

The Return of the King!
(What a Great Day for a Wedding)

Song of Songs 3:6-11

Introduction: 1) I believe the most important decision a person will ever make in life is whether or not they will personally trust Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. He lived the life (a perfect, sinless life) we all should have lived but didn't. He died the death (as a penal substitute bearing in our place the wrath and just judgment of God) we should have died. And, He offers us a free gift (eternal life) we do not deserve. The Great King from heaven came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10) and He will save anyone who comes to Him in repentance and faith.

2) Now, there is another decision that I believe clearly ranks 2nd in importance to the first. It is the question, "who will I marry and make covenant to spend the rest of my life?" I believe this question is so important that I require all prospective couples I consider marrying to sign off on a "Pre-marital Wedding Covenant." This requirement is not negotiable. Sign it and I will consider performing your marriage ceremony. Refuse to sign it and I refuse to do your wedding. Here is the pre-marital covenant that I place before them.

Pre-Marital Wedding Covenant

The decision to marry is the second most important decision one will ever make in a lifetime. The first is the decision whether or not you will personally commit your life to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Keeping this in mind, we commit to God, our minister, and each other to:

1. Seek God's will for our lives personally and together by following biblical principles for Christian living and marriage.
2. Not engage in pre-marital sex or any inappropriate sexual activity.
3. Be sure to do everything possible to build a Christian marriage and home. This means that both of us have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and that we desire growth for that relationship over the entire course of our lives by being obedient to his Word.
4. Read and listen to all pre-marital material provided by our minister. These materials are available at no cost at <http://danielakin.com> .
5. Be active together in a Bible-believing church beginning now and during our marriage.
6. Buy and read *His Needs, Her Needs* by Willard Harley, *The Act of Marriage* by Tim LaHaye, *God on Sex* by Danny Akin, and *A Promise Kept* by Robertson McQuilkin.
7. Total openness and honesty with our minister and with each other both now and after our wedding.

8. Postpone or cancel the marriage if, at any time between now and the wedding, either one of us comes to believe this marriage is not right.
9. Never allow the word “divorce” to enter the realm of our relationship. We are in this together for the duration of our lives. Divorce is not an option for us!
10. Seek competent Christian counsel should we encounter any difficulty in our marriage, beginning with the minister who performs our wedding.

With the above commitments made, we believe God will be honored, and the prospects for a meaningful and happy marriage enhanced. With God’s help, we will seek to honor God with our lives and marriage all the days of our lives.

Man’s Signature

Woman’s Signature

3) Shulamite has suffered a bad dream, a nightmare (3:1-5). Apparently Solomon had returned to the city (3:2-3) and left her alone in the countryside (2:8-17). In her dream she goes in search of “the one I love” (3:1, 2, 3, 4) and finds him (3:4). They are united and she is determined not to let him go (3:4). Her dream will now give way to reality as she is reunited with her Shepherd-King. And, she is not the one who goes after him! No, her man is coming after her with a royal wedding entourage. The days of courting have come to an end. The time for their marriage

is at hand (3:6-11). The celebration of their wedding night is soon to follow (4:1-5:1). It is the right time to stir up and awaken the intimacies of love making!

4) Thomas Constable informs us:

Weddings in Israel took place in front of the local town elders, not the priests (e.g., Ruth 4:10-11). They transpired in homes, not in the tabernacle or temple (or synagogue, in later times). They were civil rather than religious ceremonies.

There were three parts to a wedding in the ancient Near East. First, the groom's parents selected a bride for their son. This involved securing the permission of the bride's parents and the approval of both the bride and the groom themselves. Though the parents of the young people arranged the marriage, they usually obtained the consent of both the bride and the groom. Second, on the wedding day the groom proceeded to the bride's house accompanied by a group of friends. He then escorted her to the site of the wedding ceremony, and finally took her to their new residence accompanied by their friends. Physical union consummated the marriage the night after the wedding ceremony took place. Third, the couple feasted with their friends—usually for seven days following the wedding ceremony.

(Thomas Constable, *Notes on Song of Solomon*, 2013 edition. Published by Sonic Light: <http://www.soniclight.com/> Constable draws from an article by Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Cultural Aspects of Marriage in the Ancient World," *BibSac* 135:539 (July-Sept. 1978):241-52).

5) From these six verses, 4 truths emerge that help us see and understand certain characteristics that should accompany every wedding ceremony that our great God has planned for those who long to honor Him in this sacred, covenantal union. It is a beautiful and fantastic scene that unfolds before us.

I. A great wedding will involve a public celebration 3:6-7

1) Our love song suddenly shifts scenes. It moves from the private to the public. It is the day of Shulamite's wedding to her Shepherd-King! The author of the Song takes the posture of a narrator in verses 6-11. The unfolding scene is majestic as Solomon comes for his bride in this wedding processional. Jack Deere points out,

“The pomp and beauty of this procession were wholly appropriate in light of the event's significance. The Scriptures teach that marriage is one of the most important events in a person's life. Therefore it is fitting that the union of a couple be commemorated in a special way. The current practice of couples casually living together apart from the bonds of marriage demonstrates how unfashionable genuine commitment to another person has become in contemporary society. This violates the sanctity of marriage and is contrary to God's standards of purity.”
(*Biblical Knowledge Comm.*, 1017).

2) The text says the King is “coming up from the wilderness.” The theme of the wilderness is a rich one in the Old Testament and immediately evokes the ideas of the Exodus, wandering, difficulty and hardship. The wilderness reminds us that the ravaging effects of the curse are ever present in this fallen world and that the most precious and tender relationships are not immune to its influences. Elijah (1 Kings 19), John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-5) and King Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11) also had wilderness experiences. But the

Lord was faithful, as He was with Israel, to sustain them and provide for them. This is what our God intends for marriage as well.

3) Shulamite had lived through a number of difficult and trying experiences, wilderness experiences (1:6-8; 3:1-3). Now, however, those days are over as her Bridegroom King comes in full display for all to see to fetch her as his wife! What appears to be “columns of smoke” are the sweet scents of “myrrh and frankincense”, exotic spices imported from places like Arabia and India (Longman, 135). From Shulamite’s perspective, as well as the audience watching this scene unfold, things look good and they smell good. Solomon makes a full public display of his love and affection for his bride and he invites all who are there to join in this celebration.

4) In Matthew 2:11, we read that when the Magi saw the baby Jesus, they fell to their knees and they worshiped Him. They then gave to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Why? Because these were gifts fitting for a King! Solomon is not only going to make Shulamite a queen, he is going to treat her like a queen. Privately (4:1-16) and publicly, he will honor her and cherish her as God did Israel and as Christ does His Church (Eph. 5:25-33).

5) Unfortunately, Israel would forget the Lord “who brought us from the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and ravines, through a land of drought and darkness, a land no one traveled

through and where no one lived” (Jer. 2:7). This Shepherd-King publically pledges that this bride will never again find herself in the wilderness as he takes her to be his wife. We have a Shepherd-King named Jesus who promises us the same! His public pledge? A Roman cross and an empty Judean tomb!!!

II. A great wedding contains a promise of protection 3:7-8

1) As this scene unfolds we receive greater clarity in vs. 7-8. The vision of the columns of smoke that are the burning of “myrrh and frankincense from every fragrant powder of the merchant” (no expense was spared) is now revealed to be “Solomon’s royal litter [carriage].” And, it is “surrounded by 60 warriors from the mighty of Israel”, twice the number that accompanied King David (2 Sam. 23:13-39). These are elite soldiers, Navy Seals, Army Rangers, his personal body guards who are armed and ready for action at any time. How do we know? First, they are “warriors from the mighty of Israel” (v. 7). Second, “All of them are skilled with swords and trained in warfare”. Third, “Each has his sword at his side to guard against the terror of the night” (v. 8). Shulamite felt alone and unprotected at night in 3:1, but that will never happen again under the watchcare and protection of her Shepherd-King and his mighty resources.

2) These royal bodyguards are a pledge and promise of protection that will accompany their marriage until death departs them. These groomsmen are his closest and most trusted confidants. He can trust his life or wife into their care with no fear. Even at night, when evil men come out to do evil things, she will be safe and secure.

3) In a sermon on this text, Mark Driscoll is quite practical in what a godly husband will promise and provide for his bride:

“He’s looking out for her safety and her well-being, and this is something that a man has the great opportunity to do with the woman that he loves. In our day, this would include: safe car, living in a place that is safe and well-lit and not dangerous and crime-infested. This would include: Wife gets a cell phone so that if emergency comes, she can contact you, you’re accessible and available. This would also include things like medical insurance, life insurance, so that even in the occasion of your death you’re still providing for her and/or your children. He’s a man who thinks through issues of safety and protection. Provision: He’s coming to pick her up. 60 warriors carrying her into town: enormous wedding day. The kind of wedding day that little girls dress up like princesses for, and practice, beginning at a very young age for this kind of amazing wedding day.

(The Peasant Princess Series: Sermon Manuscript).

4) And, in the context of the wedding ceremony itself, Tommy Nelson is right on target when he writes, “Part of the safety and security of the wedding ceremony will be evident in the people who serve as your best man, maid or matron of honor, groomsmen, and bridesmaids. Choose godly people who will support you fully in the vows you make. As a whole, those

who witness your marriage should be like a holy hedge of protection around you, keeping you focused toward each other inside the circle of matrimony, and keeping out anybody who might try to destroy your marriage. Don't ask someone to stand up for you who isn't completely committed to you, to your marriage, and in general, to the sanctity and value of marriage. Such a person will not encourage you to work through problems in your marriage. Such a person will not do the utmost to help you and your spouse when you need help. And they may embarrass you at rehearsal dinner!" (*Book of Romance*, 76).

III. A great wedding includes a pledge of love 3:9-10

1) When it comes to the popular arrangement of cohabitation, there is an important "C" word that is missing: Commitment. It also is sad to note that more and more modern wedding ceremonies are dropping the phrase "till death do us part" for more cautious and tentative promises like "for as long as our marriage shall serve the common good" (John Harlow, "Brides Vow: I do, until I don't; *Los Angeles*, Aug.2, 2005). Other phrases showing up more often include "I promise to be loyal as long as love lasts", and, "until our time together is over."

2) Marriage as designed by God involves a life-long commitment to covenantal love. There is a pledge and promise of physical, spiritual,

emotional and personal commitment that only God brings to an end. We see this kind of commitment put on public display in verses 9-10 in the wedding carriage (*HCSB*, “sedan chair”; marginal reading is “palanquin”) “King Solomon made for himself.” This “carriage” or “sedan chair” was made of the very best materials money could buy. The wood was “from Lebanon.” The timbers from these forests were in great demand throughout the ancient Near East (Carr, 111). It was from this wood that Solomon had carved his sedan chair or carriage. Added to this were “posts of silver;” supports of gold and a “seat of purple.” All of this was exquisitely beautiful and expensive. It was Solomon’s way of saying, “I will keep nothing back from you. All I have now belongs to you. You will always receive my best.”

3) Verse 10 also informs us that the carriage’s “interior is inlaid with love by the young women of Jerusalem.” The phrase “inlaid with love” is vague and even mysterious, and “The young women of Jerusalem” provide a female counterpart to the “mighty warriors” of vs. 7-8. What are we to make of all of this? Commentators go in many different directions in trying to unwrap the verse’s meaning, so dogmatism in interpretation is certainly out of the bounds. I do find helpful and attractive the comments of the great Baptist preacher in London, Charles Spurgeon. He states that the phrase, “is a complicated, but very expressive form of speech. Some regard the

expression as signifying a pavement of stone, engraved with hieroglyphic emblems of love, which made up the floor of this travelling chariot; but this would surely be very uncomfortable and unusual, and therefore others have explained the passage as referring to choice embroidery and dainty carpets, woven with cost and care, with which the interior of the travelling-chair was lined. Into such embroidery sentences of love-poetry may have been worked. Needlework was probably the material of which it was composed; skillful fingers would therein set forth emblems and symbols of love. As the spouse in the second chapter sings, "His banner over me was love", probably alluding to some love-word upon the banner; so, probably, tokens of love were carved or embroidered, as the case may have been, upon the interior of the chariot, so that 'the midst thereof was paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. We need not, however, tarry long over the metaphor, but endeavor to profit by its teaching" (*The Most Holy Place*, p. 281). I believe we are on safe ground to affirm that the phrase speaks clearly to the truth that love will be their promise and pledge to each other from their wedding day until their death day. John Phillips says the phrase "suggests all that is romantic" (*Exploring the Song of Solomon*, 81). I would add, it suggests all that one person commits to another in covenantal marriage. Love not lust will be our circle of protection. Love not infatuation will be our companion

for life. A Christ-honoring wedding is just the right place to make such a promise. Indeed it is exactly the right place to make a pledge to love another for life. Such love finds beautiful expression in Song of Songs 8:5-14. It is wonderfully described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

IV. A great wedding has the approval of others 3:11

1) The wedding of this great Shepherd-King is the occasion of great celebration and rejoicing (cf. Psalm 45). The “daughters of Jerusalem, “also known as “the young women of Jerusalem” (v. 10), now called “the young women of Zion,” are commanded to “come out” and “gaze”, look upon intently, “King Solomon wearing the crown his mother (Bathsheba) placed on him the day of his wedding,” a day that is called “the day of his heart’s rejoicing.”

2) This day was truly different from his mother Bathsheba’s wedding day. She had been seduced into an adulterous affair by King David and become pregnant (2 Sam. 11:1-5). David then murdered her husband Uriah to cover up his sin (2 Sam. 11:14-16). She would mourn his death, and then be taken by David in marriage (2 Sam. 11:26-27). The Scriptures record no fanfare or celebration. It is one of the saddest and most sordid stories in all of the Bible.

3) This day is different. She can applaud this union and so can everyone else. This marriage is right and this couple is right for each other. The young women of Zion join in the celebration of the wedding. Their friends say, “we approve of this marriage.” In their mind this is a good and wonderful thing that is about to happen. They like Solomon when he is with Shulamite. She brings out the best in him, not the worst, when they are together. The same is true for Shulamite. She is a better and more beautiful woman when she is with her Shepherd-King. That is a good sign for us to always be on the lookout for.

Solomon’s mother, his family, also approve. The potential for in-law problems does not loom over the wedding, as is too often the case. She had prepared for him a crown similar to an Olympian laurel wreath, which symbolized the gladness and joy of his wedding day. According to Rabbinic tradition, crowns were worn by the bridegroom and the bride until the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Snaith, 57). This was a day of happiness not only for the king and his queen, but for all who shared in this wonderful event. Those who loved Solomon and Shulamite most were confident this marriage was meant to be and meant to last. Their approval is no guarantee, but it is an indication of the confidence both family and friends had in the rightness of this union. This is something every wise couple will carefully

consider as they work to have a great wedding and a great marriage. We all need friends and family in our corner praying for us and pulling for us.

Practical Applications

1) When the red hot passions of desire are ablaze, we can easily confuse a thing called lust with a thing called love. This is especially true when we are young and the hormones are raging with desires wanting (demanding!) to be satisfied. This is a time when “cooler heads” must prevail. This is a time when we need to see the mammoth difference between passing lust and lasting love. Dennis Rigstad is very helpful in his article entitled, “Is It Love Or Lust?” It is balanced, but best of all, it is biblical. Think through his observations. There is real wisdom here as we consider the person we want to spend the rest of our life with.

LUST

1. Focuses on self

“You have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh” (Gal. 5:13 *NKJ*).

2. Leads to frustration

“You want something, but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want” (James 4:2 *NIV*).

3. Continually wants more

“They are separated from the life of God...and have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more” (Eph. 4:18, 19 *NIV*).

4. Enslaves self

“To whom you present yourselves servants to obey, you are that one’s servants...you have presented your members as servants to uncleanness, and lawlessness” (Rom. 6:16, 19 *NKJ*).

5. Desires to gratify the sinful nature with things contrary to the Spirit

“The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit” (Gal. 5:17 *NIV*). “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious; sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like” (Gal. 5:19-21 *NIV*).

6. Excludes Christ

“Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind... they have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity” (Rom. 1:28, 29 *NIV*).

7. Sins to gratify the desires

“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts” (Eph. 2:3 *NIV*).

8. Entices with evil desires

“But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (Jam. 1:14 *NIV*).

9. Wars against the soul

“I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul” (I Pet. 2:11 *NIV*).

10. Avoids commitment and leads to tragedy

“Don’t lust for their beauty. Don’t let their coyness seduce you. For a prostitute will bring a man to poverty, and an adulteress may cost him his very life” (Prov. 6:25, 26 *TLD*).

LOVE

1. Focuses on the other

“Let each of you look not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4 *NKJ*).

2. Leads to fulfillment

“To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God...who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Eph. 3:19, 20 *NKJ*).

3. Brings satisfaction

“No discipline seems pleasant...but later it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11 *NIV*).

4. Encourages self-control

“I discipline my body and bring it into subjection” (I Cor. 9:27 *NKJ*)

5. Desires to live by the Spirit

“Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:22-24 *NIV*).

6. Includes Christ

“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Rom. 13:14 *NIV*)

7. Seeks God to gain its desires

“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4 *NIV*).

8. Prevents sin

“Love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:14, 15 *NKJ*).

9. Nourishes the soul

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless” (I Thess. 5:23 *NIV*).

10. Commits to one another (free love is a contradiction of terms)

“You have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13 *NKJ*).¹

How does this text point to Christ? Looking forward to the return of the King

1) Song of Songs 3:6-11 is about a Shepherd-King coming for his beautiful virgin bride. He comes with his armies and he is wearing a crown fit for the occasion. It is a magnificent scene to be sure, but it pales in comparison to the wedding processional it anticipates, a wedding processional described in Revelation 19 when King Jesus, the Shepherd King greater than David or Solomon, returns from Heaven to get his Bride, his wife (Rev. 19:7). He will not come up from the wilderness with the memories of the fall and the deliverance of the Exodus occupying our minds. No, He will descend from heaven riding a white horse. On His head will not be a simple crown, but many diadems because He is the “King of

¹ Dennis Rigstad, “Is It Love Or Lust?” (*Psychology for Living*, Feb. 1988).

Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:12, 16). The armies of heaven will accompany this Bridegroom (Rev. 19:14) and He will shepherd the nations “with an iron scepter” (Rev. 19:15).

2) Song of Songs 3:6-11 stirs our hearts for another wedding day that will consummate all of human history! There we will celebrate the marriage of the Lamb who was slain for His bride whom He purchased with His own blood (Rev. 5:9-10). On that day as Jonathan Edwards so eloquently wrote, “the church shall be brought to the full enjoyment of her bridegroom, having all tears wiped away from her eyes; and there shall be no distance or absence. She shall then be brought to the entertainments of an eternal wedding feast, and to dwell forever with her bridegroom; yea, to dwell eternally in his embraces. Then Christ will give her his loves; and she shall drink her fill, yea, she shall swim in the ocean of his love” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, p.22; Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass; 1834 rpt. 1998).

Wedding Day

By Casting Crowns

Verse 1

There’s a stirring in the throne room
 And all creation holds its breath
 Waiting now to see the Bridegroom
 Wondering how the bride will dress
 And she wears white
 And she knows that she’s undeserving

She bears the shame of history
 But this worn and weary maiden
 Is not the bride that He sees
 And she wears white head to toe
 But only He can make it so

Chorus

When someone dries your tears
 When someone wins your heart
 And says you're beautiful
 When you don't know you are
 And all you long to see
 Is written on His face
 Love has come and finally set you free
 On that wedding day
 On that wedding day

Verse 2

She has danced in golden castles
 And she has crawled through beggar's dust
 But today she stands before Him
 And she wears His righteousness
 And she will be who He adores
 And this is what He made her for

Chorus

When someone dries your tears
 When someone wins your heart
 And says you're beautiful
 When you don't know you are
 And all you long to see
 Is written on His face
 Love has come and finally set you free
 On that wedding day
 On that wedding day

Bridge

When the hand that bears the only scars
In Heaven touch her face
And the last tears she'll ever cry
Are finally wiped away
And the clouds roll back as He takes her hand
And walks her through the gates
Forever we will reign

Chorus

When someone dries your tears
When someone wins your heart
And says you're beautiful
When you don't know you are
And all you long to see
Is written on His face
Love has come and finally set you free
On that wedding day
On that wedding day