

Jesus Our Bridegroom God

1. Introduction

- a. Prayer, we said last session, is not a business transaction in which we are holding God up to His end of the bargain because we have done our part through our giving, service and morality.
- b. That type of prayer only fuels unbelief and bitterness because it is rooted in self-righteous pride. That type of prayer is centered on your desires, wishes and self-perceived rights not on God's desires, Word, or glory.
- c. Sustainable and enjoyable prayer are first and foremost built upon our heart connection with God. The blessings of a father mean nothing without having a living and tangible heart connection with him.
 - i. Blessings are only blessings because of who is giving you those blessings. Blessing void of relationship quickly becomes a burden and a curse that simply reminds you of your inward emptiness.
- d. So what is the goal of prayer? How does God define success? What is he after that He is raising up houses of prayer all over the earth?
- e. The rightly answer these questions we must first rightly perceive and understand who God is and His heart. When we see God rightly what He is after becomes crystal clear.

2. The Bridegroom God

- a. There are many different revelations of God given to us both in the Old Testament and in the New. God is seen as our Maker, King, Shepherd, Healer, and our Deliverer among others.
- b. These identities of God speak of His very character and His very nature. When God declares that He is our great Shepherd He is not simply telling us what He does but what He is like at His very core. When God declares His name He is unveiling His heart to us.
- c. One of the greatest revelations given to us throughout the whole of Scripture is that God is not only our Maker and Savior but He is also a Bridegroom. God is our Husband.
 - i. This is a scandalous claim. The marriage covenant is the single most powerful covenant humans can enter into with each other.
 - ii. To say that we can be, and will be, "married" to God is something that is hard for us to comprehend.
- d. Again, because prayer and worship must begin with God Himself, we must have a discussion about Him before we can go into the purpose of prayer.
- e. Over and over God through the mouths of His prophets declares that He is a Husband to Israel and that the covenant He made with them in Exodus 19 was that of a marriage vow.

- f. Isaiah is one of the greatest of all Old Testament prophets and his book is routinely called “The 5th Gospel” because of his clear references to Christ.
- g. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is widely considered to be the clearest picture of the suffering Christ in the whole Old Testament. Isaiah speaks about the Messiah to come who would die for the sins of His people and suffer under the wrath of God for our sakes.
- h. Many quit reading at the end of the chapter but Isaiah continues to prophesy right into chapter 54. In light of the Messiah just revealed Isaiah exclaims:

“Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman,” says the LORD. ‘Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.’” - Isaiah 54:1 & 4

- i. Isaiah begins to use a particular set of language in response to the coming Messiah of chapter 53.
 - i. Israel and Jerusalem are barren (verse 1) and not able to bring forth life.
 - ii. Israel and Jerusalem are separated from her husband (verse 1 and 4) which has led to her being barren.
 - iii. Israel and Jerusalem are silent, not worshipping or praying to the Lord. Rather they have left the Lord, joined themselves to other lovers, and therefore they have been left barren and lifeless (verse 1).
- j. Verse 4 speaks to how God will remove the reproach and shame of Israel’s youth (Egypt) and her widowhood (the coming Babylonian Exile). He then launches into one of the most dramatic proclamation of God’s bridegroom heart in all of the Old Testament.

“For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.” - Isaiah 54:5

- k. Isaiah lays bare the heart of the Messiah described in the previous chapter. He is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Maker of all things, and He is also our Husband! He is a jealous Bridegroom who will come in the zeal of His love and redeem His people from the hand of wickedness and sin.

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.” - Isaiah 61:10-11

- I. He continues into the next chapter:

*“For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her **righteousness** goes forth as brightness, and her **salvation** as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. **You shall no longer be termed Forsaken**, nor shall your land any more be **termed Desolate**; but you shall be **called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married**. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and **as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.**” - Isaiah 62:1-5*

- m. The Lord continues revealing His heart for His people (although this prophecy is directly talking about Jerusalem it reveals God’s heart to all of the redeemed).
- n. Through the ministry of the Spirit God is going to give His church two new names:
 - i. Instead of “Forsaken” we will be called “Hephzibah” which means the Lord delights in you.
 - ii. Instead of “Desolate” we will be called “Beulah” which means to be married.
- o. The primary way He is going to do this is through night and day that is described in the very next verses. As God’s people sit before His presence He will woo them in His love as He reveals His bridegroom heart to them.
 - i. In every place where God’s people feel broken, inadequate, forsaken, shameful, condemned and weary God will minister His love and faithfulness as our heavenly husband.
- p. We continue to see this language of God as a bridegroom in the Book of Jeremiah as well. Jeremiah is raised up just before the invasion of Babylon to try and turn the heart of the nation back to God.
- q. Jeremiah’s first message was that of repentance for sin. Why was God calling the nation to repent and return back to Him?

*“Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, **the love of your betrothal**, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.”’ - Jeremiah 2:1-2*

- o. Jeremiah begins his ministry with a plea from the Lord that He still remembers the days when the earnestly sought Him and loved as they journeyed out of Egypt. They left after 400 years of bondage and immediately they were taken to the mountain of the Lord (Exodus 19) where they would meet their Bridegroom and Husband and enter into covenant with Him.
- p. The Lord remembered those days and longed for those days of love and intimacy again. When they were delivered from their enemies and they had no love but the Lord.

- q. Then Jeremiah gives one of most heartbreaking cries from the heart of God in the entire Bible. You can hear the voice of a heartbroken husband in this simple plea.

*“Return, O backsliding children,’ says the Lord; **‘for I am married to you.’**” - Jeremiah 3:14*

- r. The Lord pleads with His people to return to them with all of their hearts. His heart aches with pain as they continue in their adulterous ways of harlotry and whoredom.
- s. All the while their first love, their true love, and the One the loves them is crying out for them to return to Him.
- t. Later in His ministry Jeremiah begins to prophesy about the coming of Christ and the new covenant that would be instituted. He again references the generation that came up out of Egypt and how He was a husband to them.

*“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, **though I was a husband to them,** says the Lord.” - Jeremiah 31:31-32*

- u. Lastly, and maybe most powerfully, we see the prophet Hosea not only gaining a revelation of God as a bridegroom but he actually gets invited by God to experience the emotions of God.

“When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: ‘Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord.’” - Hosea 2:2

- v. Hosea was to go and make Gomer, a prostitute, his wife and love her as his own and be a father to her children. God wanted Hosea to know what it was like to be married to a bride that continually gives herself away to other lovers and is not faithful to their marriage covenant.
- w. The Father then begins to declare His heart and intentions to win over Israel again in love. He refuses to stand by and let her continue to run after other lovers. His love is jealous and relentless.

*“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, **‘I will go and return to my first husband,** and then it was better for me than now.’ For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold - which they prepared for Baal.” - Hosea 2:6-8*

*“Therefore, behold, **I will allure her**, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; **she shall sing there**, as in the days of her youth, as in the days when she came up from the land of Egypt.” - Hosea 2:14-15*

- x. Hosea then continues with his prophecy as the Lord declares what will happen when Israel comes into a revelation of His heart for them. The result of His pursuit is remarkable.

*“And it shall be, in that day,’ says the Lord, **‘that you will call Me ‘My Husband,’** and no longer call Me ‘My Master,’ for I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more...**I will betroth you to Me forever;** yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, **and you shall know the Lord.**” - Hosea 2:16-17 & 19-20*

- y. Finally, after inviting Hosea into His bridegroom heart of love, we see God tear the veil back and fully expose His longing heart for a bride that is solely His and belongs to no one else. He commands Hosea go and win Gomer’s heart back by redeeming her at a high cost to himself just as He would someday do in and through Christ on the cross.

*“Then the Lord said to me, **‘Go again,** love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, **just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel,** who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.” - Hosea 3:1*

2. Jesus Our Bridegroom

- a. We have said that Jesus is God’s Word declaring the character, nature, and heart of God to all of humanity. Christ is ever speaking to us things that pertain to the heart of the Father through both His deeds and His speech.
- b. The prophets spoke of the God of Israel not only as the sovereign Creator or righteous Judge but also as a lovesick Bridegroom with a heart burning with jealous love. No other god makes such a statement. All “gods” claim to be lord but only Yahweh also declares Himself the husband of His people.
- c. In step with Hebrews 1:1 Christ came declaring an even greater revelation of the bridegroom heart of God than the prophets did. In Christ we see the Bridegroom stepping out of His chamber and making Himself known and visible to His bride.
- d. The same one who told Hosea to “go” has now come Himself to purchase back the love of His bride that has wandered and whose heart has gone astray.
- e. In fact the first revelation that Christ gives of Himself is that of a Bridegroom. The first time we see Jesus manifesting His glory and revealing His identity to us is at the wedding of Cana.
 - i. John the Baptist gave witness that Jesus was the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world but this was John’s witness not Christ’s.

*“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding...This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and **manifested His glory; and His disciples believed Him.**” - John 2:1-2, 11*

- f. When we consider this story in light of Christ being the Word of God always speaking to us this story all of sudden makes sense. This is not a random miracle that Christ was forced into without any say. This was how He chose to begin to manifest Himself to humanity, at a wedding.
 - i. I can imagine Christ standing in the midst of the wedding feast with music and dancing all around and His mind wandering off into the distant future when one day He will not be the guest but the bridegroom.
 - ii. The music will be the singing of saints and angels mingled together and the dancing will be that of every tribe and tongue celebrating the triumph of love over sin and evil.
 - iii. The wedding of Cana was God’s declarative statement that the bridegroom God of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea was now breaking into time and space. He has come to purchase back His bride and betroth her to Himself forever.
- g. We find this revelation of Christ as our Bridegroom at both the beginning of His life and ministry and also at the very end. On the Tuesday before His death Christ began to speak of the Kingdom of God.
- h. Two of the primary portions of teaching on that Tuesday tell us that the nature of the Kingdom of God is comparable to great wedding celebration.

*“And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged **a marriage for his son.**’” - Matthew 22:1-2*

*“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and **went out to meet the bridegroom.**” - Matthew 25:1*

- i. In Matthew 22 Jesus, speaking to the nation of Israel, clearly declares that His Father is the king and He is the son in the story. Not only this but Israel had been invited to this wedding over and over again through the mouths of the prophets. In Matthew 25 we see Christ depicted as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber at midnight.
- j. The beginning of Christ’s ministry is a declaration of His bridegroom identity, His final public teaching is focused upon the nature of the kingdom as being like a wedding feast, and we see that the consummation of all things is nothing else but a wedding.
- k. When most people read the Book of Revelation they think of judgements, anger, and wrath and while those are prominent themes the climax of the book is a wedding. All of those things are fueled and motivated by a lovesick Bridegroom longing to remove everything that hinders love.

- l. Everything that God has been doing since the formation of Eve from the rib of Adam has been done through the lens of the wedding of the Lamb.
- m. All the promises of God will one day be fulfilled when the Lamb and the Church are married (joined) and will forever dwell together in the New Jerusalem, which is also likened to a bride in Revelation 21:2.

*"I heard...the voice of a great multitude...saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb** has come, and **His wife has made herself ready.**' To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. He said to me, "Write: '**Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!**'" - Rev. 19:6-9*

- n. This event is the much anticipated climatic event of all of human history. On this day God and man will dwell together, every tear will be wiped away, all death will be vanquished forever, and every hindrance to love will be eradicated from the earth.
- o. We will see His face and be made just like Him in every way. The veil that was removed from our spirit at the cross will now be torn asunder from before our souls and bodies. From that day forward we will fully experience God and He will fully enjoy us.
- p. And the key to a sustainable and enjoyable prayer life is living within this reality. Knowing that God is our Bridegroom and we are His beloved bride in whom He finds delight and pleasure holds our heart steady over the years and decades.
- q. It also instills confidence in our voice as we petition His throne because we know that we are irresistible to Him in the sense that we are the apple of His eye and one look from us ravishes His heart.
- r. This "bridal paradigm" then should be understood as one of the cornerstones of our faith and our prayer life.