

THE KING AND HIS BRIDE

PSALM 45

Main point: The Lord Jesus secures and transforms His church to bring Him praises forever.

INTRODUCTION:

The date was July 29, 1981. It was called the wedding of the century. The place, St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Only 3,500 privileged guests in person attended the glamorous ceremony, but it was watched on television by 750 million people! The dress of the Bride was covered with 10,000 pearls. Her train was the longest in history at 25 feet long. The cost of the wedding was a whopping 48 million dollars! The heir to the British throne, Charles Philip Arthur George, married a commoner, Lady Diana Spencer. But the wedding of the century lasted only a decade and a half (15 years). They were divorced in 1996.

Psalm 45 speaks of another wedding, but one that will never be broken by divorce. It will go down in history as the most incredible wedding of all time! The date of the ceremony is unknown by men on earth, but it is set on God's calendar in eternity future. It is the wedding of the Bridegroom—the Lord Jesus Christ—and His Bride, the blood-bought church.

Psalm 45 is a beautiful portrait of a wedding ceremony of Christ marrying His Bride, the church, and bearing sons, which refers to you and me who, by faith, have become sons of God and heirs and joint heirs of Christ. Cited in the first and second chapter of Hebrews (1:8-9) as He brings many sons to glory (2:10), let us look at this picture on the wall of Scripture today, and marvel at the fact that whatever else is happening in the world today, Jesus is King and He loves His church.

The superscription of this psalm tells us it was **written for the choir director, according to the Shoshannim**, which refers to a six-stringed instrument—composed to be sung to a beautiful tune called *Lilies*, which is the flower of female beauty. Imagine the opening melody of the wedding song, "Here Comes the Bride," and you'd be close to feel of this song. The emphasis of this song is not primarily on the Bride, but on the anointed King who takes a bride for Himself. Psalm 45 is the original "Cinderella" story.

EXPOSITION:

In the opening verse, the author tells us of his *tone*, *theme*, and *topic* so that his readers and listeners may enter with him at once.

- **Verse 1**—My heart overflows with a good theme;
I address my verses to the King;
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

His *tone* is a happy one—for he writes a love song. His heart overflows because it is boiling like hot tea as it seethes over a fire. It is warm and now full of a good subject matter. The *theme* is good because there is a sense of joy and celebration throughout this psalm. The psalmist has previously written about *judgment* and *lament* and *trouble* and *triumph* and *trust*, but this psalm is all about *celebration*! His *topic*—the King! "**I address my verses to the King.**" In the original, the definitive article is missing so that it reads, "*Concerning a King...*" which suggests that the office is more prominent than the person.

Now, this is something we can relate to as I tip-toe into this illustration from the realm of politics. You hear much talk about the "Office of the Presidency," and there are varied definitions of what that means. But, generally speaking, lovers of politics agree that the *office* or the *function* of the presidency is greater than the person because it represents the people of the United States—and it is the most powerful nation on earth.

But here in this psalm, the office of the King *is not* greater than the King himself! It is made great by the Person who occupies the office. This psalm is *about the King*, and it is written *to the King*. Search the whole world over, and you will not find a king like this! Solomon fails. David fails. But Jesus fits!

His tongue claims *inspiration*. "**My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.**" Biblical inspiration is not a man giving us his idea of what he thinks God is like or says, but it is "*men moved by the Holy Spirit who spoke from God.*" (2 Pet.1:10). He is like a royal assistant given direct dictation by the Holy Spirit. The psalmist is about to draw a picture to hang on the wall of our minds about the King. He begins with...

A. THE PROFILE OF THE KING (vv.2-9)

The psalmist recounts seven features of the King: *His blessing* (v.2), *His standing* (vv.3-4), *His victory* (v.5), *His deity* (v.6a), *His anointing* (v.6b), *His clothing* (v.8), and *His entourage* (v.9). Let me reduce them to three angles. The author employs rich poetry as he sets before us a perfect profile of the King. He praises and exalts Him for both *who He is* and *what He does*.

1. HIS CHARACTER (v.2)

²You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.

To be "**fairer**" means *to be more beautiful than all others*. Yet, Isaiah 53:2 says that the Messiah was not remarkable for His physical appearance or beauty. The Jews rejected Him because His birth was *unimpressive*, and His background was *unattractive*. Isaiah 53:3 says, "*He was despised and forsaken of men*"—that is, He was treated as insignificant and not wanted, especially by men of rank. He was disdained. There was a total misunderstanding of His life. "*He was like one from whom men hide their face*"—that is, *unlovely*. He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. We treated him as if He were non-existent.

Yet, never was there a person more beautiful in character, personality, and humanity than Jesus of Nazareth.

Trapp, the English divine, said, "His soul was like a rich pearl in a rough shell; like a tabernacle—goat's hair without, but gold within." Have you seen Him? Take a look at this picture.

The beauty of the King extends to His words, which are filled with grace. "**Grace is poured upon Your lips.**" What this means is that *His grace blessed lips spoke graced filled words*.

Was this not true of the Lord Jesus Christ? In Luke 4:22, we read,

- And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

- **John 1:17**—For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

Even the opponents of Jesus said of Him in **John 7:46**,

- The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

If only they had remembered the Messianic insights in the Old Testament, perhaps they would have known what Isaiah said of Him in Isaiah 50:4,

- The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples,
That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.

You know what this is like, don't you? You've had days when you are feeling depressed and distracted and just having a hard day. Then, someone comes along and speaks a kind word to you in such a way that it lifts your spirit. This is what Jesus did during His ministry to downcast sinners, and He still speaks gracious words today.

- **Horne**—His word instructed the ignorant, resolved the doubtful, comforted the mourners, reclaimed the wicked, silenced the adversaries, healed diseases, controlled the elements, and raised the dead.

Such statements cannot be said of Noah, Abraham, Job, Daniel, or David. Yet it can be said of Christ. Why? "**Because [not therefore] God has blessed You forever.**"

In *the beauty of His character and the graciousness of His words*, the King—the same one who "*sat as King at the flood*" (Ps.29:10), yes, "*the Lord is King forever and ever*" (Ps.10:16)—this King, enjoys the special blessing of God and enjoys it forever!

Who can this be said of other than Jesus? Who outshined Him in *wisdom, piety, purity, unbending integrity, holiness of heart, and righteousness of life*? Who was more *superior* than He? Dear friends, it is because of Jesus' character and His works that He executed His high-priestly office well. Because He suffered, died, and rose again, we are told in Philippians 2:9-11,

- God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Is this Jesus your King? Is He your Lord? Never did a subject have so great a Master as Jesus!

Now, this King, who is *beautiful in character* and who speaks *grace-filled words*, is no weak Casper Milquetoast! He is no soft, effeminate man. This King is *a man of war*—a mighty Warrior armed with weapons of warfare. Look with me now at the warfare of the King.

2. HIS CONQUEST (vv.3-5)

³Gird Your sword on *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,
In Your splendor and Your majesty!

⁴And in Your majesty ride on victoriously,
For the cause of truth and meekness *and* righteousness;

Let Your right hand teach You awesome things.
⁵Your arrows are sharp;
The peoples fall under You;
Your arrows are in the heart of the King's enemies.

Spurgeon writes, "This is a title well-deserved, and not given from empty courtesy like the...highnesses of our fellow mortals. Jesus is the truest of heroes...mighty to save, mighty in love."

Two elements are worth highlighting, which bring out rich, colorful features of our King.

First, notice *the reason He goes to war*. "**In Your majesty ride on victoriously, for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness.**" The kings of earth go to war to *gain* something that they do not have, whether it be *security, resources, or honor*. But not King Jesus! He is already full of *majesty and splendor*, and He goes forth in the "**cause of truth...meekness and righteousness.**" Envisioned as a King riding on a chariot pulled by three horses, Jesus does not go to war out of a lust for *power, conquest, or force*. His riding forth in divine action flows from *truth, meekness* (humility), and *righteousness*. His *word* is truth. His *heart* is humble. His *cause* is righteous.

Second, notice *His weapons are varied and effective*. To be girded with "**a sword**" is to be prepared for battle. Because He is mighty and blessed. His undertaking is guaranteed success. What is this sword? Paul identifies the sword as "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Eph.6:17), and Jesus, by the spirit's power, knows how to cut down *unbelief* and open up the chest cavity of the sinner without destroying his soul.

He carries not only a sword but "**sharp arrows**," stated in the plural to signal to us that *Jesus has many ways to pierce and prick the hearts of men and women*. Sometimes He releases *the arrow of conviction* to expose unbelief. No arrow pierces so deeply as the arrows of truth. Sometimes He unleashes *arrows of justice to exalt His holiness*. Still, at other times, He discharges *arrows of terror to subdue His enemies*. One kills sin; another punctures error, another crushes pride. One weakens stubbornness, and others strikes fear. When Peter preached Christ at Pentecost, the hearers were "*pierced to the heart*" (Acts 2:37). When Stephen bore witness of Christ at his defense, those who heard it were "*cut to the quick*" (Acts 7:54). Who will go to war with the Mighty One? Who can stand when He begins His conquest of the heart?

The King of Glory is also a Man of War. Who will rise against Him? If you despise His grace, you shall be crushed by His power? This is no neutral territory when it comes to Jesus. Either you are with Him or against Him. John Bunyan, before His salvation, thought that he had gone too far and sinned too much to be saved. But this mighty King spoke to Him through the Gospel and opened up his dead heart, and Bunyan became a lover of Christ. Will you?

The portrait is stunning! The beautiful character of the King. The righteous warfare of the King. Now, we look and see the divine nature of the King.

3. HIS COMMENDATION (vv.6-9)

⁶Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

These verses are quoted in full by the author of Hebrews to establish the deity of Christ.

In verse 6, the King is praised and exalted as God—*Your throne, O God, is forever*. In the previous verses (vv.2-5), the psalmist describes a beautiful, gracious Man who is King, whose lips and words are filled with grace, but now he refers to this same King as *God Himself* seated upon an eternal throne! The author of the Hebrews clearly explains that this is a reference to Jesus Christ.

- **Hebrews 1:5-9**—For to which of the angels did He ever say,
"YOU ARE MY SON,
TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"?
And again,
"I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM
AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"?
⁶ And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says,
"AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."
⁷ And of the angels He says,
"WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS,
AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE."
⁸ But of the Son *He says*,
"YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,
AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM."
⁹ "YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS;
THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU
WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."

John calls Jesus "*the true God and eternal life*" (1 John 5:20). Isaiah calls Him, "*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace*" (Is.9:6). Micah says He is from "*the days of eternity*" (Mic.5:2). Daniel speaks of Him in the 7th chapter,

- "And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.

This is why that hymn known as the National anthem of Christendom says,

All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.¹

A scepter is a symbol of authority, and the psalmist reminds us that this King's reign is not founded on mere aggression and conquest. It isn't a matter of might making right. His kingdom, His rule, is a good rule. Moral. Holy. Just. Honorable. And it does not flow from a Constitution written by men, but it comes from the very character of the King.

¹ Edward Perronet, All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

⁷You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;

Who can it be said of but Jesus, that He always pleased the Father (*John 8:29*)? He loved what the Father loved. He hated what the Father hated. Jesus does not have to work hard to make His kingdom righteous; it is in His nature and character.

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

This King is God, yet He receives an anointing from God. How are we to understand this? The only way to make sense of this is to know that this is a reference to *the Trinity*. One God who exists in three Persons. God the Father anoints God the Son with the power of God the Spirit.

Now, what is meant by this next reference in verses 8-9?

⁸All Your garments are *fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia*;

We are familiar with the fragrance of **myrrh** and **aloes**. You recall that Nicodemus brought 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to embalm the sacred body of Jesus (*John 19:39*). Cassia was an ingredient in holy oil (*Ezek.27:19*) from the merchandise of Tyre. It had a cinnamon smell to it. What are we to make of this poetic language? The psalmist uses this metaphor to complete the picture of the King's beauty and pleasantness.

Imagine a very handsome man. His character is remarkable. His words are gracious, and His personality is pleasing, but he smells terrible. Quite frankly, he stinks! It does not matter how good he looks; no one wants to be around a person who smells like a muskrat! Jesus isn't like that. The psalmist is showing that the King is complete in His beauty! Inside and out, His character, His cause, and now His companions are brought into His greatness. The King is not only great for *who He is*, but also for those He *associates with*.

Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You glad.

⁹Kings' daughters are among Your noble ladies;
At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

"Ivory places" are the dominion of the super-rich. **"Kings' daughters"** are the company of royalty. **"At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir"**—this was gold of the highest quality. This is rich language pointing to those brought into relation with Him *stand in the highest place of honor* and are *arrayed with, enriched with, the King's bounty and adorned with His grace*. This is the relationship of the church. We are brought into the place of highest privilege and blessing as the King's associates and His Bride.

B. THE PORTRAIT OF THE BRIDE (vv.10-17)

The word **"listen,"** which begins verse 10, summons the Bride to seriousness, thoughtfulness, and attention to a weighty charge. The daughter is about to become a wife to the King. The wedding metaphor continues, and three powerful truths are brought out about the Bride.

1. HER CHOOSING (vv.10-11)

¹⁰ Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear:

Forget your people and your Father's house;

¹¹ Then the King will desire your beauty.

Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him.

In Genesis 2:24, God's design for marriage calls for a man and a woman to leave their parent's care financially and emotionally and to physically cleave to a wife or husband, and the two shall become one flesh in marriage.

The psalmist picks up on that language in Genesis when he says, "**Forget your people and your father's house.**" Just as a man or woman must leave the old behind, those called into a relationship with Him must leave what was near and dear in the world behind (*Luke 9:23-24; 14:26, 33*). Have you made that choice?

Now, the reason that the King invites us to be His own is that He sees beauty in us. The beauty that He sees is not inherent but bestowed. He sees His own holiness and righteousness in us (*1 Pet.3:3, Rev.19:8*).

Here's the difference between a marriage relationship on earth between a man and a woman and a spiritual relationship with Jesus—Christ is our Lord, and we owe Him something greater than respect; we owe Him worship.

2. HER CLOTHING (vv.12-15)

What privileges come to the Bride of Christ? *Favor.*

¹² The daughter of Tyre *will come* with a gift;

The rich among the people will seek your favor.

The inhabitants of a city are often called the daughter. The city of Tyre was the commercial metropolis of the ancient world. It was the New York City of the Old Testament—the most famous of Gentile cities. Because the Bride is joined to the King in marriage, she receives gifts from the nations. Usually, others seek the favor of the rich, but because the King has set His Bride in such an exalted place, the rich seek her favor.

Friends, when you submit and give your life to Jesus Christ, His friends become your friends. His subjects are now your subjects. His reward becomes your gain. No one is ever a loser by being united to Christ.

In addition to His favor, we all receive His *beauty*.

¹³ The King's daughter is all glorious within;

Her clothing is interwoven with gold.

¹⁴ She will be led to the King in embroidered work;

The virgins, her companions who follow her,

Will be brought to You.

¹⁵ They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing;

They will enter into the King's palace.

As we look at the visible church, we see many flaws, cracks, wrinkles, spots, and blemishes. There is injustice, laziness, tares among the wheat, and immaturity. But in the true church—that is, in those *born again* and *raised to spiritual life*—something is taking place *in* their soul that has yet to be seen!

We are like a bride behind the doors of the makeup room. Yes, our position of righteousness has been secured, but practical holiness is a work in progress. Our gowns are being stitched together, seam by seam. Our robes are being embroidered in the most valuable and beautiful garments ever seen before we are brought into the wedding room of the King.

What is this work that is taking place to beautify the Bride? It is not justification by faith. It is not something that is declared of us, but it is something that we partake in. In Revelation 19:8, we read,

- It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

John's emphasis points out that the Bride has made herself ready. She has prepared for the big day! No true bride just shows up on her wedding day looking any old way! No, she wants to look her best. Do you want to look your best for Christ on the wedding day of the Lamb? Then, we must get prepared, and the readiness happens in sanctification. Don't think for one moment that the more good you do, the more spiritually beautiful you will be. In Ephesians 5:26-27, Christ is said to be carrying on a present work with His church, "*that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.*" This is done with a view of our future presentation in heaven. Verse 27 says, "*that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*"

Our robes are righteous acts that we performed, but He provides. "*It is God who is at work in you both to will and to do His good pleasure*" (Phil.2:13). Christ provides the *grace*, but we must do the *work*. But let's not get it twisted, for Paul says,

- **1 Corinthians 15:10**—But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Here is the privilege we have been given because of our union with Christ: His saving grace provides a serving grace that will make us more like the King of grace in beauty! God's work in us now is to bring our spiritual state up to our position in Christ.

3. HER COMPANIONS (vv.16-17)

¹⁶In place of your fathers will be your sons;
You shall make them princes in all the earth.

¹⁷I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever.

The fathers have passed away but will be replaced by sons that come from the marriage. The King's legacy passes from one generation to another. Many sons are brought to glory. As a result of the King's choosing, the King's privileges, and the King's blessing, everyone at the marriage supper of the Lamb will give Him glory and praise.

What a day that will be! Richard Brooks says,

"The betrothal of Christ and His church took place not in time but in eternity, when the Father gave us to the Son in the covenant of grace. He will not have lost a single one of us."

What a day that will be! You know how it is when you've been away from home and loved ones for a long time—and how good it is to get home! How much better it will be to arrive safely in heaven! This world is not our home. We are citizens of heaven now, but oh, what will it be like to finally get home?

It will be a day of intimate communion. Our King will be happy to see us, and we will be happy to see Him! He will welcome us, all of us, singing over us with songs of love. He will show us endless delights that He has been preparing for us before the foundation of the world (*John 14:1-3*). We will follow Him. Worship Him. We shall see Him as He is. Faith will become sight.

Samuel Rutherford once described himself as "hungry in waiting for the marriage supper of the Lamb."

John Bradford, that faithful martyr for Christ who was tied to the stake with another young believer named John Leaf at Smithfield, said, "Be of good cheer, brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night."

This is the day every believer is waiting for and preparing himself/herself for. Are you preparing yourself for this great day?

CONCLUSION:

- Are we doing what the psalmist did?
- Do we praise Him who has purchased us to Himself to be His Bride?
- Are we working to see that the nations come to honor him as well?

Let us leave this psalm with Spurgeon. The Prince of Preachers once said,

"We dare not say that our Lord will love us more than He loves us now, but He will indulge His love for us more; He will manifest it more, we shall see more of it, we shall understand it better; it will appear to us as though He loves us more. He will lay open His whole heart and soul to us, with all its feelings, and secrets, and purposes, and allow us to know them, as far at least as we can understand them...the love of this hour will be the perfection of love...the exalted Savior will show to the whole universe that He loves us to the utmost bound love can go, and we will love Him with a fervor, a gratitude, an adoration, a delight, that are new even in heaven. The provisions made by Him for our enjoyment will astonish us. It will have delights for us, of which we have no conception; and the pleasures we anticipate in it will be far higher and more abundant than our highest expectations have ever gone."

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair, sweet morn awakes:
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,

And glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

The King there in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen:
It were a well-spent journey
Though seven deaths lay between:
The Lamb with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand;
And glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above:
There, to an ocean fullness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

The bride eyes, not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of Grace—
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.²

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² Samuel Rutherford, *The Sands of Time Are Sinking*