

Pastoral Letter July 2012

The best marriage of all

In the previous pastoral letter we considered something of the true biblical nature and beauty of marriage as God defined it from the beginning of creation – and we did so against the dark and desolate background of the current national debate. This time we return to the subject of marriage, but in order to explore one or two aspects of what I'm calling 'the best marriage of all'. Can you guess what that is? It can surely be only one thing: the marriage of the Lord Jesus Christ to his church, the heavenly Bridegroom and his Calvary-purchased bride.

This is a consistent theme of Scripture, coming to the fore very especially in Psalm 45, the Song of Songs as a whole, Ephesians 5 and Revelation 19. What glorious passages these are! We would do well to read them frequently and seek Holy Spirit help to meditate profitably upon them. The last mentioned of those instances (Revelation 19) sets forth 'the marriage of the Lamb'. Verse 7 of this chapter reads as follows: 'Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready'. In our better moments we feel that it cannot come soon enough!

What is it, in particular, about this event which makes it '*the best marriage of all*'? No doubt there are many reasons, but two stand out. It is the union of *the best husband* and *the best bride*. How is this so?

The Lord Jesus Christ is the best husband. That is certainly so, without any doubt. Do you ask, what kind of a husband is he? We could answer in terms of *his glorious person*. His is unparalleled dignity and greatness. He is laden with riches and treasure. His is the most noble and generous spirit. To him belongs all wisdom and knowledge. Beauty is his, beyond compare. This bridegroom lives forever and cannot die. No husband loves his bride like this husband loves his bride. Then we could answer in terms of *his glorious work*. One of the Puritans (Edward Pearce) sets out in the following manner what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for his bride. He pays all her debts, supplies all her wants, heals all her maladies, bears all her burdens, sweetens all her afflictions, subdues all her enemies, minds and manages all her concerns, and joins her in eternal life and glory. Oh, what a bridegroom and husband Christ is. Do we adore him and honour him, esteem him and prize him, love him and obey him as we should?

The church is the best bride. John 'Rabbi' Duncan once remarked, 'Next to the sight of the Lamb, I would like to see his bride'. No bride is more loved than this bride, for we are loved with 'the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (Ephesians 3:19). No bride is more favoured than this bride, for our husband never tires of us, even though we often provoke him in so many ways. No bride is anything like as beautiful as this bride, for our beauty is his beauty, the beauty he puts upon us from himself as the result of him being 'made ... our righteousness and sanctification' (1 Corinthians 1:30). No bride has such prospects as this bride, for ours are heavenly honours and an eternal inheritance in glory. How conscious are you, dear believer, of your position and character as Christ's bride, and how thankful?

Let Samuel Rutherford (who so often warmed to these themes in his letters) have the last word. 'O how sweet to be wholly Christ's and wholly in Christ ... I am confounded with wonder to think what it shall be, when the fairest among the sons of men shall lay a King's sweet soft cheek to the sinful cheeks of poor sinners ... O for the coming of the Bridegroom! ... Oh, when will we get our day, and our heart's fill of that love!'