

Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 19, 2025
THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Prayer

Jesus, thank you that you've claimed us as your bride!

AMEN

What Did They Do to Deserve This?

In verse 4a, the text implies there are a couple names that Jerusalem had been called by – The Forsaken City and the Desolate Land.

Isaiah is describing the state of Jerusalem as representative of the sins of Judah. He has said that the city that was once faithful to the Lord had forsaken Him to become a prostitute, (Isaiah 1:21) implying the participation of the people in the worship of false gods. The people of Judah had become unfaithful to the one true God; they had broken the first commandment.

As for a desolate land, this is a prophetic vision of the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon in about 586 BC. Archaeological research has shown that the Babylonians systematically destroyed the city with fire and that the city walls were pulled down.

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Today, most of us don't have idols of wood or stone, but we may indeed have idols of in many different forms, like "pleasures of life", money, education, and the like. In fact, everything that you esteem as above God or that draws your attention away from Him can be idol.

What Will God Do About It?

Even while the people of Judah were unfaithful, just as we are today, God is not. As Isaiah wrote in verses 2 and 3:

. . . you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

He continues in verse 4b to tell of the new names that will replace the old ones:

but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married

Delight isn't a word we often hear today; it describes an emotion, which is often hard to put into words, but let me try:

Delight primarily conveys the idea of taking pleasure in something or someone. It is often used to express a deep,

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heartfelt desire or enjoyment. This term can describe both human emotions and divine attitudes, indicating a sense of favor or approval.

And this delight, this approval, is God's attitude toward us, the church, the baptized, whom Jesus has claimed as His bride. It is with the same intensity with which God hates sin that He loves us whose sins have been paid for by the blood of Jesus.

If we were perfect, which we aren't, this should be the same attitude and emotional response that we have for our spouses and children.

Recurring Theme of Marriage

In verses 4b and 5, God call us His bride:

for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.

*For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, **and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.***

This theme of marriage between Jesus and His church can be found throughout scripture.

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The Psalmist (45:13-14) wrote:

*All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. In many-colored robes **she is led to the king**, with her virgin companions following behind her.*

St. Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus (5:25-27, 32-33):

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. . . This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to **Christ and the church**. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Note that this passage describes the relationship between Jesus and His church; the application to our human marriages is in the last part of the verse, after the 'however.'

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Paul, as their Pastor, their spiritual father, also wrote on this topic to the Corinthian Christians (2 Cor 11:2):

*For I feel a divine jealousy for you, **since I betrothed you to one husband**, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*

St. John wrote in his revelation (Rev 22:17):

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

We find this water of life today at the font, through which God calls us to Himself, elects us to salvation, adopts us as His child, gifts us with the Holy Spirit, and promises eternal life.

Earlier in that book, we see these words from St. John (Rev 19:7-9):

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Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

We are privileged to be able to have a foretaste of that feast to come here and now. In the sacrament of the altar, Jesus gives us his very body and blood, in, with, and under forms of bread and wine for the forgiveness of your sins.

Come and taste, see that the Lord is indeed good, that He delights in you as His bride, and have faith in the true words spoken that this body and this blood was given for you.

AMEN