

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB



CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

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Sermon #2096, delivered on the Lord's Day morning, July 21, 1889, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, London, England.

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THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb
is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
And to her was granted that she should be arrayed
in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen
is the righteousness of saints.*

—Revelation 19:7-8

Introduction

Last Lord's Day we saw clearly from God's Word that our Lord is worshipped in heaven under the character of a lamb. By a lamb was meant sacrifice, sacrifice for the putting away of sin according to the text, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Joh 1:29). It is against the great doctrine of atonement¹ and substitutionary death² that the attacks of the present unbelieving age are constantly being made; and therefore I set before you the truth that substitution and sacrifice were not a temporary expedient, but that they continue all through the whole history of salvation and remain in the very highest place, even in heaven itself, and will continue evermore. Do not forget that, whenever we read of Christ as a lamb, it is to remind us of His sufferings and death in our room, place, and stead, for the putting away of our sin. Under that character we looked to Him, some of us, years ago, and found peace at the first. We are still looking to Him under that same character; and when we attain to heaven, we shall not have to change our thought of Him, but we shall still see Him as a lamb that has been slain (Rev 5:6). In our lowest place, when we came out of the Egypt of our bondage, He was the Lamb of God's Passover; and in our highest place, in the heavenly temple, we shall still regard Him as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8).

¹ **atonement** – literally "at-one-ment"; the condition of being at one with another; theologically, atonement means reconciliation with God by removing or covering the guilt of sin; this was accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. See Free Grace Broadcaster 227, *The Atonement*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² **substitutionary death** – biblical teaching that Jesus Christ suffered in the place of His people bearing the punishment due their sins. See FGB 207, *Substitution*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

This morning my principal aim shall be to show you that the blessed and glorious union that is to be celebrated between the Church and her Lord will be “the marriage of the Lamb.” The ever blessed and eternal union of hearts with Christ will be in reference to His sacrifice, specially and emphatically. The perfected union of the entire Church of God with her divine Husband is here described by the beloved apostle, who laid his head upon his Master’s bosom and knew most about Him, and who was under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in these words: “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Rev 19:7).

Whatever else we think of at this time, my discourse will aim at this as the white of the target—namely, that Jesus Christ as the Lamb, the sacrifice, is not only the beginning but the end, not only the foundation but the topstone of the whole sacred edifice of the temple of grace. The consummation of the whole work of redemption is the marriage of the Church to Christ; and, according to “the true sayings of God,” this is “the marriage of the Lamb” (Rev 19:7, 9).

I will set forth this marriage as best I am able. It is divinely veiled as well as revealed in this Revelation. God forbid we should intrude where the Holy Spirit shuts us out! But still, what we do know of it, let us now think upon, and may the sacred Spirit make it profitable to us!

I. Before the Marriage

First, I invite your attention to the antecedents of³ this marriage. What will happen before the public marriage is celebrated?

A. Destruction of the False Church

One great event will be *the destruction of the harlot church*. I have just read, in your hearing, the previous chapter, which declares the overwhelming destruction that will fall upon that evil system. Any church that puts in the place of justification by faith in Christ another method of salvation is a harlot church. The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ⁴ is the article of a standing or a falling church. Where the blood is precious, there is life; where atonement by the sacrifice is preached and loved, there will the Spirit of God bear effectual testimony. But where human priests are put in the place of Jesus, where pardons can be purchased, where there is an unbloody sacrifice instead of the great propitiation, and sacraments are exalted as the means of regeneration, there the church is no longer a chaste virgin unto Christ, but she hath turned aside from her purity.

The antichristian system is to be utterly extirpated⁵ and burnt with fire; for you will perceive, in the fourteenth verse of the seventeenth chapter, that those who were

³ **the antecedents of** – those events that occurred before.

⁴ See FGB 187, *Justification*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁵ **extirpated** – rooted out; exterminated; totally destroyed.

associated with this false church “shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings”; and there has been no more wicked nor more determined war with the Lamb than that which has been waged by superstition supported by unbelief. The harlot church and the beast of infidelity are in real league against the simple faith of Christ.

If you point men away from Christ—no matter where—you point them to anti-christ.⁶ If you teach them what you may—no matter how philosophical it may seem—if in any way it takes them off from building upon the one foundation of Christ’s glorious and finished work, you have laid an antichristian foundation, and all that is built thereon will be destroyed. Everything that sets up itself in opposition to the sacrifice of Christ is to be hurled down and made to sink like a millstone in the flood.

I would God the hour were come! Oh, that the Lord’s own right arm were bare, and that we heard the cry, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen” (Rev 18:2). It is ours to expect the speedy coming of our Lord; yet, if He tarry, it may be many a day before “her plagues come in one day” (Rev 18:8). But, wait as we may, so it shall be; the day must come when the true Church shall be honored and the harlot church shall be abhorred. The Bride of Christ is a sort of Cinderella⁷ now, sitting among the ashes. She is like her Lord, “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3). The watchmen smite her and take away her veil from her (Song 5:7); for they know her not, even as they knew not her Lord (1Jo 3:1). But when He shall appear, then shall she appear also, and in His glorious manifestation⁸ she also shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father (1Jo 3:2; Mat 13:43).

B. The Voice

1. Peculiar

Furthermore, in the immediate connection, we note that before the marriage of the Lamb there was a peculiar voice. Read the fifth verse: “And a voice came.” Where from? “A voice came out of the throne.” Whose voice was that? It was not the voice of the eternal God, for it said, “Praise our God, all ye his servants.” Whose voice, then,

⁶ **antichrist** – The Greek preposition *anti* signifies “in place of,” rather than merely “against.” The word *antichrist*, then, speaks of one who opposes Christ by posing as Him or usurping His place. He opposes, and exalts himself above all that is called God; thus he is called “the man of sin,” “the lawless one,” “that wicked one,” and “the son of perdition” in 2 Thessalonians 2...1 John 2:18 shows that while there are many antichrists, there will come one to whom the title preeminently belongs. He will be...finally destroyed by the spirit of the Lord’s mouth and the brightness of His coming (2Th 2:18), being cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20). [Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, South Carolina: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 31]

⁷ **Cinderella** – folk-tale first published in 1697, originating in China and entering Europe through Italy. Its theme is unjust repression and triumphant blessing, embodied in a destitute maid forced to serve arrogant noblewomen.

⁸ **manifestation** – visible presence, making clear or evident what was before concealed.

could it be? No one but God could be upon the throne save the Lamb, Who is God. Surely, it was He Who said, “Praise our God.” The Mediator,⁹ God and man in one person, was on the throne as a lamb, and He announced the day of His own marriage. Who should do it but He? “A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.” He speaks the word that calls on all the servants of God to praise Him, because His complete victory had come. Longing to see of the travail of His soul, earnest to gather in all His elect, He speaks—for the fullness of time has come, when His joy shall be full and He shall rejoice over the whole company of His redeemed as forever one with Himself.

2. *Near*

The voice from the throne is a very remarkable one; for it shows how near akin the exalted Christ is to His people. He saith to all the redeemed, “Praise *our* God, all ye his servants.” It reminds me of His memorable words, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (Joh 20:17). He was not then ashamed to associate His people with Him in the high possession of His Father and His God; and up there upon the throne, He saith, “Praise our God.” I do not know how this language strikes you; but to me it forcibly sets forth His love, His condescension, His fraternization,¹⁰ His union with His people.¹¹ Since I know not how to set it out to you, I must leave you to think over it. He Who has gone triumphantly up to the throne, the Savior Whose conflicts are all over, Who has gained the everlasting reward of sitting with the Father upon His throne, still joins with us in praise and saith, “Praise *our* God, all ye his servants.” He is not even ashamed to have fellowship with the least of His people; for He adds, “And ye that fear him, both small and great.” Truly “the man is near of kin to us, one of our next kinsman” (Ru 2:20).

*“In ties of blood, with sinners one,
Our Jesus hath to glory gone.”¹²*

In that glory He still owns His dear relationship, and in the midst of the Church He singeth praise unto God (Heb 2:11-12).

⁹ **Mediator** – *literally*: “one who goes between”; “It pleased God in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest and king; head and savior of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1; see also FGB 183, *Christ the Mediator*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY).

¹⁰ **fraternization** – association in a friendly and sympathetic way.

¹¹ See FGB 214, *Union with Christ*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹² Jesse Fowler, *Christ Alone Exalted* 2nd edition (London: Scientific and Commercial Press, 1815), 107.

C. Response to the Voice

1. *A great multitude*

Next, notice the response to this voice; for this also precedes the marriage. No sooner did that one august¹³ voice summon them to praise, than immediately “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude” (Rev 19:6). He heard the mingled sound as of an innumerable host all joining in the song, for the redeemed of the Lord are not a few. No man can count them. “Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” they respond in that day to the voice of the Lamb, saying, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev 5:9; 19:6). So loud was the sound of all those commingled voices that it sounded like “many waters”—like cataracts¹⁴ in their roar, or like oceans in their fullness. It was as though all the billows of the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Northern, and the Southern oceans lifted up their voices, and deep answered unto deep. Nor was the figure too strong; for John heaps upon it another comparison and says, “As the voice of mighty thunderings.”

We have lately heard the thunder above the deafening din of our streets, and we have trembled at the dread artillery of heaven. Such was the sound of the mingled voices of the redeemed when they all united to give honor to God because the marriage of the Lamb had come. Who can imagine the acclamations of that glorious day? We now preach the gospel, as it were, in a corner; and few there are that will applaud the King of kings. Still, the Christ wendeth¹⁵ His way through the world as an unknown or forgotten man; and His Church, following behind Him, seemeth as a forlorn and forsaken woman—few there be that care for her. But in that day when her Lord is seen as the King of kings and she is openly acknowledged as His spouse, what welcomes will be heard, what bursts of adoring praise unto the Lord God omnipotent!

2. *Rejoicing and homage*

Observe that this tremendous volume of sound will be full of rejoicing and of devout homage.¹⁶ “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him” (Rev 19:7). Double joy will be there, and its expression will be homage to the Lord God. The joy of joys will be the delight of Christ in His perfectly gathered Church. There is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth (Luk 15:10); but when all these repenting sinners are gathered into one perfected body and married to the Lamb, what will be the infinite gladness? Heaven is always heaven and unspeakably full of blessedness; but even heaven has its holidays, even bliss has its overflowings. And on that day when the springtide of the infinite ocean of joy shall have come, what a measureless flood of delight shall overflow the souls of all glori-

¹³ **august** – majestic; inspiring awe; solemnly grand.

¹⁴ **cataracts** – large waterfalls.

¹⁵ **wendeth** – directs; pursues.

¹⁶ **homage** – respect; reverence; honor.

fied spirits as they perceive that the consummation of love's great design is come! "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev 19:7).

We do not know yet, beloved, of what happiness we are capable. We have sometimes wished that we could "sit and sing ourselves away to everlasting bliss,"¹⁷ but then we were only feeling the spray of the ocean of blessedness. What must it be to bathe in it? Here we drink from cups of consolation, but what draughts we shall have when we lie down at the well-head and drink in our joy immediately¹⁸ from God! If you and I enter glory soon without our bodies, we shall not even then know to the utmost degree what will be the bliss of our perfected manhood, when the body shall be raised incorruptible from among the dead and joined to the sinless soul. Nor would this give us more than a bare idea of the infinite blessedness of myriads of such perfected manhoods united in a perfected Church, from which no one single member shall be missing, nor one member maimed, sick, or stained. Praise the Lord Jesus as you sing:

*"Thou the whole body shalt present
Before Thy Father's face;
Nor shall a wrinkle, or a spot,
The beauteous form deface."*¹⁹

Oh, what joy! I feel as if I could not preach to you. I want to get away to think it over and chew the cud of meditation for myself. You must just sit where you are and muse. Here we have the essence of heavenly music in a few plain words: "The marriage of the Lamb is come." Oh, may I be there! May I be a part of the perfected body of the Church of God! Oh, that I might be but part of the soles of her feet or the least hair of her head! If I may but see the King in His beauty—in the fullness of His joy, when He shall take by the right hand her for whom He shed His precious blood, and shall know the joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the cross, despising the shame (Heb 12:2)—I shall be blest indeed!

Thus I have given you a hint of what will precede the marriage of the Lamb, in all of which you may observe that Jesus wears His character of the Lamb. The harlot church hath fought against the Lamb, and the Lamb hath overcome her forces. He it is that on the throne speaks to His people as His brethren. It is to Him that the response is given; for the joy and the delight all spring from the fact that the marriage is that of the Lamb Whom the Father glorifies, and Who glorifies the Father. The voice said, "Let us rejoice, and give honour to him." Was not that His prayer of old: "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (Joh 17:1)? To glorify the

¹⁷ Isaac Watts, "Welcome, Sweet Day of Rest."

¹⁸ **immediately** – directly, without anything in between.

¹⁹ Thomas Willcocks, "Jesus, I Sing Thy Matchless Grace," *Psalms and Hymns* 2nd edition (London: Henry Washbourn, 1828), hymn 415, p. 119.

Father, Jesus died as a sacrifice; and to glorify Jesus, the Father gives Him His Church, which is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

II. The Marriage

Now may I be helped by the Spirit of God, while I lead you on to the marriage itself. “The marriage of the Lamb is come.” Often as you hear about this marriage of the Lamb, I greatly question whether any here have any precise idea what it means. Dean Henry Alford²⁰ says, “This figure of a marriage between the Lord and His people is too frequent and familiar to need explanation.” With all deference to the excellent divine, that was a very sufficient reason why he should have carefully explained it, since that which is often noted in Holy Scripture must be of first importance and should be well understood. I do not wonder that many are shy of such a theme, for it is a difficult one. Alas, how little do I personally know of such a matter!

A. The Eternal Gift of the Father

The marriage of the Lamb is the result of the eternal gift of the Father. Our Lord says, “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (Joh 17:6). His prayer was, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24). The Father made a choice, and the chosen He gave to His Son to be His portion. For them He entered into a covenant of redemption,²¹ whereby He was pledged in due time to take upon Himself their nature, pay the penalty of their offences, and set them free to be His own. Beloved, that which was arranged in the councils of eternity and settled there between the high contracting parties is brought to its ultimate end in that day when the Lamb takes unto Himself, in everlasting union, the whole of those whom His Father gave Him from of old.

B. The Completion of the Betrothal

Next, this is the completion of the betrothal, which took place with each of them in time. I shall not attempt elaborate distinctions; but as far as you and I were concerned, the Lord Jesus betrothed each one of us unto Himself in righteousness when first we believed on Him. Then He took us to be His and gave Himself to be ours, so that we could sing, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16). This was the essence of the marriage. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, represents our Lord as already married to the Church. This may be illustrated by the Oriental custom by which, when the bride is betrothed, all the sanctities of marriage are involved in

²⁰ **Henry Alford** (1810-1871) – English Anglican churchman, theologian, preacher, textual critic, scholar, poet, hymnodist, and writer; became Dean of Canterbury, where he served till his death.

²¹ **covenant of redemption** – term used by some to describe the eternal purpose of redemption: God the Father purposed to give a people and a kingdom to His Son, and God the Son agreed to accomplish this purpose by His life, death, and resurrection. See FGB 236, *God’s Eternal Purpose*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

those espousals; but yet there may be a considerable interval before the bride is taken to her husband's house. She dwells with her former household and has not yet forgotten her kindred and her father's house, though still she is espoused in truth and righteousness. Afterwards, she is brought home on an appointed day, the day that we should call the actual marriage; but yet the betrothal is, to Orientals, of the very essence of the marriage.

Well, then, you and I are betrothed to our Lord today, and He is joined to us by inseparable bonds. He does not wish to part with us, nor could we part from Him. He is the delight of our souls, and He rejoices over us with singing (Zep 3:17). Rejoice that He has chosen you and called you, and through the betrothal look forward to the marriage. Feel even now that, though in the world, you are not of it; your destiny does not lie here among these frivolous sons of men. Our home is henceforth on high.

*"My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"*²²

C. The Perfecting of the Church

The marriage day indicates the perfecting of the body of the Church. I have already told you that the Church will then be completed, and it is not so now. Adam lay asleep, and the Lord took out of his side a rib and fashioned thereof a help meet²³ for him. Adam saw her not when she was in the forming; but he opened his eyes, and before him was the perfect form of his help meet (Gen 2:18). Beloved, the true Church is now in the forming and is therefore not visible. There are many churches; but as to the one Church of Christ, we see it neither here nor there. We speak of the visible church, but the term is not correct. The thing that we see is a mixture of believers and mere pretenders to faith. The Church that is affianced²⁴ unto the heavenly Bridegroom is not visible as yet; for she is in the process of formation.²⁵

The Lord will not allow such simpletons as we are to see His half-finished work. But the day will come when He shall have completed His new creation, and then will

²² Robert C. Chapman, "My soul, amid this stormy world," in *The Book of Praise* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1898), p. 401.

²³ **meet** – fit; appropriate.

²⁴ **affianced** – bound in a pledge to marry; betrothed.

²⁵ Spurgeon did believe in the local church and the necessity of a believer's commitment to the local church: "There has been a great deal said in these latter days about being simply a Christian and not joining any particular church—a piece of cant [hypocritical and sanctimonious talk] mostly, and in all cases a mistake. In the name of unity this system is preached up, and yet it is clear to all that it is the reverse of unity, and is calculated to put an end to all visible church fellowship." (Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit sermon #1167 entitled "Additions to the Church," delivered April 5th, 1874, in the public domain)

He bring her forth whom He has made for the second Adam, to be His delight to all eternity. The Church is not perfected as yet. We read of that part of it which is in heaven, that “they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:40). Unless you and I get there, if we are true believers, there cannot be a perfect Church in glory. The music of the heavenly harmonies as yet lacks certain voices. Some of its needful notes are too bass for those already, and others are too high for them, until the singers come who are ordained to give the choir its fullest range.

At the Crystal Palace²⁶ you have seen the singers come trooping in. The conductor is all anxiety if they seem to linger. Still, some are away. The time is nearly up, and you see seats up there on the right and a vacant block down there on the left. Even so with the heavenly choir: they are streaming in, the orchestra is filling up; but yet there is room, and yet there is demand for other voices to complete the heavenly harmony! Beloved, in the day of the marriage of the Lamb, the chosen shall all be there—the great and the small—even all the believers who are wrestling hard this day with sins and doubts and fears. Every living member of the living Church shall be there to be married to the Lamb.

D. The Home-bringing

By this marriage is meant more than I have told you. There is the home-bringing. You are not to live here forever in these tents of Kedar²⁷ (Psa 120:5) among a people of a strange tongue; but the blessed Bridegroom cometh to take you to the happy country, where you shall no longer say, “My soul is among lions” (Psa 57:4). All the faithful shall soon be away to thy land, O Emmanuel! We shall dwell in the land that floweth with milk and honey, the land of the unclouded and unsetting sun, the home of the blessed of the Lord. Happy indeed will be the home-bringing of the perfect Church!

The marriage is the *coronal-avowal*. The Church is the bride of the great King: He will set the crown upon her head and make her to be known as His true spouse forever. Oh, what a day that will be when every member of Christ shall be crowned in Him, and with Him, and every member of the mystical body shall be glorified in the glory of the Bridegroom! Oh, may I be there in that day! Brethren, we must be with our Lord in the fight, if we would be with Him in the victory. We must be with Him in wearing the crown of thorns, if we are to be with Him in wearing the crown of glory. We must be faithful by His grace, even unto death, if we are to share the glory of His endless life.

²⁶ **Crystal Palace** – cast-iron and plate-glass structure originally built in Hyde Park, London, to house the Great Exhibition of 1851. More than 14,000 people could gather in its 990,000 ft² (92,000 m²) exhibition space.

²⁷ **tents of Kedar** – Kedar was a son of Ishmael, who founded an important tribe of tent-dwellers in the northeast of the Arabian desert.

I cannot tell you all it means, but certainly this marriage signifies that all who have believed in Him shall then *enter into a bliss that shall never end*; a bliss that no fear approacheth or doubt becloudeth. They shall be forever with the Lord, forever glorified with Him. Expect not lips of clay fitly to speak on such a theme. Tongues of fire are needed, and words that fall like fire-flakes on the soul.

A day will come—the day of days, time’s crown and glory—when, all conflict, risk, and judgment ended forever, the saints, arrayed in the righteousness of Christ, shall be eternally one with Him in living, loving, lasting union, partaking together of the same glory—the glory of the Most High. What must it be to be there! My dear hearers, will you be there? Make your calling and election sure. If you are not trusting in the Lamb on earth, you will not reign with the Lamb in His glory. He that doth not love the Lamb as the atoning sacrifice shall never be the bride of the Lamb. How can you hope to be glorified with Him if you neglect Him in the day of His scorning? O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I must be one with Thee, for this is my very life! I could not live apart from Thee. If, my hearer, thou canst thus speak, there is good hope that thou shalt be a participator in the marriage of the Lamb.

III. The Lamb

But we pass on now to dwell emphatically upon the fact that the character under which the bridegroom appears is that of the Lamb. “The marriage *of the Lamb* is come.”

It must be so, because first of all *our Savior was the Lamb in the eternal covenant*, when this whole matter was planned, arranged, and settled by the foresight and decree²⁸ of eternity. He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8); and the covenant was with Him as one Who was to be the surety, the substitute, the sacrifice for guilty men. So, and not otherwise, was it of old.

It was, next, as the Lamb that He loved us and proved His love. Beloved, He did not give us words of love merely when He came from heaven to earth and dwelt among us a lowly man before his foes; but He proceeded to deeds of truest affection. The supreme proof of His love was that He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. When He poured out His blood as a sacrifice, it might have been said, “Behold, how he loved them!” If you would prove the love of Jesus, you would not mention the transfiguration, but the crucifixion. Gethsemane and Golgotha would rise to your lips. Here to demonstration, beyond all possibility of doubt by any true heart, the Well-beloved proved His love to us. See how it runs: “Who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20), as if that giving of Himself for me was the clear proof that He loved me. Read again: “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25). The proof of His love to the Church was the giving up of Himself for it. “Being found in

²⁸ See FGB 237, *God’s Decrees*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phi 2:8). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1Jo 4:10). So, you see, as a lamb, He proved His love; and as a lamb, He celebrated His marriage with us.

Go a step further. Love in marriage must be on both sides, and it is *as the Lamb that we first came to love Him*. I had no love to Christ. How could I have, until I saw His wounds and blood? "We love him, because he first loved us" (1Jo 4:19). His perfect life was a condemnation to me, much as I was compelled to admire it; but the love that drew me to Him was shown in His substitutionary character, when He bore my sins in His own body on the tree. Is it not so with you, beloved? I have heard a great deal about conversions through admiration of the character of Christ, but I have never met with one. All I have ever met with have been conversions through a sense of need of salvation, and a consciousness of guilt, which could never be satisfied save by His agony and death, through which sin is justly pardoned and evil is subdued. This is the great heart-winning doctrine. Christ loves us as the Lamb, and we love Him as the Lamb.

Further, marriage is the most perfect union. Surely, it is as the Lamb that Jesus is most closely joined to His people. Our Lord came very close to us when He took our nature, for thus He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He came very near to us when, for this cause, He left His Father and became one flesh with His Church. He could not be sinful as she was; but He did take her sins upon Himself and bear them all away, as it is written, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). When "he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa 53:12) and when the sword of vengeance smote Him in our stead, then He came nearer to us than ever He could do in the perfection of His incarnation.²⁹ I cannot conceive of closer union than that of Christ and souls redeemed by blood. As I look at Him in death, I feel forced to cry, "Surely a husband by blood art thou to me, O Jesus! Thou art joined to me by something closer than the one fact that Thou art of my nature; for that nature of Thine has borne my sin and suffered the penalty of wrath on my behalf. Now art Thou one with me in all things by a union like to that which links Thee with the Father." A wonderful union is thus effected by our Lord's wearing the character of the Lamb.

Once more, *we never feel so one with Jesus as when we see Him as the Lamb*. I shall again appeal to your experience. When have you had the sweetest fellowship with Christ in all your lives? I answer on my own account: it has been when I have sung,

*"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His soul-redeeming blood,*

²⁹ See FGB 234, *Incarnation*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

*With divine assurance knowing
He hath made my peace with God!"*

If I had my choice today, while abiding in this present state, to see my Lord in His glory or on His cross, I should choose the latter. Of course I would prefer to see His glory and be away with Him; but, while dwelling here surrounded with sin and sorrow, a sight of His griefs has the most effect upon me. "O sacred head once wounded," I long to behold thee! I never feel so close to my Lord as when I survey His wondrous cross and see Him pouring out His blood for me. I have been melted down when we have sung together those sweet lines:

*"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"³⁰*

I have almost felt myself in His arms, and like John, I have leaned on His bosom when I have beheld His passion. I do not wonder, therefore, that since He comes closest to us as the Lamb, and since we come closest to Him when we behold Him in that character, He is pleased to call His highest eternal union with His Church, "the marriage of the Lamb."

And O beloved, when you come to think of it, to be married to Him, to be one with Him, to have no thought, no object, no desire, no glory but that which dwells in Him that liveth and was dead—will not this be heaven indeed, where the Lamb is the light thereof? Forever to contemplate and adore Him Who offered up Himself without spot unto God as our sacrifice and propitiation³¹—this shall be an endless feast of grateful love. We shall never weary of this subject.

If you see the Lord coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, from the winepress wherein He has trampled on His foes, you are overawed and overcome by the terror of that dread display of justice (Isa 63:1-2). But when you see Him clad in a vesture dipped in no blood but His own, you will sing aloud evermore, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; to thee be glory for ever and ever" (see Rev 5:9). I could go on singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," throughout all eternity. The theme has an inexhaustible interest about it. There is everything in it: justice, mercy, power, patience, love, condescension, grace, and glory. All over glorious is my Lord when I behold Him as a lamb; and this shall make heaven seven times heaven to me: to think that even then I shall be joined to Him in everlasting bonds as the Lamb. [Here a voice from the gallery cried, "Praise the Lord!"] Yes, my friend, we will praise the Lord. "Praise ye the Lord" is the command that was heard coming out of the throne—"Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye

³⁰ Isaac Watts, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

³¹ **propitiation** – appeasement; sacrifice that turns away wrath.

that fear him, both small and great...for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev 19:5, 7).

IV. The Bride Ready

Now we come to the last point, the preparedness of the bride: "his wife hath made herself ready." Up till now the Church has always been spoken of as His bride. Now she is "his wife." That is a deeper, dearer, more-matured word than "bride": "*his wife* hath made herself ready." The Church has now come to the fullness of her joy, and has taken possession of her status and dower³² as "his wife." What does it mean: "hath made herself ready"?

A. She Comes Willingly

It signifies, first, that she willingly and of her own accord comes to her Lord to be His, and to be with Him forever. This she does with all her heart: "she hath made herself ready." She does not enter into this engagement with reluctance. Some unwisely speak of the grace of God as though it were a physical force that sets a constraint upon the will of the quickened man. Beloved, I never preach to you in that fashion. Free will is an unknown thing except it be wrought in us by grace. Grace is the great liberating force. The will is a slave to evil till grace comes and makes it free to choose that which is good. No action of the soul is more free than that by which it quits sin and closes with Christ. Then the man comes to himself. The heart is free from compulsion when its love goes forth towards the Lord Jesus.

I ask you that love Him, do you feel that you are going against your will in so doing? Far from it: you wish to love Him more. In the ultimate union of all the chosen with Christ, will you want³³ any forcing to take your part in the marriage of the Lamb? Did not the words I used just now state your longings: "My heart is with Him on His throne"? Are you not panting to behold His face? Compulsion to a hungry man to eat would seem more likely than compulsion to be joined unto Christ. His wife hath gladly made herself ready; free grace has made her freely choose Him.

B. She Has Separated from All Evil

Does it not mean that she has put away from herself all evil, and all connection with the corruptions of the harlot church has been destroyed? She has struggled against error; she has fought against infidelity; and both have been put down by her holy watchfulness and earnest testimony, and so she is ready for her Lord.

C. She Is Unified

Does it not also mean that in the great day of the consummation the Church will be one? Alas for the divisions among us! You do not know what denomination my

³² **dower** – gifts given for a bride by her future husband in consideration of marriage.

³³ **want** – need.

friend belonged to who prayed just now. Well, I shall not tell you. You could not judge from his prayer. “The saints in prayer appear as one.” Denomination? A plague upon denominationalism! There should be but one denomination. We should be denominated by the name of Christ, as the wife is named by her husband’s name. As long as the Church of Christ has to say, “My right arm is Episcopalian, my left arm is Wesleyan, my right foot is Baptist, and my left foot is Presbyterian or Congregational,” she is not ready for the marriage. She will be ready when she has washed out these stains, when all her members have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:5). Unity is a main part of the readiness here spoken of.

D. “To Her Was Granted”

I beg you to notice what the preparation was. It is described in the eighth verse: “to her was granted.” I will go no further. Whatever preparation it was that she made, in whatever apparel she was arrayed, it was granted to her. Observe that the harlot church wore fine linen also, but then she had with it purple, silk, scarlet, precious stones, and pearls. I do not know whence the harlot obtained her apparel; but I know where the true Church found her wedding dress; for it is written, “to her was granted.” This was a gift of sovereign grace, the free gift of her own Beloved: “To her was granted.” She had a grant from the throne, a royal grant, an indisputable right. We also go to heaven by royal grant. We have nothing of our own to carry us there by right, nothing of boasted merit; but to us also is granted acceptance in the Beloved. Oh, it is a glorious thing to hold your own by letters patent,³⁴ under the great seal of heaven! When we shall be united to Jesus, the ever blessed Lamb, in endless wedlock, all our fitness to be there will be ours by free grant.

E. Her Apparel

Look at the apparel of the wife: “to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white.” How simple her raiment! Only fine linen, clean and white! The more simple our worship, the better. The true Church of Christ is content with white linen, and no more. She asked not for those fine things we read about in connection with the harlot. She envied not the unchaste one her harpers, musicians, pipers, and trumpeters; she was content with her simple harp and joyful song. She did not need all manner of vessels of ivory, and precious wood, brass and iron, and marble. She did not seek for cinnamon, odors, and ointments, nor aught else of that finery with which people nowadays try to adorn their worship.

The simpler the better. When in worship you cannot hear the voices of the people beyond the noise that might be made by the twitter of half-a-dozen sparrows, because a flood of noise from a huge organ is drowning all the praise—I think we have lost

³⁴ **letters patent** – an open document issued by a monarch or government conferring a patent or other right.

our way.³⁵ The simpler the worship, the better—whether in prayer, praise, or anything else. The harlot church bedecks herself with her architecture, millinery, perfumery, oratory, and music; but those who would follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth will keep their worship, their practice, and their doctrine pure and simple, avoiding all the blandishments of carnal³⁶ policy and human wisdom, content with the truth as it is in Jesus. What more beautiful than pure white linen?

In the Greek, our text runs thus: “Fine linen, clean and white: for fine linen is *the righteousness of the saints*” (Rev 19:8). Our Revised Version³⁷ has, in this case, not given us a translation, but an explanation, and that explanation is a contraction of the sense. The revisers word it, “Fine linen is the righteous acts of saints.” That word *acts* is of their own insertion. The word *righteousness* has a fuller meaning; it is exceeding broad, [but] they have narrowed it and misapplied it. We shall have a complete array of righteousnesses in Christ’s righteousness, active and passive—a garment for the head, and a garment for the feet, and for the loins.

What righteousnesses we have! Righteousness imparted by the power of the Spirit; righteousness imputed by the decree of God. Every form of righteousness will go to make up the believer’s outfit; only, all of it is *granted*, and none of it is of our own purchasing. We shall not have Christ’s righteousness to cover up our sin, as some blasphemously say—for we shall have no sin to cover. We shall not want³⁸ Christ’s righteousness to make an evil heart seem pure: we shall be as perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Washed in the blood of the Lamb, we shall have no spot upon us or within us. We shall have a complete righteousness; and, in this arrayed, we shall be covered with the beauty of holiness. This garment is most befitting, for it is “the righteousness of saints.” Saints ought to have righteousness. They are themselves made holy, and therefore they ought to be adorned in visible holiness; and so they shall be.

Best of all we shall be arrayed in that day with *that which pleases the Bridegroom*. Do I not remember how He said, “I counsel thee to buy of me...white raiment” (Rev 3:18)? Yes, she has remembered His bidding. She has nothing else but that “fine linen” which is “the righteousness of saints”; and this He delights in. She comes to the Lamb, bearing about her the result of His own passion and of His own Spirit, and she is well pleasing in His eyes. The Lord sees in her of the travail of His soul, and He is satisfied (Isa 53:11).

F. Love the Lamb

I have done when I have again put this question: Do you trust the Lamb? I warn you, if you have a religion that has no blood of Christ in it, it is not worth a thought; you had better be rid of it. It will be of no use to you. I warn you, also, that unless

³⁵ There are differences of opinion among godly men about the issue of accompaniment in worship.

³⁶ **carnal** – limited to man’s experience; depending upon human reason.

³⁷ **Revised Version** – translation of the Bible completed in Britain in 1885.

³⁸ **want** – need.

you love the Lamb, you cannot be married to the Lamb; for He will never be married to those who have no love to Him. You must take Jesus as a sacrifice or not at all. It is useless to say, "I will follow Christ's example." You will not do anything of the sort. It is idle to say, "He shall be my teacher." He will not own you for a disciple unless you will own Him as a sacrifice. You must take Him as the Lamb or have done with Him. If you do despite to³⁹ the blood of Christ, you do despite to the whole person of Christ. Christ is nothing to you if He is not your atonement. As many of you as hope to be saved by the works of the Law or by *anything* else apart from His blood and righteousness, you have un-Christianized yourselves; you have no part in Jesus here, and you shall have no part in Him hereafter, when He shall take to Himself His own redeemed Church to be His spouse forever and ever. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.



³⁹ do despite to – despise.