

Exalting Christ as His Bride (Psalm 45)

He is risen! He is ascended! He is sovereign! Please turn to Ps 45 and today we have the great privilege of hearing the word of our risen, ascended, and sovereign Lord, and it's my great privilege to be His herald and messenger. Ps 45 is a unique psalm because it's heralding a wedding, a royal wedding of a king and a princess bride who becomes the queen at his right hand. It's a poem of a hero who won her heart, a knight in glorious armor riding on a horse to defeat enemies. But this no fairy tale, this is a true love story written in the past and it has application to the present and our future.

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO LILIES. A MASKIL OF THE SONS OF KORAH; A LOVE SONG [NIV 'wedding song']. My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. ² You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. ³ Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty! ⁴ In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds! ⁵ Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. ⁶ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; ⁷ you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; ⁸ your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; ⁹ daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. ¹⁰ Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, ¹¹ and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him. ¹² The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people. ¹³ All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. ¹⁴ In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her. ¹⁵ With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king. ¹⁶ In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. ¹⁷ I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

Unlike modern royal marriages (Charles, Diana, etc.) with sad endings, this love story ends literally happily forever after. How many of you have heard a sermon on Ps 45? There's a very special psalm here with fresh truth for us

OUTLINE: The Admiration of the King (v. 1-8)
The Application for the Bride (v. 9-17)

First, notice the Admiration of the King. But first we need to ask: who is this king in Ps 45? Could it be David? Scripture describes a woman named Abigail who was beautiful like this text says and when David asked her to be his wife, it says *'she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "...my lord."* [like v. 11 here] ... *her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife'* (1 Sam 25:3, 40-42). But the next verse says he took another wife at the same time (not so romantic or recommended), and David wasn't king yet and was doing the opposite of v. 7 at that time. So others wonder if Ps 45 is Solomon marrying a princess of Egypt or Tyre (there's a few wives to choose from with him, a few hundred). Some suggest Ps 45 was written for Solomon's 1st wedding, as there's some similarities to the Song of Solomon poem,¹ or it could be in memory of and/or making wishes for future royal marriages to be all this and more as a poetic ideal, or a prayer for weddings not answered in the OT

Alexander MacLaren: 'Either we have here a piece of poetical exaggeration far beyond the limits of poetic license, or "a greater than Solomon is here."² Not even Solomon in all His splendor was arrayed as gloriously as this one. Even ancient Jews understood Ps 45 wasn't fulfilled by any of the monarchs of OT times, in fact a Targum paraphrase of v. 3 says this is Messiah-King. No mere human king matches the language here. Solomon wasn't a warrior like v. 3-5 describes. The middle of v. 3 calls this King *'mighty one,'* the same root word in the prophecy of Messiah in Isa 9:6: *'to us a child is born ... a son is given, and His name shall be called wonderful counsellor, **the mighty God**'* [same root word as Ps 45:3]. And the phrase at the end of v. 3, *'splendor and majesty,'* is never used of one of Israel's human kings, but is a common phrase for God in the OT. v. 6 removes doubt, calling Him God: *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.* Who's he writing to? v. 1 tells us *My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king...*

So these verses are being addressed to the king, speaking to Him as God in v. 6 but also a man in v. 2, speaking to him as the finest of the sons of man. Is He God or man? Yes! v. 17 ends *'...nations will praise you forever and ever'* (can't be a mere man, this is the God-man). Middle of v. 7: *Therefore God, your God, has anointed you* ... so is He God or did God anoint Him? Yes! It's like Ps 110:1 (LORD and Lord) or in Jn 20 Jesus is called *'my Lord and my God'* and in the same chapter Jesus also calls the Father *'my God.'*

Heb 1:8 settles it: *'of the Son he says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness... God, your God, has anointed...'* Heb 1 proves the words to the king in Ps 45 are addressed to God the Son anointed by God the Father. The NT says the church is the bride of Christ, and King Jesus is the great warrior coming again for the wedding in Rev 19.

So Ps 45 shows Christ's deity and humanity and the persons in the Trinity. Spurgeon said in Ps 45 some 'see Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only—they are short sighted...spiritual eyes see here Jesus only, or if Solomon be present at all, it must be like those hazy shadows of by passers...' ³ So let's look beyond the OT's foreshadowing to the substance and reality in Christ.

¹ *My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king ...* The NASB and NKJV capitalize King, it's for the King of kings his heart is stirred, literally boiling and bubbling over with this good and noble theme of themes, this marriage of marriages. There's no wedding photographer in those days, but like a ready skillful writer recording the event, his tongue is giving the color commentary, or like a paintbrush trying to paint the picture.

² *You are the most handsome of the sons of men...* others say 'most excellent' or 'fairest.' This root word was usually used of the beauty of women but the prophets spoke also of a majestic Lord and Savior to come, using the same terms, *'you will behold the king in his beauty'* (Isa 33:17, 21-23). Zechariah also uses this same root word to describe Messiah-King riding as a warrior with sword and arrows in righteousness and meekness, much like Ps 45, and it says to the daughters of Jerusalem *'how great is his beauty!'* (9:6, 13-17). He is the fairest Lord Jesus, a beautiful Savior who is irresistibly glorious.

...grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Paul borrows that language in Rom 9:5 when he says *'Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever'* (KJV). When Christ first came, people were amazed at *'the gracious words...falling from His lips'* (Lk 4:22 NAS). But when He comes again, He also has words of judgment, like v. 3: *Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty!* At His 1st coming, Jesus told Peter to put away a sword in Gethesmane, at His 2nd coming Jesus puts on a sword. ⁴ *In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!* ⁵ *Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you* [judgment words, end time or any time]

Edwards: 'The Bow of God's Wrath is bent, and the Arrow made ready on the String, and Justice bends the Arrow at your Heart, and strains the Bow, and it is nothing but [the will of] God...an angry God, without any Promise or Obligation at all, that keeps the Arrow one Moment from ... your Blood. Thus are all you that are never passed under the great Change of Heart, by the mighty Power of the SPIRIT of GOD upon your Souls; all that were never born again, and made new Creatures, and raised from being dead in Sin, to a State of new...Life...you are thus in the Hands of an angry God ... You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn Rebel did his Prince: and yet 'tis nothing but his Hand that holds you from falling...'⁴

If you're a sinner in the hands of an angry God today, hear His words of grace in v. 2 before it's too late for you in v. 3-5. Look to the right hand of Christ and the awesome work of salvation He's done for sinners like you. Fall before Him in faith now, or you'll fall before Him into a fiery hell on the last day. If you repent now, you'll rejoice then in the end to be with the King in His victory. The language of v. 3-5 is fulfilled in Rev 19: '*From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron...on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords*' (and all enemies fall). John is a ready writer told to write of the wedding supper celebration to come. John is on the winning side so his heart is also stirred to overflow with praise as he sees King Jesus in awesome dazzling beauty, splendor and majesty, riding victoriously on a white horse, in truth and righteousness and He will reign forever, Rev 19-22

⁶ *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; your robes are all fragrant with myrrh, aloes, and cassia.* Those were the finest spices reserved for a most holy anointing oil of priests and never to be used by or on others (Ex 30:22-32). At Christ's birth, Magi from the East brought Him myrrh, and at His death, Nicodemus brought '*a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight*' (Jn 19:39). That was far beyond the normal anointing of a dead body, but the anointing by God here is not in mourning, it's anointing with gladness, probably that's when God anointed His Son with the Spirit (fruit of the Spirit includes joy). *Fragrance* reminds us of Christ's sacrifice, a sweet-smelling aroma, Eph 5:2

End of v. 8 says '*From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad...*' The King is pleased by music in worship as His people give Him their best.

v. 9 goes from the **Admiration of the King to the Application for the Bride**

⁹ *daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor, at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.* ¹⁰ *Hear, O daughter, and consider ...*

So this is the 'here comes the bride part' of the royal wedding and the King's minister now pauses from speaking to the King to give words for her. This minister mentions the bridal party, daughters of kings are maids of honor in this wedding, many nations and kingdoms are honored. Now the next part of the wedding program is the princess bride becomes the queen at His side. And written into the script of this wedding is a charge to the bride herself:

1. Give your ear to the king's messenger

¹⁰ *Hear, O daughter, and consider and incline your ear ...* Those verbs are used in other passages for what believers are to do with the word of the Lord. This is addressed to the bride of Christ, which the NT applies to us. The church is to hear the word of the King's heralds or spokesmen, to listen and give attention to what is spoken to her, to consider the message His minister gives. The commands are: give ear, incline the ear, give full and undivided concentrated focus to listen to those who speak for the King. The King isn't honored by any who don't give heed to what His messenger says.

2. Give your heart to the king above all

Look at the middle of v. 10: '*...forget your people and your father's house.*' Eph 5 says leaving father and mother to be united in marriage is a profound mystery that speaks of Christ and His church. Marriage supersedes the past and past relationships, and so does a covenant commitment to King Jesus. A new family is formed in marriage that has priority over the former family. v. 10 is like the wedding vow 'will you love him, honor and keep him...and **forsaking all others**, be faithful to him...?' We can't literally forget the past or former family, but Jesus said we must love Him more than father, family, our own flesh: love Him so much it's like forsaking or rejecting compared to the level of love we have for Jesus. We don't have amnesia about the past or avoid contact with unsaved family, but Christ's bride isn't to look back on her past with regret like Lot's wife. We're not to desire or dwell on the past is the idea in Phil 3 of '*forgetting what is behind*,' we're to look forward to and long for our #1 love. And it's not one-sided, He loves and longs for us.

¹¹ *and the king will desire your beauty...* The bride says in Song of Solomon '*I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me*' (7:10). Jesus prayed in Jn 17:24 of His bride, the church '*I desire that they ... may be with me where I am ...*'

This isn't just a duty for Him, it's His desire and delight. The Lord says to His people through Isaiah *'you shall be called My Delight Is in Her...for the LORD delights in you...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride...'* 62:4-5. He says of in the end *'I will rejoice...and take delight in my people'* (65:19 NIV). Zephaniah seems to borrow language from Ps 45 calling the Lord *'A victorious warrior. He will exult over you...He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy'* (3:17 NAS, or NIV *'He will take great delight in you...in his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.'* He may sing at His wedding!

But remember v. 11 is future tense, and this wedding is still future (Rev 19). The church may not look beautiful or desirable to us now, but Paul says in Eph 5 like a husband is to desire for his wife, Jesus *'nourishes and cherishes ...the church [and will] sanctify...cleanse...that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle...blameless'* (NASB). Other translations describe the church as *'radiant'* in *'splendor,* or *'glorious.'*

That's the term v. 13 picks up on to describe the bride: ¹³ *All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold.* ¹⁴ *In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her.* That language reminds us of what Jesus taught as He compared His kingdom to a royal wedding and a bridal party with virgin companions going out to meet the bridegroom (Mt 22:1-2, 25:1). Her multi-colored robe reminds us of what Peter wrote about our *'multi-colored grace'* (1 Pet 4:10). But most of all it reminds us what the bride of Christ reflects in Revelation.

3. Give your life to reflecting the king's glory

Rev 19 completes the picture of Ps 45, calling on all God's people to *'give him glory, for the marriage...has come'* and it says the bride *'was granted..to clothe herself with fine linen, bright...the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the church'* (v. 7-8). It was granted to the bride to clothe herself with brightly colored linen robes, and we don't have to wonder what that symbolizes, it says it's righteous deeds done by the church. The NT often uses language of putting on clothing for putting on righteous deeds of our new life reflecting Christ's change in us from the inside out (Eph 4:22-24). To make it specific, Col 3:12 says to God's *'dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have...And over all these...put on love ...And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands...Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.'*

*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.
Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged...
[and in work] Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working
for the Lord, not for men [in other words do it for the King at work, home]*

The way husband and wife interact is to reflect the glory of the relationship of Christ and His church. Family relationships are to reflect Christ's family. If you really want to apply this 3rd point, spend time in Col 3, because all that begins with *'set your hearts on things above...where Christ is...When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory...Therefore...'* (NIV). As we set our heart on who Christ is, where He is, and that He is coming for His bride, we're called to be ready for the day and to reflect His glory. Paul says like a mirror believers *'reflect the Lord's glory [and] are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit'* (2 Cor 3:18 NIV). By the Spirit, as we behold King Jesus, we become like Him and reflect Him.

So let's walk through this psalm and see how we're to reflect Christ's glory:

- v. 2 says grace is on His lips, and Paul says it's to be on ours, too, in Col 4:6: *'Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned'*
- v. 3 says He girds the sword for warfare, Paul calls us to be girded in our minds and for spiritual warfare to take up the sword of the Word
- v. 4 mentions truth, meekness and righteousness we're to reflect, too
- v. 7 says the King loves righteousness and hates wickedness, we're to do the same, to love what is right and to hate what is wrong. v. 7 goes on to say He was given oil of gladness beyond others with him, well v. 15 says the bride reflects that gladness with her companions:

¹⁵ *With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.* Jesus made clear Isa 61 is about Him (Lk 4:17-21). That chapter says Messiah would do this for His people: *'bestow on them a crown of beauty...oil of gladness...a garment of praise...arrayed in a robe of righteousness...as a bride adorns herself with her jewels... as a young man marries a maiden...as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride...God rejoice[s] over you'* (Isa 61:3, 10, 62:5, 12 NIV). The joy of the Lord is to be our strength in this life even as we await the last day when we hear the King say *'enter into the joy of your Master.'* Jesus is our Master, as the end of v. 11 says *'Since he is your lord, bow to him.'* Rejoicing must include reverence, joy and trembling in giving homage to the Son, kiss the Son, Ps 2:11 says. The hymn says 'I shall bow in humble adoration and there proclaim my God how great Thou art.' If you've never bowed before Him as your Lord and King, bow today.

In v. 11, your beauty is actually a reflection of Christ's beauty in v. 2. In fact the way the fairest Lord Jesus is described in v. 2 is the same Hebrew root word used twice for emphasis in v. 2 and again in v. 11 for the beauty of the bride. It's an emphatic doubled form in v. 2, literally 'beautiful, beautiful is the King' (i.e., most beautiful), and in v. 11 His bride is beautiful. The King is most glorious and the radiant bride reflects or radiates glory from Him. It may be helpful to think of Jesus when He says '*I am the light of the world,*' and He also says to His bride, the church '*you are the light of the world.*' He is the source of glorious light and beauty, we reflect it like the moon reflects the sun. How are you doing in reflecting the attractiveness of King Jesus?

Titus 2 says in everyday work with those we work for, we can do this as we submit and '*try to please them, not...talk back to them...so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive*' (v. 9-10 NIV). How can you this week make the teaching about our Savior more attractive to unbelievers you work with or interact with? Titus 2 tells us, some of the translations say '*adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*'--that's language right out of Ps 45:13, a bride adorned in interwoven gold clothing. What we do tomorrow in the workplace or home will adorn Christ or not. Peter applies it to literal wives when he says your adorning is to be from the heart, not just external interweaving hair or '*gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the...beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,*' 1 Pet 3:3-5.

That's beautiful in the Lord's sight, and husbands must also strive to please the Lord by living with their wives in an understanding way, sympathetic to them in their weakness, honoring them equally as fellow heirs of the grace of life with us (v. 7). Kids, how can you adorn the Savior? Children here, is this just for grown-ups? Prov 1:8 *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. ⁹ They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck*' (NIV). A child listening to his parents is also a beautiful sight in God's eyes, like a gold chain adorning a bride or like a 'graceful ornament' (NKJV), think decorated Christmas tree

Ps 45 describes how Jesus rides in victory and v. 8 mentions His fragrance. Paul also picks up on this image and applies it to us: '*thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God...a fragrance from life to life*' (2 Cor 2:14-16). That's to be us

What fragrance are you putting off? What are you spreading? What are you reflecting? Are we reflecting Him as Paul says? *'Be imitators of God... as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God'* (Eph 5 NIV).

The royal wedding in Ps 45 ends with a benediction to the King for His marriage: ¹⁶ *In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.* ¹⁷ *I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.*

¹ Compare Ps 45:2 with Songs 5:10, 13, 16; Ps 45:3-4 with Songs 3:8-9, Ps 45:7-8 with Songs 1:3, 3:6, 3:11, 5:13; Ps 45:11 with Songs 7:10; Ps 45:13-15 with Songs 4:9, 6:8-10.

² Alexander MacLaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, vol. 3, part 1, 307.

³ SOURCE?

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,"

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