

## **In the Presence of King Jesus**

Song of Solomon 1:12-14; Psalm 16:11

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All people (wicked and righteous alike) live in the presence of Almighty God who sees all and knows all. He occupies all of the space within the universe that He has created and even all of the vast universe that He has created cannot contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). He is the atmosphere in which we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28).

But as Christians, we worship and commune in the blessed presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in a sense that no non-Christian can possibly know or experience. We worship and commune in the presence of His grace, mercy, and love. It is not only a presence that is necessary by way of God's innate and inherent nature, but it is a special presence that is freely bestowed upon Christ's bride (and none other) and that flows out of His sovereign love to sacrifice Himself and to bear the penalty of her sin that she might spend all time and eternity in His presence—Him loving her, and her adoring Him.

You see, election, redemption, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification are really all means to one end: Christ's unending and loving communion with His chosen bride and hers with Him. We revel in our union with Jesus Christ (and so we should), but the goal of that union is communion—is blessed fellowship—is finding the greatest pleasure possible at being in the sweet and precious presence of our King, our Lord, our Savior, and our Beloved. It is that sweet communion with Jesus Christ that brings heaven to earth and that is what makes heaven, heaven. Heaven is not simply an escape from hell. It is our place of uninterrupted and blessed fellowship with Jesus Christ. There will be no temptation, no sin, no pain, and no sorrow to hinder your eternal joy, delight, and pleasure in the presence of the Lord (Psalm 16:11).

Let us consider today the loving and blessed presence of the Lord with us, His bride. The main points from our text are the following: (1) Christ's Presence in Public Ordinances (Song 1:12); (2) Christ's Presence in Private Communion (Song 1:13-14).

### **I. Christ's Presence in Public Ordinances (Song 1:12).**

A. The loving dialogue between Jesus and His chosen bride (the church) continues with the passage before us today. In the previous verses (Song 1:9-11), the Lord Jesus had said (in effect), "Look how lovely and beautiful my chosen bride is to me!"

1. There is nothing more beautiful to Jesus Christ in all of His creation than you, dear beloved Christian. That is not flattery. That is not hyperbole or exaggeration. That is the absolute truth. In spite of your trials and tribulations, and your sins and weaknesses, Jesus sees in you His grace (in electing you, in redeeming you, in justifying you, in sanctifying you, and in glorifying you). The fruit of the Holy Spirit (the DNA of Jesus Christ) has been implanted in you at your regeneration.

2. Through all of your joys and sorrows, through all of your victories and failures, through all of the highs and lows you have and are experiencing in your Christian life, Jesus sees the gospel at work (hatred for sin and repentance, love for truth and righteousness, putting off the old man and putting on the new man). Jesus not only loves the beauty of what He sees by way of His grace from the past and in the present, but He loves the beauty of what you shall be in the future. As God, Jesus is not limited to time as you are. He is already enjoying the glory of that future beauty in you (a perfect bride without spot or wrinkle).

B. Now the beloved bride responds to the loving words of the Lord Jesus and focuses on her joy and delight in being in His presence (Song 1:12-14)—first, being in His presence at the time that public

ordinances are administered by Him through His ministers (Song 1:12). We are presented here with an instructive scene of the King sitting at His table with His chosen bride.

1. The King is the Lord Jesus (Song 1:4). He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16). He is the great and mighty King that has universal dominion over all of creation and over all nations (even over all of the wicked of the earth). But He is especially our King to whom we submit as ruler over His church (which is His kingdom).

a. He is **an absolutely sovereign King** that subdues all His enemies (even death) and defends His royal bride so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. He is **a most gracious King** that has irresistibly wooed and drawn His chosen bride to Him, and has redeemed her out of her harlotry in following all of her many lovers, and has cleansed her and has clothed her in His glorious righteousness. He is **an absolutely holy King** that has given to you His good commandments that you might follow Him and find your joy not in walking in your own ways, but in walking in His commandments. The Lord Jesus is your companion and lover, but you must never forget that He is also your great King.

b. Many want Jesus on their own terms simply as their Savior to save them from hell, but they do not want Jesus as their absolute sovereign King to reign over them. Dear ones, you cannot divide Jesus up and take the parts of Him that you want and leave behind the parts that you don't want. You either take all of Him and all that He is as both loving Savior and sovereign Lord, as Prophet, Priest, and King, as fully God and fully man, as gracious and righteous, or you take Him not at all. Don't waste your time if you will not take Him as King over all your desires, dreams, and ambitions, over your family, over your work, over your health, over your bank account, and over your pleasures (Luke 6:46). Jesus saves no one who does not bow the knee to Him as King.

c. And this is not a mere outward obedience, but also an inward desire and love to obey Him (John 14:15).

2. Jesus, as King, is seated at His table. What is He doing at the table? He is eating and drinking with His beloved bride at His table.

a. The table from ancient times was the place where the body was strengthened with food and drink and where the soul was encouraged with communion (kingdom like wedding feast, Matthew 22).

b. Jesus, our King, spreads His table every Lord's Day with nourishing food to strengthen your faith through the ordinances of public worship (whether it be through prayer, the singing of Psalms, the reading and preaching of His Word, through the benediction, or through the sacraments). These are all His appointed means of strengthening your faith and growing you in His grace and knowledge.

c. But these appointed means of grace are also the tokens of His presence with you to enjoy you and delight in you as His bride and for you to commune with Him, to adore Him, and to worship Him as your beloved King. Public worship will cease to be a mere outward exercise of ritual obedience when you truly understand that you come to sit at the table of King Jesus, and it is He through His minister that prays, that leads in singing the Psalm, that reads and preaches the Word, that pronounces the benediction, and that administers the sacraments. King Jesus is really present in the administration of His ordinances. When you understand that truth—worship takes on an entirely greater significance of communing with Jesus Christ. It is then that you truly begin to hear the voice of Jesus Christ in every aspect of your worship.

d. This truth of communion with Jesus your King is especially graphically portrayed when you sit together around whose table? The Lord's Table! At the Lord's Supper you have the tokens of bread and wine which signify and seal Christ's life-giving body and blood which was sacrificed for you, His elect bride. At the Lord's Supper you also have the real spiritual presence of the Lord Jesus with you in communing with you and you with Him. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus is both the spiritual Host with whom that most intimate communion is enjoyed, and He is the spiritual food that you eat and drink to your spiritual nourishment by faith.

e. You see, dear ones, it's one thing to have a King that rules from a distance upon His royal throne with whom you have no intimate fellowship and communion; however, it's another thing to have a King who calls you, His beloved, to His banqueting table that He might feed you, convict you, comfort you, encourage you, commune with you, and enjoy you, and you love, adore, and worship Him. Your King is present in all of His public ordinances. Never forget that true worship begins with ascribing to Him all worth, and glory, and honor as Savior and King, and then worship issues forth in blessed fellowship with Him. He speaks to you in love, and you respond to Him in love.

3. And when we read in Song 1:12, "my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof", this is simply an indication of the sweet smelling sacrifices of your King's grace that have been worked within you: worship, praise, thanksgiving, faith, love, repentance, covenant renewal, and communion. Spikenard was a very costly and precious aromatic ointment that when used did not wear off quickly, but lasted days. It was a token of Mary's love for the Lord Jesus (John 12). So in your public worship, your faith, love, repentance, and praise is your spikenard that fills the meeting place of worship, and it is that in which the King delights.

## II. Christ's Presence in Private Communion (Song 1:13-14).

A. Not only does the chosen and beloved bride of Jesus Christ have the assurance of His real presence with her in the public ordinances of worship, but also in private communion as well ("all night" Song 1:13).

1. The bride calls the King "my wellbeloved" (Song 1:13) and "my beloved" (Song 1:14). Actually, it is the same Hebrew word that is used in both verses. Though her husband is the King of kings, her love for him is not hindered at all by her holy fear of and subjection to Him—it is a catalyst. He is your King, but He is your love that is to be above all loves in this world. To love anyone or anything in this world more than Jesus Christ is spiritual adultery or idolatry. That was the grievous sin of the Church of Ephesus that was orthodox and doctrinally pure (Revelation 2:2-4). How would you know if you love someone or something in the world more than Jesus (1 John 2:15)? Who will you stand with in matters of loyalty and truth? What are you not **willing** to forsake or wait for for Jesus Christ (Matthew 6:21)? For the Christian, Jesus is not "beloved" in a generic sense, but is "**MY** wellbeloved" and "**MY** beloved" in a very personal sense (that is the language of union through faith in Jesus).

2. Jesus and His presence with His beloved bride is like the strong aromatic scent of "a bundle of myrrh" (Song 1:13) and "a cluster of camphire" (Song 1:14).

a. These were plants that had such a strong attractive aroma that one carrying them could not be ignored. In ancient times such strong scented plants were at times cut and placed in a small bag and hung around the neck beneath the garments of women which made her presence so appealing to the one loved. In this instance, the presence of Jesus in His private communion with His chosen bride is like those attractive aromatic plants. This is how desirable the presence of Jesus is to the Christian in prayer, in the reading of Scripture, in the singing of Psalms, and in meditation of Him as you worship, work, drive, study, weep, and rejoice. His presence with her is as near as if He were lying with His head between her breasts—near to her heart.

b. You have the promises of Him who cannot lie that He is ever with you "all night", even all the days of your life (Psalm 23:4; Psalm 46:10-11; Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 13:5-6). The promises of God are more real than even that which you can see or touch. They are certainly more real than your emotions and feelings which change from moment to moment. Who will you believe? God or your feelings? God or what you can only see and touch? Remember the words of Jesus (John 20:29).

c. Doubting the presence of the Lord with you because you cannot see Him, touch Him, or feel Him is like having a cold with a stuffy nose in which you cannot smell the fresh scent of the rose or the gardenia—you cannot smell the wonderful aroma of bread baking or your favorite food being prepared.

The scent and aroma is there even if you cannot smell it. So likewise Jesus is always present with you, His beloved bride, whether you can smell Him or not—it is only your stuffy nose of doubt and unbelief that hinders you from smelling His sweet and precious presence. Repent of and forsake your doubt, unbelief, and fear and cast yourself in faith upon the promise of God, and you will be assured of His presence with you regardless of what you are facing.

B. Dear ones, there is nothing that you cannot do in your obedience to your beloved King if you know that He is present and truly with you. Like a child that is afraid of the dark, so the Christian seems paralyzed at times by his/her fear. The people, the circumstances, and the temptations that you dread seem like walking into a dark unknown back alley all by yourself. The darkness whispers to you that you are all alone. But Jesus speaks through His Word, "I am with you." Who will you believe? A child who fears the dark will confidently walk into the darkest room if his parent is beside him. So likewise, dear ones, you will be able to face whatever the dark enemy, the fiery furnace, the lion's den, the vicious storm upon the sea, or that strong temptation as long as you know your beloved King is beside you. And so He is and always shall be. His presence with you, dear believer, at all times is as certain as His death for you and His resurrection for you, His chosen bride.

In the gospel all who hunger and thirst for Christ's forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and fellowship with Jesus Christ are called to come in faith to Him. He will feed you with His own life, and you will know His presence with you in public worship and at all times. Amen.

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