



# THE WISE VIRGINS

GOING FORTH TO  
MEET THE BRIDEGROOM

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Matthew 25:6

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by Ebenezer Erskine

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## **THE WISE VIRGINS GOING FORTH TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM**

MATTHEW 25:6.—"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him."

## THE FIRST SERMON ON THIS TEXT

THESE words that I have read are a part of the famous parable of the ten virgins; for clearing of which, you would carefully advert to these two or three things.

1st, The Bridegroom here spoken of is none other than Christ Jesus the Lord, the eternal Son of God, who, from all eternity, rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and whose delights were so much with the sons of men, that he first married our nature into a personal union with himself, that so there might be some sort of equality in the bargain; and having made himself of our tribe, comes to betrothe us to himself for ever in a marriage-relation.

2dly, The virgins here spoken of are the professors of religion, members of the church visible. The church is called the bride the Lamb's wife, Rev. 19:7–9. particularly professors, saints, and believers, at least in profession, are so called virgins, because of the beauty of holiness that should adorn them.

3dly, The office of these virgins is to meet the bridegroom. This alludes unto a common custom among the Jews, who consummated their marriages at night; when the bridegroom was on his way to the place of marriage, the bride with so many virgins that attended her, went forth with lamps to meet him, in order to conduct him to the bride's chamber. Now, with allusion to this custom, professors of religion are said to go and meet the Bridegroom.

4thly, Notice the different characters of these virgins, five were wise, and five foolish. The foolish represent the case of nominal or hypocritical professors, who have the lamp of a profession, and content themselves with a name to live, while destitute of the life and power of religion; and, by wise virgins, we are to understand real saints, or believers indeed, who not only profess Christ and Christianity, but are Christians indeed, having the oil of his grace and spirit within them.

5thly, We have the common fault of both these sorts of virgins, while the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept; together with the surprising summons they all get to attend the Bridegroom, ver. 6, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. It is the last clause of this verse that I intend to insist upon, viz. Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.

We have a key given us, ver. 13. for opening of the general scope of this parable, "Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Which words, though they chiefly and particularly relate unto the coming of Christ by death, or his coming at the last judgment: yet, as Mr Shephard and other interpreters are agreed, they do not exclude, but include, his other intermediate comings, whether in the dispensation of the word and sacraments, of ordinances, or providences, it is the duty of all to prepare for his reception and entertainment.

The words read, ver. 6. are a surprising summons or advertisement unto the church in general, and every individual member thereof, to make ready for his entertainment, because he is at the door. And at midnight there was a cry made, &c., where we may notice the particulars following.

(1.) To whom the advertisement is given. It is unto all in general, both unto the wise and foolish virgins. The gospel is preached unto a promiscuous multitude of good and bad, gracious and graceless, according to Christ's command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature."

(2.) We have the manner in which the advertisement is given. It is by a cry, so as all might hear and take warning, Is. 57:1. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet." Ministers, are God's criers or heralds. It is said of John the Baptist, that he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," &c. Whatever be the message God puts in our mouth, whether it be of mercy or of judgment, we are not to whisper it in a corner, but to publish it as upon the house top, Prov.

1:20–24, "Wisdom crieth without the city, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief place of concourse."

(3.) We have the time when the summons or advertisement is given. At midnight, when they all slumbered and slept, and had given over hope and expectation of his coming: both the wise and foolish virgins were saying, "The Lord delayeth his coming;" and therefore, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." In this case, even at midnight, in a surprise, the cry is made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh.

(4.) We have the summons or advertisement itself, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. These are the words I intend particularly to insist upon, and in them we may notice these following particulars.

1. The solemnity of the warning in the word Behold, which may be taken there as a note of attention or admiration. It is like the warnward when the King's proclamation is issued forth by the herald; he cries, Oyez, to arrest the attention of the audience, like that, Is. 55:1, "Ho every one that thirsteth," &c. Or we may take it as a note of admiration, Behold and wonder at the glory of the Bridegroom, who is a-coming. We find commonly, when the Messiah is spoken of by the prophets under the Old Testament, they usher in their prophecies anent his coming, with a note of admiration, Behold! Is. 7:14, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name IMMANUEL Is. 42:1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold," &c.; Is. 55:4, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people;" Zech. 9:9, "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, behold thy King cometh unto thee," &c.; signifying that Christ is a wonderful person, and his coming to us in mercy is wonderful.

2. We have the character of the person concerning whom this intimation is made. He is called the Bridegroom, and the Bridegroom in a way of eminence, because there is none that ever bore this

character that can be compared to him. Whenever we hear the name of a bridegroom, we presently conclude there is a marriage in hand; so here when Christ takes this amiable character and title to himself, we should presently conclude there is a match or marriage in hand, that Christ is a lover, and that he hath a bride, and a purpose of marriage with her, according to that you have, Hos. 2:19, 20, "I will betrothe you unto me for ever," &c. But more of this afterwards, if the Lord will.

3. In the words we have the approach of the Bridegroom, Behold the Bridegroom cometh. There are various comings of Christ we read of in scripture. There is his first coming in the flesh, and his second coming unto judgment, either general or particular. There are his typical and prophetic comings to the church, in the Old Testament, and his actual coming in person to fulfil and accomplish the great work of redemption, by his obedience, death, and resurrection. There is his coming, in the dispensation of the gospel, to a church or nation. There is his coming, in the power of his word and Spirit in a day of conversion to a church, or to a particular soul, as when he said to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to this house." And, lastly, there is his coming in word or sacrament with the renewed manifestations of his love, or the renewed influences and communications of his Spirit of grace; as when it is said, Ps 72:6, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth:" or Hos. 6:3, "His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Now, I do not, in my intended discourse upon these words, exclude any of these comings of Christ that I have mentioned. But at present I understand them of his approach in a way of grace and love, in the dispensation of word or sacrament, or any other ordinance of his appointment, wherein he uses to manifest himself, and impart the fruits of his dying love unto the souls of his people.

And one reason why I choose to discourse the words in this view, is, because he here presents himself in the quality of a bridegroom,



coming with a design of marriage or espousal; and so we have a word much parallel unto this, Song 3:11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

4. We have the duty incumbent upon all the virgins, on the approach of the Bridegroom. Go ye out to meet him. This alludes, as was hinted before, unto the practice or custom in marriages among the Jews, in the time of our Saviour's being upon earth. The bride and her maids, under night, went forth to meet him with lighted lamps, in order to attend him to the place of marriage, with some sort of nuptial solemnity. In allusion to this custom, the church in general, and all particular professors, under the notion of virgins, are commanded and called to go out and meet Christ, when he is coming in the dispensation of his word and ordinances, or when he comes at death or the last judgment. But the import of this expression may occur afterwards, in the prosecution of the following doctrine.

DOCT.—"That it is the indispensable duty of all and every one, when Christ, the glorious Bridegroom of souls, is a-coming, to go out and meet him, by giving him a suitable reception and entertainment." Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

I shall only adduce two places of scripture for proof and confirmation of this doctrine. The one you have, Ps. 24 at the close, where Christ, under the notion of some great person, is represented as drawing near unto the gates or doors of some great house or city; and thereupon a summons is issued out, 'Cast open the gates, and make room for his entertainment.' "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." And when the question is put, "Who is this King of glory?" the answer is made, ver. 8, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." The summons is again renewed: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Another text you have to this purpose,



Song 3:9 and downwards, where Christ, under the notion of King Solomon, who made to himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon, the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom of gold, the covering of purple, being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. This chariot of state is none else than the chariot of the everlasting gospel, wherein Christ, like a bridegroom, goes forth, manifesting the glory of his person, and the glorious device of Infinite Wisdom for the salvation of sinners. And in the last verse a cry is made, like this in my text, to all professors of religion, who are designed the daughters of Zion. "Behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

But now, in discoursing this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the following method.

I. I would premise a few things with relation to the spiritual marriage spoken of in this parable.

II. Give some account of the Bridegroom, and his excellent engaging qualities.

III. Give some account of the bride, and the vast disparity of the match.

IV. Speak a little of the comings of the Bridegroom, and his gracious approaches to his people.

V. Speak of the import of the duty required upon his approach, in these words, Go ye out to meet him.

VI. Give the reasons of the doctrine, why we are to go out and meet him, and give him suitable reception.

VII. Make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. The first thing in the method is, to premise a few things anent the spiritual marriage; for, as I said in the explication, a bridegroom supposes a marriage in hand.

1st, God the Father, from all eternity, had a purpose of marriage betwixt his own beloved Son, and a select company of the fallen race and posterity of Adam: hence Christ tells us, Matt. 22:2. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain King who made a marriage for his son." The marriage was made in the purpose of God from eternity, and the bride was given unto the Bridegroom before ever she had a being, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John 17:8; Psa. 2. "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And that they were given him in a design of marriage, is plain from what the Lord says to, and concerning the church of the Gentiles, by the spirit of prophecy, long before their being called by the gospel, Is. 54:1, 5. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife." And ver. 5. "Thy Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of hosts is his name."

2dly, This proposal of marriage with a bride of Adam's family was graciously received and entertained by the Son of God before the world was made," Prov. 8:3. He rejoiced "in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.—I delight to do thy will, O my God," says he, Psa. 40:8. q. d. 'I consent to, and am heartily willing and content; a bargain be it; let it be registrated in the volume of thy book;' i.e. Let it be entered into the records of heaven, and an extract thereof be given out in the scriptures of truth unto sinners of mankind, that they may have their thoughts about it.

3dly, So much was the heart of the Bridegroom set upon the match, that he undertook to remove all impediments that lay in the way: and indeed the impediments were so great and insuperable, that nothing but almighty power, inspired with infinite and amazing love, could remove them; and yet they are all rolled away by the wisdom and power of the Bridegroom.

The first impediment was the inequality of the parties as to their nature. We may easily suppose that the question would be put upon the first proposal of the marriage, how shall God and man, the Creator and the creature, be ever brought unto a conjugal relation? The distance of natures is infinite, and therefore there can be no marriage. 'Well, (says the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person) [he takes care to remove that], I will assume the human nature unto a personal union; I will become the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham; I will be God manifested in the flesh; I will become IMMANUEL, God with them, and so that natural impediment shall be removed; I will come upon a level with the bride, and so I will be a help meet for her.'

(2.) There is another impediment arises from the law: O, says the Law, 'I have an action against the supposed bride. She was once married unto me, and I promised her the inheritance of life, upon the condition of her fulfilling perfect obedience to my commands; but she disobeyed, and played the harlot, and she is under the curse; and therefore there can be no marriage.' 'Well but (says the Bridegroom), I will remove this impediment also; I will be made a curse for her, and so redeem her from the curse; I will cancel the hand-writing that is against her, and contrary to her.'

(3.) 'Well but (says justice), I stand upon a complete satisfaction; for without death, and the shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sin.' 'Well (says the Bridegroom), I will die for the bride, and in her room and stead; the sword of justice shall be soaked in my blood instead of hers; my life shall be a ransom for hers; I will be wounded for her iniquities, and bruised for her transgressions; I will be made sin for her.'

(4.) There is another impediment yet that must be removed: The bride hates the Bridegroom; she is wholly averse from the match; and what will be done in this case? 'Well (says the Bridegroom), I will undertake to gain her affection. Psa. 110:3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. I will draw with the cords of a man,

and with the bands of love; and then her affections shall be gained, and she shall call me Ishi.'

(5.) Another great impediment in the way of the marriage is, that the bride is a lawful captive to sin and Satan: "Now (says Satan) shall the lawful captive be delivered; both law and justice have put her in my power; and therefore I will not part with my prisoner.' 'Well but (says the blessed Bridegroom), it is true, Satan, thou hast law and justice on thy side: but I will fulfil the law, and satisfy justice; and, in so doing, thy head shall be bruised, and the lawful captive shall be delivered, and the prey shall be taken from the terrible. I will redeem her by purchase and by power.' And accordingly he spoiled principalities and powers, and took the bride by main force out of the devil's prison, saying to the prisoners, Go ye forth, &c.

From what is said, it appears, that the heart of the Bridegroom is exceedingly set upon the match, with desire he desired to be baptised with his own blood, that he might finish her redemption; and, having completed her redemption, he longs for the day of espousals, when he gains the love and affection of the bride. So much was the heart of the Bridegroom set upon the match, that, when he saw the bride in danger of perishing, he flew, as it were, from his Father's bosom, left all the glories of heaven behind him, and travelled through the armies of hell and earth, yea encountered the legions of his Father's wrath, in order to accomplish her deliverance. Hence is that of the church, Is. 63:1. "Who is this that cometh from Edom? with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness." And ver. 3. "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me."

4thly, A fourth premise is, That the covenant of grace is the contract of marriage, the plan of which was agreed upon in the council of peace, betwixt the Father and the Son, from all eternity: Psa. 89:3. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant." It was originally made with the Bridegroom, as the Head,

Husband, and Representative of the bride, wherein he undertakes, that the grace of God shall reign and be glorified through his own righteousness, to her eternal life and salvation. As Surety of the covenant, he undertakes to fulfil the condition of it, by his own obedience unto death, to buy his bride from the hands of justice, by paying a ransom of his own blood for her, and to buy, at the same time, all the blessings and goods of the covenant for her use; and that, by the power of his word and Spirit, he will make her to take hold of his covenant, bring her within the bond of it, and make an effectual application thereof in due time, according to the order of the covenant; and that he will betrothe her unto himself for ever, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; yea, that he will betrothe her unto himself in faithfulness, and that she shall know the Lord, Hos. 2:19, 20.

5thly, In the day of his espousals all this is fulfilled. The Bridegroom presents himself to the bride in his divine and human glories, fulness, and excellencies; he makes the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God," in his own person, to shine in her heart; wherewith she is made to see him, and fall so much in love with him, that she cannot but cry out, "O! he is infinitely fairer than the sons of men, he is as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, the chiefest among ten thousand, white and ruddy, his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; his mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely. O! this is my Beloved, this is my Friend: if I had ten thousand hearts and hands to give, he should have them all. I am well pleased with his person; well pleased with the contract he has made, and signed with his blood; well pleased with all the promises, which I see to be yea and amen in him; well pleased with his law: I will follow him whithersoever he goes." And in this way the marriage is concluded and agreed upon, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, even the sure mercies of David," Is. 55:3; Jer. 32:40. "I will make (or establish) an everlasting covenant with them. That I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So much for the first thing.

II. The second thing in the method is, to speak a little of the blessed Bridegroom, who is here said to be a-coming. Behold the Bridegroom cometh.

But O! Who can speak of him to any purpose? we but darken counsel by words without knowledge, when we speak of him; and no wonder, for he is the unspeakable gift of God. All the saints that ever were on earth, and all faithful ministers, martyrs, and witnesses, that ever appeared in the church militant, have been aye speaking to his commendation, but they always acknowledged he was above all their praises; the most that they could say of him was, that he is altogether lovely, and that there is none in heaven or in earth that is to be in the least compared unto him. Ask the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, who see him as he is, and know him as they are known of him, what is their estimate of him? All they can say of him is, Rev. 5:9. "Worthy is he to take the book, and to open the (seven) seals thereof. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." But how worthy is he they cannot tell; his praise is in all the churches, both militant and triumphant. But their praises are nothing but a profound silence, in comparison of what he is and deserves, Psa. 85:1. "Praise waiteth (or is silent) for thee, O God, in Zion—Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold him;" for behold he cometh, go out and meet him.

All I shall say anent him, shall be comprised in the answer of a few questions, that some poor soul may be ready to put concerning the blessed Bridegroom. They that love Christ, and have a mind to match with him, have commonly a great deal of questions to put concerning him.

Qust. 1. Will you tell us, what is the Bridegroom's name, if you can tell? Answ. That is not easily answered, for it is a part of Agur's confession of faith, Prov. 30:4. "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended. What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" And when Manoah asked the angel what was his name? (that he might do him honour), He (viz. Christ the angel of the

covenant) answers, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" or, as in the margin, seeing it is Wonderful. Such a secret is his name, that no man can call him Lord, but by the Holy Ghost; you may read his name in your Bibles, and still his name will be a secret, till the Spirit of the Lord open it unto you by glorifying his person in your eyes, and then, and never till then, will you cry out, O! his name is like ointment poured forth; O! he has a name above every name that can be named, whether in this world or that which is to come: Every knee must bow unto this name, and every tongue must acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

I will just tell you of a few of the scriptural names of the Bridegroom. And O! look up to him for a glimpse of his glory in them.

His name is Jesus, Matth. 1:21. Now, what think ye of that name? for the sound of salvation is in it: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." O lost sinner, roll the name of the Bridegroom, as a sweet morsel under thy tongue. His name is Christ, or the renowned Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Grace was poured into his lips, for God, even his Father, anointed him with the oil of gladness above all his fellows. His name is the Lord, for he is Lord of all; Lord of lords. He is God's first-born, whom he hath made higher than the kings of the earth; yea, all the kings of the earth must do homage unto him, some time or other; and no wonder, for by him "kings reign, and princes decree justice." What is his name? His name is Immanuel, God-man, or God with us, to stand in our quarrel; to take our part against the old serpent; and accordingly he has bruised his head, and through death has destroyed him that had the power of death.

See a whole cluster of the names of the Bridegroom together, Is. 9:6. Where the bride, the Lamb's wife, glorying in her beloved consort, cries out, in a holy triumph, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name



shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace."

1st, His name is a great, glorious, and renowned name, a name above every name, Philip, 2:9–11. "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." So Eph. 1:20, 21, 22. God "hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, and exalted him far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

2dly, His name is a savoury name: Song 1:3. "Because of the savour of thy good ointment, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." O Sirs! there is such an odoriferous perfume in the name of Christ, that when once a poor soul gets a scent of it, it can never forget it, and the very remembrance of it, is a feast and banquet to the soul, Is. 26:8, 9. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night: yea, with my Spirit within me, will I seek thee early."

3dly, His name is a medicinal name. If faith be but acted upon his name, it makes the bones that were broken to rejoice; makes the blind to see; the deaf to hear; the lame man to leap like an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing, Acts 3:6, 7, 16. So Acts 4:12. &c.

4thly, His name is a sheltering and hiding name: when storms are blowing, whether from heaven, earth, or hell, Prov. 18:11, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous fly unto it, and are safe." It is not only a tower, but a strong and impregnable tower, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against that soul that has fled for refuge unto it.

5thly, His name is an attractive name, it draws the heart and soul to him: it is by the sound of this name that the gathering of the people is unto him as the blessed Shiloh. What is it that makes the gospel the power of God unto salvation? Why, it is just the displays of the glory of his renowned name, "If I be lifted up from the earth (says Christ), I will draw all men unto me."

6thly, His name is an enlightening name to the poor soul that is walking in darkness; hence Is. 50 at the close, "He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord," &c. plainly intimating, that a glance of the name of Christ, by the eye of faith, will make light to spring out of darkness, to the soul, under the darkest clouds of desertion: and no wonder, for he is the "light of the world, the true light, the Sun of righteousness."

7thly, His name is a quickening and enlivening name: By the name of Jesus the dead are raised unto life; and no wonder, for this is one of his names. The Life, John 14:6. and John 11:25. The Resurrection and the Life. Let but a languishing saint, when he is crying, with the eunuch, Is. 56. "I am a dry tree," let him but hear the name of the Lord Jesus, let him but get a glimpse of the glory of his person, he will be ready to cry with the apostle, Col. 3:3, I am "dead, but my life is hid with Christ in God." Or with Paul, Gal. 2:20, I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

8thly, His name is a prevalent name in heaven, insomuch, that, if this name be set in the front of our prayers and petitions, they will prevail, and obtain a hearing, and a gracious answer and return, John 14:13, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do," &c. This name perfumes our prayers like incense.

9thly, It is a worthy name, James 2:7. speaking of the rich man with the gold ring and gay clothing, tells us, they "blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called;" the triumphant company in heaven

know it to be so, for they warble forth the praises of his name, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," Rev. 5.

10thly, It is a durable and everlasting name, Ps. 72 at the close." "His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun: for men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed: and therefore blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." This name will make sweet melody in heaven, through all eternity.

Now, Sirs, what think you of the Bridegroom, when you hear of his name? will you match with him? will you marry him? if thy heart can say, "O, if I had ten thousand hearts and hands, I would give them all to him." Well, if this be the language of thy heart, it is a done bargain; he is thy Bridegroom, and thou art his bride, the Lamb's wife.

Quest. 2. O I would hear more about him! Will you tell me what is the Bridegroom's pedigree and parentage? of whom is he descended?  
Answ. I can tell you some things anent his genealogy: "He is of the seed of David according to the flesh," he is the offspring of ancient kings, as you may see from his genealogy, Matth. 1. and Luke 3. If you ask anent his divine pedigree, he "is the only begotten Son of the Father, and the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." But as to the manner of his generation, who can declare it! this is a secret, and secret things belong unto the Lord. Only from this hint you may see, the Bridegroom is so honourably descended, that it is a wonder he should match with any of the fallen tribe of Adam.

Quest. 3. What is the Bridegroom's personal worth and excellency?  
Answ. There is such a divine glory in his person, that the lustre of it darkens the sun in the firmament, that it appears to be as sackcloth and darkness. Such glory is in his person, as dazzles the eyes of angels to behold him, Is. 6. They cover their faces with their wings, crying, one to another, "Holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts," &c. All the

perfections of the Deity shine with a meridian lustre and glory in the person of our glorious Bridegroom. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily. He is "in the form of God, and thinks it not robbery to be equal with God." So glorious is the person of the Bridegroom, that he captivates every eye and heart that beholds him, and imparts his glory, in some measure, to every soul that looks on him by the eye of faith, 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory," &c. The bride, by looking on the glory of the Bridegroom, is made like the "king's daughter, all glorious within, and to look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners: O go forth, ye daughters of Zion," and behold his glory.

Quest. 4. What are the endowments and qualifications of the Bridegroom? Answ. His qualifications are so rare and singular, that tongue cannot tell them, nor heart conceive them. Only, to commend him to your esteem, love, and affections, there are these few qualifications that may recommend him to any rational soul.

1. "For beauty, he is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars, fairer than the children of men, and altogether lovely."

2. For wisdom, all the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him:" he is wise in heart, and mighty in counsel. So wise, that he has outwitted all the power and policy of hell and earth: although his enemies dig counsel as deep as hell, yet hell and destruction being naked before him, he just takes the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward he carrieth headlong; and he imparts wisdom unto the simple bride, making her wise unto salvation, acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom, which are hid from the wise and prudent of the world.

3. For riches, the Bridegroom that offers to match with you is immensely rich; he is a man of substance indeed, and he causes

those that love him to inherit substance; his riches are unsearchable, Eph. 3:8. his riches are durable, Prov. 8:18.

4. For honour, he is renowned in heaven and earth, having a name above every name that can be named; Prov. 8:18. "Honour and riches are with me." Honour and majesty are before his face: and he makes all that believe on him honourable, Is. 43:2, "Ever since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable," &c.

5. For strength, he is the man of God's right-hand, whom he has made strong for himself. The strength of omnipotence is in him, for he is the mighty God, Is. 9:6. and the Almighty, Rev. 1:8, He came from Edom, and from Bozra, "travelling in the greatness of his strength, shewing himself mighty to save."

6. For authority, he has power over all flesh, "that he may give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. All power is his in heaven and in earth; things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, yea, every knee must bow unto him, and every tongue must confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

7. For meekness and lowliness, he is incomparable, and proposes himself as the great pattern of it for our imitation, Matth. 11:29, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly."

8. For constancy in his love, in his promises, and in all his amiable excellencies, he is Christ Jesus, "the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever." His name is, "I AM; he rests in his love, and changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed." His promises are not like the promises of men, yea to day, and nay to-morrow; no, but "all the promises of God are in him yea and amen; one jot or tittle of what he says shall never pass away; the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy upon thee." These are some, and but a small part, of

the qualifications of the blessed Bridegroom: "Go forth, then, ye daughters of Zion, and behold him."

MATTHEW 25:6.—"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

## **THE SECOND SERMON ON THIS TEXT**

THE third thing proposed in the general method was, to speak a little of the Bride, for where there is a bridegroom, there must of necessity be a bride. And here the bride of Christ may be viewed in a three-fold situation; either 1. As in a state of nature; 2. As in a state of grace; or, 3. As in a state of glory.

(1.) Let us view her as in her natural state, and so we shall find her in a doleful and deplorable condition (I speak of the elect, whether personally or collectively considered). If we view her in her natural descent and pedigree, she is a corrupt branch, sprung of the rotten root of the first Adam, conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, altogether as an unclean thing, black like the Ethiopian, by lying among the pots of hell, Ezek. 16. Christ there puts his church and people in mind of their natural condition, ver. 3–6, where, by a lively metaphor of a new born infant, the Lord represents the condition of all mankind.

1. "Thy navel was not cut," i.e. just feeding and living upon things below, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man's nature sucks in the poison of carnal things, and to be carnally minded is death.

2. "Thou wast not salted at all." Salt preserves from putrefaction. The spirit and grace of God is sometimes likened unto salt, "have salt in yourselves." Now, man by nature is quite destitute of this salt, and so

must be wholly putrefied and corrupted, therefore likened unto a putrefied carcase, Rom. 3 or an open sepulchre.

3. "No eye pitied thee, to do any of these things unto thee," &c. Man of all creatures is the most helpless when he is new born, especially if cast out in the open field. What can a sinner do for himself? or what can angels or men do for him? The whole creation stand aloof, and cry, 'We cannot help you out from under the curse of the law, or the wrath of an angry God.' And therefore he must inevitably perish, like the new born infant, cast out to the open field, unless some one take it up.

Now this is the condition of Christ's bride when he set his love upon her, as you see in the 6th and 8th verses of the same 16. of Ezek. and "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live," &c. We have another very clear description of man in his natural state, Eph. 2:5–12, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," &c.; and Titus 3:3, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Thus you see how the Spirit of God describes the natural condition of all mankind. Oh how may it fill us with admiration, to think that such a creature should become a bride to the Son of God! and yet his love surmounts all; "O the height, the depth, the breadth, and length of the love of God."

(2.) Let us view the bride as in a state of grace, and see what a strange alteration free grace makes upon her. This is also set forth in Ezek. 16 by an elegant metaphor, from ver. 6–14.

1. He quickens her and gives her life, ver. 6, "I said unto thee, Live."

2. He casts the skirt of his everlasting righteousness over her, ver. 8.

3. He takes her unto a marriage-relation with himself, within the bond of the covenant, ver. 8.



4. He washes and cleanses her with the washing of regeneration, ver. 9.
5. He anoints her with the oil of his Spirit.
6. He decks and adorns her with the ornaments of holiness, the graces of his Spirit, ver. 11, 12.
7. He confers royal dignity upon her, ver. 12, at the close; puts a crown upon her head.
8. He makes her perfect and complete in himself, through the comeliness he puts upon her, ver. 14. Thus you see what the love of Christ doth for his bride, while yet only in time of espousals.

(3.) We might also view her in a state of glory, when the marriage shall be consummate at Christ's second coming, but this is what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Only I refer you to two or three texts, that give us a glimpse of the glory that Christ will then confer upon his bride, Matth. 13:43, "They shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Dan. 12:3, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Col. 3:4, "When Christ also who is our life shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory." 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," &c. Thus I have given you a short account of the bride in her natural state, and in a state of grace and glory.

IV. The fourth thing was to speak a little of the coming of the Bridegroom. Behold the Bridegroom cometh.

Now, to clear this matter, I would have you to know, that I do not at present speak either of Christ's first coming in the flesh, or of his second coming unto judgment. His first coming in the flesh was to

purchase a bride for himself by his obedience and death. His second and last coming, at the end of the world, will be to solemnise the marriage, and to fetch the bride home to the royal palace, the house of many mansions that he is preparing for her reception, when she shall be made fully ready. I say, I do not at this time speak of either of these, however the last may be intended in this parable. At present I shall speak a little of these intermediate visits that the Bridegroom makes unto his bride during the time of espousals, before he come at the last day to solemnise the marriage before men and angels.

1st, The Bridegroom comes and visits his church and people in the chariot of providence; I understand his favourable dispensations when he comes to build up Zion, he appears in his glory, and regards the prayer of the destitute. Thus when the Lord brought Israel out of their Egyptian bondage, with a high hand and outstretched arm, plaguing Egypt, slaying their first born, and at length bringing his church and people through the Red Sea, while, at the same time, he overthrew Pharaoh and his host, on which occasion Israel sang that song, Exod. 15 through the whole: So likewise, when he turned back their captivity from Babylon, and settled them again in their native land, and caused the city and temple to be rebuilt, and daily sacrifice and oblation to be offered, this was a favourable visit in the chariot of providence. Much like unto this, was the visit the Lord made in his providence to this poor land, when, at our reformation from Popery, he spirited our nobles, gentry, and commons, to shake off the yoke of Popish tyranny and idolatry, and to embrace the gospel of Christ, and authorise the true reformed religion, by laws and acts of parliament, which stand in force to this day, and were adopted by this church in the year 1638, and again authorised by law at the revolution, and since that time. These, I say, were gracious visits that the Lord made to this church, riding in the chariot of providence, with the bright side towards her; and how often doth he visit particular believers, by favourable dispensations of providence, when they expected nothing but death and destruction. He has interposed mercifully for their deliverance, and made them to sing with David, Ps. 116. "I was brought low, and he helped me." And Ps. 103. "He

redeemeth my life from destruction, and crowneth me with loving kindness and tender mercy."

Sometimes again the dark side of the chariot appears in gloomy and wrathlike dispensations, as when he sets up the right hand of the cruel enemy over them, gives them like "sheep to the slaughter, to be killed all the day long. When he breaks them with breach upon breach, and rushes upon them like a giant;" as in the case of Job: when he cast the three children into a fiery furnace, and Daniel into the lions' den. These and the like dispensations have a very black and dismal aspect; and in this case the church and people of God are ready to cry out with Jacob, "All these things are against us." And yet the black chariot of providence is bottomed and lined with love, grace, and mercy, as appeared in the case of Job, Daniel, the three children, and Jacob; and so the scripture comes to be fulfilled, that "all the ways of the Lord are mercy and peace to them that love him," Ps. 103; and Rom. 8:28, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

But I do not at present speak so much of the visits that the Lord Christ makes unto his people in the chariot of providence, as the visits he makes to them in the chariot of the gospel revelation, and ordinances of his appointment, such as word, sacrament, prayer, meditation, Christian conference, and the like, which are so many trysting places, in which the Bridegroom comes and visits his bride, manifesting forth his glory to her, spreading his banner of love over her. Now, as to the visits that Christ makes to his bride of this kind, in the chariot of the gospel revelation, there are these few things I would remark concerning them.

1st, The first visit of distinguishing love that he makes to the bride is in the day of conversion, when he draws by the veils of ignorance, unbelief, error, and prejudice, and manifests himself to her in his divine glory, fulness, suitableness, and excellency, in such a way as ravishes her heart with his love and loveliness. This is called the time of espousals, Song 3 last, because then it is that the consent of the

bride is gained, and her heart drawn after the Bridegroom with the irresistible cords of victorious love. Of this the Lord puts Israel in mind, when he says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown," Jer. 2:2.

2dly, The heart of the bride being thus hanked or caught with the glory of the Bridegroom, he, for holy and wise ends, withdraws commonly his sensible presence, and leaves her with a promise of his returning in due time; like that, John 14:18, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you;" or that, John 14:21, 23, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him," &c., or John 16:22, "I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice," &c. You know it is not usual for the bridegroom to stay or cohabit with the bride, even after the espousals, until the marriage be solemnised, and then they take up house, and dwell together; but until that time come he makes only passing visits, or comes and goes; only when he goes, he leaves her with a promise of coming back. Just so is it in the present case, Christ leaves his people with a promise to support them in his absence.

3dly, I remark, that Christ is many times present with the bride and spouse, when she is not aware of it. An instance of this we have in the case of Jacob, Gen. 28:16. The Lord there appears to him in a dream, and when he awakes, he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not;" and Mary, John 20:14. she is weeping, and saying, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She was speaking to Christ himself, but knew not that it was Christ, but supposing him to be the gardener, said to him, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away," &c. So we see the same in the case of the disciples going to Emmaus, Luke 24. Christ was conversing with them, and opening unto them the scriptures, reprovng them for their unbelief; and yet they did not know that it was he, until, upon

reflection, they say one to another, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us," &c.

4thly, Every visit the Bridegroom of souls makes unto his bride is an assured pledge of after visits, until he come to consummate the marriage at the end of the day; for, as we are told, Hos. 6:3. "His going forth is prepared as the morning." As the break of day is a pledge of the sun's rising, and his rising is a pledge of his ascending to the meridian or mid-day; so every visit that Christ makes to the soul makes way for further discoveries of his glory, until the day of glory break, and all shadows for ever flee away.

5thly, The Bridegroom loves sometimes to surprise the bride with his visits, he comes even at midnight, when she is little looking for him, Song 6:12. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib;" or, as it reads in the margin, "set me on the chariots of my willing people." So Is. 49:14, 15. Zion is there saying, under a dark cloud of desertion, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me:" But, all on a sudden, the Lord comes, and says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

6thly, These sensible surprising visits of the Bridegroom, they are but rare, and of a short continuance: they are like a bright blink of the sun from under the cloud, which in a little is presently overcast with a new cloud, like that of the disciples upon Mount Tabor, at Christ's transfiguration, when they saw his countenance to shine as the sun, his raiment white as the light, and a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" but ere ever they were aware, a dark cloud intercepts all. Quest. Why are the Bridegroom's visits so rare, and of a short continuance. Answ. The Lord will have it so, to let the bride know that the marriage is not yet consummate, and she is only yet in a state of espousals: cohabitation only follows the consummation of the marriage in heaven. Again, the bride, while here away, in a state of imperfection, is not able to bear a constant

fellowship with the Bridegroom, I mean bright sensible manifestations, the old bottles cannot bear much of that new wine. Paul himself was in danger of being lifted up with pride, through abundance of manifestations; and therefore a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him. And, again, by this way he makes them long for heaven, where the Bridegroom and the bride shall meet, never to part, saying, "I desire to depart, and be with Jesus, which is best of all."

7thly, The Bridegroom may, and frequently doth intermit his visits for a very long space of time; he may absent himself not only for days, or weeks, or months, but for years, and many many years together. It is thought, that long twenty years intervened between Jacob's Bethel visit, Gen. 38:18, and his visit he got chap. 31:13. When the Lord appeared unto him, saying, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me." It is no strange thing for the saints to be walking in darkness, and seeing no light: and, in this case, they are ready to cry with David, Psa. 13:1. "How long, how long wilt thou hide thy face from me;" Psa. 89. "Where are thy former loving-kindnesses," &c.; Psa. 77. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? will he be favourable no more?" &c. The reason of this withdrawing is either some idol harboured, or to hide pride from their eyes, or to quicken the soul's longing after himself, or to teach and train them up unto a life of faith upon the promise; for here "we walk by faith, and not by sight."

8thly, Although the Bridegroom may be long absent, yet he will return at length, when his own time comes, which is aye best both for his glory and her good. He will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth, lest the spirit of the poor bride should fail within her: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psa. 30:5. So Is. 54:5–8. "Thy Maker is thine Husband. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, and in a little wrath have I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with great mercy will I gather thee, and with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

9thly, Let him come when he will, or how he will, he is aye welcome; for he brings all good with him. Quest. What doth he bring with him. Answ. 1. He brings his Father with him, John 14:23. "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." 2. He brings the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, along with him; and then the soul is anointed as with fresh oil, which makes the heart glad, and the countenance to shine. 3. He brings peace and joy with him, a "peace that passes all understanding, a joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory." 4. He brings victory over sin, Satan, death, and hell, along with him; and, in a word, he brings pardon of sin, and all manner of salvation, along with him. And therefore, I say, let him come when or how he will, he is aye welcome. But I pass this, and should now go on to

V. The fifth thing proposed in the method, which was to speak to the duty called for in all the virgins, upon the intimation and warning given them, Go ye out to meet him. But this I refer unto another occasion.

## **ACTION SERMON**

MATTHEW 25:6.—"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

### **THE THIRD SERMON ON THIS TEXT**

HAVING in some former discourses spoken of the Bridegroom and of the bride, and of the coming of the Bridegroom, I now proceed to speak of the call and summons given to the virgins, both wise and foolish, Go ye out to meet him. And this I shall endeavour to discourse by resolving the few following questions that may be put by the professed virgins that are hearing me.



1. What is supposed or implied in the duty, Go ye out to meet him?
2. What is the motion of the soul in going out to meet him?
3. For what end and purpose are we to go out and meet the Bridegroom?
4. Where may we expect to meet him?
5. Who they are that stand fairest for a meeting with him in love and mercy?
6. What sort of a meeting have the wise virgins with the Bridegroom, when they go forth to meet him in a way of believing?

Quest., What is supposed or implied in the duty, Go ye out to meet him?

1st, It supposes a present distance between them and the Bridegroom. There was a total distance between him and the foolish virgins; they had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but their eyes had never seen him, the light of the knowledge of his glory had never shined in their hearts. O! how many such have we in our Christian assemblies, "whom the god of this world has blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them?" And as there was a total distance between Christ and the foolish virgins, so there was a partial distance between him and the wise virgins, otherwise they had not been slumbering and sleeping.

2dly, Go ye out to meet him. It supposes, that it is the work and business of God's heralds to prepare the way for a meeting between Christ and sinners, to bring Christ near to sinners, and sinners near to Christ. When Christ was coming, yea actually come in the flesh to the Jewish nation, John the Baptist cried, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God." We, as ambassadors for the Bridegroom, come to beseech and intreat

sinner to go out and meet the Bridegroom in a way of believing, and saints (wise virgins) to go out and hold communion with him in the renewed actings of faith. Wisdom crieth to all promiseously, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

3dly, Go ye out to meet him. It implies, that the Bridegroom is not afar off, but that he is nigh at hand. It is the way of unbelief, and a deceitful heart to say, "The Lord delayeth his coming;" he is behind the mountains, while yet he is at the door: Rev. 3:20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." And therefore, "say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring Christ again from the dead. For the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith, which we preach," Rom. 10:6–8.

4thly, Go ye out to meet him. It says, that the Bridegroom is a person of note and merit, that he is worthy of all reception and entertainment: 1 Tim. 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Sirs, we tell you, that the Bridegroom is worthy of the greatest welcome: his person is worthy, for he is the Son of God; and he comes upon a worthy and wonderful errand, even to save sinners, and not only so, but to wed them for a bride; for he is saying, "I will betrothe thee unto me for ever."

5thly, Go ye out to meet him. It implies that the Bridegroom is not to be found within, but without, Go ye out to meet him. Quakers and enthusiasts boast of a Christ within them; but though Christ, by his Spirit, dwells in the heart of a true believer, yet the first meeting that faith has with Christ, is by going out to meet him: It is a Christ outwardly revealed in the word that true faith deals with: the grace of faith is indeed seated in the soul, as the eye is in the body, but then, like the eye of the body, it is wholly taken up with objects without itself. Faith lies in a continual outgoing toward Christ revealed and

exhibited in the word: Israel had never found the manna, unless they had gone out to gather it; and they had never been healed of the stings of the fiery serpents, except they had looked without to the brazen serpent: so we shall never meet the Bridegroom, except we go out and meet him.

6thly, Go ye out to meet him. It says, that in believing in Christ, in receiving him, there is a disbanding of other lovers; for "no man can serve two masters." Sin, Satan, and the world, have dominion over the man, while in a natural and Christless state; he is playing the harlot with other lovers; some lust or idol he is hugging in his bosom, that is as dear to him as a right hand or right eye. But now, whenever he goes out to meet the Bridegroom, he cries with Ephraim, Hos. 14:8, "What have I to do any more with idols?" "O Lord, our God, other lords, besides thee, have had dominion over me; but by thee only will I make mention of thy name," Is. 26:13.

7thly, Go ye out to meet him. It says, that the soul, in believing or receiving Christ, quits all false confidences, and arises out of these beds of sloth and security upon which it was stretching itself. The virgins here, they were all slumbering and sleeping, some of them upon one bed of sloth, and some upon another. But the cry comes at midnight, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him; which says plainly, that they behoved to quit their short beds, and cast away their narrow coverings, if they would meet the Bridegroom and have fellowship with him. 1. There is the bed of spiritual death and security, Eph. 5:14, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." 2. We must quit the bed of church privileges, and go forth from these; and beware of saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." 3. The bed of civility and moral honesty: the young man in the gospel could say, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," and yet was a stranger to Christ, and to the new birth. 4. The bed of a legal righteousness; we must arise out of that, for by "the works of the law no flesh living can be justified." 5. The bed of evangelical righteousness; this also must be quitted, if ever we would

go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Some seek righteousness not directly by the law, but, "as it were, by the works of the law." They make their faith, love, repentance, and obedience, unto a pretended new gospel law, a sort of righteousness to themselves, and thereupon build their faith and hope of the imputation of the righteousness, which is nothing but a subtle way of subverting the whole gospel of Christ, and the method of free justification by the righteousness of Christ alone, a building the imputation of Christ's righteousness upon straw and stubble, and, at best, a profane jumbling of Christ's righteousness and our own together, an error against which the apostle denounceth an anathema, Gal. 1:6, 8.

8thly, Go ye out to meet him. It implies some knowledge of the Bridegroom, accompanied with an assent of the mind unto the report of the gospel, and the record of God concerning him; for we do not go out to meet strangers, of whom we have no knowledge, or of whom we have never heard: the soul that goes out to meet Christ, is made to know him. By "his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many:" and, from the knowledge it has of his person and mediation, it assents to what is recorded of him in the word, and reported of him in a preached gospel; and is ready to say, as the Queen of Sheba, when she saw the glory of King Solomon, and heard his wisdom. "The half (what I heard at a distance) was not told me, to what I now see and know." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

9thly, It implies a high esteem and hearty approbation of the person of Christ, and the method of justification, sanctification, and salvation, through him. O! will the soul say, he is "worthy of all acceptance," indeed: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but lost, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: that I may win Christ, and be found in him; and unto you who believe he is precious."

10thly, Go ye out to meet him. It implies an outgoing of the whole soul, in all its powers and faculties, after the Bridegroom, and an actual subscribing the contract of the new covenant, with heart and hand, according to what is prophesied and promised, Is. 44:3, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." And, from that time forward, the bride is betrothed unto the Bridegroom, according to that, Hos. 2:19, 20. She now begins to call him Ishi; my husband being the echo of the bride's voice unto the words of the Bridegroom, Is. 54:5, "Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name."

11thly, Go ye out to meet him. It implies, that it is the duty, and will be the desire of the soul espoused to Christ to pursue after the enjoyment of him, and fellowship with him, in all the duties and ordinances of his appointment, while in a state of espousals, till the marriage be consummate at the end of time, Ps. 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." It is but a toom house to the bride when the Bridegroom is absent; and therefore when she misses him, she goes mourning without the sun, crying, "O that I knew where I might find him, saw ye him whom my soul loveth," &c. So much for the first question. I now proceed to,

The second question; What is the motion of the bride? or how doth she move when she goes out to meet the Bridegroom? For going out to meet him implies motion. I answer,

1st, It is not a carnal or corporeal, but a spiritual and a soul motion: "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord," Psa. 16:2. "Return unto thy rest, O my Soul," Ps. 116:7; Is. 26:9, "With my soul have I desired thee," &c.

2dly, It is not a blind, but a rational and understanding motion: he draws with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love. The

entrance of God's word having given light to the mind, he has got an understanding to know him that is true. So that the man in going out to meet the Bridegroom, knows well what he is doing, for he knows the Lord, and therefore follows on to know him more and more.

3dly, It is not a forced, but a free and voluntary motion the soul hath, when it goes out to meet the Bridegroom, Ps. 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." He rejoices to meet the Lord in his ways, &c.

4thly, It is not a cold, but a most affectionate motion. All the affections of the soul are taken up with the glory of the Bridegroom, such as love, delight, desire, that before were pursuing other lovers, do now centre upon him alone.

5thly, It is not a slow, but a swift and speedy motion: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments." Like the flight of a dove to its windows, when pursued by the birds of prey, or that of the man-slayer to the city of refuge.

6thly, It is not a careless, but a careful and resolute motion. The man, in going out to meet the Bridegroom, is resolved to be at him, and with him, whatever bars or impediments be in the way: he will not say, "there is a lion in the way, a lion in the streets:" no; although lions and leopards be in his way; though all the armies of hell, and showers of fiery darts be in his way, he will break through them all.

7thly, It is a praying, importunate, and wrestling motion. The man in going out to meet the Bridegroom, is crying, "O when wilt thou come unto me? And O that I knew where I might find him," &c.

8thly, It is a very mysterious motion: the soul is carried out after Christ, and it knows not how: like the wind which blows where it listeth, we hear the sound of it, "but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth."

9thly, It is a joyful and cheerful motion. O with what alacrity doth the soul receive and embrace the Bridegroom, in the day of espousals? the soul is just filled "with joy and peace in believing; yea, a joy unspeakable and full of glory," saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come."

The third question, for what end and purpose are we called to go out and meet the Bridegroom?

1st, We are to go out and behold him, and contemplate his glory, Song 3 last, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon," &c. Is. 42:1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," &c. The Lord, by the prophet, had been reprovng the nations for their idolatry, in the close of the preceding chapter, ver. 29, "Behold they are all vanity, their works are nothing, their molten images are wind and confusion." Well, to take their hearts off their idols, he presents them with an object worthy of their looks: It is as if the Lord had said, Turn away your eyes from beholding vanity, and behold "mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," &c. As if he had said, He is worthy to be beheld, and if you knew him, you would think little of all other objects that take up your mind.

2dly, We are to go out, and admire and wonder at the glory of his person and mediation; for one of the names of the Bridegroom is Wonderful, Is. 9:6. Admire the union of the two natures in him, "for without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh; admire the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length, of the love of God," in matching with our nature, that he might be a fit Bridegroom for us, and match with our persons: "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Admire the exploits he has wrought in the great work of our redemption; he has brought over an angry and offended God, to be a God with us. Admire how he has bruised the head of the serpent, finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, brought in an everlasting

righteousness, and confirmed the covenant with many, and made the sacrifice and oblation to cease. O! how should these things make us cry out with admiration, as the church doth, Is. 63:1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah," &c.

3dly, We should go out and meet him so as to match with him, for he is the Bridegroom, and wants a bride among the sons of men, Prov. 8:30. The day of his espousals with any poor soul is the day of the gladness of his heart; he just rejoices over that poor soul that gives its consent to take him for a Husband, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride; and the report of it reaching heaven, makes all the angels and spirits of just men made perfect to rejoice with him. O then go out and meet him, and present yourselves as chaste virgins to this one Husband.

4thly, Go out and meet him, and feast with him, and feed upon him, for the Bridegroom and his royal Father has provided a banquet for every one that will come to the marriage, and he has sent forth his servants, saying, "Tell them who are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen, and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage," Matth. 22:4. Is. 25:6, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," Prov. 9:1–3, &c.

5thly, Go out and meet him, and list with him, for the Bridegroom is a "man of war, and the armies which are in heaven follow him," Rev. 19:14. Virgin souls are said to "follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth," Rev. 14:4. and they that follow him, he makes them all conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, and admits them as such to sit with him upon his throne, as he also overcame, and is set down with the Father upon his throne, Rev. 3 at the close. Sirs, we are the recruiting officers of the Bridegroom, the Captain of salvation, who leads many sons unto glory. We want you to take on in the service of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, that under his victorious



banner, you may wage war against sin, Satan, and the world, which he came to destroy.

Quest. 4. You call us to go out and meet the Bridegroom, Where may we meet him? O! may some poor soul say, 'That I knew where I might find him. O! tell me where he feedeth, and where he maketh his flocks to rest at noon.' Answ. Although the Bridegroom, as to his human nature, be in heaven, and in this respect the heavens are to "receive him until the times of restitution of all things;" yet he is to be found any where upon earth as to his divine, spiritual, gracious presence, by those that are really seeking after fellowship and communion with him by faith, in the ways and means of his own appointment: and this is what he has promised to his church, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." So that I say, there is as real communion and fellowship to be had with Christ now, though ascended, as ever his disciples had when he was going out and in among them, in a state of humiliation here upon earth; hence, says the apostle John concerning Christ, after he was gone away to heaven, 1 John 1:3, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

But O, say you, Will you tell me more particularly where I may meet him and find him? Answ. He is so fond of a meeting with sinners, that he is sometimes, yea, many times, found of them that seek him not, as in the case of Paul going a black errand to Damascus, and poor Zaccheus upon the sycamore tree, seeking only to satisfy his curiosity: and if so, much more will he be found of them that seek him in the ways of his appointment; for he has said, he meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember him in his ways.

Quest. What are these ways and means of his appointment where I may meet the Bridegroom, and have fellowship with him?

Answ. He is sometimes found in the mount of secret meditation, "while I was musing, the fire burned," says David. Many a sweet interview have the souls of believers with Christ in meditation, Ps. 63:6, "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches—ver. 5. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." He is to be met with in secret prayer, "Then shall ye find me, when ye seek me, and search after me with all your hearts." In this duty Jacob found the Lord, and wrestled for the blessing till break of day, and like a prince prevailed, Hos. 12:3, 4, "He took his brother by the heel, in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: He found him at Bethel," &c compared with Gen. 32:24–26, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh; and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." He is to be met with in the duty of personal, family, or public fasting and humiliation, "But to this man will I look, who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." He is to be met with in the duty of Christian conference and fellowship, when they that "feared the Lord spake often one to another, the Lord hearkened and heard." He is to be met with in reading and searching the scriptures, John 5:39, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me." While the Ethiopian eunuch was reading his Bible, the Lord met him in the ministry of Philip, insomuch that he "went on his way rejoicing." Many a sweet glimpse of the glory of the Bridegroom has the bride, while she is looking after him, through the glass of the revelation, 2 Cor. 3 last, "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." He is especially to be found in the gates of Zion, the public ordinances of his worship, where his people attend upon him in their assemblies, for prayer, for praise, for preaching and hearing the gospel, and for the celebration of the

sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper in a solemn manner; "the Lord loves these gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." These are the streets and broad ways where the spouse sought him, Song 3. It is true she missed him for a while, but, at length, she met the Bridegroom, and was in a case to say, "I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him and would not let him go." David saw his power and glory in his sanctuary; hence Ps. 84 he declares how amiable his tabernacles were unto him; "A day (says he) in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

He is especially to be met with in the breaking of bread at a communion table: for "the cup which we bless, it is the communion of the blood of Christ; and the bread which we break, it is the communion of the body of Christ." Here the blessed Bridegroom is to be seen in his dyed garments; for, out of love to his bride, he trode "the wine press alone, when of the people there were none with him." If that question be put to him, "Why art thou red in thine apparel, as one that treadeth the wine fat? He may well answer, It is no wonder my apparel be red, for I was "wounded for thine iniquities, and bruised for thy transgressions."

MATTHEW 25:6.—"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

## **THE FOURTH SERMON ON THIS TEXT**

THE fifth question was, Who are they that stand fairest for a meeting with the Bridegroom in love and mercy?

Answ. What God may do, in a way of sovereign grace, for Christless, unbelieving, and profane sinners, who are in covenant with death,

and at agreement with hell, we know not, for he can pluck a brand out of the fire, and take the prey from the mighty, when and how he pleases. He catches the wild ass in his mouth, that is snuffing up the east wind of sin and vanity. Only when you are running in the broad way to hell, you have no reason to look for anything but that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, that is denounced against every soul that worketh evil. You that are among the rank of the foolish virgins, that are contenting yourselves with the empty lamps of a profession, and sleeping and slumbering away the day of grace, without buying the oil of grace for your lamps; you see, in the close of this parable, what you are to look for, even to meet with a shut door, and when you shall cry out of time, Lord, Open to us, he answers, Depart, I know you not.

But I do not speak of you, or the like of you, at present: but poor souls that are really exercised about soul matters, and are taken up with the Bridegroom and fellowship with him. I will tell you of some that stand fair for a comfortable meeting with the blessed Bridegroom, in the ordinances and means he has appointed for that end and purpose.

1. You who, like the wise virgins, are not satisfied with the lamp of a profession, but are buying oil for your vessels, while the market of grace is standing. You see the wise virgins go out and meet the Bridegroom, and enter into the marriage with him.

2. You who love the Bridegroom, and remember his words with pleasure, rolling them like a sweet morsel under your tongue, he has promised that ye shall have a meeting with him, John 14:23, "If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

3. You that quit and renounce the covenant of works, made with the first Adam, and are taking hold of a covenant of grace and promise, made with a second Adam, you stand fair for a meeting with the Bridegroom. I give you his promise to lean upon, Is. 56:4, 5. "For

thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant: even unto them will I give, in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name, better than of sons and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." And it is again repeated, ver. 7, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people:" And therefore, Go ye out and meet him.

4. You that are waiting with hope and expectation for a visit of the Bridegroom, you stand fair for a meeting with him, "for he is good to them that wait for him," to the soul that seeketh him: He taketh pleasure "in them that fear him; in them that hope in his mercy. It is good for a man to hope," &c.

5. You who are poor and needy, and who are longing for a supply of soul needs, out of the fulness that is in Christ: for he has said, that "the needy shall not be forgotten;" that he will "supply all your need," Is. 41:17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear," &c.

6. The importunate beggar who hangs on at a throne of grace, and the door of the house of mercy, and will not take a nay-say, shall meet the Bridegroom, and get its errand, for he has said, that "to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Then shall ye find me, when ye seek me with all your heart."

7. The poor wearied and burdened soul, that is crying, "Mine iniquities have gone over my head, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death,—for it is a burden too heavy for me to bear." The Bridegroom says to such, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

8. The poor deserted soul that is walking in darkness, and sees no light, crying, "O when will he come unto me, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." The Bridegroom hears thy moans after him, and is saying, as Is. 49:15, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," or Isa. 54:7, 8. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee." Ver. 10, "The mountains shall depart, but my love shall never depart from thee." Thus you see who they are that may look for a meeting with the Bridegroom.

The sixth and last question was, What sort of a meeting is it, that is between the bride and the Bridegroom.

Answ. 1. It is a real meeting, though, indeed, it be of a spiritual nature. A graceless world that know nothing of this matter, they look upon all religion, all fellowship with Christ, as a fancy. But they that have the knowledge and experience of it can say, in some measure, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." There is a far greater reality in it, than is in all the pleasures of sin and sense. Hence is that of David, Psa. 4:7. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased," Psa. 84:10. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand in the tents of wickedness."

2dly, It is a most friendly and familiar meeting. The Bridegroom and bride converse and open their hearts to one another, with the most unreserved freedom. Christ imparts his secrets unto the bride; "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," Psa. 25. and John 15:15. "All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." And, on the other hand, the bride imparts her mind with an unhampered freedom to the Bridegroom, and tells him all that is in her heart, even secrets she would not tell all the world besides.

3dly, It is a most joyful meeting upon both sides. As for the Bridegroom, it is "the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of

his heart." Whenever he meets his bride, he cries, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck," Song 4:9. And then he adds, ver. 10. "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! Ver. 11. "And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." And, on the other hand, the bride, the Lamb's wife, rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, Rev. 19:7. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come."

4thly, It is an honourable and dignifying meeting on the bride's part. Believers espoused to the Son of God are highly advanced indeed, to become the Lamb's wife, a greater honour than ever was conferred upon the highest angel in heaven, who are made ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, Is. 43:4. "Ever since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable."

5thly, It is a meeting that shall never end in a total parting, and is a prelude of that everlasting meeting they shall have with him at his second coming, when the marriage is solemnised before men and angels. I proceed now to,

VI. The sixth thing proposed, which was to give the reasons of the doctrine. Why is it the duty of all the Virgins, both wise and foolish, to go out and meet the Bridegroom? I answer,

1st, Because this is a falling in with the great design of God, in sending his beloved Son into the world. Why did he send him, but that he might be received? He is called the sent of God, to engage us to believe in him.

2dly, Because God has commanded it. His authority is interposed, that sinners of mankind entertain him in a way of believing, 1 John 3:23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," &c. Hear ye him, and that soul that does not

hear him, "shall be cut off from among his people, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

3dly, Because the Bridegroom himself calls that we should go out and meet him. Come unto me. Behold me, behold me, &c.

4thly, Because the Holy Ghost calls in the word, and by all his motions and operations, to go out and meet the Bridegroom. "The Holy Ghost saith, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Heb. 3. The Spirit saith, Come, Rev. 22:17. And what a dangerous thing is it to resist the Spirit, when he glorifies Christ, and testifies of him?

5thly, Because the bride, the spouse of Christ, all true believers, that are best acquainted with him, calls upon all others to come and match with him. She does not love to enjoy him alone; no, she would have all to be as happy in him as herself: hence they cry, "O taste and see that the Lord is good. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul," Psa. 66:16. Hence, when the daughters of Jerusalem asked, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" She runs out in commendation of him, Song 5:10–16.

6thly, This is the design of the record of God concerning him in the word: Why has God set him forth in the word, and given him his testimonial, but to engage the world to fall in love with him, as the Bridegroom of souls? This is the design of all faithful ministers and friends of the Bridegroom, to make a match between Christ and you; and, Sirs, you will never give us our errand, or answer the design of our commission, as ambassadors of Christ, until you go forth and meet him, and give heart and hand unto him, so as we may be in case to say, as Paul did to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 11:2. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." But more of this afterwards. I proceed now to,



VII. The seventh thing in the method, which was the application of the doctrine.

Use first, shall be of information in the few following particulars.

1st, See hence the unspeakable and amazing love of God towards lost and undone sinners of Adam's Family: for he had a marriage plot in his mind from all eternity, with our tribe and family. No sooner had God made man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, but he was so much in love with the work of his own hand, that he enters into a contract of marriage with him, upon condition of perfect obedience to the law, saying, "Thy Maker is thy Husband," and all I require of thee is to yield obedience to my commands, which he gave him power to do. Yea, after man had violate this contract, and prostitute himself to the devil, the world, and his own lust, gone astray after other lovers, that God should so love him, even then, as to match, first with his nature, by taking it into a personal union with him, in his eternal Son, and then to come and say, "Thy Maker is thine Husband, I will yet betrothe thee unto me, in righteousness, faithfulness, mercy, and loving-kindness." O who can think of this love but must be stricken with wonder? and cry, O the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length of it! for it passeth the knowledge of men or angels. How excellent is this loving-kindness! Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus remember him? or the Son of man that thou shouldst be so kind to him?

2dly, See hence, that God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. We would think it a strange disparagement for a person of high rank and station, suppose a gentlemen, a nobleman, a duke, a king, or great emperor, to fall so much in conceit with a poor forlorn miserable beggar, all full of sores, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, as to marry her, and make her his wife, his consort and queen, and set her upon the throne with himself. I say, we would think it very strange, because of the inequality of the match. But O, Sirs, there is an infinitely greater inequality between the Son of God, and a poor filthy guilty sinner,

than between the greatest king that ever swayed a sceptre, and the most abject creature that ever sprung from Adam's race. To this purpose is that of the apostle Paul, ye know the grace of "our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." And how doth he make us rich, but by taking us unto a conjugal relation unto himself: for all is ours by contract when married to the Heir.

3dly, From this doctrine see the wondrous sibness between Christ and his church, and every particular believer: why, he is the Bridegroom, and they are both collectively and singularly considered the bride, the Lamb's wife: and "as the Bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall the Lord thy God rejoice over thee." There is a threefold mysterious union we read of in scripture.

1. The mysterious union of the three Persons in one essence, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three in one, and one in three.
2. There is the mysterious union of the two natures, viz: God and man in one person, 1 Tim. 3 last, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh."
3. There is the mystical, or mysterious conjugal union between Christ and believers, Eph. 5:32, "This is a great mystery (says the apostle), but I speak concerning Christ and the church;" and ver. 30, "We are the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." O what a strange sibness is this, between Christ and us. The apostle, from ver. 25, had been discoursing of the relative duties between husband and wife; and enforcing this duty, from the consideration of the close and intimate union between husband and wife; "They are no more twain but one flesh." And then presently adds, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Whereby he gives us to understand, that the natural marriage between Adam and Eve, or other husbands and their wives, is a faint shadow and representation of the spiritual marriage between Christ and the church.

There is such a depth of infinite wisdom in the works of God in this visible world, that they serve as a glass to lead the spiritual mind unto another world, and the hid mysteries of our holy religion. Hence it is, that the scriptures of truth, which are a revelation of the mind of God, abound so much with parables and metaphors, which are nothing else but a revelation of divine supernatural mysteries, by expressions borrowed from the things of this world, which are obvious to our external senses. The apostle, Rom. 5:14, tells us, that the first Adam was the figure or representation of him that was to come, i.e. of a second Adam, and new covenant Head: I might state the similitude, and also the dissimilitude in many respects, which I do not stand upon at present; but I confine myself unto the point in hand, namely, that of marriage between man and woman, particularly between Adam and Eve, as bearing a manifold similitude unto the marriage between Christ and the Church. This I shall endeavour to illustrate in these particulars.

1st. When God made our first parent Adam, he gave this whole earth to him, for his inheritance: he set him in a paradise of pleasure, and made him lord of all the works of his hand, so that he wanted for nothing to make him happy. But it was some abatement and diminution of his happiness, when he wanted one like himself, as a consort to enjoy the same happiness with him. For it is the observation, even of a heathen philosopher, there is no pleasant or comfortable enjoyment of any happiness alone: and therefore God himself said concerning Adam, "It is not good that the man should be alone:" thereby intimating, that it would add to his happiness if he had a creature of his own stamp and mould to converse with, and share of his happiness. Now, in this, the first Adam was a figure of him that was to come; the blessed Bridegroom of souls, Christ Jesus, was happy from eternity, and possessed all divine perfection and glory. But he resolves to have a bride, a consort for himself, that might share with him of the same happiness and glory, that he himself was possessed of. And for this end, he casts his eyes upon the fallen tribe of Adam, lying in their blood, and chooses a bride and spouse for himself there. Hence, Prov. 8:30. He is said, before the

creation of the world, to rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, his delights were with the sons of men; the desire of his eyes and heart was among them, in prospect of a marriage union with them.

2dly, The first woman, you know, was taken out of Adam's side, when he was cast into a deep sleep: hence, says the apostle, "the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man." Just so, in the spiritual marriage, the bride and spouse of Christ, is (as it were) taken out of his side, when he slept the sleep of death upon the cross, and in the sepulchre. The church is just founded in the blood of Christ. His death was her life; the price of our redemption is not by "silver or gold, or such corruptible things, but the precious blood of Christ the Lord."

3dly, The man and the woman are of one common nature. Just so is it in this spiritual marriage, Heb. 2:11, "Both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren." The Bridegroom, indeed, as to his divine nature, is the Son of God, the second Person of the glorious Trinity, and so of a nature quite different from ours, and so infinitely above us, that there could be no marriage between him and us; but in the fulness of time he was made of a woman, made under the law, that so, being upon a level with us, he might be made like unto us in all things, and betrothe us unto himself as his beloved spouse and bride.

4thly, We are told, Gen. 2:22, That when God had formed the woman of a rib taken out of the man's side, he brought her to the man; she did not know that there was such a creature as Adam in the world; and therefore could never have come to him unless she had been brought: Just so the bride and spouse of Christ, the second Adam, is by nature ignorant of God, and his Son Christ Jesus, and would never come to him, unless she were brought to him by the power of God, John 6:44, "No man (says Christ) can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." To the same purpose is that ver. 45, "Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Quest. What way is that? Answ.\* 'He

enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ, renews the will; and so persuades and enables us to receive the Bridegroom, as he is freely presented in the gospel,' Psa. 110:3.

5thly, Whenever Eve was presented to Adam, he gladly and joyfully received her, and expressed his satisfaction with her, saying, "This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Just so, whenever a poor sinner is determined by the Father to come unto Christ, O how doth he rejoice, and how gladly doth he entertain him. This is "the day of his espousals, and the day of the gladness of his heart." "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no ways cast out." This is signified by the reception of the prodigal, Luke 15.

6thly, In marriage between man and woman, both parties quit their former relatives in some respect, that they may cleave to one another; "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife;" and the wife, on the other hand, doth the same. Just so is it between Christ and his bride. Christ, the blessed Bridegroom, when he had his bride to redeem and purchase, he left the bosom of his Father, and the glory of the higher house, that he might accomplish our redemption, at the expense of his death; and when he had a mind for a bride among the Gentiles, he forsook his mother's house, namely, the Jewish church, that he might betrothe her unto himself for ever. It is with a particular view unto the Gentiles, that he says, Isa. 54:6, "Thy Maker is thine Husband." And, on the other hand, the soul truly espoused unto Christ the Bridegroom, is said to forget her own people, and her Father's house, Psa. 45:10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy Father's house." The meaning is, that she gives up with the devil, the world, and the lusts of the flesh, or the law as a covenant, unto which she had been cleaving, and says, "O Lord, other lords besides thee have had dominion over me;" but now I will be under the law to Christ, as my only Lord and Lawgiver.

Other particulars of this nature might be added, but some of them may occur afterwards; these that I have named are sufficient to shew, that there is a wonderful sibness between Christ in heaven, and the church of believers on earth, and that infinite Wisdom has seen fit to paint out and decipher the marriage union between Christ and his church, by the relation between the husband and the wife; which made the apostle say, when discoursing of the relation between husband and wife, Eph. 5:32. "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Inf. 4. See from this doctrine, what happy and honourable persons believers are, and why they are called the excellent ones of the earth, with whom is all Christ's delight. Why, they are the bride of an honourable Bridegroom. O! who is so well matched? Every believer is married to his Maker, to the Prince of life, the Lord of glory, the Heir of God; and he makes his bride also an heir of God, and a joint heir of all things with himself. There are two or three mysteries, or seeming contradictions, about the bride of Christ, (1.) She is basely, and yet honourably descended. If we view the believer as to his natural birth and pedigree, he is a child of the devil, and an heir of hell; and O! what a wonder is it, that ever the Son of God should match with such a creature? But, by her new birth and adoption, she has the blood royal of heaven in her veins, John 1:13, "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (2.) Christ's bride is black, and yet beautiful, "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." View her in her natural state, or as she is harassed with Satan, the world, and indwelling corruption, she is black and ill hued; but yet she is comely, through the comeliness of the Lord her God; he says of her, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." (3.) Christ's bride is naked, and yet well arrayed; naked in herself, quite destitute of all righteousness: "There is none righteous, no, not one." But the Bridegroom decks her with the garments of salvation, and with a robe of righteousness, Isa. 61:10. (4.) She is poor, and yet possessed of great riches: In herself considered, she is poor, and has nothing but poverty, wretchedness, and misery, yea, drowned in debt to law

and justice; but yet, by virtue of her marriage relation to the Bridegroom, she is possessed of unsearchable riches, and gold better than the gold of Ophir. In a word, she is condemned in the court of law, of justice, of conscience; and yet, by virtue of her relation to Christ the Bridegroom, she is absolved and discharged, and can lift up her head and say, "Who can lay any thing to my charge? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" Thus you see what happy and honourable persons believers are, by virtue of their marriage relation to Christ.

Inf. 5. From this doctrine we may see the folly, madness, and misery, of a carnal, Christless, and unbelieving world, (who fall in among the ranks of the foolish virgins). Why, although they be called, as well as the wise virgins, to go out and meet the Bridegroom, they yet lie still slumbering and sleeping in their beds of sloth, saying, "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," neglect to buy oil for their vessels, and so do not go out to meet the Bridegroom, but lie still in the embraces of some lust and idol or other, which they prefer unto Christ, the glorious Bridegroom: O! "be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate," at the folly of sinners, who forsake their own mercy for lying vanities that cannot profit them. You prefer a soul-murdering lust to the glorious Bridegroom, like the Jews, who preferred Barabbas unto Jesus. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and ye choose darkness rather than light." And you have reason to fear, lest the Lord say unto you, as he did unto Ephraim, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone."

Inf. 6. See the good office of the Spirit of God: why? he it is that testifies of the glory of the Bridegroom, and enlightens the eyes of the poor sinner to take up the glory of his person and mediation, and so gains the consent of the bride; yea, he is the leading band of union between the parties, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

Inf. 7. See the usefulness of a gospel ministry: why, they are the friends of the Bridegroom, and come, by commission from him, to

court a bride for him among the sons of men. A faithful minister travels as in birth till the match be made up; and, O! when the match is made, this is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts, for they are their crown and rejoicing in the day of the Lord. They that are won to consent to the Bridegroom, and to go out and meet him, will be ready to say, "How beautiful, upon the mountains, are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."

Inf. 8. See the excellency of the grace of faith. It is the band of union, whereby we are married to Christ, as our Husband; for it includes the assent and consent of the soul unto this better Husband, whereby we come to be betrothed unto him for ever. Not to insist upon particulars, it is by faith that we put on Christ as the Lord our righteousness. By faith the bride receives out of Christ's fulness, grace for grace, whereby the heart is purified, the old man crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, that we may not serve sin. By faith we overcome the world, 1 John 5:4, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." By faith we resist the devil, and quench his fiery darts, Eph. 6:12. And if you ask, how it is that faith does this? I answer, (1.) Faith brandishes the sword of the Spirit in the face of the enemy, as Christ did, Matth. 4 saying, Thus and thus it is written. (2.) Faith takes up the blood of the Lamb, and presents it to the enemy; at the sight of which he flies, remembering that by this blood his head was bruised upon Mount Calvary, and therefore cannot endure the sight of it. Hence is that word, Rev. 12:11. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." By faith we receive the great and precious promises, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature. All manner of grace is laid up in the promises, for the babes of grace, like milk in the breast; and faith is the mouth of the soul, which, when applied to the breast, sucks in the sincere milk of the word, and of the grace of God by the word, whereby the soul is made to grow in grace, like a babe thriving upon the breast. But I pass this use.



MATTHEW 25:6.—"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

## THE FIFTH SERMON ON THIS TEXT

I go on to a second use of this doctrine, viz, by way of Trial and Examination. And here there are two questions that naturally arise, 1. Have you matched with the Bridegroom? are you espoused to that one Husband. 2. Have you gone out and met the Bridegroom? has he and you had any pleasant and comfortable interviews?

Quest. 1. Whether are you the bride? are you married unto Christ the blessed Bridegroom of souls? I offer the following marks to clear you as to this.

1st, The true bride of Christ has the Bridegroom in great admiration; her esteem of him is such, that she just admires every thing in him and about him. She admires his personal glory, as IMMANUEL; she wonders that ever the second Person of the glorious Godhead should ever have past by the angelic nature, and joined himself in a personal union to the human nature, out of love to her, that he might be a help meet for her. Hence that word of the apostle is much in her mouth and heart, 1 Tim. 1:3. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness," God was manifest in the flesh. O he is just a Nonsuch! "as the apple tree among the trees of the wood. The chiefest among ten thousand." And when the bride thinks of the love he bore to her before the world was made; and how, in the fulness of time, he came and spent his blood for her redemption; how in time he drew her with the cords of love, conquered her enmity by shedding abroad his love upon her heart; she is just swallowed up with admiration, and is ready to cry out, "O, what am I, or my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto! Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? O, what hath God wrought! O the height, the depth, the breadth, and the length of his love! It passeth all knowledge."

2dly, The true bride of Christ knows the voice of the Bridegroom, and is much delighted with the words of his mouth, "My sheep hear my voice," John 10. You see, Song 2:8 how her heart flighters at the first opening of his lips, "It is the voice of my beloved:" It is sweeter to me than the melody of angels or archangels. Every word of the Bridegroom creates admiration in her heart, and she remembers them with delight and pleasure, Song 2:10. "My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my dove, my love, my fair one, and come away." Such words make her heart to glow and burn within her. O, says Job, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food;" and O, says David, "the law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver, more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, yea, sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb." O, says Jeremiah, "thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

3dly, Not only every word, but every thought of the Bridegroom, is a banquet unto the soul of the bride, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." So David, Psa. 104:34. and Psa. 63:6. "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches;" ver. 5. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." Many a sweet interview has the bride with Christ, upon the mount of meditation, which strangers do not intermeddle with.

4thly, The true bride of Christ hates all his rivals. She is dead to the law her first husband, and is ready to say, "I through the law, am dead to the law." She is dead to sin, and crucifies the flesh, with the affections and lusts, though as dear as a right hand, or a right eye. She is dead to the world, and counts all its profits, pleasures, and honours, nothing but a mass of vanity. "I am crucified to the world, and the world to me." Thus, I say, the true bride of Christ hates all Christ's rivals; "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and do count them but dung," &c. Yea, she is ready to part with all relations whatever for him, father, mother,

wife, children, let them all go for him; yea, if her life comes in competition with Christ, she will be ready to say, "I am ready not to be bound only, but to die," for the glory of the Bridegroom; "They loved not their lives unto the death," for the love that they bore unto the Lord Jesus.

5thly, The bride of Christ has much trust and confidence to put in the Bridegroom, and by trusting in him is kept in perfect peace, and is filled with joy and peace in believing. She dares venture upon the greatest dangers, when called, upon the credit of his word, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God," &c. The very name of the Bridegroom is the ground of her trust, and is to her like a strong tower, whither she flies and is safe. The language of the bride's confidence towards the Bridegroom is that, Psa. 36:7. "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings;" and Psa. 27:5. For "in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me," &c.

6thly, The bride of Christ has a great regard for his commands, and is ready to follow him whithersoever he goes. The Bridegroom says to the bride, "If ye love me, ye will keep all my commandments," John 14:15.; and ver. 21. "He that hath my commandment, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." The wise virgins will keep themselves chaste for the service of the Bridegroom and will not defile themselves with "the corruption that is in the world through lust." Hence is that, Rev. 14:4. speaking of the hundred forty and four thousand, that stood with the Lamb upon Mount Zion: "These are they who were not defiled with woman (i.e. with the errors, idolatry, and abomination of Antichrist), for they are virgins: These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

7thly, The true bride of Jesus holds fast the testimony of Jesus, in opposition to the devil, and the world, and all errors and corruptions that are cast out of hell in order to obscure his declarative glory, Rev. 12:17. There we are told, that the dragon "was wroth with the woman,

and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which kept the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." And if it be asked, What is the testimony of Jesus? it is answered, Rev. 19:10. For "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," i.e. the "word of God, which holy men of God speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Now, the true bride of Christ "contends earnestly for this testimony or faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and will receive no doctrine, no practice, no decision, though it were of the general assembly of angels, but what quadrates or agrees with, and is founded upon this testimony and word of Jesus; and this is what Christ hath given in charge to his bride, the church, and every believer in particular, Isa. 8:20. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

8thly, The bride of Christ is very fond to bring forth a seed to serve him; and for this end she studies to bring him to her mother's house, and the ordinances of his appointment. It is only his presence in the church that makes the word effectual for the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; and therefore they that are married to the Bridegroom are fond to see his power and glory in the sanctuary, that so it may be "said of Zion, This and that man was born in her," Psa. 87:5 and "who hath begotten me these," Isa. 49:21.

9thly, The bride of Christ longs sometimes for the consummation of the marriage at death, especially at the last judgment, when the collective body of Christ shall be made fully up, and when the Bridegroom shall present his bride to his Father, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," and when she "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of her Father." Paul had this in his eye, when he said, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing;" and the church, when she said, Song 8 last verse, "Make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

Second question for trial is, Have you had any meeting with the Bridegroom? Has he and you had any pleasant and comfortable interview? Did he draw near and manifest himself to you, as he does not unto the world. I do not insist on this. Only in a few words:

1st, A meeting with Christ, the Bridegroom, puts life, new life, into the languishing soul and spirit of the bride; and no wonder, for he is "the resurrection and the life. He that hath the Son hath life."

2dly, A meeting with Christ, the Bridegroom, gives light to the bride when sitting in darkness; and no wonder, for he is the bright and morning Star that brings day with him. He is the true light, and darkness evanishes before him.

3dly, A meeting with the Bridegroom fires the heart with love, that many waters cannot quench, and all floods are not able to drown. His banner is love, and the bride will follow the banner through life and death, Rom. 8 at the close.

4thly, A meeting with the Bridegroom brings liberty and enlargement of soul with it. The soul that was in bonds is made free by the Son; and then the soul sings, as in Psa. 116, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds:" and then it runs the way of his commandments, he having enlarged it.

5thly, A meeting with the Bridegroom quickens the longings of the soul for another meeting: For the bride never tires of his company; and when he is making as though he would withdraw, she hangs about him to detain him, saying, O! "Why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" And when he is withdrawing, O, will she say, "that I knew where I might find him! I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love."

6thly, If you have met the Bridegroom, you will study to keep his room for him, until he return again. Christ's bride will not play the harlot, or take up with other lovers in his absence; and when enticed by the devil or the world, to join with them in sin, the true bride of Christ will be ready to say, with David, "Depart from me evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God; or as Joseph, when tempted by his adulterous mistress, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against my Lord," my blessed Bridegroom, unto whom I have given heart and hand: And hence the true bride of Christ is ready to resist even unto blood, striving against sin; she would rather venture upon the anger and displeasure of all the world, than endure one frown of the Bridegroom's face; and therefore, having presented herself as a chaste virgin unto Christ, she studies to maintain her chastity and purity.

7thly, Every meeting with the Bridegroom adds a new print or lineament of the beauty of the Bridegroom upon the soul of the bride. For, by beholding of his glory, we are changed into the same image. Hence the world about them are ready to take knowledge of them, that they have been with Jesus: the light of Christ's bride borrowed from the Bridegroom's company, shines before men; so that others seeing her good works are made to glorify the Bridegroom, in the way and deportment of the bride.

8thly, Every meeting with the Bridegroom fills the soul of the bride with a holy blush at the thoughts of her own unworthiness, and the undeserved love and kindness of the Bridegroom; insomuch that she is ashamed, yea even confounded, when she sees that he is pacified towards her, notwithstanding of all her strayings and debordings, Ezek. 16 at the close; and this makes her to cry out with Job, chap. 13 when the Lord manifested himself to him in a way of love, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eyes see thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So much by way of trial.

Use third shall be by way of Consolation to believers, who are the true bride of the blessed Bridegroom.

And well may we speak comfort to the bride, for he himself just joys over her with singing, and says, that "her heart shall rejoice, and her joy no man taketh from her."

To help on the joy of the soul espoused unto this one husband, I shall only touch a little upon two scriptural expressions, wherein the closest union and most intimate communion between Christ and his spouse is held forth: in one place, Christ is said to have them, and, in another, they are said to have him. The first you have, John 3:29, "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom;" the second you have, John 5:12 where it is said of believers, the bride of Christ, "He that hath the Son hath life;" so that they mutually have one another. And therefore upon scripture ground we may safely say, that the Bridegroom hath the bride, and the bride hath the Bridegroom. But now that I may open this twofold spring of consolation, I shall essay to draw a little water out of them, for the consolation of the bride, the Lamb's wife: I begin with

The first, John 3:29, "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom." Now Christ hath the bride in these following respects.

1st, By eternal donation and gift from the Father. The Father of the Bridegroom gifted the bride unto his beloved Son, John 17. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." They were the Father's by electing love: he chose them from among the mass of corrupted mankind, and he makes a propine of them to his eternal Son, that he might redeem them with his blood, and call them in due time by his grace, justify them freely, sanctify them throughout, and save them eternally.

2dly, The Bridegroom hath the bride by purchase. She is by nature the law's debtor, justice's prisoner, and the devil's slave. Christ takes a view of her in this deplorable condition; the justice of God pursuing

like the avenger of blood; the devil, as God's executioner, ready to haul her to the prison of hell. 'O (says Christ), I have loved her with an everlasting love, and my heart is so much set upon a marriage with her, that I am content to satisfy the law and justice in her room; let the curse of the law due to them fall upon me; let the awakened sword of justice rage against me, that they may escape; I will be wounded for their iniquities, and bruised for their transgressions.'

3dly, He hath the bride by conquest. Although law and justice be satisfied, yet, the devil having got possession he will not quit the prisoner, unless she be taken out of his custody by main force. Well, says the Bridegroom, 'I will lead captivity captive, I will bruise the head of that old serpent the devil, spoil principalities and powers; and so the lawful captive shall be delivered, and the prey taken from the mighty.'

4thly, He hath the bride by her own consent, in a day of power, Psa. 110:3. He conquers her enmity against him by discoveries of his love and loveliness, Hos. 11:4; Jer. 31:3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee:" and thereupon the bride signs the contract, Isa. 40:3, 4. "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord," &c. And so the espousals are made, and the Bridegroom hath the bride. But it may be asked, 'Where hath he the bride?' Answer,

1st, He hath her in his house: for as King Solomon built a house for Pharaoh's daughter, so Christ, the true Solomon, builds a twofold house for his bride, a house on earth, and another in heaven. We read of a house that Wisdom hath built, Prov. 9:5 with seven pillars, for the entertainment of his bride, and the stones thereof are laid with fair colours, and the foundation thereof of sapphire; and this is that house of mercy, which God will have built up for ever: and then he has prepared a house, yea, a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" John 14:2, 3. "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c.



2dly, He hath the bride not only in his house, but in his hand; Deut. 33:3, "All his saints are in thy hand," i.e. in the hand of the Bridegroom; John 10:28, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." O believer, is not this a glorious spring of consolation, that thou art continually in the hand of thy glorious Husband and Bridegroom? He keeps his bride in the hollow of his hand, the hand of his power and providence.

3dly, What more? I can tell you more yet. The Bridegroom hath the bride in his arms and bosom; Isa. 40:11, "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom," &c. O what a sweet lodging is this, to lie in the bosom of him, who lay from eternity, and will lie to eternity, in the bosom of the Father, encircled with the everlasting arms of the eternal God! O blessed lodging! Psa. 91:1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shade of the Almighty."

4thly, The Bridegroom hath the bride continually in his eye: such is the love that he bears her, that his eye can never be off her; wherever she is, his eye follows her, and his eyes run to and fro through the whole earth to shew himself strong in her behalf.

5thly, The Bridegroom hath the bride continually in his very heart. O "says the spouse, set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." As the priest had the tribes of Israel upon his breast, so Christ has his people set as a seal upon his heart; she can never be out of his mind. Now is not this a glorious spring of consolation to the soul espoused to Christ; that thy Bridegroom, believer, has thee in his house, in his hand, in his arms, and bosom, and set in his eye, and on his very heart? But,

Secondly, As the Bridegroom hath the bride, so the bride hath the Bridegroom; for he that hath the Son hath life. If thou be a believer, thou hast the Son, who is the Bridegroom. Take this in these particulars,

1st, If thou be the bride, and hast received him by faith, thou hast the person of the Son for thy Husband and Bridegroom, "Thy Maker is thine Husband." You know, that in marriage the relation is between the person of the man and woman; so, in the spiritual marriage, it is the person of Christ and the person of the believer that are married. And what thinkest thou, believer, of being married to the second Person of the glorious Trinity? To which of the angels did he ever say, Thou art the bride, the Lamb's wife?

2dly, Being married to the Son of God, thou art a partaker of the divine nature, as he is a partaker of the human, 2 Pet. 1:4. The beauty of the Lord thy God is upon thee. The Bridegroom imparts and communicates his beauty to the bride; and then she looks "forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun;" and he says, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee."

3dly, The Bridegroom's Father, is thy Father; John 20:17, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Christ, as the second Adam and new covenant Head, says for himself, and all believers who are his bride, Psa. 89. "Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation." And the Father of Christ allows and requires his Son's bride to come to him with holy and humble confidence, and cry, Abba, Father, unto him: "Doubtless thou art my Father, wilt thou not cry unto me, my Father? thou art the guide of my youth."

4thly, The Holy Ghost is thy Comforter, to encourage and comfort the bride in the absence of the Bridegroom; John 16:6, "It is expedient (says Christ) for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I go away, I will send him unto you," and he shall dwell in you, and abide with you for ever. The spirit of the Bridegroom abiding with the bride is far better than if she enjoyed his bodily presence.

5thly, The very life of the bride is hid in the Bridegroom, Col. 3:3, "Your life is hid with Christ in God. Because I live, ye shall live also."

Perhaps, poor believer, to thy own sense and feeling, thou mayest be brought to that pass, as to say, "My life draweth nigh unto the grave, I am free among the dead:" I am a dry tree, and like Ezekiel's dry bones; but remember, that the fountain of life is with thy Head, Husband, and Bridegroom; "because I live, ye shall live also."

6thly, Know for thy comfort, that the contract of the covenant stands fast; he has betrothed thee to himself, not for a day, for a month, or a year, or an age, but for ever: "I will make with them an everlasting covenant." The covenant stands fast with him: "My covenant I will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

7thly, Having the Son, thou hast all the promises of the new covenant, as so many wells of salvation, out of which thou mayest draw waters with joy; for all the promises of God are in him, and in him they are to the bride of Christ yea and amen. O! how great and precious are these promises.

8thly, Having the Son for thy Bridegroom, the law, nor justice, nor the world, nor life nor death, have any action or process against thee. You know, in law, the wife cannot be pursued for debt: the husband is liable for her debt; and if the husband pay the debt, the creditors have nothing to say against the wife. Well, this is the case with thee, O believer, who hast the Son for thy Husband: he has cleared scores with law and justice, and was discharged of it in his resurrection, wherefore "he was taken from prison and from judgment;" and therefore the soul married and betrothed unto him, being under his cover, may lift up the head and cry, Rom. 8:33, 34, "Who can lay anything to my charge? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

9thly, Whatever deep seas or Jordans of trouble thou mayest have before thee, the Bridegroom has passed his word for it, that he will be present with thee in them, Isa. 41:10; Is. 43:2 "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," &c. When thou art laid upon a sick-bed, or a death-bed, the Bridegroom will attend thee; for he

has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee:" yea, when thou liest down in the grave, thou shalt sleep in his bed and bosom; "Them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."

10thly, Thy Bridegroom, believer, when thou art giving up the ghost, and thy soul departing from thy body; he, with a guard of angels, will be ready to receive thy spirit, John 14:3, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." O what comfort is it to a dying saint or believer that no sooner is he absent from the body, but he is present with the Lord; and may welcome the waggon of death, that is come to fetch the bride home to the house of the Bridegroom, saying, with dying Stephen, "O Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

11thly, Though thou drop the carcase of the body into the grave, where it sleeps quietly until the morning of the resurrection, yet the Bridegroom says, I will raise them up at the last day. This promise he frequently repeats, particularly John 6. "I will raise him up at the last day." O lift up thy head, believer; for the day of thy complete redemption, even the redemption of thy body from the power of the grave, draweth nigh. Thy beloved Bridegroom will, as it were, come to the bed-side of the grave, and cry, "Awake and sing, thou that sleepest in the dust:" and then the dew of the Holy Ghost, that quickened thy soul when dead in trespasses and sins, shall also quicken thy dead body, and thereupon the earth shall cast out the dead, Is. 26:19, compared with Rom. 8:11. Then, O then, believer, thou shalt "shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of thy Father;" thy vile body shall be made like unto the glorious body of the Bridegroom; and thereupon the nuptial solemnity will begin, which shall never have an end, each one crying to another, as Rev. 19:7, "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."

Thus you see what unspeakable ground of consolation and eternal triumph there is for the soul that is espoused unto Christ: but the ten thousandth thousandth part of it cannot be told; for eye hath not

seen, nor ear heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived, what is laid up for her in Christ.

Object. 1. O! may some poor soul say, these are great things indeed; but I am afraid they do not belong unto me; I am afraid I am not the bride; he is such a great and glorious person, and I such a poor despicable worm, so guilty, so filthy, that I am afraid the match was never made between him and me; and therefore I am afraid to apply all that comfort that belongs to the bride of Christ.

Answ. It is one of the properties of the bride of Christ, to be humble, and lowly, and self-denied, and to be admiring the infinite distance between the Bridegroom and her: She is never taken up with admiring her own gifts and graces, her own beauty and excellency, but the beauty, glory and excellency of the Bridegroom: She does not boast of what she has received, but all her boasting and glorying is in the Lord: And the more humble and denied the bride of Christ is, the more amiable and desireable she is in the eyes of the Bridegroom, Isa. 57:15. and 62:2.

Object, 2. I am so pestered with a body of sin and death, carnality, unbelief, and pride, and other heart plagues, that I doubt if my spot be the spot of Christ's bride.

Answ. You see how much the great apostle Paul was distressed with the law of sin which was in his members, Rom. 7. "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death." Christ says of his bride, Song 6. "What will you see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies;" grace and corruption continually struggling together; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and therefore do not draw rash conclusions upon this account.

Object. 3. I thought once in a day my heart could rejoice in him as my beloved; and I thought his left hand was under my head, and his right hand did embrace me, and I could say, "My beloved is mine,

and I am his:" But, alas! he is gone; "The Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me."

Answ. "Why sayest thou so, O Jacob, my way is hid from the Lord? Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." And therefore wait upon the return of thy Bridegroom, as they that watch for the morning, yea, more than they that watch for the morning:" for as sure as the morning light will arise, after a dark night, as sure will he return to thy soul in a way of grace. And therefore live by faith; and let Israel, the true bride of Christ, hope in the Lord. And I give you his word as the ground of your sure hope, Isa. 54:7, 8. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer."

Use fourth of this doctrine shall be by way of reproof and terror unto all these, who, instead of closing the bargain, and going forth to meet the Bridegroom Christ Jesus, continue married unto other husbands. But more particularly,

First, Some, yea multitudes of gospel-hearers, are married to the law as a husband; and this is the case with all legalists, and self-righteous persons, that are seeking life, righteousness, and acceptance with God, by their own personal obedience, their prayers, and repentance, mortification, and this and that good thing that they have done, or some good qualification that they find in themselves. If this be the case with you, you never yet went out to meet the Bridegroom, you were never married to the better Husband, but continue married to the law.

Here I would do two things, first, shew who they are that are yet married to the law; secondly, discover to you your miserable condition while it is so.

1. I say, I would shew who they are that are married to the law; for all mankind are married unto it in Adam, and all mankind continue under Adam's covenant, until the power of grace make a divorce.

1st, If the law never slew you, you are yet married unto it as a husband, Gal. 2:19. "I through the law am dead to the law;" Rom. 7:9. "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Every man by nature sits mounted upon the throne of an imaginary righteousness, he thinks himself a living man, and that he can do well enough by his own endeavours for life; like the Jews spoken of, Rom. 10:3 who were ignorant of the righteousness of God, and went about to establish their own righteousness.

2dly, You that never knew what it was to mourn over, and wrestle against the legal set and bias of your hearts towards the law as a covenant, you remain yet married unto it as a husband. A believer that is married unto Christ, through the remaining legality of his heart, is many times looking back unto his old husband, and ready to rest upon duties done by him, and his own frames and enlargements, as the ground of his acceptance with God, which is a putting these things in the room of Christ; and this is sad matter of mourning and humiliation unto him: and if you know nothing of this exercise, it is a shrewd evidence that you are not married unto Christ, but under the law as a covenant.

3dly, When you are in any distress or perplexity of mind, where is it that you find rest, ease, and quiet? For you know it is but natural for a poor woman in her distress to run to her husband for relief. Just so is it with the believer that is married unto Christ; when he is weary and heavy laden, he can never rest till he come to Christ, and then he sits down under his shadow with great delight. But if you find rest in your own works, duties, qualifications, your personal covenants, your vows, repentance, and reformations, it is a sign you are yet married unto the law.

4thly, You that can be grieved for your gross sins and outbreaks, that perhaps wound your reputation before the world, but never yet had a sore heart for the corruptions of your nature, and the internal plagues of your heart, such as unbelief, enmity, pride, ignorance, and carnality; it is a sign that you are yet married unto the law as a husband: and the reason is; because, if ever the law had come home in its extent and spirituality, it would have been "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and discover the secret thoughts and intents of your hearts, which are only and continually evil.

2. I come to tell you of your misery while married to the law, and not to Christ.

1st, You are married to a very rigorous husband, that demands nothing else than a perfect and every way complete obedience, and that under the pain of death; like the Egyptian taskmasters, the law, to which you are married, requires brick, but neither can nor will afford any straw. My meaning is, that it requires perfect working, but gives no grace, no strength, whereby to obey. Yea,

2dly, You are married to a cursing husband, Gal. 3:10. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Observe the expression, if you do not continue in all things, the law curses and condemns you. Some folks fancy if they do as well as they can, they answer the demands of it, and God, the great Lawgiver, will be satisfied with what they do, and forgive their defects and short-comings. Well, you may go on, and foster yourselves up in this fancy: but in the name of the Lord I warn you, "You shall lie down in sorrow."

3dly, You are married to a weak husband, Rom. 8:3. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." This is not to be understood as if the law had lost any of its authority to require obedience, or to condemn the sinner for disobedience: Not at all, the law is as strong as ever, and as sacred as ever. But the law is weak; it



has lost its covenant power to confer life upon the sinner that has once broken it; it is weak to redeem or save the sinner; it cannot justify; it cannot pardon; it cannot afford life unto any springing of Adam by ordinary generation, because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It is weak through the flesh, i.e. through the corruption of our nature, and our inability to obey it; for, if we could yield perfect obedience to the law, the law would be as strong as ever to save us, according to that word, "He that doth these things shall live in them," but he that doth them not shall die.

4thly, You are married to a dead husband, Rom. 7:6 speaking of the law, says the apostle, "That being dead wherein we were held." What help can a woman's husband, that is dead and buried in the grave afford unto her? She may go and weep upon his grave, and cry; but he no more hears her than the grave-stone. Just so is the case: The law to which we were married in the first Adam is dead, and its votaries may work, and sigh, and cry, and do as they will for help by the works of the law: It no more regards all that they can do, than a dead carcase regards when you speak to it; for "by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." But still indeed the law is alive to curse and condemn, as was just now said.

Thus you see what a miserable husband you are married to, while married to the law; but that you may yet better know your misery, there are these things I have to tell you from the Lord.

1st, While married unto the law, you are farther off from heaven than the grossest of sinners. Hence Christ tells the Pharisees, who were touching the law blameless, but because they rested upon the works of the law as the ground of their justification and acceptance, Christ tells them, that "publicans and harlots should enter into the kingdom of God before them" Quest. Are not publicans and harlots continuing so in the broad way to hell? Answ. No doubt of that; but there were more of the publicans and harlots converted by Christ's ministry, than of the Scribes and Pharisees. And how came that about? Why, the publicans and harlots were more easily convinced that they were

in the high way to ruin, and so more easily turned from the evil of their ways, than the Pharisee, who wrapt himself up in the garment of his own obedience and righteousness, and so under that covering screened himself against all the arrows of conviction.

2dly, While married unto the law, you are under the dominion and power of sin, Rom. 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace;" plainly importing, that while a man is married unto the law, sin is in its reigning power, for "the strength of sin is the law." The law irritates corruption, but does not mortify it; it condemns a man to lie under the dominion of every lust and idol.

3dly, You are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise." You have a right of access indeed, by sitting under the drop of the gospel, but no saving interest therein; you have no more right of possession than the devils have.

4thly, All your worship and service is rejected of God, because you reject his beloved Son, whom he has given for a covenant unto the people. While a man is upon a law bottom, all he doth is an abomination to God, Isa. 1:11–13.

5thly, All the attributes of God are armed against you: His holiness hates you as unclean: his justice condemns you, because all your righteousness is as filthy rags; his wisdom devises an evil device against you; and his power will execute all the threatenings of the law upon you: "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

Thus you see what a dangerous condition you are in, while married to the law.

Secondly, I should now speak a word to these who are married to their lusts, and are cleaving unto the world's trinity, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. The prophet Hosea speaks of some who were joined to their idols; they are so wedded to

their sinful profits and pleasures, such as the lust of drunkenness, the lust of uncleanness, the lust of covetousness, that they never yet went out to meet the Bridegroom in a way of believing. What shall I say to all such profane sinners, that are hugging their Delilahs in their bosom, and giving them that room that is due to the Lord Jesus Christ? I have only a word or two unto you.

1st, You are in love and league with that which God hates; for every sin and lust in heart or hand, in life or lip, is the abominable thing which God hates.

2dly, You are married to that which Christ came to destroy and condemn. Christ's great errand was to finish transgression, and make an end of sin. "He condemned sin in the flesh," or by the sacrifice of his flesh or human nature. Can you expect to be saved by Christ, while you harbour that condemned traitor.

3dly, You are married unto a foul-murderer, that is stabbing you to your very heart, and the life of thy soul must go for it, if you hold it fast, though as dear as a right hand.

4thly, You are married unto that which the holy law of God condemns. The law pours out its anathemas against every sin, because sin is a transgression of the law, Gal. 3:10. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,"

5thly, If you continue married to your lusts, you must bed with them in hell, where your present lusts will be found so many vipers to sting you to the heart for ever. Your meat will then be turned into your bowels, and will be as the gall of asps within you. In a word, snares, fire, and brimstone, and a furious tempest of wrath and vengeance, shall be the portion of your cup, if you continue married to your lusts.

Perhaps some may be saying in their hearts, "I hope I am married unto Christ, and shall be saved by him, though I continue in my old

way of lying and drinking, cheating and whoring, and over-reaching my neighbours; I hope God will pardon these, and the like failings and infirmities." Well, you may foster yourselves up in these vain hopes; but what says Christ? "No man can serve two masters," he must give up either with the one or with the other. O, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with God? and shall sin, and self, and the world, have the throne of your hearts, and the obedience of your lives, and yet think you to have fellowship with God? What communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial?" And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? 2 Cor. 6:14, 15. And therefore I say, if ever you go out to meet the Bridegroom, you must let these go, and say with Ephraim, What have I to do any more with idols? So much for reproof.

MATTH. 25:6.—And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

## **THE SIXTH SERMON ON THIS TEXT**

THE fifth use of this doctrine I shall endeavour to manage in an address to two sorts of persons: First, To all in general. Secondly, To believers in particular.

First, I say, I would address myself to all in general.

Sirs, you have been hearing of Christ in the quality of a Bridegroom, and how he is not only come in the flesh, but actually come in the dispensation of the gospel, to court a bride for himself among the sons of men. He who married our nature unto personal union with himself, when he past by the nature of angels, that he might be upon a level with us, is now actually presenting himself to us in this gospel, as the Bridegroom of souls, and saying, with his hand stretched out, "Behold me, behold me;" I will be for you, if you will be for me, and

not for another: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door of his heart to me, and consent to the bargain, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me: I will betrothe thee unto me for ever."

Now, I say, seeing this is the case, my call and exhortation unto all is, to give the assent and consent of faith unto the bargain. I, as a friend of the Bridegroom, have a commission to court for him, and to say to you, as Rebekah's friends said to her, upon a proposal of marriage with Isaac, "Wilt thou go with this man?" the Man IMMANUEL, GOD-MAN; the man of God's right hand; the Man whose name is the Branch, who builds the temple, and bears all the glory; the Man who hath all power in heaven, and on earth; who is KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. O, will you sign the contract of the new covenant with the hand of faith, and say, "I am the Lord's, my Maker is and shall be my Husband, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and my Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." O, what a happy day would it be to this assembly, if every individual soul would give Rebekah's answer to the proposal, with the same affection and resolution, 'I will go with the man. I will follow him whithersoever he goes; his God shall be my God, his Father shall be my Father, where he dwells there will I dwell; neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate between him and me.' Now, because it is Christ's way not to drag with violence, but to draw his bride to him with the cords of a man, and the bands of love, therefore I shall essay to enforce the exhortation with a few motives or arguments.

Mot. 1. Shall be taken from the glory and excellency of the blessed Bridegroom. And here it is fit you remember what was said of him in the doctrinal part. As to his name, he has a "name above every name that can be named." As to his pedigree, who can declare his generation? As to his personal worth and excellency, his qualities are every way incomparable. Now, seeing such a Bridegroom offers to betrothe you to himself, O let it be a bargain; give your consent unto him, that the everlasting knot may be cast between you and him.

Mot. 2. To engage you to match with the Bridegroom, O consider how fond he is of the match, how much his heart is set upon it. This will appear, if you consider,

1. That he had it upon his heart from all eternity, before the world was made: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," Jer. 31:3. Before we had any being, save in his own purpose, when he saw us in our blood, his time, even then, was a time of love, Ezek. 16; and the accomplishing of that project of love was the joy of his heart, Prov. 8:30. He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men."

2. He was so fond of the match, that, though he be God's fellow, and thinks it not robbery to be equal with God," yet he consented voluntarily to become his Father's bond servant out of love to us. This is the import of the word, "Mine ear hast thou bored, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart." As Jacob became Laban's servant for fourteen years, out of love he had to Rachel; so did Christ become his Father's servant in the great work of redemption, out of love he had to the bride, that his Father promised him, in Adam's family.

3. Because he was none of our kindred, therefore he became our Kinsman, by manifesting himself in the flesh, or taking part of our flesh, Heb. 2:14; John 1:14. "The Word was made flesh;" he became as one of us, that so the natural distance being removed, the marriage might be accomplished.

4. Because the bride was a bond slave to law and justice, and could not be redeemed but with a ransom of infinite value; therefore the Bridegroom dies for the bride, and redeems her, not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood: he gave his life a ransom for many.

5. Because she was a prisoner unto Satan, and a lawful captive unto her greatest enemy, who was ready to devour her; therefore he comes

in the quality of a victorious and renowned conqueror, and travels in the greatness of his strength, spoils principalities and powers, makes a shew of them openly, and "through death, destroys him that had the power of death," setting the captives of the mighty at liberty.

6. Because the bride was as black as hell, by lying among the pots; therefore he undertakes to wash and cleanse her, and to put his own beauty upon her, whereby she should be as the wings of a dove, covered with yellow gold.

7. Because the bride was naked, the devil having run away with her beautiful ornament of original righteousness; therefore the Bridegroom undertakes to clothe her with white raiment, so as the shame of her nakedness might not appear: the Bridegroom is made of God to her, "righteousness and sanctification," &c.

8. So fond is the Bridegroom of the match, that he despatches his heralds to make open proclamation of his purpose of marriage to her, and he gives it us ministers in our commission, to insist upon it, and not to take a refusal; 2 Cor. 5:20. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God," by embracing his beloved Son, and consenting to him as your Head, Husband, and Bridegroom.

9. So fond is he, that he waits for a good answer from the bride; he waits that he may be gracious, and he exalts himself, that he may shew mercy; he stands at the door and knocks, till his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night.

10. He is grieved at the heart when he gets a refusal. How did he weep over Jerusalem, saying, O, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

11. How glad is his heart when the consent of the bride is gained? He is so glad, that he calls heaven and earth to rejoice with him: for there is joy in heaven when but one sinner is converted: O then the cry is given, Rev. 19:5. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready." The joy of that day is expressed by the joyful solemnity of a king's coronation, Cant. 4 last, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

Now, is Christ so fond of a match with you, and will you be cool, careless, and averse? especially, if you consider by way of

Mot. 3. The vast disparity and disproportion between you and him. Never was there such an inequality in marriage between parties as here; and yet his love and kindness towards the bride makes him come over all inequality. O let heaven and earth, angels and men, stand amazed! He who is the Lord, the Creator of all the ends of the earth, offers to match with his own creature, the work of his own hand, Is. 54:6. "Thy Maker is thine Husband." He who is the ANCIENT OF DAYS, the EVERLASTING FATHER, offers to match with a forlorn infant cast out into the open field. He who is the most noble Branch of heaven or earth, offers to match with a vile prostitute, who had played the harlot with many lovers, whose father was an Amorite, and her mother a Hittite. He who is the Heir of God, Heir of heaven, the Heir of all things, offers to match with the children of Satan, and heirs of hell. He who is the greatest beauty of heaven and earth, the brightness of the Father's glory, offers to match with a bride, black as the Ethiopian, and spotted like the leopard, who is full of wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores. O let heaven and earth stand amazed at the condescension of the Bridegroom, and the folly of sinners in refusing such a match!

Mot. 4. To win your hearts to the Bridegroom, consider how much it will turn out to your advantage, if you take on with him as your



Husband. View this in these following things.

1. The Bridegroom will clear, and ease you of all your debts. As for temporal and worldly debts he has a thousand ways to rid you of these, if he see it for his glory, and your good: for the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, and he bids you cast all your cares upon him, for he careth for his bride; he that paid a ransom for your souls, how will he not with that freely give you all things? But as to the debts you owe to law and justice, which indeed of all are the greatest and heaviest, heavier than you can bear, the least farthing of which you could never have paid, either by an eternity of obedience, or an eternity of punishment, that moment you close with Christ, you are cleared and discharged; the Bridegroom stands between you and all your creditors. You know the wife is not sueable at law while clothed with a husband, he answers for all. Just so when you close with Christ the better Husband, who is raised from the dead, you become dead to the law," Rom. 7:4 i.e. you have no more concern with the law, and the debts you owe to it as a covenant, either for obedience or punishment, than if they had never been; insomuch that, with joy and triumph you may lift up your heads in the presence of all your creditors or accusers, and say, 'Who can lay any thing to my charge? for it is Christ that died for my offences, and rose again for my justification and acquittance; I am under his covering, I am with him in the bride-chamber, where law and justice have no action against me.' O then, poor diver, broken and bankrupt sinner, go out and match with the Bridegroom, and that moment, "It is God that justifies you," saying, "I, even I am he that blotteth out your transgressions."

2. O Sirs, go out and meet the Bridegroom, and take on with him, and all your wants shall be supplied, be they never so great and many, Phil. 4:19. "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," The Bridegroom, as you have heard, has unsearchable riches: all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and of glory, are in him; and out of his fulness you shall receive grace for grace; quickening grace, for he is the Resurrection

and the Life; enlightening grace, for he is the Sun of righteousness, the bright and the morning Star; strengthening grace, for he giveth power to the faint, and increaseth strength to them that have no might. In a word, he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from the soul that consents to marry him.

3. The Bridegroom will heal all your soul maladies: for he is well skilled in physic; he is the Physician of value, and there is no disease so obstinate, but he will cure it with a word speaking. Hast thou a hard heart? he will soften it, and turn it unto a heart of flesh. Hast thou a withered hand, that cannot work? well, he strengthens the weak and withered hand. Hast thou lame feet, that cannot walk? well, he makes the lame to leap like an hart. Hast thou a blind eye? or wast thou born blind? well, he has eye-salve to make the blind to see clearly. In a word, the first moment the soul matches with Christ, he begins the cure, and, against the day of consummation of the marriage, the bride will be fully ready, the good work will be perfected, and the bride will be presented "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

4. O go out and meet the Bridegroom, and match with him, and he will bear all your burdens, let them be never so heavy: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Christ is the most sympathising Husband that ever was: If he see his bride or beloved spouse oppressed in spirit with any sort of trouble, be what it will, he is just afflicted in all her afflictions, and he will be with her in the fire and in the waters, that the fire may not burn, nor the waters overwhelm her. See how he speaks to his beloved spouse in her tossings, Is. 54:11. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires."

5. O match with the Bridegroom, and he will subdue all thy enemies, and make thee a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror over them. They that match and take on with Christ, must indeed lay their account to have the armies of hell upon their top: The old serpent

casts out water like a flood against the woman, and the remnant of her seed, that "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." But be not discouraged, poor soul; thy Bridegroom has already bruised the head of the old serpent, and, ere it be long, will also make thee to tread Satan under thy feet. He that stood between thee and avenging justice, will likewise stand with and for thee, in opposition to all enemies whatever. Let men and devils curse the bride of Christ, he will bless her. Let her be excommunicate, or cast out of the Church unto the devil's common, Christ will not affirm, but make void such sentences. In the ninth chapter of John, we read of a poor man born blind, whose eyes Christ had opened upon the Sabbath day, by making a little clay, and putting it upon his eyes. The Jewish Sanhedrim met; and under a very religious pretence of zeal for the Sabbath day, they convene the man before them, who professed Christ, in as far as he knew him; and thereupon they excommunicate him, and cast him out of the church, and held him as a Heathen man and a Publican. Well, was this sentence bound in heaven? No; so far from that, that ver. 35 when Christ heard they had cast him out (or excommunicated him, as in the margin), Christ seeks him out, and finds him, and manifests himself the more to him, as you may see, ver. 35–38: and, in the 39th verse, he passes a heavy doom and sentence upon them that had cast him out: "For judgement I am come into this world, that they who see not might see, and that they who see (or imagine that they are the only men that see things, or know them in a better light), might be made blind." Thus Christ will take up and defend his bride, to the confusion of them that do her hurt.

6. O match with the blessed Bridegroom, and he will manage all your concerns for you, and that both in heaven above, and earth below; for he has "all power in heaven and in earth." Thy Bridegroom, believer, will agent all thy business for thee on earth; for all the wheels of providence, they are rolled in a subserviency unto his design of love towards his beloved spouse and bride, Rom. 8:28; Deut. 33. "He rides upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky." And as for thy concerns in the high court of heaven, he is thy Agent

and Advocate there, 1 John, 2:1, 2. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father," &c.

7. O match with Christ the Bridegroom, for he provides his bride in a large jointure. Although she contracts nothing with him but debt, and want, and poverty; yet he, in a way of free grace and love, contracts all things with her. See the tenure of the contract, 1 Cor. 3:21. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Oh! how well is the spouse of Christ provided, by virtue of the contract of the new covenant! He provides his bride of a crown, and "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." He provides her of "a kingdom that cannot be moved, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." He provides her of "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and a jointure house "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In a word, he contracts, that his own God and Father shall be her God and Father for ever. What more can the most enlarged heart desire? More "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

Mot. 5. To win your hearts to the blessed Bridegroom, consider the excellency of the contract he makes with his bride. I told you in the entry, the contract is the covenant of grace and promise, transacted in eternity between the Bridegroom and his eternal Father, on the behalf of these whom the Father gave him, Psal. 89:3. "I have made a covenant with my chosen." And, in a day of power, when the bride gives her consent, that same covenant is made and established with her, Is. 55:3. "I will make with them an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." I shall name a few properties, and you have them all in a bundle together, Hos. 2:19, 20. "And I will betrothe thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercy. I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord."

1. It is an everlasting contract; for thus saith the Bridegroom, "I will betrothe thee unto me for ever." As the contract bears date from the ancient years of eternity, so it runs forward to an eternity to come; and, Oh! who can form a right thought of never-ending eternity? Oh! it is a great, but comfortable word to the bride of Christ, "I will betrothe thee unto me for ever. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good." Death breaks all contracts between man and wife, and nullifies the relation; but "neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come," shall separate between Christ and his spouse.

2. It is a just and righteous contract; for it stands bottomed upon the everlasting righteousness brought in by the Bridegroom, "I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness." The righteousness of Christ is the condition of the contract of the new covenant. By his obedience unto death, he confirmed the covenant unto many; and he gifts this righteousness unto his bride as her wedding garment, and puts it on her with his own hand: Hence she sings, Is. 61:10. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

3. It is a wise and well ordered contract; for, says the Bridegroom, "I will betrothe thee unto me in judgement," i.e. with great wisdom and understanding. This chariot of the wood of Lebanon, viz. the covenant of grace, was made by a greater than Solomon, in whom "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It was the result of the council of peace, between the Father and the Son, from all eternity, and therefore cannot but be well ordered in all things." It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, even his hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of the world knew. In other contracts between man and wife, there are sometimes very intricate and perplexing clauses, which occasion law-suits and vexations; but no such thing here, every thing is clear.

4. It is a most loving contract; for, says the Bridegroom, "I will betrothe thee unto me in loving-kindness." The love that Christ did bear to his bride from all eternity is the source and original of the whole of the match. The chariot of the wood of Lebanon is just paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. Love makes him to choose her for his bride from eternity; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Love made him lay down his life a ransom for his bride; "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Love made him draw her within the bonds of that covenant, whereof he is the Head; and love made all the promises of the contract; and love obliges him to fulfil them.

5. It is a gratuitous and free contract that he makes with her; for, says the Bridegroom, "I will betrothe thee unto me in mercies; and it is observable, that is in the plural number, because that there are a multitude of tender mercies with the Bridegroom towards the bride. She was in misery when he looked upon her, wallowing in her blood, without any eye to pity, or hand to help; but his tender mercies made him to spread his skirt over her, and to say unto her, Live; and thus his "mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." His tender bowels yearn towards his beloved spouse, when he sees her in any distress and trouble; for, "in all her afflictions he is afflicted;" and although her afflictions be many, yet at length he relieves her out of them all.

6. It is a faithful and true contract; for he says, ver. 20. "I will betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness." The very name of the Bridegroom is faithful and true, Rev. 19:11. He is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness. He is not man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent; and therefore the contract of the covenant is more sure than heaven and earth: his "covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips, Is. 54:10. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."

7. It is an additional clause of the contract, Hos. 2:20. "(And thou shalt know the Lord.) I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord." The Bridegroom manifests himself to the bride in another manner than he doth to the rest of the world, Is. 33:17. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." Hos. 6:3 "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." This is the leading blessing in the contract of the covenant, and therefore called life eternal, John 17:3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To see the glory of Christ, and to be with him, is just the culminating or consummating point of the happiness of the saints in heaven, John 17:24. But that which seems especially to be imported in the expression, "Thou shalt know the Lord," is, that the bride shall be admitted into the most intimate fellowship and communion with the Bridegroom. As, upon the consummation of the marriage, the bride and the bridegroom know one another, in a way of conjugal union and communion; so the bride of Christ shall enjoy the sweetest communion with the Lord, so as to be in case to say, with the spouse, "His left hand shall be under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me; and as a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me, he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." Thus you see what an excellent contract it is that Christ makes with the bride. Now, this contract we bring unto you in a preached gospel, requiring you in God's great name to take hold of it, and subscribe it by the hand of faith, according to that prophecy and promise, Is. 44:5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

Mot. 6. To engage you to go forth and meet and match with the Bridegroom, in a way of believing, consider, that, by the command of the Bridegroom, proclamation is made of the purpose of marriage with the bride, and no lawful objection or impediment is or can be made against the design. O, Sirs, we who are the friends and heralds of the Bridegroom, by commission from the Bridegroom and his eternal Father, have proclaimed, and continue to proclaim, from the tops of the high places, in the chief places of concourse, "Whoever

will, let him come, and be the bride, the Lamb's wife. Unto you, O men (says he), I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And what is his voice? See it, Is. 55:1-3. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come, &c. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant." Now, shall proclamation of marriage be made, and yet shall the bride draw back, and make the proclamation of none effect.

Mot. 7. Consider, that if you be pleased with the match, all parties are pleased.

1. The Father of the Bridegroom is pleased. The first motion of the bargain was made by him; he first proposed the match for his beloved Son, in the council of peace, saying, 'O my Son, wilt thou match with you company of Adam's family, and buy them off from the hand of justice, and betrothe them unto thee for ever? Mine they are, and I give them unto thee.' And as the Father proposed the match, so he presents his beloved Son unto the bride, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth." For what end doth the Father thus commend him unto you, if he be not pleased with the match? Yea, he commands and requires you to take him by the hand, 1 John, 3:23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," &c.

2. As the Father of the Bridegroom is pleased, so is the Bridegroom himself, yea, as you heard in ten or twelve particulars, he is exceedingly fond of it. His delights were and are with the sons of men; he rejoices over the soul that comes to him, "as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride."

3. The friends of the Bridegroom, all faithful ministers, are pleased, yea, they travail as in birth, till they gain your consent to take your Maker for your Husband; and that day your consent is gained, they rejoice, and forget their sorrow, like a travailing woman when a man-child is born into the world.



4. Fellow virgins, all true believers, are well pleased and rejoice when a poor soul gives heart and hand to the Bridegroom, Psal. 45:14, 15. "The virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee: with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought." Thus, I say, all parties are pleased. O, then, let it be a bargain, and go forth and meet the Bridegroom.

Mot. 8. As all parties on the side of the Bridegroom are pleased, so all things are ready, and therefore come to the marriage. The Bridegroom is ready, as the words of the text declare, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him; yea, he stands at the door, and knocks. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is ready to cast the everlasting knot, saying, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." He is ready to give the bride "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for a heavy spirit." The contract of the covenant is ready, being signed by the Father, saying, Is. 42:6. "I will give thee for a covenant unto the people;" and the Bridegroom has signed it with his own blood, Dan. 9; Heb. 9. The marriage house is built, and ready for the reception of the bride, Prov. 9 at the beginning, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." The marriage supper is ready, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, Matth. 22.: and Prov. 9:2. "Wisdom hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, she hath also furnished her table," &c. In a word, all the angels and saints in heaven, all ministers and Christians upon earth, are ready to clap their hands, and to tune their harps, and there will be joy both in heaven and in earth, at your going forth to meet the Bridegroom.

Mot. 9. Go forth, and meet the Bridegroom in a way of believing; for sad, sad, will be the event, if you do not, after all that has been said. Why, say you, What will be the event? or what will follow?

1. You will sadden the heart of the Bridegroom, who is the joy of heaven and earth. How sad a heart got he from the Jews, when he grieved for the hardness of their hearts, and when he wept over

them! And will you follow their footsteps, and grieve the heart of your God also?

2. If you go not forth to meet him, he will depart from you, and give you up, Gen. 6:3. "My Spirit (says he) shall not always strive with man." Psal. 81:11. "My people would not hearken unto my voice; Israel would none of me, so I gave them up," &c. Many a sad wo will befall you upon his departure, Hos. 9:12. "Yea, wo also to them, when I depart from them."

3. He will go to his Father that sent him, and enter a complaint against you, saying, 'O Father, according to thy command, I went and proposed myself as a Bridegroom to such a people or person, but they refused the match, they cast the bargain.'" And O how will God the Father resent the indignity? John 3:18, 36. "He that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. There remains no sacrifice for such a sin:" For, in so doing, you trample the blood of the Bridegroom under your feet, Heb. 10:26, 29.

4. Heaven and earth, and the whole creation, will be astonished, and horribly afraid at you, in preferring other lovers unto him, who is altogether lovely, Jer. 2:12, 13.

5. Sin, Satan, and the world, will pick you up, and lead you captive, and God will say, They are joined to their idols, let them alone, Hos. 4:17 seeing they continue in covenant with death, and at agreement with hell, Is. 28:15. Let them go, and see what the end will be: "I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, and therefore thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more," Ezek. 24:13.

6. Remember, despised love issues out in flames of wrath and resentment, Prov. 1:24. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;" ver. 26. "I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

Sirs, I am afraid, that some if not many of you in this place, are more taken up in drinking, caballing, and peuthering about your ensuing

elections, than you are about this important affair of having your own souls, and the souls of others, matched unto the Son of God. Your heads and hearts are so filled with these sinful and trifling matters, that the Bridegroom cannot get a hearing. Yea, you are "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers," Psal. 58:4, 5. But, dear friends, allow me to reason the matter with you, in the name of God, Is. 55:2. "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which profiteth nothing?" What will the gain of the election or the gain of the whole world avail, if you lose your own souls by not going forth from these things to meet the Bridegroom? For the Lord's sake remember, that if you do not go forth, and meet him, and match with him by faith now, you shall meet with him and see him shortly upon the back of death, and at the last judgement, Rev. 1:7. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him," and you also that pierced his heart by unbelief, and then you will wail because of him: O how will you look him in the face, whose offers of love you despised? What will you do? and what blushing and confusion of face will fly up unto your breast and countenance, when you shall see your despised lover sitting upon his white throne, with all his holy angels, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ministering unto him?" Oh, "to whom then will ye fly for help, and where will ye leave your glory?" Is. 10:3. How will you choose rather, if possible, to be buried under rocks and mountains, than appear before the face of him (Rev. 6:16), who once in a day courted your affections and consent to be his bride, but was maltreated, rejected, and despised by you? You said by your practice, we will not go with this man, Gen. 28:5-8 we will not have him to rule over us, Luke 19:14. "Let God depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of his ways; what is the Almighty that we should serve him," Job 21:14. Therefore the dreadful and awful sentence shall go forth against you, Matth. 25:41. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," and thereupon you shall be hurried by legions of devils into everlasting torments. O consider these things in time, ye that forget God, and

make light of the offers of the Bridegroom's love, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver.

2dly. But I do not love to conclude with the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai, but choose rather to turn again to Mount Zion, and to cry again, and again, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold the beauty and excellency of the true King Solomon, Cant. 3:11. "O that this may be the day of his espousals, and the day of the gladness of his heart." Behold how glorious he is in his apparel, and how he comes travelling from Edom, and from Bozrah, in the greatness of his strength, in order to meet you, and will not you go forth and meet him? The Bridegroom began his journey towards you, from the early ages of eternity, Mic. 5:2. For his goings forth were of old, from everlasting. He left the glory he had with his Father before the world was, and travelled up and down this world for his spouse, for about the space of thirty-three years, in poverty, reproach, and persecution; he travelled through seas of wrath, and the Jordan of death, and then back again to heaven, in order to bring about the match; and, since his ascension, he has been travelling in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, first among the Jews, and then among the Gentile nations; and he is come even unto these isles of the seas, and utmost parts of the earth; he has been long stretching out the arms of redeeming love unto Scotland, and unto the inhabitants of Stirling, crying, Behold me, behold me: How gladly would I gather you, unto me as the "hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" Matth. 23:37. How would my soul rejoice over you, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, if you would but entertain and embrace me as your Bridegroom! I, who am your Maker, will be your Husband, and betrothe you unto me for ever. Well then, Sirs, take on with the best of Husbands, and say with thy whole heart and soul, Thine are we, O David, and on thy side will we be, thou Son of Jesse, 1 Chron. 12:18. O let it be an everlasting bargain, that shall never be dissolved.

Oh! may some poor soul say, gladly would I go forth and meet the Bridegroom, and present myself as the bride, the Lamb's wife; but

when I begin to think of it, there are a thousand obstacles east in my way, which I know not how to surmount.

Well, let us hear what either the devil, the world, or an evil heart of unbelief, has to say; for there is no objection they can offer, that is of any relevance; the blessed Bridegroom has removed all impediments on the side of law and justice, by his obedience unto death; and he stands ready to answer, and we in his name and authority are ready to answer, whatever may come from any other airth.

Object. 1. Oh! may some poor dejected soul say, 'The distance between the Bridegroom and me is so great and infinite, that I can never think it will be a bargain; he is God's first-born, higher than the kings of the earth; will he ever match with me, a poor despicable worm, who am but nothing, yea, less than nothing and vanity.'

Answ. It is true, the distance between him and you is great as he is the Son of God, God co-equal with the Father; and if he had not removed this bar, by taking the human nature into a personal union with himself, there could never have been any such thing as a spiritual marriage between him and any of Adam's race; "But though he be in the form of God, and thinks it not robbery to be equal with God," yet he has become our equal also, by the assumption of the human nature; that so, being upon a level with us, he might betrothe us to himself for ever. Since he has come over the mountain of infinite distance, both natural and moral, let not the distance of parties be any impediment on your side; but consider the greater the inequality of the match be, the more are the riches, freedom and sovereignty, of the grace of God exalted, and this is the great plot of heaven, Is. 57:15. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place"—To which no man can approach, 1 Tim. 6:16. "With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God would have us, and all the world, to know that his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his

ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. It is God's way to pass by the great, the rich, and the wise and noble, and to pitch upon the weak, the poor and contemptible things of the world, "that no flesh may glory in his presence."

Object. 2. May another say, 'I am a poor deformed creature, there is nothing desirable in or about me, I am a transgressor from the womb, conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, altogether as an unclean thing; will ever the glorious Bridegroom match with the like of me?'

Answ. If Christ stood upon this objection, he could never have a bride among the race of Adam; he never married any of Adam's race because of their beauty or comeliness, but that he might make them beautiful, through his comeliness, that he puts upon them, Ezek. 16:8–12.

Object. 3. But Oh! 'My transgressions are multiplied, innumerable evils compass me about, and my sins have been highly aggravated against light, against love, against covenant vows and engagements: I gave my consent unto Christ, but I have hidden back, and therefore, Christ will never look upon me.'

Answ. Be it so as you say; yet, if you will return, he will receive you graciously, Jer. 3:1. Though "thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me;" and Is. 1:18. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Remember the example of Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Paul, and many others; the same mercy and grace that saved them, is as able to save you: his "hand is not shortened that he cannot save," &c.

Object. 4. 'I am lying in a dunghill of sin and misery, the Bridegroom will never look upon me.'

Answ. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, and sets them with princes: See what a dunghill the poor Israelitish infant was lying in, when the Lord passed by, and said unto it, Live, Ezek. 16. "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet will I make thee as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Object. 5. 'I am so miserable, the Bridegroom will never look upon me.'

Answ. That is a mistake, for the Bridegroom's name is merciful, and his mercy is in the heavens.

Object. 6. 'I am blind,' says the sinner. Christ answers, "I recover sight to the blind;" Christ says to blind, "Laodicea, I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve that thou mayest see."

Object. 7. 'I am naked, have no robe of righteousness to cover me.' Ay, but (says the Bridegroom) give but thy consent, and I will bring forth the best robe in heaven, and cover the shame of thy nakedness that it may not appear.

Object. 8. 'I am poor, and so poor, that I have no desireable qualification to recommend me.' Answ. The Bridegroom, "though he was rich, yet he became poor, that, through his poverty, we might be made rich." He has abundance of gold, "gold tried in the fire, unsearchable riches;" and all his riches are thine, that moment you consent to him.

Object. 9. 'I am dead, there is not the least spark of spiritual life in me, and therefore the Bridegroom will never look upon me.'

Answ. "Hear (says the Bridegroom to the dead), and your souls shall live," Isa. 55:3. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, for I am the resurrection and the life:" And if thou be but groaning under a sense of thy deadness, it is a sign

of some life, for the dead do not use to tell any such tales of themselves. See what Christ doth to the dead, Eph. 3:1. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," Ezek. 31. "The spirit of life quickeneth the dry bones."

Object. 10. 'I do not know if ever the Bridegroom loved me, or choosed me.'

Answ. He has revealed his love in the proposal of marriage that he makes thee in the gospel of his grace. He has said that he is willing; and he swears on his life, that he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they would turn unto him and live." He declares, that he hates putting away; and that him that comes to him, he will in no ways cast out, that "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off."

Now, your way is, to take him by his word, and to judge of his thoughts and purpose by his word; for "those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever." I illustrate the case in hand, by a familiar similitude of a proposal of marriage made unto a woman; the man that is in suit of her, not only proposes and profers love to her, but he solicits and courts her consent; he forms the contract to the greatest advantage; he makes over himself and his whole estate unto her, and confirms his ingenuity by his oath, that she may not have any doubt of his love and affection.

Now, if after all, the woman should say, I will not consent to marry this man, because I do not know if he really loves me; would not every body look upon the woman as most ridiculous and unreasonable? and, in this case, does she not charge the man with the most horrid disingenuity? Well, this is the very case: how should you know the love of Christ to you, but by his offers, promises, intreaties, and declarations of his love; and to doubt of his love, is to charge him foolishly with deceitful dealing: and O! do not treat him so any more, but believe, and see his salvation.



Object. 11. 'Oh! God, is angry with me, I think I see frowns in his countenance, when I begin to think of matching with his beloved Son.'

Answ. You are in a great mistake; for the main ground of his controversy with you is, because you do not go forth to meet his beloved Son: And that moment you receive him by faith, you shall find him a well pleased God; for to as many as received him, as their Saviour, Husband, King, Priest, and Prophet, John 1:12 "to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

Object. 12. "You urge me to wed by faith the Bridegroom, and gladly would I do it, but I find an entire impotency, and inability in myself, and it is only the power of God that must do the work; and therefore, all you have said is in vain, till a day of power come.'

Answ. It is true, it is the power of God that must make a sinner willing; but the way that this power is exerted is, by convincing the sinner of his own inability either to will or to do, that so he may put the whole work in the Lord's hand. And if this be your case, the good work is already begun; and he that has begun to convince you, and humble you under a sense of your own impotency, he will carry it on, and finish the matter; for he has said, Psal. 110:3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Isa. 40:29. "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might increaseth strength."

I conclude this exhortation with two or three advices.

1. Be convinced and persuaded of your dangerous and deplorable case, while married unto the law, and your lusts; for which see the use of reproof and lamentation.

2. Conceive and entertain hopes of getting the match between Christ and you accomplished and brought about. A hopeless despair as to this matter cuts the sinews of all activity: "There is no hope; no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go," Jer. 2:25 and therefore, "it is good that a man should hope," Lam. 3:26.

3. Be much in studying the love of God in providing such a help every way meet for you. It was an evidence of God's kindness to Adam, when he said, "It is not good that the man should be alone," Gen. 2:18. I will make "him an help meet for him." Much more is it an evidence of the love of God to lost man, that he has laid help for him upon one that is mighty, Psal. 89:19.

4. I recommend to you to be much in studying the love of the eternal Son of God, in marrying the human nature unto a personal union with the divine, that he might act the part of a Kinsman Redeemer. Oh! think what he has done in order to get a bride for himself in Adam's family, for one love kindles another, and "we love him because he first loved us," 1 John 4:19.

5. Be much in viewing the glorious fulness and suitableness of the Bridegroom through the lattices of the word read and preached; "For all—we beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory," &c. 2 Cor. 3 last.

6. Oh! cry and plead much for the purchased and promised Spirit, that he may glorify Christ, and testify of him to your souls, according to the promise of the Bridegroom, before he left this world, John 16:14. "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you."

7. In matching with the Bridegroom, disband all other lovers, saying with Ephraim, Hos. 14:8. "What have I any more to do with idols." Is. 26:13. "O Lord my God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over me, but henceforth by thee only will I make mention of thy name." If you be for me (says Christ), let these soul-murdering lusts go; let go your lust of covetousness, your lust of uncleanness, your lust of pride, malice, revenge, your lust of drunkenness and gluttony; for as no man can serve two masters, Matth, 6:24 so can no man be married unto Christ and these lusts at once; Christ says, Destroy these, crucify them, "Mortify the deeds of the body," Rom. 8:13. "Fornication, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is

idolatry," Col. 3:8. I came to destroy these works of the devil, John 3:8. And therefore give a bill of divorce to them, if you would follow me.

I shut up this discourse with a word of counsel and advice to believers, who, through the power of grace, have been determined to go forth and meet the Bridegroom.

Oh! bless the Lord that ever gave you counsel to do so, for this was never effected by the power of nature, but only by the power of victorious grace, Psal. 110:3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Thou wast dead in sin, Eph. 2:1 but he "passed by thee, and said unto thee, Live," Ezek. 16:6. Thou wast full of enmity against God and his anointed, Psal. 2:2, but he captivated thy heart with his own love, and loveliness. Who made thee to differ from others that are left behind, "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?" Why, it was the blessed Bridegroom that drew thee to him with the cords of his own love; and therefore let the high praises of the Bridegroom, and of his eternal Father, be continually in thy mouth, Psal. 149:6; John 6:44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Let the bride, the Lamb's wife, put much confidence in the Bridegroom; and well may she do it, for he is "the confidence of all the ends of the earth, his name is FAITHFUL and TRUE," Rev. 19:11.

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## MONERGISM BOOKS

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