

The Wedding Psalm (Introduction)

Psalm 45:1-17

Halifax: 25 April 2010

Introduction

I don't know if any one has noticed it lately,

- but it seems like a lot of people in our congregation have had marriage and weddings and things like on their minds.
- And besides that, we have just come to a transition point in our series from Isaiah with the completion of chapter 39...
- And besides that, the elders told me that they thought it might be good if I did a special series on marriage and family...
 - So I thought about it and realising that there are four weeks until I go on my annual month of travels,
 - I decided that this would be a really great time to do a little series about marriage.
- It was very difficult to decide what to focus on for such a series, but after a lot of different ideas,
 - I finally settled on Psalm 45, the wedding Psalm!
 - Back in 2006, I preached on this Psalm and it was our Psalm of Focus.
 - A lot of you really took a liking to this Psalm.
 - But as is often the case with a Psalm of Focus,
 - I only preached one message on it and there was so much more that could be said about this Psalm...
 - and so today I want to begin a four-part series on Psalm 45.
 - And yes, we will take this Psalm as our Psalm of Focus over the next four weeks.

Today, what I have to say about this Psalm will be almost entirely introductory.

- I want to begin with a question
 - We will spend the bulk of our time today on this question:

I. Who is this Psalm about?

A. If you glance over this Psalm you can see that it is about a wedding of a king.

1. The structure is quite simple...

- a. From verse 1-9, it speaks about the king.
- 1) First, in verses 2-5, it presents him as a mighty conquering warrior who goes forth in justice.
 - Indeed, every man who wishes to establish a household ought to go forth for the cause of Jesus Christ according to his gifts and calling as this great king does!
 - His business is the service of the Lord whether he is a king or a carpenter.
 - 2) Then, from verse 6 to verse 9, it speaks of him as the one who establishes a joyous and prosperous house...
 - Again, something that every man ought to endeavour to do who takes a wife.
 - It is a house of gladness and love that brings glory to God.

TRANS> The king is highly praised and honoured and his reign is looked on with great hope and anticipation.

- b. And then in verse 10 to verse 17, the psalm speaks about the king's bride.
- 1) In verses 10-12, she is admonished to leave her father's house to form a new household with her husband!
 - This is what every bride is called to do—
 - She becomes part of a new household—one flesh with her husband.
 - She leaves her father's household and brings all her beauty and her gifts to contribute to his household.
 - 2) In verses 13-16, she is seen as entering into the joy of her husband's household and being a fruitful mother of children...
 - The children she bears to him are children who continue to carry on the work of her husband from generation to generation, bearing their father's name with honour!
 - There was a much greater sense of this in the Old Testament than there is in our western lands today where men often have little interest in their children.
 - But every godly bride should seek to bring forth godly off-spring that will carry on God's work and their husband's good name in the world.

TRANS> This Psalm speaks of everything that could be hoped among the godly at a royal wedding...

- Whenever the sons of David married, the godly renewed their hope in the glorious kingdom that God had promised them.

- But do we know which particular king this Psalm is about?
 - We do not know for certain...but...

- 2. The details of this Psalm seem to fit best with King Joram of Judah in his marriage to Athaliah.
 - a. If you know anything about Joram and Athaliah, you may find this suggestion to be quite shocking...even disturbing!
 - 1) Joram (or Jehoram as he was also called) was the wicked son of good King Jehoshaphat.
 - He was so wicked in fact, that we are told that when he died, no one mourned for him.
 - After his father, Jehoshaphat died, he killed all six of his brothers after the manner of a pagan king,
 - probably following the advice of his dominant wife Athaliah.
 - He filled the land with Baal worship and idolatry—the very things his father had purged from the land.

 - 2) Athaliah his bride was the daughter of Ahab—
 - Jezebel was probably her mother, although we are not told and Ahab had more than one wife.
 - Jehoshaphat, while generally a godly king,
 - had been very foolish to arrange this marriage,
 - but he did so without foreknowledge that his son or Athaliah would become so reprobate.

 - It is easy to see how he fell into this—with the best of intentions and the highest of hopes...
 - At the time, it surely seemed like a wonderful thing to him to arrange this marriage.
 - For generation, Israel and Judah had had sour relations.
 - Jehoshaphat had worked hard to restore Judah's relationship with Israel and this marriage was the seal of his success.
 - Things had gone so well that he was able to make an alliance by his son's marriage to Ahab's daughter!
 - These were happy times for him.
 - Times, you can be sure, when he was full of thanksgiving to God.
 - In no way was this an act of rebellion on his part.

- It was a foolish thing to do because Ahab was a wicked and ungodly man...
 - But Jehoshaphat thought it was a good thing.
 - The joy and hope expressed in Psalm 45 was surely the joy and hope of Jehoshaphat at the time of his son's wedding.
- 3) But Joram was so far from the ideal described in Psalm 45 that the Lord brought judgement upon Joram after only six years of his reign.
- And then his son Ahaziah reigned in his place.
 - For all intents and purposes, Athaliah now had control of the throne as the Queen mother.
 - but Ahaziah was cut off after only one year of rule—probably at the tender age of 23.
- 4) It was at this time that Athaliah did something that displayed the extent of her depravity...
- She was so pleased about reigning as queen that she killed all her own grandsons.
 - She attempted to wipe out all the heirs to the throne of David so that she could reign without being challenged...
 - And so she did—of six long years she reigned—the only time a queen was on the throne of David.
 - But because of God's gracious promise to David (and to all of us), that He would always preserve the seed of David until Messiah came,
 - the LORD did not allow Athaliah to kill *all* the heirs to the throne.
 - You may remember the story of how baby Joash was hidden by his aunt (Ahaziah's sister) who was the wife of the godly priest Jehoiada.
 - And then at eight years of age how Joash was brought forward and crowned as king while Athaliah cried out "Treason Treason!"

TRANS> But don't lose sight of the main point I was making in all this...

- The occasion for which Psalm 45 was written was probably the wedding of this wicked couple.
 - How could Joram and Athaliah possibly be the couple spoken of in Psalm 45?
- b. There are several things that point in this direction.

- 1) First, the time of Joram was a time of great wealth such as is described in Psalm 45.
 - The psalm speaks of treasures imported from different parts of the world.
 - This has led some to think that this may be the wedding of Solomon because of the riches that were so abundant in his day,
 - but the time of Joram was a time when those riches had been restored in Judah.
 - In 2 Chron 18:1, we are told that Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance.
 - In 2 Chron 21:3, we are told that Jehoshaphat gave all six of his sons great gifts of silver and gold and precious things with fortified cities.
 - It was a time of great blessing and prosperity such as is described in this Psalm.
- 2) Secondly, and related to this, there are a couple of specific treasures mentioned in Psalm 45 that relate to the time of Joram...
 - There is reference to the gold of Ophir—and Jehoshaphat had just secured a fleet of ships that were to bring gold from Ophir at the time of Joram’s wedding...
 - And in verse 8, there is a reference to the bride bringing treasures out of ivory palaces—
 - her father Ahab was known for having built an ivory palace at this time.
 - We don’t know of any ivory palaces in Solomon’s day.
- 3) But the third and most conclusive indication that Psalm 45 refers to Joram’s marriage to Athaliah is in the mention of Tyre.
 - Ahab’s wife Jezebel was the daughter of the pagan priest of Tyre, and Jezebel was probably Athaliah’s mother.
 - In verse 12, Psalm 45 speaks of the daughter of Tyre bringing her gift.
 - This wedding was bringing not just two, but three kingdoms together: Judah, Israel, and Tyre.
 - Athaliah certainly did show her connection with Tyre by a fanatical devotion to the cultus of the Tyrian Baal Melqart.
 - Sadly she brought much more than the treasures of Tyre into the house of David.

TRANS> We do not know for sure that Psalm 45 was written on the occasion of the marriage of Athaliah and Joram,

c. But there is no harm done to Psalm 45 if it was indeed written at the time of a marriage of a couple that turned to be some of the worst to inherit David's throne.

1) It was still right for those at the wedding of a successor to David to have high hopes concerning the kingdom and its succession.

- This is something we all need to learn
 - The lineage of Christ is filled with sinners—in fact, when we compare them to God's requirement, they are all entirely unfit and unworthy of Him.
 - By having some that are really wicked, it reminds us that in fact none were worthy of Him.
- This teaches us that hope we have for the advance of God's kingdom is not grounded in the goodness of man, but in the promise of God.

2) At the same time, we do learn what trouble and disappointment a young couple who turns from the Lord can bring to God's people.

- When we see our covenant children growing up in the Lord, we have high hopes for them as they marry and move forward for Jesus Christ.
 - We rightly look in hope for the Lord to do great things through them!
- But what grief and disappointment it brings if they harden their hearts and turn from the Lord.
 - How great their judgement will be who had such great privileges and made such ill use of them!
 - Woe to them!
 - As with Judas, it would have been better for them if they had not been born.

3) Nevertheless, we learn that no matter how much the wicked may try to overthrow God's kingdom,

- they will never succeed.
 - Let the Jews crucify Christ out of envy—it is only that He might rise again with justification for our sins...
 - Let persecutors rise up to destroy the church—it only brings God more glory through his faithful martyrs and brings many more sons into the kingdom.
- Brothers and sisters, the church of God will not be hindered!

- The Lord will accomplish all that He has promised concerning His kingdom.
- The hope of Psalm 45 will not be frustrated by Joram and Athaliah, no matter how hard they may try.
- The Lord will accomplish all that He has spoken.

TRANS> So this Psalm is about the marriage of a son of David in the hope of the glorious covenant promise of God!

- It was probably written on the occasion of the marriage of Joram and Athaliah.
 - But now I want you to see further that it was very obviously written about a marriage much greater than that of Joram or Solomon or David!

B. I want you to see that this Psalm was obviously written about the marriage of King Jesus to His church—His chosen bride!

1. There is said of this king that which is just too excellent to say about any ordinary Son of David.
 - In verse 2 He is said to be fairer than the sons of men!
 - He is said to have grace poured upon his lips—to be a man who speaks truth and righteousness!
 - In vesre 3-5 He is said to conquer his enemies with the power of God—which may be said of other kings to an extent...
 - But then in verse 6, He is called God...
 - “Your throne O God is forever and ever!”
 - In the Epistle to the Hebrews,
 - this is quoted expressly of none other than the LORD Jesus Christ because it only pertains to none other Jesus Christ!
 - No one else is God on the throne forever!
 - This is our wonderful Saviour’s exclusive place!
 - And look,
 - He is described as loving righteousness and hating wickedness...
 - Can this be said of any other than our LORD Jesus Christ?
 - to truly hate wickedness and to truly love righteousness?
 - David sinned, Solomon sinned, Joram certainly sinned.
 - Only Christ is righteous.
 - And then He is described as anointed above his companions!
 - Jesus Christ is the Messiah – the anointed one!
 - I should point out that the Jews understood this to pertain to the Messiah.

- how much more ought we who now know the Messiah and rejoice in His appearing!

TRANS> So here in this Psalm, we are given wonderful words with which to praise our dear Lord.

- Words to stir up our worship of Him in all His messianic greatness and power as the One who comes to establish a glorious house and who conquers all His enemies!
- Words of hope and great encouragement.

2. And now look at His bride!

- a. She is the church and she is called to leave everything to be His alone!
 - She is called to enter into His joy and to bring her companions with her!
 - Just what our LORD calls us to do when He brings us the gospel and invites us to come and live in His house!
- b. Are we from Tyre? Are we gentiles? Do we come from an ungodly past?
 - No matter!
 - Like Athaliah, we are called to enter into God's house.
 - to forget our father's house, own people, and come to Him alone as our Lord and Master...
 - to leave our father and mother and cling to our husband.
 - God delights in taking what is broken and ruined and making it new!
 - If you would seek Him now, it does not matter where you have come from or where you have been.
 - His grace meets you where you are.
- c. And see how the bride of Christ is called to bring forth children for Him.
 - Unlike Athaliah who destroyed her children by he selfishness,
 - We are called in Jesus Christ to be a royal princess bringing forth children for Him that serve Him in His house from generation to generation.
 - By His grace, we are to bring forth princes that serve God and man from age to age and who continue in His house forever!

3. Was this Psalm written on the occasion of Athaliah and Jorah's wedding?

- Let that be all the greater of an encouragement to you!
 - Despite their great wickedness, Athaliah was nonetheless the one who brought forth a son of David who was preserved against her own will...
 - and because the grace of God is so great and His power so invincible,

- this wicked mother was actually used to bring forth in time the true Messiah, the Saviour of the whole world!
- This just highlights the grace of God—
 - That His kingdom is not brought forth by the goodness and power of man, but by His extreme grace!
 - What hope there is for us as we struggle along in our walk as His people!
 - It is by His grace that kingdom of God goes on!
 - Let us serve Him with all the more eagerness and zeal!
 - He brings light out of darkness, life out of death, righteousness out of wickedness!
 - It is His glory to do!
 - He calls what is not as though it is!
 - Blessed be His glorious name!
 - Do not look at yourself or your own resources.
 - Look to your mighty Lord and His super-abounding grace!
 - Where sin abounds, grace far more abounds!

TRANS> Surely this Psalm is fundamentally about our Lord Jesus Christ and His bride!

- Let it warm your heart accordingly if you are His!
- Let it put you in fear and trembling if you are not.
 - But this Psalm is also about something more.

C. Because it is a wedding Psalm, it is about our weddings... our ordinary weddings

1. This is the great thing about scripture that you all need to understand.

- When you read something that speaks of Christ and His bride, there are always lessons for you about marriage.
 - And whenever you read something that speaks about marriage, there are always lessons about Jesus Christ and His relationship to us!
- There is this debate that goes on about the Song of Solomon and passages like this about who they refer to.
 - There are many today who want to say that the Song of Solomon is only about marriage.
 - And there are those in the past who have said that it is only about Christ and the church.
 - But why do we have to make such a choice?

- The apostles don't make these kinds of choices.
 - They apply muzzling and ox to paying a preacher...
 - They apply the phrase "out of Egypt have I called my Son" to Jesus and His persecutions...
 - And more specifically to our point,
 - Paul applies the words of the institution of marriage:
 - "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh"
 - to Christ and the church!
 - Paul has no problem making this connection and neither should we if we would learn from him!
 - In Ephesians 5:31, he quotes these words about marriage and then he says,
 - Eph 5:32: This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church!
 - You see, it is a parallel relationship!
 - We learn more about marriage as we learn more about Christ and the church...
 - And we learn more about Christ and the church as we learn what it is to live in marriage according to God's will.
- Why can't we freely preach about Christ and marriage from the Song of Solomon,
 - and freely preach about marriage and Christ from Psalm 45?
 - and freely preach about both from Ephesians 5?
 - That is how the apostles teach us to interpret the scriptures.

TRANS> Don't you see brothers and sisters,

2. God has made us in His image...

- a. And we learn about Him as we learn about ourselves and what He calls us to be...
 - And we learn about ourselves as we learn about Him and what He is revealed to be in Jesus Christ.
 - We need not look at one to the exclusion of the other...
 - but as we learn of the one, we ought to learn of the other!
 - That is just the way God has done things.

- b. I showed you in Ephesians 5 how Paul says that the relationship between Christ and the church is parallel to the relationship of husband and wife...
 - And now I want to show you something further.
 - I want you to look at 1 Cor 11 and see that the relationship of husband and wife is also said to be parallel to the relationship of God the Father and God the Son!
 - It is an amazing statement right in verse 3.
 - Look at 1 Corinthians 11:3!
 - 1 Cor 11:3: “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.”
 - Do you see?
 - There are three relationships that are compared here!
 - The relationship that Christ bears as head to every man...
 - Is the same relationship that fathers or husbands bear to their daughters and wives (respectively)
 - And this is the same relationship that God the Father bears to God the Son!
 - This is so rich! It brings marriage right up to the relationship of God Himself in the Trinity!
 - Just look at Christ and the Father...
 - We are told in John 5 that the Son always does what pleases the Father... He always has and He always will... it is His glory to please the Father!
 - And we are told that the Father continually gives all things to the Son—
 - As the Head of the trinity, He pours His glory into Him so that He is filled with all the glory of the Father.
 - In Philippians 2, we see this fully illustrated for us...
 - Where Jesus, in obedience to the Father, leaves heaven to come and die on the cross for us—He does this for the Father...
 - And then in response to this, the Father fills Him with glory and gives Him the name that is above every name!
 - And here is the amazing thing...
 - The Son came down in order that He might pour out His glory into us—that He might redeem us and fill us...

- So he pours everything out for us and then the Father pours everything back in to Him.
- And Jesus is busy filling His church with His glory as we are told in Eph 1:22-23:
 - “And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23 NKJV)
 - He fills us and the Father fills Him!
 - This is hard for us to grasp, but this is what the scripture says!
 - And it is our example!
 - And now in 1 Cor 11:3,
 - Paul tells us that husbands are the head of their wives and daughters in the same way that Christ is their head and that God is His head!
 - Husbands are to exercise headship the Christ exercises headship over the church which is the way the Father exercises headship over Christ!
- c. Do you see how much there is for us to learn—about God and about the church and about marriage?
 - Learning about each of these helps us to learn about the others!
 - Husbands must learn to pour out themselves as a sacrifice for their wives even as Christ poured Himself out for the church!
 - And this is the same way that the Father pours Himself out for Christ, always giving, always filling, always blessing!
 - And as husbands empty themselves, they are made full by Christ.
 - You see how utterly inappropriate it is for a husband to be abusive to His wife or to compete with her!
 - He is rather to pour himself out for her!
 - We can't possibly understand how all this works within the eternal godhead...
 - But we must accept that it does work in some mysterious divine way that there is this filling with glory and this giving that goes on.
 - Submission is not a demeaning thing at all—it is what the Son always does, and it is what we are always to do to Christ and what wives and daughters are to do to their husbands.

- There is this constant love going on between the members of the trinity that is like Christ's love to the church that is like a husband's love for His wife...
 - When the husband understands that he is one flesh with her as Christ is one flesh with the church...
 - and takes up her interests and her happiness as his own—
 - when he truly comes to love her as he loves Himself...
 - recognising that she his own flesh and blood even as we are one flesh and blood with Christ whose death causes us to live...
 - then he is beginning to be what he is called to be a husband.

- I don't claim to fully understand this...
 - That is not the point!
 - The point is that we understand enough of it to understand what it really meant for Christ to take us as His own...
 - and then to understand how husbands are to take their wives as their own and pour out themselves for their sake.
 - This is something that God's grace will be teaching Christian husbands to do as long as they live!
 - And as we learn about it, we will learn more and more of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.
 - We learn of it by living in it ourselves—and like Christ, the more we give, the more we are filled with glory.

 - We all stand in a relationship of giving and a relationship of joyfully receiving and responding...
 - A husband is to teach His wife about submission by the way he submits to Christ...
 - even as Christ teaches him by the way He submits to the Father...
 - and even as wives teach their husbands how to submit to God by the way they submit to their husbands...
 - and all the while learn what it was for Christ to submit to the Father.

 - We all get to participate...
 - And if you are not married, you still get to participate because you live in this relationship to Christ and you are directly as one married to Him...
 - And you are called to pour out your life for others.

So who is Psalm 45 about then?

- It is about Joram and Athaliah,
 - It is about Christ and the church,
 - And it is about husbands and wives.
 - It is about you!

II. And now I want to say a few words about how you ought to sing this Psalm...

A. First, you ought to sing it with delight in Jesus Christ!

- In singing it, it will be good for all of you to sing with the same attitude as the one who composed it...
 - He describes his attitude in verse 1:
 - He says,
 - Ps. 45:1: “My heart is overflowing with a good theme.”
 - That word **overflowing** literally means to boil over—
 - He so filled with joy when he considered this subject that he could hardly contain himself!
 - There was a heat of affection that boiled over from within!
- Too often, we are bubbling forth with things far less noble...
 - we bubble up inside with a piece of juicy gossip that breaks forth...
 - or we boil over with anger against our spouse or our children, saying things that ought not to have been said.
 - How much better it is to bubble forth with the good theme of this Psalm...
 - The theme, as the Psalm writer says, “of the King.”
- For the Psalmist,
 - these words were given to him by the Holy Spirit,
 - but remember that the Holy Spirit has also given these words to **us** to sing by putting them in the Bible’s song book for us.
 - The Book of Psalms is the Holy Spirit’s hymnbook for the church.
 - And so when you sing and start off with verse one, saying,
 - “My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King,”
 - You need to know that these words are meant to be on your tongue...
 - The Holy Spirit has given them to you to sing...

- And that if He means them to be your tongue,
 - He surely means them to be a genuine expression of your heart!
 - He does not want mere words from us, but words that come from within.
 - And so I hope as you become more and more acquainted with the words of this Psalm that it will overflow from your heart!
 - How excellent that would be!
 - It is my prayer that every one in our congregation would have a heart that overflows with these excellent words about our excellent Saviour and His church!
 - May it ever be so!
- B. Secondly, you ought to sing the words of this Psalm (and receive them) as admonition to one another.
1. Ephesians 5:19 calls us to be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...
 - You see in this that you are not only called to sing *to the Lord*,
 - you are also called to speak *to one another*...
 - And the parallel passage in Colossians emphasises this idea of *singing to one another* even more,
 - Col 3:16 says that we are to “*teach and admonish*” each other from the psalms.
 - In our corporate praise we are not only singing to the Lord,
 - but also to each other.
 2. And so in the singing of Psalm 45,
 - We are looking to teach each other about marriage and admonish each other to live in marriage according to God’s will...
 - We are saying,
 - husband, look at Christ—look at what He does and look at what He is to His bride—
 - you are to be like Him...
 - You go and pour out your life for your wife.
 - And we are saying,

- wives, look at the bride—look at how she enters into her husband’s household and lives joyfully with him and is fruitful for her Lord—
- And we are also saying to every member of Christ,
 - let your response be like this bride’s response—leave all for Jesus and live joyfully in His house...
 - and be fruitful for him...
- And of course if we are admonishing and teaching each other,
 - It goes without saying that we ought to also be receiving admonishment and teaching from each other ...
 - Let each of us be not only be ready to admonish, but also to receive the good counsel that our Lord has for us here as we sing together.

TRANS> There is a lot that is to happen when we sing—

- Singing is not just a way to fill space in the service or to make a transition.
 - It is a sacred exercise before the LORD and in the company of one another in which we solemnly admonish one another.
 - And when you do this...

C. As you sing this Psalm, my brothers and sisters, you will, as the bride of Christ, be doing the very thing this Psalm calls you to do in verse 17.

1. You will be causing the name of your husband, Jesus Christ, to be remembered in all generations!
 - You are telling the present generation and the generation that is growing up about your dear Saviour...
 - About His great love and service for His bride...
 - And about your delight in Him as His bride and the joy you have in giving yourself into His service.
2. And by God’s grace, the outcome will be what is stated at the end of verse 17 to the Lord...
 - “Therefore the people shall praise you forever and ever!”
 - We are saying,
 - Just look at our husband Jesus! Just look at Him and how great He is!
 - We are stirring up our generation to praise Him—
 - To confess His greatness with us and to give thanks to Him forever and ever...

- And by the grace of God, they will!
 - Even Athaliah for all her wickedness could not stop the praises of Christ.
 - She could not stomp it out.
 - How encouraging this ought to be to you are trying to promote His praise and His glory!
 - If Athaliah did so while trying to do the opposite,
 - how confident you can be that you will indeed promote His glory when you set out to do so!
 - How much more can you, whose hearts have been captivated by the grace of God and by the love of your Saviour...
 - promote His glory by your eager praise of Him in this world?
 - Not just by singing this Psalm,
 - but by a life that is consistent with this Psalm by the grace of God...
 - Let us make His name to live in our generation and in the generations to come!