rev 22:1-2. They minister for our eternal cleansing (destroying the old) and as our eternal life (establishing the new). This happened on Moriah, which is Mount Calvary.

Moses continued in Genesis saying, *'Therefore a man shall leave His father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'*. Gen 2:24. This statement is not in reference to Adam because Adam had no father or mother, and he had no father's house to leave. Nor is this a poetic statement of marriage. The man spoken of is Jesus Christ! He left His Father's house for this purpose – to become the fully glorified Son of Man (through the finished work of offering and resurrection from the dead); that being, the first man in the image and likeness of God and then to be joined in one flesh with a multitude of sons and daughters of men who would comprise His bride the church; brought forth from His body. Jesus Himself then said, *'So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate.'* Mat 19:6. Speaking of what God had *joined together*, Jesus said, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.' Joh 15:5.

The apostle Paul highlighted the explanation of marriage given by Moses in Genesis chapter two, to highlight that our membership of the body of Christ is fundamental to our citizenship of the bride city. In other words, becoming a member of Christ's body comes before becoming a part of the bride. He said, *'For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.'* Eph 5:30-32.

We are members of His body because we have responded in repentance and faith towards His offering. As members of His body, we have been made of His flesh and of His bones. We are then joined to Him corporately as His wife, so that the two become one flesh in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. We are joined to Him through the word of the cross proclaimed to us through the presbytery in His right hand by the Holy Spirit. This was exemplified by Paul who said, 'I have betrothed you to one husband...to Christ'. 2Co 11:2.

Christ's offering

Christ left His Father's house and emptied Himself to be born in the flesh as the son of God. His physical body, received from Mary, was of the DNA of David and Abraham. He first called Himself the Son of Man because He was David's Son, of the seed of David. The Son of Man then, as David's Son, was glorified through the perfecting work of His offering journey. He was then declared, through a second birth to be the Son of God / Son of Man with power when He was born from the dead by resurrection. Rom 1:3-4. He was begotten by the Father and the Father at this point proclaimed, 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You'. Heb 5:5. At this point He was made to be the head over all things to His church, which was his body and His bride. Eph 1:22.

In the course of His offering journey His physical body, that had become the body of sin (in Gethsemane), became the new creation, one new man. Eph 2:14-16. This new man, was made perfect through the things that He suffered. While every person was made a member of the body of sin, only those who turn in repentance and faith and are born from above are established within the one new man, the body of Christ. They are then established in the bride as they continue to receive the ministry of the Spirit, the washing of the water by the word of the Father, and the sprinkling of Christ's blood. 1Jn 5:8.

The apostle John wrote, 'There are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.' 1Jo 5:8. These elements of eternal cleansing were the elements that firstly formed the woman, and secondly are life to the woman as she is made a helper comparable to Christ. The marriage of Christ and the church, that is called a great mystery, took place on the cross as the fruit of His finished offering. We are joined corporately to Him in marriage through the new covenant of the Spirit that was established in His blood.

There is only one place where the life of Christ is manifest and then multiplied. It's here in this fellowship at the cross. By the Holy Spirit our marriages are to be established and built on the ground of this offering fellowship. We come to Him and build upon Him; a sure foundation, the stone laid in Zion, the mountain of the Lord. He does not come to us to build upon a foundation that we've laid.

The mystery of Christ and the church refers to the marriage relationship between Christ and the church where the bride is enabled, by the Spirit, to **multiply His life**. That is, to bring to birth many sons according to the Spirit and to nurture the life of God. While Jesus remained with His disciples following His resurrection, they did not have a participation in bringing to birth sons of God as part of the bride of Christ. They were only brought forth through Christ Himself, and He was the only observable new man. But when Christ ascended and gave to His disciples the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they all could now be joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, and they could all now reveal His glory as members of His body.

A virgin wife bringing forth sons of God

The apostle Paul said to the church (the elect lady) in Corinth, 'For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' 2Co 11:2. When describing Sarah's motherhood, Paul also said that the Jerusalem from above is free, and she is the mother of us all. Gal 4:26. The question is - How can a virgin church be the mother of us all?

Paul continues in Galatians by quoting from the prophet Isaiah who said (immediately after chapter 53), "Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not laboured with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman," says the Lord.' Isa 54:1, Gal 4:27. The married woman is the nation married to Christ at Mount Sinai; a nation that came into bondage to Hagar's fleshly motherhood under the old covenant. The barren woman is Sarah. She rejoiced as she, by faith, 'received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.' Heb 11:11.

Mary's motherhood

This brings us to the virgin Mary. Jesus was begotten and brought forth by Mary, before Mary and Joseph had consummated their marriage and had brought forth sons of men (Jesus' natural brothers and sisters) through the process of procreation. Mary was a virgin who was betrothed to Joseph when the angel, Gabriel, appeared to her and told her that she would conceive and bring forth a Son who would be called 'the Son of the Highest'. Luk 1:27-33.

Before Mary had come together with Joseph, she 'was found with child of the Holy Spirit'. Mat 1:18. Joseph was directed by the angel of the Lord to not fear in taking Mary as His wife, 'for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.' Mat 1:20. So Joseph took Mary as his wife, but he did not know her until she had given birth to Jesus. Mat 1:24-25.

Jesus' birth to Mary is prophetic of how sons of God are brought to birth through Christ's bride, the church. Although she is a virgin, she is pregnant and is bringing to birth sons of God through the activity of the Holy Spirit who is Lord of the church age. Even though the marriage of Christ and the church has not yet been consummated (resulting in His sons), she is bringing forth children for God the Father. In covenant homes, these children are brought forth at the point of conception. **Before the mother has travailed in labour pain to give birth naturally, she is delivering sons of God by the Spirit.** Their name, which is all of their works for all eternity, is being caught up to God and His throne with their life. When we're baptised into the likeness of His death, our life is then hidden with Christ in God. As members of Christ's body and as part of His bride, we are now revealing Christ who is our life, the fruit of His sonship. We are bringing

forth the fruit of all the works that He has already accomplished for us for this age and the age to come. This is the principle of the vine and the branches.

These children then commit themselves, through baptism to the process through which they are being conformed into the image of Christ, who is currently the only Man in the image and likeness of God. This process of conformity, which we call walking blamelessly before the Lord, continues until the day of anastasis when Christ returns. At this time, we shall all be changed, and we will be like Him; brought forth in His image forever. 1Jn 3:2; 1Co 15:49.

When the last trumpet sounds, declaring the day of resurrection, Christ will return as our Everlasting Father. 1Co 15. The seed or sons of His Everlasting Fatherhood will be revealed as men who have been made in the image and likeness of God. All those who have been progressively glorified through their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ will receive a spiritual body. That is, we will receive an incorruptible and immortal body from the substance of Christ's body, and we will be clothed with our heavenly body from the Father.

Until that day of anastasis (the resurrection) the members of His body and bride are committed to walking blamelessly in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. 2Pe 3:14. This is where they receive the ministry of the Spirit, the washing of the water by the word of the Father, and the sprinkling of Christ's blood. 1Jo 5:8.

In summary, after Christ's offering journey was finished, and His Spirit had been received to the throne of the Father on the day of His crucifixion, the church was married to Him. **The children that are brought forth by the church as a helper to Christ, are not the fruit of the consummation of the marriage of Christ and the church. They are sons and daughters of the Father, brought forth from a virgin church, by the Holy Spirit. This is a bride that is in the process of being cleansed and sanctified in preparation for the wedding feast that the Father will host once He has taken His seat.**

Isaiah declared, 'Before she was in labour, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labour, she gave birth to her children.' Isa 66:7-8.

The dangers of a family first gospel

When someone is born of God, their birth is registered in Zion. Psa 87:1-7. Our children born in covenant homes are the same. Their names are registered from conception as those who have been born in Zion. In this regard, they are born of God, registered in Zion even before they are born of their mothers. They belong to God the Father because of the faith of their parents. 1Co 7:14. Having then been brought to birth naturally, their orientation needs to remain towards their citizenship of the heavenly city. This city is not a mysterious unknown for them because it is revealed in our homes. Our homes are built into the walls of the heavenly city, not mysteriously or futuristically, but very tangibly. Our fellowship together from house to house as an elect lady in a city or region reveals this.

If we raise our children with a family first orientated gospel, we confuse them and ultimately condemn them. The family first gospel is we are a family who are Christians, who go to this church. When we do this, we raise our children as though they belong firstly to the family. As a result, they don't understand the workings of the body of Christ, the community of the bride of Christ and they do not submit to the headship of Christ. These are viewed as optional extras but not the essential connections, without which there is no grace of life. We say this because Satan wants to devour our children. His deception of Eve is the crisis of motherhood within the church. 2Co 11: 3. Is she raising children according to the Spirit or children according to the flesh?

Jesus drew our attention to this when He spoke with His parents at the age of twelve. He was saying to them, 'don't forget that I was born in Zion, Zion is my chief joy, I must be about my Father's business.' Luk 2:49. In some ways, our children could say to us, 'why have you prioritised other things for me before this purpose? I'm old enough to be making the choice to serve in the body.' Jesus later said, when His mother and brothers stood outside wanting to speak with Him, 'Who is my mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand towards His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.' Mat 12:48-50. The call to Mount Moriah is difficult if that's not how you've been living as a family. Abraham taught the culture of offering to Isaac. He was exemplifying in his own life, the obedience of faith that he called Isaac to join. He invites Isaac to lift his eyes and behold the provision of the Lord (God Himself) together with him. From this culture of offering fellowship, Isaac would say, 'Where else would I go?'

Abraham and Isaac participated in the obedience of faith on Mount Moriah because this was the established culture in the home. Isaac already knew resurrection life, he knew worship, he knew the principle of the Lord providing a lamb. From this culture God called Abraham. Having the culture established within the home didn't mean that they did not need to journey and offer on Mount Moriah. Having the culture meant that they could journey and offer on Mount Moriah. The fellowship of the burnt offering is not something that we are trying to avoid. It is the well-spring of our life.

Abraham is the parent family

Before we talk about a New Jerusalem or even a Bethel, you need an initiating household from which it all comes. Therefore, look to your father Abraham and Sarah your mother who bore you. The prophet Isaiah exhorts us to, "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. ²Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; For I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him." ³For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.' Isa 51:1-3.

Calvary was the New Covenant expression of the offering of Yahweh on Mount Moriah, which Abraham was called to participate in. Gen 22. Here, the Father made the house of Abraham the parent family from which Isaac and Christ would come. Abraham so loved that he gave his son, his only son who he loved, into the fellowship of Yahweh. He bound him and placed him on the altar. As Isaac submitted, obeyed, and trusted Abraham in the fear of the Lord, the grace of God coming through headship, bound him to the fellowship of Yahweh's offering. Because of this, he was able to abide, and therefore be fruitful. 'In Isaac your seed shall be called'. Rom 9:7.

Abraham and Sarah are the parents of the bride. From the remnant of the Spirit given to Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Christ would come. One son was designated as the dust and the other as the stars. A lot of people have not proceeded from Abraham's house to bride. By this we mean that they have not gone to Moriah (which is Calvary) and offered their children to God. Instead, they are off with Hagar and Ishmael in bondage together. They are Jerusalem, but it's the Jerusalem that now is and will die. Gal 4:25. This is the element that is dying among us. In Abraham's house we have the failure of what's born of the flesh and its warring against what's born of the Spirit.

We're still grappling with the two Jerusalem's like Paul was with the Galatians. He said to them, 'O foolish Galatians', you began in the Spirit, but are now trying to be perfected by the flesh. Gal 3:1-3. This is the issue we are dealing with in many of our families. It's the complexities caused by believing in another Jesus, a different spirit and different gospel. 2Co 11:3-4.

The motherhood of Sarah

It was the motherhood of Sarah that said to Abraham, 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son.' She saw the impact of the mocking persecution upon Isaac, who had been born according to the Spirit (the remnant of the Spirit in their marriage). She was further illuminated to proclaim that the son of the bondwoman would not inherit with the son of the freewoman. Gen 21:10; Gal 4:30. This is true motherhood. A motherhood that belongs to the shepherding administration within the bride city and a motherhood that belongs in every covenant home built into the bride city. "But we (presbytery) were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children." 1Th 2:7.

We hear Sarah's voice among us saying, 'remove this thing!' True motherhood says that which is mocking can't abide in the house. This stark polarisation is happening right here in Abraham's house. Sarah's motherhood speaks the truth that sends away and sets free (she set the house free). Her motherhood is expressed in Isaiah 66. Hagar's motherhood is fleshly, natural. She makes excuses, allowances for mocking and persecution etc. Where honour and submission to Christ's headship has been deficient, the children are lost. We can't get Isaac to Moriah unless the house is cleansed, and Isaac can be clear about the culture of the home.

It's important to understand that Isaac is called at Moriah. If we don't take our children to Moriah, they are in bondage. God speaks from heaven to Abraham at Moriah saying, "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Gen 22:16-18.

Isaac allows himself to be bound as a living sacrifice in obedience to the faith of his father Abraham. Our confusion with the divine nature in our children has been that because they have the divine nature at birth, they don't need to journey to Moriah. What has been born according to the Spirit in our children (because of the faith of their parents) needs to be verified at Moriah as the children choose for themselves and allow themselves to be bound by their father. Until they are a living sacrifice, they don't have it. We've got to become a living sacrifice. Rom 12:1-2.

Christ was first married to Israel and Judah

From Isaac came Jacob, and from Jacob came the twelve families that comprised the Israel of God. This nation, or company of people, was consecrated at Bethel. They represented the walls and gates of God's administration, which proceeded from Zion above. This was the administration that Jacob had previously seen as angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

The nation of Israel, as the wife of Christ, was revealed on earth as Jerusalem by King David. In this city, there was a temple in which the Shekinah presence of Yahweh, through Christ, dwelt. Christ was married to the nation as a husband, and His presence resided by covenant within the ark of the covenant. The relationship was consummated in fellowship, through offering at the door of the temple. The nation was cleansed every year and made blameless on the day of atonement. Their children were deemed to be the offspring of God the Father. They were His sons and daughters.

Christ, alone, as the Son of Abraham, was to be the parenting source from which all the families of the earth would be blessed with the divine nature, making them sons of God by new creation birth. After Christ had risen from the dead, they would be born from above in the dispensation of the New Covenant. However, *as sons of Christ*, we see that the church is still a virgin who is being perfected and cleansed as Mary was. As we noted earlier, on the day of resurrection, we see the multiplicity of sons of men in the image and likeness of Christ.