

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 32

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

(continued)

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast *left thy first love*” (Rev. 2:4).

Some believe that the messages to the seven churches have no relevance to the sons of God because they describe the conditions in the old-order church realm, not the state of the overcoming elect. These believe that only the promises to the overcomers relate to those called to sonship who have already come out of the church age. But I would be remiss if I did not remind you, my beloved, that each promise to the overcomer begins with the phrase, “To *him that overcometh* will I give...” The question follows: To him that overcometh *what*? And while it is true that we are called to overcome *everything* that would dominate our lives to the detriment of our spiritual walk, yet the thrust of these messages to the churches is not about overcoming cussing, smoking, and drinking, but overcoming the very *spiritual conditions* that are revealed in the seven churches, that is, among the Lord’s people!

While we might like to pride ourselves that we have *already* fully and forever overcome all these things, and no longer pertain in any sense to the old-order church realm, I do not hesitate to tell you that I know many who treasure the beautiful hope of sonship and are following on to know the Lord who are *still in the process of overcoming* in many of these areas. If the work of overcoming would now be complete in each of us, would we not already have *received all the promises*? Therefore, until we have *all* attained the absolute fullness of *everything* the Father has apprehended us to, the messages to the churches **are still relevant** to our present walk. Nothing can be clearer than this! Otherwise, how could we know and understand where and what it is that we still must overcome?

The saints in Ephesus had left their first love, and the One who walked in the midst was unrecognized and only dimly known. What is that *first love* which is here described as outweighing all their wonderful works? Think of it! Labor — steadfastness of toiling on and on for His name’s sake; patience — the endurance to bear up under testing; uncompromising — the refusal to fellowship evil; discernment — they had tried the false apostles and found them liars — not a bad record at all! “Nevertheless...”

This is one of the most mis-understood passages of scripture in all the Bible. Most teachers have looked at this departure from the first love in the sense of having left something we once had. The idea usually expounded is that there was a quality of love that we possessed in the beginning of our walk with the Lord which we have departed from. That is certainly true in a great many cases! But the understanding I have received from the Spirit is that there has at times been

an experience in our walk wherein we have left or departed from that which should have *first place* in our lives, we have neglected that which we should love and esteem *preeminently*. What do we love the most? What are our priorities? What is it that grabs our attention and gains our affection most readily? What is it that consumes most of our thoughts, time, and emotion? That is indeed our *first love*, although not the first love the Spirit has in mind! If steadfastly trusting and praising God in all things, walking out the nature of God, and doing all the Father's will in every situation is down the line in priority in our lives, then we have fallen short of that which must have *first place* in the life of every son of God.

It is interesting to note the precise meaning of the word "first" in the original as used in the phrase "your first love." "First" is from the Greek *protos* meaning "foremost, best, chief, principle, prime, paramount, cardinal, main, supreme, crowning, supreme, number one." Your *first* love is therefore your *paramount* love! Your *supreme* love! Your *crowning* love! Your *most important* and *most imperative* love! What a message that is!

Christians spend a lifetime trying to recapture early experiences with the Lord. They mistakenly believe that the immature, romantic love they first experienced when they came to Christ is the greatest quality of love — the *first love*. But think about it, my friend, does not true love grow, develop, increase, intensify and deepen through the years? I know I loved my wife when we got married — Lorain was eighteen years old and I was nineteen. She was so sweet, so innocent, so pure, so pretty, so very desirable! Oh, how "in love" we were! That was *young love*. But is young love the *best* love? In those early days, should Lorain have left me or been killed in some horrible accident, almost certainly I would have gotten over it in a few months or in a few years, married again, and gotten on with my life. But after 48 years together, raising three children together, passing through the hard times and the good times together, standing by each other, truly getting to know each other, trust each other, and depend upon one another, there is now a bonding, a depth, intensity, quality, and power of love that our "young love" knew absolutely nothing about!

Today, I would gladly do anything, pay any price, spend my last dime and suffer the loss of all my world's goods to save her life or care for her — so deep does our love go. Young love, childish love, untried love, immature love, romantic love is *not the greatest love* and that is not the love the Lord rebuked the Ephesian church for having left! Christians mistakenly assume that going back to the first love is returning to the zeal, fervor, and excitement of their early relationship with Christ. They grieve over having lost some kind of youthful enthusiasm for the Lord. It's true, many believers have grown cold and dry — but going back to a more innocent time is not enough and does not express the deeper truth of this text.

WE SHOULD NEVER GO BACK TO WHAT WE WERE AT FIRST! Who wants to return to the cradle, the bottle, the nursery, kindergarten, or to the distresses of adolescence? Some get saved out of selfish interests — to escape hell, to get blessed or healed, or simply because they want peace of mind. None of us really *knew* the Lord, nor did we understand who He truly is, His ways, His truth, or His great plan and purpose in our lives and in creation. We knew so little! I have no desire to go back to my early days either naturally or spiritually! Our understanding was deficient, our experience limited, our wisdom incomplete, our zeal without knowledge, our works

were, for the most part, the dead works of religion, and our love for Christ was more emotion than devotion! I would not want to return to anything LESS THAN I NOW HAVE ATTAINED!

When Jesus uses the words “first love” He speaks not of the childish and immature love we experienced when first we met the Lord. He’s referring to *exclusive* love — *first place* in our hearts above *all* other things! The Christians in the religious systems today are satisfied with merely an *entrance* into the family of God where as children they can enjoy the many blessings and wonderful benefits of God’s mercy, kindness, and goodness. Their eyes are blind to the higher purposes of God, and any efforts to lead them on to higher ground are rebuffed and resisted by a human reasoning that asks why one should waste time on “deep things” when they are already saved and “on their way to heaven.” But the new birth, while it is the most astounding miracle of the ages, is, nevertheless, but the birth of a mere **spiritual infant**. There are many further steps that must follow this birth if one is to come into all the glories and the full heritage which is prepared for those who follow on to **know** the Lord.

The life of God is a free gift of unmerited mercy and favor. But there is a vast kingdom of spiritual heavenly wealth and power and glory and usefulness that is given to those who grow up into the fullness of Christ! In the wonderful family of God we can give ourselves to become either spiritual paupers or heavenly billionaires! We can remain thumb-sucking children or mature in wisdom and stature to become kings and priests upon the throne of the universe! Once we see by the Spirit the high purposes of our heavenly Father in calling us to sonship, there is no more desire to return to any stage of spiritual development or any hope that we ever had before! THE WILL OF THE FATHER IS OUR FIRST LOVE! THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS IS OUR FIRST LOVE! THE FULLNESS OF GOD HIMSELF IS OUR FIRST LOVE! Here is the test, my beloved, here is where those in THE EPHESIAN CONDITION must overcome — we cling to the Lord of our *first* love, our *chief* love, our *best* love, our *paramount* love! The overcoming ones do not neglect to yield themselves to the purpose and calling of sonship to God! Their priority is not in doing all kinds of religious works, getting all kinds of worldly blessings, or in trying to convert the world by the antiquated methods of the old church order. The fullness of the righteousness and power and glory of God’s heavenly kingdom on earth, the image and likeness of Christ within, and our full stature and inheritance in Christ Jesus, is the *supreme* quest, the *first* and *highest* love of our life! We cannot, dare not, leave our **first love**! We cannot, dare not, *will not* settle for less!

The elect of God are *true worshippers*, for by supreme love they worship the Father in spirit and in truth. One can only fully and maturely love God when he loves also His ways, His will, His word, and His purposes. There is a second word that goes with worship. It is the word *adoration*. It is a term of endearment. There is passion in that word! “O, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 96:9). Worship is a love affair; it is making love to God. You know, according to the Jewish sages, it was David who wrote this Psalm on the day he brought the ark into Jerusalem. His first wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul, who represents the rule of the flesh, witnessed David bringing the ark into the city as he danced in the Spirit and sang before the Lord, and the scripture says that as she watched from her balcony she despised him in her heart. Sure she did! She discovered that David loved God more than he loved her, more than he loved the fleshly ways of the soul and the carnal mind, and that he was making love to God *in the spirit*. Is that not the same reason why the fleshly religious folks in the church systems of man

often despise the called-out elect of God? Worship without love is like a flame without heat; it is like a rainbow without color; it is like a flower without perfume. There is spontaneity and intensity in love. It has a tenderness, an eagerness, and an expectancy in it. God is bringing His elect into that place of the intensity and expectation of love by which we anticipate the full fruit and inheritance of our union with Him! In the union of love we are being made one with His mind, His will, His nature, His glory and His purpose. The overcomer will *never* leave this *first and highest* love!

In union with God there is rest that's complete,

There is joy, and there's peace without measure.

In union with God we can sit at His feet,

And enjoy this wonderful treasure.

He's coming to us as our hearts yearn for Him

And we're changed in the light of His glory;

The Father is pleased as with gladness He sees

His likeness brought forth in this union of love!

Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Moses used the fact that He knew God as an argument for knowing Him better. "Now, therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may *know Thee*." From there he rose to make the daring request, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!"

God was pleased with this intensity of desire, and the next day called Moses into the mount, and there in solemn procession made all His glory pass before him. In meekness Moses sought nothing for himself, but all for the glory of God. Through faithful communion with God Moses became acquainted with God's intentions. He was able to see far into the future and understand what the Lord purposed to do in distant ages. His wise heart knew what would evolve from the confusion and disorder of the day. He knew that from among the stiff-necked people he led the Lord would raise up a prophet like himself, and that prophet would be God's Christ who would, as a Son, do all the will of the Father and only those things that pleased the Father. He saw, furthermore, that by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit the Lord would raise up other sons of God who would be manifest out of the church age in the fullness of HIS LIFE. Out of his love relationship with God he received the revelation of the Father's purpose; out of *our* love relationship with the Father *we* are blessed to be made glad partakers of the *reality* of what Moses saw!

David's life was a torrent of spiritual desire, and his psalms ring with the cry of the seeker and the glad shout of the finder. Paul confessed the mainspring of his life to be his burning desire after Christ. "That I may *know Him!*" was the goal of his heart, and to this he sacrificed everything, if by any means he might apprehend that for which he was apprehended by Christ Jesus, for Christ in all His glory, wisdom, righteousness, and power was Paul's *first love*. He never left his *first*, his *supreme* love! The church world for the most part is content to know *about* Christ, but the heart of every apprehended member of God's called and chosen elect will never be satisfied until we fully and completely KNOW HIM!

Any man can come to know something of the *acts* and the *ways* of God, but only those who walk with Christ in the heavenly places of the Spirit can ever come to *know Him* in the most wonderfully personal and intimate manner. This depth of "knowing" Him is like the intimate relationship of a man with his beloved wife, in which love he seeks to reproduce after his kind. In fact this is precisely the way in which the scriptures in a number of cases make use of the word "know" — to declare the giving and receiving of human seed in the act of love. We read that "Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain" (Gen. 4:1). This statement does not mean that Adam was able to *recognize* his wife as she walked about the house! "Knowing," in the sense of recognition, does not beget children! When Adam "knew" his wife he intimately and fully explored her physical and emotional being, and she "knew" him in return in a personal, familiar, and private way that words could never communicate. Only by the experience of the sexual relationship does man know woman in this sense, and she him.

In like manner, it is only in that exquisite relationship where the believer completely yields himself to the spirit, presence, mind, will and desires of the Lord, and proves by his wholehearted response that he totally and truly loves the Lord, that he *knows* and is *known* of God. A husband and wife, by means of the act of "knowing," become ONE FLESH; so Christ and the believer, by the spiritual act of "knowing," become ONE SPIRIT. "Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is *one body*? But he that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*" (I Cor. 6:16-17). As we truly come to *know* the Lord in the ecstasy of spiritual union, His seed is raised up in us and His image and likeness is reproduced within us as the *son of God*. This truly is the first love — the foremost, the crowning, the chiefest of all!

From the earliest years of my memory there stirred deep within my bosom an insatiable longing after reality. Though only a child, I wanted to *know* Him who redeemed me, who made me His own, who came as the pattern and forerunner of all that we are called to in God. I wanted to intimately **know** the Christ; oh, how I wanted to KNOW HIM! At the tender age of twelve the Lord revealed Himself to me in a remarkable manner, flooding my life with billows of His presence, power, and glory. I had found the Christ and my heart was filled with joy because of the love I had for Him. I wanted to be near Him, and become *like Him*. I wanted to be conformed to His image and be the expression of Himself in the earth to humanity. He was to me the Center of all things and the most important Reality in the universe! From that moment Christ was the ONLY REALITY. He filled the skies. He filled the earth. He filled heaven and hell and all realms above and beneath. He filled my life and flooded my heart with love, hope, and expectation of the glory of God. He spoke mysteries into my spirit. He enlightened my understanding concerning His great plan and purpose to restore all things and all men unto Himself. He raised up in my heart the hope of His kingdom coming in earth as it is in heaven. He showed me the throne of His dominion and

our call to sit with Christ upon the throne of His power over all things. He unfolded within the depths of my being the wonders of His awesome holiness, His ineffable glory, His fearful majesty, His inscrutable wisdom, His unsearchable ways, and His merciful, wise, glorious, and all-encompassing plan for creation. Christ in me in all His glory is truly my FIRST LOVE! Can we not now understand what a sin, what a tragedy, what a failure, what a *loss* it would be to *leave our first, supreme, transcendent love!* Not the immature love of our beginning in Christ, but that love above all loves, the greatest, highest love, the *love of loves* — Christ Himself!

The most important thing for any person who has received the call to sonship is to have a *relationship* with the Father — not merely an experience, not a creed or doctrine or religious program and activity — but relationship, a real presence in your life that you know and that is made unto you strength, wisdom, understanding, faith, life, love, and power. By way of illustration, the earth has a relationship to the sun, all things in our solar system and on earth have a relationship to one another, and only this *perfect relationship* makes life possible on earth!

An example of this is to be found in the unique position and size of the earth in relation to the sun and the other planets of the solar system. Were the earth only a few miles closer to the sun, we would all be burned to a crisp and our tombstone could read, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant!*” On the other hand, were the earth only a little farther from the sun we would all be blocks of ice. Were the earth smaller than it is — as the moon, for instance — the power of gravitation would be too weak to retain sufficient atmosphere for the needs of life forms. Were the earth as large as Jupiter, or even Saturn or Uranus, the power of gravity would be so strong as to render man’s movements difficult. Were the earth as near the sun as Venus its burning heat would be unbearable; were it as remote as Mars there would be scarcely a night, even in its warmest zones, that would be free from snow and ice. Then look, too, at the perfect proportion of the earth’s land and water. If the ocean had only one half of its present area the earth would receive only one-fourth its present rainfall. But, on the other hand, if the area of the ocean should be increased one-eighth the rainfall would be increased four times, and the earth would become a vast swamp. Truly these wonderful *relationships* display the marvelous intelligence of the Creator!

In the spiritual world our relationship to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, is altogether as vital as the earth’s relationship to the sun! It is by relationship that we learn to respect Him, draw from Him, depend upon Him, love Him, and live by Him. Spiritual relationship is not cosmic law. Many people have the idea that they can learn certain *facts* about God and then walk with Him. That’s not *relationship!* That’s not how you have a relationship with your husband, your wife, your children, or your best friend. You don’t search out a certain law that they live by and then relate to them on the basis of that law. That’s not relationship! Yet that’s how vast multitudes of Christians think about the Lord today! They think they have His doctrines in their head, and His rituals, ceremonies, and ordinances in the church, and by believing the doctrines, attending meetings, singing songs, saying prayers, going through the motions of worship, doing religious works, and observing the ordinances they suppose that they have a relationship with God. But that’s not relationship!

You say, “Then, what is?” INTIMACY OF FELLOWSHIP AND VITAL UNION! First of all, you have to communicate to relate. That’s where prayer, praise, and worship come in. Prayer is not designed primarily for asking or petitioning God for *things* — prayer

is *communication* and *communion* with God! Prayer is seeking after the presence of God, the voice of God, the knowledge of God. This brings us near enough to *experience* God in the spirit, and by the spirit exploring intimately the very personality, mind, heart, and being of God. Relationship is the key! We are being saved, changed, matured, and transformed by relationship, not by knowledge or laws or observances. I have seen hundreds and thousands of people who sat in pews listening to doctrines of salvation, doctrines of sanctification, doctrines of the Holy Spirit, doctrines of the kingdom, doctrines of perfection, doctrines of sonship, doctrines of the feast of tabernacles, doctrines of the most holy place, doctrines of the third day, doctrines of life and immortality, and they are no closer to the reality of any of those things today than they were when they first heard them. Doctrine, teaching, and understanding don't make anything happen! You've got to have a *relationship*.

God is causing His true elect to seek this, pursue this, extend themselves to this, and make it personal in their lives at all times and in all circumstances. Intimacy of fellowship and vital union — that's where it is! That is how truth becomes experiential, that is how sonship becomes life, that is how the purposes of God become power and reality within our lives. God is raising up and maturing a seed in the earth. Those who walk with Him and live with Him in this significant hour are becoming that seed and are being made a harvest of salvation and righteousness unto all the ends of the earth. God gave His firstborn Son thirty years to mature in the life of the Father within Him. And now many sons are growing up into the fullness of Christ!

Relationship with God is a Song. It's a song in your heart, it's a melody in your spirit — joy unspeakable and full of glory! It's like when two people fall in love — they are like two songbirds. As soon as the arrow of love pierces the heart all things are transformed; in that exhilarating moment nothing else matters anymore. All that matters is that loving song that has occurred between two individuals who are now lost in one another. And that is what relationship with God is like! It's a love song. The message of the inner chamber, the Holy of holies within our spirit, is the message of those who have been brought into union with Christ. The Holiest of all is the conception chamber, the place of union. It is not a place outside of us, it is not an experience, it is not found in some church or group or meeting, or in heaven someday. It is that place in the deepest part of our being, right within our spirit, where the life of God ravishes our heart, and we are made one in love.

The Song of Solomon is the reflections of king Solomon and is a revelation of love and union. In the Song of Solomon the king purposed to bring the Shulamite maiden into his conception chamber, into the most intimate part of his life. The Shulamite is not just any woman, she is not merely a little illiterate, unkempt, desert girl with dirt underneath her fingernails and needing a bath. Oh, no! She is undoubtedly from the tent of the leader of the tribe, the wealthiest family among the Bedouin. She is a princess — a royal natured person of exquisite beauty and enchanting personality. She is unusual, unique, special and unsurpassed in poise, grace, mental adeptness, ability, and loveliness.

The significance of the Song of Solomon is found in the distinctions that come forth between the various characters. There are four main characters, two male and two female, although one female is a group — the daughters of Jerusalem. The interplay between these four characters is the *key* to the book and the secret lies in identifying the *voice* — the one

speaking. The importance of this drama is rooted in the fact that in the beginning God created man, male and female. And within each of us are the characteristics of both male and female — *spirit* and *soul*. Anyone who has read the Song of Solomon knows that it is very sexual in content, it's about the intimacy of love, about coming together, about the union of two people, male and female. It is not about something you do out in the world, in public, but it's private and personal. And that's how our relationship with Christ is — it's not something we do in church — it's a secret love *within ourselves*.

Christ is in your spirit, dear one, and He seeks to come into your soul fully. He wants to affect the way you feel, the way you think about things, the way you act and react, your deepest desires and all of your will. That's how it is in *relationship*! Over time a couple start to think like each other, act alike, and even *look* like each other because they are knowing each other through each other. And that's how it is between the spirit and the soul, between us and the Lord! In relationship we no longer keep rules, believe doctrines, observe ordinances, or do works to please God. We simply begin to *think* like the Lord, *desire* like the Lord, *act* like the Lord, *talk* like the Lord, *walk* like the Lord, and *look* like the Lord! We are not conformed to a law, but now share His life at the most intimate, deepest, and powerful level of our being!

Every one of God's called and chosen elect is brought to the place of accepting the Lord into our *soul*. I'm not talking about raising your hand or going forward in a revival meeting, I am speaking of entering into a relationship with the *Lover of your soul*. It is not a matter of receiving a *gift* from the Lord — union is far *beyond gifts*! The Lord invites us to the deepest and most intimate and exhilarating relationship that can exist between two people — the relationship of **love**! Love is a power greater than anything we can imagine, for *God is love*. As infinite as God, so is the depth and height of all that the Lord expresses in love. This is the *first* and *foremost* love we must realize as we enter into relationship with God. This is the *supreme, first love*!

The meaning of the message of the Song of Solomon is just this — a song. Singing is one of the major themes of scripture. In the book of Revelation, when the elect of the Lord move into a higher place in the Spirit, they sing a *new song*. The songs of the Bible came by revelation of the Holy Spirit, indeed, they *were* revelations of the Holy Spirit. Moses revealed by song. David revealed by song. The Psalms are songs. They are music. They are singing. They are a symphony. David ordained a whole realm of ministry just for songs. Paul spoke of “singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord.” The Bible is full of songs! But of all the songs that have ever been sung, Solomon's is the song of all songs. It is called “The *song of songs*, which is Solomon's” (S. of S. 1:1). “*Song of songs*” is a term like “*King of kings*” or the “*Day of days*.” It denotes that which is higher, finer, supreme, superlative, unexcelled! A song in scripture means a *message*. Thus, the “song of songs” is truly the MESSAGE OF MESSAGES — the greatest and highest message of all!

It is the message of **love**. It is a song of **love-making**. It is a song of **intimacy**. It is a song of **union**. You know what happens when you fall in love, everything else sinks into the shadows, and you are consumed by this one fixation of your life. The grass appears greener, the sun shines brighter, the air smells fresher, the birds sing sweeter, your step is quicker, and all creation is alive, vibrating harmoniously to the melody of your awakened soul. This is the song of creation — the

eternal song of **love!** That is why the Song of Solomon is in the Bible. It is a book of love — in the very Book of God! It's not a poem. It's not a theatrical drama. It's not a novel. Its not a sex-education manual. It's a REVELATION! It's about who we are, why we are who we are, and how the relationship between Christ and the church, the relationship between our spirit and our soul, *works*.

I view the story of the Song of Solomon differently than I did in the past. I once saw the male character in Solomon's Song as king Solomon himself, and the female character was a little desert girl whose beauty Solomon had discovered in the wilderness and brought her into his harem. The king fell in love with the Bedouin maiden, and in return she fell in love with the king. That is how the story is usually taught. As you carefully read this story, however, you find something else altogether. It seems that this exquisite Shulamite girl was sent out to work in the vineyards in the hill country north of Jerusalem where the blazing sun had turned her olive complexion black. How beautiful she must have been when one day king Solomon, traveling through his kingdom, upon passing the vineyard, found her so comely that his heart melted within him. Exercising his right of authority he ordered that she be escorted to his court and made ready for his pleasure.

Once there, Solomon sought, by every means in his power, to woo and win the lovely Shulamite girl. At the palace she was surrounded by the many careful attentions of the attending ladies, king Solomon's servants, the "daughters of Jerusalem." Her sun-burnt skin was carefully rubbed with precious aromatic oils and spices. She was also bedecked with ornaments and chains of gold to please the king. Solomon wooed her as he praised her beauty and lavished affection upon her. He told her of his desire for her; the women of the court told her about the splendid life she would enjoy as Solomon's wife. The mightiest and wealthiest king of that day offered every inducement at his disposal to accomplish his ends.

The great king Solomon, however, was in for a surprise, for the girl loved a shepherd boy from her home region and the little maiden's heart was faithfully fixed upon her *first love*, her *true love*, her *only love* — her *Beloved!* She would not be tempted nor intimidated by all the gold and glitter lavished upon her, nor by the urgings of the women who attended her. She refused to be moved by all the king's enticing advances and intense flatteries. She was desperately in love with her one and only Shepherd and her mind and heart were stayed on him. Throughout all her trying ordeal, she remained faithful to her lover. She adamantly said, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." Not once did she deviate from that loyalty. Nothing that the king could offer her could change her mind. Nor could his threats make her yield. She blotted out the enticements of Solomon's glittering palace with the recollection of her beloved. How tenderly she spoke of him! How often she whispered the words, "My *beloved!*" While her body might be held captive by Solomon, her heart went winging its way to the hills to relive over and over again the tender moments she had shared with him whom she loved so much. As she roamed about the city she was constantly looking and listening for the One whom her soul loved. In the end Solomon was forced to let her go because she stayed true to the love of her heart. Joyfully she returned to the shepherd whom her soul loved.

In former days we have used king Solomon as a type of Christ wooing his bride, the church. Let me tell you something about king Solomon. When Solomon became king he married

the daughter of Egypt's Pharaoh. It is in the record that though he "loved the Lord," he practiced idolatry (I Kings 3:3), a *strange mixture*. Then there follows the story of his wisdom and prosperity, and the houses he built, one for the Lord, one for his Egyptian bride, and one for himself (I Kings 3:7-8). But he also "loved many strange women," a union prohibited by the Lord to His people. Some twenty years or so after his accession to the throne of Israel, he had "**seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines**" (I Kings 11:3) and, "**his wives turned away his heart...after other gods...and he did evil in the sight of the Lord,**" and slipped into terrible idolatry. Jerusalem became filled with temples and shrines and altars built to the strange gods of his many foreign wives.

SOLOMON IS **NOT** A TYPE OF CHRIST! He is a type of the world, especially of the *religious world* of the harlot systems of man. He is a type of Mystery Babylon the Great, of whom it is written, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (Rev. 18:2-3). And to the lovely little Shulamite held captive within the clutches of this glittering religious enticement the call goes out, "Come out of her, my people!" (Rev. 18:4).

In its spiritual application the bride of Christ is the Shulamite, Christ Himself is the Beloved, and Solomon represents the world, the realm of the carnal mind, the exalted and powerful religious realm, the distraction that once took all of us captive, and which seeks to woo our hearts away from that precious Shepherd lover who dwells right within the spirit of each of us. But in the end, as we, the elect of God, learned by the spirit of life within us what it means to remain firm in our *first love*, our *supreme* and *true love*, keeping our hearts pure and our passions reserved, Solomon in all of his glory has been forced to loose us to go to the One we love! That is the **Song of songs!** That is the **Message of messages!**

A dear friend of ours, Jackie Caporaso, has shared some precious insights into this. She writes, "God's precious sheep are as this little Shulamite. They have been taken captive to a lustful and ruthless system which thinks nothing of stripping and using them to appease their voracious appetite for fame fortune, and rulership. The young maiden knew that her heart did not belong to the king, and that none of his carefully planned enticing tactics could possibly separate her from the love of her true beloved. Many of God's precious sheep have been in the king's court, the powerful religious systems of our day. Their spiritual beauty and abilities have been exploited. They have been made to give themselves to programs which keep carnal organizations going strong. They have been pressured to build the king's desire for bigger and better harems — congregations — that he might satisfy his greedy appetites. This is a time of severe testing for the sheep. The Voice of the Shepherd is calling unto them! 'My sheep hear my voice,' Jesus said, 'and another they will not follow.' He will deliver and heal them!"

The love of the Beloved is a special one. The Shulamite is not a concubine, she's not a queen, and she's not a virgin — one of the daughters of Jerusalem. She is the only one of her mother, she's a unique reality, a special soul. That is what God is after — a *special soul*. You cannot have a relationship with someone and be intimate with them, and not spend time with them, care for them, and know them. Love is not casual, love is not sex, love is not infatuation, love is

not a one-night stand, love is not a mistress, love is not a clandestine affair. There is a deep mystery between Christ and the church! The word “church” is from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning “the out-called.” God’s elect, chosen ones have been *called out* both from something and unto something. If you have been called out of anything, out from any realm, you *are the church* on some level! That’s what constitutes who we are. We are the “called out.” We are called out of the world, we are called out of the flesh, we are called out of our own desires, hopes, plans, and ambitions, we are called out of the worldly, harlot church systems of man, and we are called out **unto the Lord**. We are called out to a special relationship with God! We are called to walk with Him, to follow hard after Him, to pant after Him as the hart pants after the waterbrooks, to keep ourselves unto Him and unto Him *alone*. We are called to experience Him and know Him in the deepest measure and most intimate expression of being.

The message of the Song of Songs represents that element of our experience of Christ into which we shall move more fully as we enter into the feast of tabernacles, into the third day, into the Holiest of all. The significance of the Song of Songs is that there is an awakening of the feminine side within each of us, and the church **is** His bride. The reason we are collectively His church, or His bride, is because the feminine side of being, our *soul*, has been awakened within each of us individually by the Christ in our *spirit*. There are two compartments within the life of every person — there is a male and there is a female reality within each one. Within every regenerated person there is the consciousness of Spirit, the Beloved, the Bridegroom, the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; and there is the Soul, the part of us that is wooed by Christ in our Spirit.

Christ is not just in some far-off heaven somewhere, for He truly dwells *within* each of us! “Christ *liveth in me*” (Gal. 2:20). “For He abideth with you, and *shall be in you*” (Jn. 14:17). In these simple words our Lord announces that wonderful mystery of His indwelling which is the fruit and crown of His redeeming work. It was for this that man was created! It was for this, God’s mastery within the heart, that Christ came to bring us to the Father. It was for this that Christ returned as the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Dwelling consciously within us He would prepare us to receive Him as our Lord — as Bridegroom. We will never understand the deep mystery of the Bridegroom and the bride until we know that Christ is the Bridegroom and that Christ lives in our spirit. If you give godly consideration to these simple truths, you cannot avoid the conclusion that **THE BRIDEGROOM IS WITHIN YOU!** There is a place within you, in the bridal chamber of your life, in the Holy of holies of your very being, where the Bridegroom dwells and comes out of that place and woos you into a relationship with Himself.

The reverent heart is made to wonder at the unmistakable simplicity of the ways of God. Long centuries ago the apostle penned these meaningful words, “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the FATHER OF SPIRITS, and live?” (Heb. 12:9). All of God’s elect know now by the spirit of wisdom and revelation that **GOD is the FATHER OF OUR SPIRITS!** He is not the Father of religious rituals or static creeds; He is not the Father of man-made religious organizations; He is not the Father of your flesh; He is not the Father of your carnal mind, your self-will, your fleshly desires, or your soulish emotions. You can never *know* God in any of those realms! He is not there!

God is the God of your spirit, and you must be in your spirit to be with God and touch God. Today I am sitting in my office in El Paso, Texas. If you go to Dallas you will miss me! If you go on any other street, you will miss me. If you stand outside my house on the street corner, you will miss me. You must come to the door and enter my dwelling to be where I am and know me. And you must enter in to where God is to know Him. God is the God of our spirits! We all need to turn to the spirit. From thence is the fountain of all life! It is a blessed day for any man when he makes the amazing discovery that Christ Himself is the Bridegroom; that this Christ is in our spirit; that the Bridegroom is thus in our spirit; when our *soul* pants after God the soul turns to Christ in our spirit, and it is there that we know union with God!

The natural mind, the human will, our carnal emotions and fleshly desires are all aspects of the *soul*. The soul is our natural, human consciousness! Regardless of whether a man is walking in the mind, after his own will, or his natural emotions and desires, he is *soulish*. Every man that lives by these senses apart from the life of the spirit is a soulish man. Therefore it is very easy to discern whether a man is soulish! I would be remiss if I failed to point out that the soul can be moved upon to *act religiously* — and what a fine act it is able to perform! The soul can be taken into a meeting where a religious atmosphere is created by a man at the pulpit; with a suave and dynamic personality he tells you to stand up, sing, clap your hands, raise your hands, praise the Lord, say Amen, etc. By the rhythm of the music and movements of the body the soul is stirred and takes on the appearance of spirituality. And yet, the *source* of all this is not the sovereign and spontaneous OUTFLOW OF HIS LIFE IN THE SPIRIT, but merely the contrived actions of the soul! When none of these “good” things are motivated from within by the spirit, it is still naught but the vanity of the soul!

When we can recognize what type of person is soulish, it is not difficult to realize what kind of person is spiritual. Since a soulish person lives by the mind, will, emotion, and desire of the natural life, a spiritual person is one who does *not live by these*. A spiritual person thinks by the spirit, desires by the spirit, wills by the spirit, acts by the spirit, and speaks out of the spirit. The spiritual person is not one who acts *religious*. Most people who have a *religious aura* about them are not spiritual at all! A spiritual person simply allows the spirit to be the source and master of all their action and behavior. The spirit in them occupies the preeminent position; the soul in them is in the position of submission, under the government of the spirit and dominated by the spirit. They are not like soulish persons, who let the soul dominate in everything; they deny the preeminence of their own mind, will, emotion, and desire by entering into union with the spirit and yielding to the high desires of the spirit! Thus they allow the spirit to BE LORD in them; they allow the spirit to direct their whole being so that they become the expression of the spirit. Whenever they encounter a situation they do not draw from their mind, will, emotion, or desire; rather they draw from the life of Christ in their spirit to understand what is the *mind, the will, and the way of the spirit!* These are spiritual, living by the life of the spirit, and the soul acts only in union with the spirit, as the outward expression of the indwelling spirit. It is Christ in the spirit who becomes the Bridegroom that ultimately is fully joined to the soul — receives the soul into itself. **This is the Song of songs, the Message of messages!**

The wonderful goal, however, is not just our will, our mind, our emotions, and our desires *submitted* to His will and way, but ONLY HIS WILL! In the marriage union of spirit and soul, of Christ and the church, there is *one new creature*, Christ, with one mind, one will, one

emotion, and one desire — HIS made OURS. This is **union!** Blessed union! It is not merely His mind *controlling* our mind; it is our possessing HIS mind. It is more than just “fill me” with more of God, but a being swallowed up into Him, that henceforth it is “no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). This is UNION! This is what all of God’s elect are yearning for and experiencing more and more every day — that we have a constant outflow of our **true inner nature**. As Paul wrote, “Stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being...but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being” (Rom. 12:2, Wuest).

That’s how you get to know yourself — when you meet the corresponding reality to yourself within yourself your true nature is awakened within you. A woman doesn’t know all that it means to be a woman until she falls in love with a man! It is in that intimate and exquisite experience that all her feminine qualities are awakened within her. And it is the same with a man, when his masculine capacities are awakened within him and fulfilled in their totality. You are actually changed — expanded, broadened, increased, intensified, amplified, made complete — when you enter into a relationship with the beloved one of the opposite sex. In that union you come to know yourself in a way you never could by any other means. It causes your true feminine or masculine potentials to be called forth, expressed, utilized, and fulfilled through that exchange.

It is just the same between Christ and His bride, between the spirit and the soul! The fullness of what He is and the fullness of what we are called to be are revealed in the union of love! When our soul bows low before the spirit, yields to the wooing of the spirit’s love, submits to the will and way of the spirit, to find itself in union with the spirit, that is when our true identity is discovered! As long as our soul is doing its own thing, walking in our own way, after our own desires, fulfilling only the promptings of our own mind, we know neither who we are nor why we are who we are. That is most of humanity! But as we, the firstfruits of God, seek the Lord in our spirit and enter into union with Him, the eyes of our understanding are enlightened and we are granted the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of HIM.

The Shulamite, as she went about Jerusalem searching for her Beloved, said, “I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer” (S. of S. 5:6). At night she was out looking for him and we read, “The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the wall took away my veil from me” (S. of S. 5:7). The watchmen of the wall represent the ministers of the carnal church systems. It was the watchmen and keepers of the walls around the Lord’s people who should have gladly assisted the Shulamite in finding her Beloved, but instead they began to mistreat her in the most brutal ways. It is truly irritating to those who are appointed to lead and tend the sheep, for those who should go before the flock and first partake of every pasture and all the fruit, to have those whom they esteem as “dumb sheep” start out and run ahead of the shepherd, and the pasture in which they are staying and keeping the rest of the flock. Nothing will stir up persecution as this will! But it is because the sheep have heard the voice of the *true Shepherd*, instead of those appointed by man!

Many of us have had this experience who have kept step with God in His on-going revelation and walked on with Him, regardless of cost or separations. And how some of us have

been smitten by the watchmen! No greater indignity could be offered an oriental woman than to take away her veil. In those days it was only harlots who went about unveiled. The watchmen taking away the bride's veil denotes the removing of her covering — the misrepresentation and slurs cast upon her, the claim that she has no covering, therefore she cannot be considered acceptable in the city, for shame is cast upon her. How many churches have acted in this way to the Lord's faithful chosen ones who cry out for Him! We are not received by them, but of course we have no desire to be. We are accused of being "Lone Rangers," unsubmitive to authority, uncommitted to the brethren, and worse things. Because of the veil being torn away from her condition and distress, the Shulamite was urged on to greater love and fervency in seeking him whom her soul loved. And we, too, never before have we loved Him as we love Him now! Never before has He seemed so sweet and desirable to us, as He does now! And never before have we been so determined to find Him, to *know* Him in all His fullness as we are now!

So the Shulamite says to the daughters of Jerusalem, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that tell him that I am sick of love (love-sick)." To which they respond, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou doest so charge us?" (S. of S. 5:8-9). And to those today who are following hard after Christ in all His fullness the old-order church daughters of Jerusalem say, "What is there about your message that is so much better than anybody else's message? What is there about your hope that is so much better than anybody else's hope? What is there about your experience that is so much better than anybody else's experience?" They ask out of ignorance because they have neither *seen* Him nor *known* Him **as He is!**

She goes into a description of Him that was rooted in her knowledge of Him. She *knew* Him! She could describe Him! She could praise and extol and say everything her heart felt about Him because she knew Him. She knew what she was after. And so do we know today who is our Beloved and so do we know what we are after. We know the beauty of His appearing, for He has disclosed Himself to us. We know the wonder of His ways, the marvel of His salvation. We know what is the hope of our sonship in Him — it's beautiful, it's altogether glorious, and there is none like unto our Christ, our Beloved! There is no hope greater than His hope, no faith more powerful than His faith, no love stronger than His love, no purpose more excellent than His purpose, no life more abundant than His life, no peace deeper than His peace, no joy more exhilarating than His joy, no righteousness more pure and holy than His righteousness, no power more triumphant than His power, and no throne higher than His throne! Aren't you glad!

Ah, yes, CHRIST is our chief, foremost, supreme, *first love!* We shall never leave our *first love!*