

# CCF Conference 2012

## Friday, Feb. 3

### Ignorance is not Bliss!

We live in interesting times, do we not? The time in which we live is particularly interesting because within the scope of history—both the history of the Church, and the history of mankind, we are here at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> day, the 6,000<sup>th</sup> year, on the brink of entering into the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the 7,000<sup>th</sup> year. Most certainly, we are at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, nearing the midnight hour — the time of day when most people become drowsy, even to the point of sleeping! And when you think about what God has made known to us by the revelation through the Holy Spirit in His Word, it is more than AWE-inspiring! But as AWE-inspiring as it is, it is here at this moment, at this place wherein we must be so very careful! There are (and will continue to be), many pitfalls along our way, placed there by the three enemies of our soul —the devil, the world and the flesh. We cannot allow ourselves to be in ignorance of these potential pitfalls, especially the subtle one — that of sleepiness. Ignorance is not bliss! We must understand and believe what God’s Word says about these things, otherwise we may be duped into thinking we are above the pitfalls, that we are beyond the point of becoming sleepy, or of drifting away from what we have been given by the Spirit of Grace to know and understand. I am reminded of what we can learn through the experiences of Peter, the night before the crucifixion of Jesus. Let’s look back to this moment in history.

**Matthew 26:30 And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

**31 Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.’ 32 But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”**

**33 But Peter answered and said to Him, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” 34 Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times.” 35 Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.**

**36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”**

**39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”**

**40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

**42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done.” 43 And again He came and found**

**them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. 45 Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.**

Peter, the one who promised the Christ that he was willing to die for Him, *fell to sleep* instead of *staying awake* and *alert*, praying so that he would not fall into temptation. Jesus had just said that *all of them* would be scattered and fall away from Him *that very night*. But, ignoring the very Word of Christ, ignoring the OT Scripture which Jesus quoted, Peter said that he would not be among those who scatter! Jesus then told him that before the cock crowed, he will have denied Him three times! Still Peter continued to be unbelieving of what Jesus was telling him, saying that he would even *die* for Him, if need be. He would *not* deny Jesus!

Of course, we know that it was within a few short hours the cock crowed at the third denial of Peter, and he went outside the lighted courtyard into the darkness and wept *bitterly*. It is interesting to note what was between the moment Jesus *told Peter that he would deny Him three times* and the moment that *the cock crowed* — he slept!!! Instead of keeping watch with Jesus (presumably through prayer) in the Garden, Peter along with James and John became sleepy and began to sleep. They slept, even after Jesus told Peter specifically in **Mt 26:41 “Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** Instead of keeping watch and praying, Peter slept, after which he fell into temptation. Please notice here that Peter did not make a cognitive decision that he was going to deny Jesus. No, his downfall was that he did not believe what Jesus said about it, therefore did not stay awake to pray about it. And in that, while his spirit was willing, his flesh was weak.

In the same way, we are warned about sleepiness. Will we heed the warning, knowing that it is certainly possible for us to fall asleep, or will we think that we are above that? Will we sit up and take note of what the Lord is saying to us at this midnight hour, or will we let the warnings slip past us, thereby falling from our own steadfastness?

In recent weeks, we here at Cornerstone, have been duly warned! As we work our way through the Book of Hebrews, we have been well taught the various facets of the major warning to the Church throughout this wonderful NT book. It seems quite apparent that the Lord God is asking us, through His Spirit, *to watch and pray that we might not enter into temptation*. We have seen that we are *to stir one another up to love and good deeds, especially as we see the Day approaching*. This phrase ‘stir up’ has a very strong meaning as it is used in the original language. It means *to incite one another, to provoke each other*. We are to do this so *much the more*, as we see the Day approaching.

Yes, we are at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, fast approaching the midnight hour. You know what happens at midnight, right? The call concerning the Bridegroom returning to collect His bride goes out at midnight! We will soon find ourselves at the threshing floor at midnight. Judgment takes place at this time — midnight; and at this place — the threshing floor. Will we watch and pray so that we do not fall into temptation? Or will

become drowsy and sleep, not believing that it is possible for us to do so, not believing that though our spirit is willing, our flesh is weak? Let us remember what we have already learned concerning the ten virgins: **Matthew 25:1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4 but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.**

Oil in Scripture often (if not always) represents the Holy Spirit. To have their lamps filled with oil would picture for us that the wise virgins are continually filled with the Holy Spirit as they waited for the Bridegroom to return. The foolish ones, who were also waiting for the Bridegroom to return, did not have their lamps filled with oil. They were not continually being filled by the Holy Spirit! It really is as simple as that.

The difference between the wise and the foolish was the oil — the Holy Spirit. From Scripture, we know how a person is filled with the Holy Spirit! It would *only be* through the Word! It would only be through *reading, studying, hearing, and believing* what the Word of God says. At the point in Peter’s life when the Lord warned him to watch and pray, he would not believe the Living Word! He did not heed Jesus’ words about being watchful and in prayer. We must realize that we are in the same place here at the midnight hour, as we await the return of our Bridegroom. The Word says that we will *all sleep!* Look at this:

**5 Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7 Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’**

**9 But the prudent answered, saying, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ 10 And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.**

Evidently, the shout awoke the wise virgins out of their sleep! They trimmed their lamps and the oil within their lamps lit their way. Because they were ready, they went into the wedding feast. But what happened to the one who were foolish, who had not kept their lamps filled with oil?

**11 And later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ 12 But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.**

We see here that even though the *wise* virgins had fallen to sleep as they were awaiting the return of the Bridegroom, they heard the shout! They heard the warning! And evidently they woke up, as they trimmed their lamps in order to go out to meet Him.

The warning in the last verse of the passage in Matthew chapter twenty-five *commands us to be on the alert, for we do not know the day nor the hour*. This is what we are to hear — right here, right now! Ignorance is not bliss! It is as if Jesus is saying to us: **“So, you could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

We may be a breath away from being caught up in the heavens to stand before the Lord, or we may be days, months, perhaps years away from that moment! Regardless of the time we have left, we are commanded (for our own good) to be on the alert! To wake up! To not sleep!

Given the recent thread of teachings we have been receiving from the Book of Hebrews, the phrase, “*be on the alert*” in the Matthew twenty-five passage really hit me when I looked up the meaning of phrase. Actually, it comes from a single Greek word transliterated: **egeiro**. It is the idea of **collecting one’s faculties); to waken i.e. rouse (literally, from sleep, from sitting or lying, from disease, from death; or figuratively, from obscurity, inactivity, ruins, nonexistence):--awake, lift (up), raise (again, up), rear up, (a-)rise (again, up), stand, take up**.

This idea — to be on the alert — seems to be a common thread that the Lord is causing us to notice. In the Book of Hebrews, we have been warned *not to drift away*. Of course, this would be the first part of the warning, for if we were to ignore this portion of the warning it could be the beginning point in a downward spiral that could eventually lead to the entire forfeiture of our inheritance.

This forfeiture of the inheritance would be *our end* if we were to fall asleep now, refusing to wake up, not being watchful in our continuing to seeking the Lord and His kingdom. This is what the five foolish virgins lost when the door was shut for them. They lost their inheritance for the entire 1,000-year period’ they found themselves outside the Lord’s Glory during the entire age to come.

Recently we have seen the connection between the progressive warnings in the Book of Hebrews with the downward spiral of the Churches in Revelation chapters two and three. Two thousand years ago, the Apostle John *was removed from the earth and was taken up* to the third heaven in order to witness a time yet future — the JSOC. In John’s vision, we witness this downward spiral of the Church throughout the present dispensation beginning with the Church of Ephesus falling from her first love—the love they once had for His appearing and all things attendant to that — all the way to the Church of Laodicea being lukewarm and frankly repulsive to Christ.

The warning connected to the sin of falling away from our first love is for the Church *to repent; to do the things done at the first*, otherwise we would find ourselves making the same downward spiral, that of:

- taking hold of the teachings of Balaam,
- tolerating that woman Jezebel,
- of having deeds that *appear* to be alive but are really dead,
- having our crown being taken by someone else; and finally

- being neither hot nor cold, thinking we are wealthy and have need of nothing, but really being blind, poor, naked and wretched.

And this, in the end, would result in our being spit out of the mouth of Jesus at the JSOC, separated from Christ and His glory as He comes into His kingdom — a separation that would last for 1,000 years. This is the same end as the foolish virgins.

Yes, we being stirred up, being warned not to allow this process to begin! We are to be on the alert! We are not to quench the Holy Spirit, not drift away. Do not fall asleep. Wake up! Open to Him Who calls! And if we find ourselves at any point in this downward spiral seen in the letters to the seven Churches in Asia, we can hear (and be alert to) the advice that Jesus gives throughout the 7 letters in chapters two and three in the Book of the Revelation, if we would but believe it! We can:

**Re 2:5 ‘Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first...’**

**Re 2:10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer...’**

**Re 2:16 ‘Repent therefore...’**

**Re 2: 25 ‘...Hold fast until I come...’**

**Re 3:2 ‘Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent...’**

**Re 3:11 ‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown...’**

**Re 3:18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.’**

Of course, all of these admonitions have to do with the goal at the end of our race of faith! After each one of these admonitions found in the seven letters to the Churches in Revelation two and three, (*each and every time*) Jesus ends with saying:

**Re 2:7 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

**Re 2:11 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

**Re 2:17 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

**Re 2:29 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

**Re 3:6 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

**Re 3:13 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

**Re 3:22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”**

He who has an ear! What does that mean? Do you think Peter had an ear to hear what Jesus was saying the night He was betrayed? Do you think the foolish virgins had an ear

to hear what they needed to do in order to keep their lamps filled? Perhaps we should ask ourselves right here, right now, “Do I have an ear to hear what Jesus is saying?”

We who sit in these chairs Sunday after Sunday are being warned! I hope you, who have come from afar, are keeping up with the Sunday messages. I have this deep sense that this is what the Lord wants us to hear right here, right now! Some of you know that I have been recently studying the Song of Songs. I have had opportunity to speak on it two different times in the recent past: one Sunday in August and one Sunday in December. I have been amazed at how this Song fits into and coincides with the warnings we have been learning from Hebrews. The Song of Songs is a beautiful, Holy Spirit-inspired love poem, teaching us how the King of kings is pursuing His bride. The Song is a small OT book that, interestingly enough, deals with Jesus and His bride. Even its location in the Bible is interesting, being found at the end of the Historical books and books of poetry and wisdom; and just prior to the books of the prophets, wherein God really deals with the disobedience of Israel.

Its right here in the Song of Songs that we see the capstone type in the OT of Christ taking His bride just prior to His dealing with Israel. We know that in order to understand any part of Scripture, that part really must be understood within the context of the whole of Scripture. Since no part of Scripture exists in a vacuum, Scripture must interpret Scripture. Therefore, in this message tonight and the one tomorrow, we will strive to see how the Song of Songs fits into the overall scope of Christ’s pursuit of His Bride and the warnings to the bride implicit within the Song. We will strive to understand the path that we must take as the potential bride of Christ, along with the potential pitfalls that face us on this journey. Again, it seems so evident that the Lord is warning us in this 11<sup>th</sup> hour!

We already understand how the Bride of Christ is procured!

- The Bride will be taken from the Body of Christ, as in the type of Adam.
- The Bride will be taken from the Family of God, as seen in the type of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebekkah.
- The Bride will be taken from among the Gentiles at a time between God setting aside Israel and His bringing them to repentance as seen in the type of Joseph and Moses. And finally,
- the Bride will be found as the one who continued the journey with Naomi; the one who worked in Boaz’ field, and who obeyed all the commands given to her by Naomi concerning her preparations to meet Boaz at the threshing floor at midnight as seen in the type of Ruth.

But, the picture in the OT does not stop there concerning the Bride of Christ. God evidently deemed it desirous, *even necessary* for us also to understand just *how much the Son loves* the one He pursues as His wife. In this book, He reveals His passionate love for us, even describing Himself (through the type of Solomon) as being ravished in His love for us: **Song 4:9 (KJV) You have ravished my heart, My sister, my spouse; You have ravished my heart...**

His body so ravished that the Prophet Isaiah prophesied:

**Isa 52:14b ... His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.**

So what will be our response to this type of love? Would we lay down our lives and take up our cross and follow Him, so as to be his disciple? Will we heed and obey the words of the Spirit, as *we patiently endure the trials and tribulations of this life*, not becoming weary in well-doing? Will we realize and accept that we, too, will become sleepy, and that we need to stay awake to pray for our hour of temptation, all the while stirring up others around us?

The Song of Songs is a book that graphically describes Christ's love for you and for me, and is replete with warnings of potential pitfalls, which will inevitably present themselves along our path toward becoming His bride. And in this, ignorance is NOT bliss.

For the remainder of my message tonight, I would like to do a brief review of what we have seen in the Song of Songs. I would like us to remember how the king allowed the Shulamite woman to come to him, having drawn her to himself. We would do well to remember how Jesus, our Bridegroom, has already drawn us to Himself. We see in the opening verses in the Song that the woman makes specific requests of the king:

**Song 1:2a “May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!** This, of course, would be her asking him for a closer intimacy between the two of them. Recall that Ruth was the one who, through her actions and words at the threshing floor, asked Boaz to marry her and redeem the inheritance for her. (Remember that it was at midnight, that she was to go to meet him at the threshing floor.) Ruth was the one doing the asking, just as it was with the Shulamite woman — she is the one asking the king to kiss her with the kisses of his mouth! This is instructive for us! It seems that the Holy Spirit would desire *us to be the one to ask the Lord* for more intimacy! This intimacy needs to be something that we *personally* desire. No other person can give us “the want to”! The desire must come from within. We are to be the ones to ask for more intimacy! And if you do not have the desire, ask the Lord to give the desire to you! Or ask Him to increase your desire for Him.

Then the Shulamite woman also asks the king to:

**4 “Draw me after you and let us run together!** In this request, the woman is recognizing that there are others. “...Let us run together.” She wants him to draw her to himself, thus allowing her to run with the others who are running after him. We ask the King for this, and in doing so, we realize that we have our own share of responsibility in this facet of our race. We are to see to it that we run with others who are running the same race with the same goal, not separating ourselves, thinking we can go it alone! We can compare Scripture with Scripture here. James says:

**James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes**

**himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?**

You see, God jealously desires us to have the ‘want to’! He desires us to desire Him above all else. And in desiring Him above all else, we will need to, want to become a friend with others who have put Him above all else, and remain with them. The text goes on to say:

**6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

There is no middle ground here. Either, *we are running* with those who are running after the King, or *we are not running* with those who are running after the King. We each need to SUBMIT, to RESIST, and the DRAW NEAR. These are things that we are to do, and in doing so—in drawing near to God—we can realize that God is also drawing near to us.

**Heb 4:16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.**

We have seen this verse in recent weeks in our study of Hebrews. We are to draw near with confidence. We are to do this in a time of need. Think of what heartache Peter could have averted if he had only *heard and believed* what Jesus had told him about himself. We even see Jesus drawing him near in that coming time of trouble (taking him along with James and John, to the place apart from the others!), but Peter didn’t believe what he had been told. Had he believed what Jesus said, perhaps he would have realized the need to stay awake and pray that he might not enter into that time of trouble, that time of temptation. But he didn’t take advantage of help that was available to him. Look at one more level in this. The writer of Hebrews also says:

**Heb 7:25 Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**

Those who are willing to draw near to God (even and especially in time of need), He is able to save, since *He always makes intercession for them*. Jesus makes intercession for whom? For those who draw near to Him. Oh, and there is one little tidbit of information about Peter’s temptation on that night of Jesus’ betrayal that might be missed, if it were not for Luke’s Gospel. Luke noted something that the other Gospel writers did not note. In the midst of Jesus telling the disciples that one of them was going to betray Him that very night, Jesus said this to Peter:

**Luke 22:31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”**

Jesus KNEW the temptation that was about to befall Peter! Therefore, Jesus prayed for him (interceded for him), that his faith might not fail! Can you imagine that!

Jesus knew that Peter’s faith would fail, otherwise He would not have added: “...and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers’! And still, Peter’s response was: **Luke 22:33 And he said to Him, “Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!”**

So we can see that as we draw near to God; as we ask God to draw us, He will not only draw us to Himself, but in so doing He will also draw near to us, even and always making intercession for those who draw near. Can we know that Jesus is interceding for us right now? Are we going to heed the warnings that He is allowing us to hear? Or we think the warnings only apply to someone else? And we need to know that there are others who desire to draw near to God. We need to ask God to draw us to Him, so that we can run with others who draw near to God.

And to further indicate that she realizes that there are others, the Shulamite woman asks the king to: **Song 1:7 “Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock, Where do you make it lie down at noon?”**

Again, even within this additional request, there is an inherent understanding that there is a need for fellowship with others within His flock; with others who are following intimately after him. And again, it is in the Book of Hebrews that God tells us to:

**Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.**

This past Sunday’s message (Part 31 in the Series on Hebrews) brought this command to the forefront as it relates to the fourth part of the warning in the Book of Hebrews. This text moves *immediately into the warning*. Immediately following the command to continue assembling with each other, and continue stirring each other up, the very next verse is the 4<sup>th</sup> part of Hebrew’s warning:

**Heb 10:26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment [which comes at midnight, by the way], and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. 28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?**

Trampled under foot the Son of God? Regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified? Insulted the Spirit of grace? How would these things be done? What would these sins look like in real life? And what would this have to do with the Song of Songs?

Of course, *this* willful sin can only be committed *after* the individual has come into the knowledge of the truth. For the Shulamite woman, this sin could be committed only after the king kisses her with the kisses of his mouth, only after the king draws her, tells her. This part of the warning in the Book of Hebrews is based upon the previous portion of the warning, the 3<sup>rd</sup> part. Let's back up for a moment to see this.:

**Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we shall do, if God permits.**

What shall we do if God permits? Press on to maturity! Why might God not allow a person to press on to maturity? It is because in coming to that maturity if they fall away, they would not be able to come to repentance. The continuing text reveals that:

**Heb 6:4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit. 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.**

So the one who is allowed by the Spirit of grace to press on to maturity, coming into a good understanding of the Word of the Kingdom, but then allows himself or herself to become sleepy and to sleep, or to drift away, or does not hold fast their confidence firm until the end, or ... or... If they fall away, then there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

This is the warning we are to hear. This is the warning *we are hearing*, if we but have ears to hear! We can see this is the level of maturity to which the Shulamite woman had come in her relationship with the king. The Shulamite woman has asked the king to kiss her, to draw her, to tell her. And of course, it is up to the king whether or not he will fulfill her requests. In a real sense, he must judge her worthy of his kisses; worthy of her being drawn *by* him into the his fold. (Let us press on to maturity...and this we shall do, if God permits!) And the king in the Song does! He permits it! He counts her worthy, for we see in the Song that upon her request to be drawn to him, he brings her into his chamber:

**Song 1:4 “Draw me after you and let us run together! The king has brought me into his chambers.”** It is after this that she asks him to “tell her”

His *telling* her is based upon his having drawn her into his chambers. It is here that they become more intimate, here that she gains more knowledge of him, here that she asks him to tell her where he pastures his flock and makes them to lie down at noon time.

**Song 1:8 “If you yourself do not know, Most beautiful among women, Go forth on the trail of the flock, And pasture your young goats By the tents of the shepherds.**

Yes, the king has allowed her to press on to maturity, if I can say it like that. Then the remainder of the Song reveals the ongoing relationship of the king and the woman. The seven and a half chapters that ensue hereafter reveal the ups and downs in the heart of the woman as the king pursues her, being ravished by his love for her. The remainder of the book teaches the potential pitfalls of the journey. Yes, he *kisses* her; yes, he *draws* her; yes, he *tells* her.

There is something in chapter two of the Song that I would like for us to note in particular. It is v. 14 **“O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret place of the steep pathway, Let me see your form, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your form is lovely.”**

The king was so willing to reveal himself to her that he took her to that secret place...the clefts of the rock, the steep pathway! What is this place? And is that a place wherein we might go? Perhaps, is it even a place where we may have already been? Or, the place where we might even be now?

We can turn to Exodus to learn more about this place: **Ex 33:18 Then Moses said, “I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!” 19 And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” 20 But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” 21 Then the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”**

The only place wherein one comes to know and understand the goodness of God and to realize His Glory is when one is standing on the Rock. The Rock is a place *by God*, even at His Right Hand. (“Behold there is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock...”) And for protection sake, God placed Moses in the cleft of the rock with His hand covering Moses so that he would not die in seeing the Lord. It was in this place and in this way that God revealed to Moses His Goodness and His Glory. And it is here in the Song, that the king is happy to place her in the clefts of the rock, in the steep pathway. It is here wherein he reveals to her his glory. And by his own words, it is a secret place.

What can we learn about the path from other Scriptures?

**Pr 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.** (Perhaps we can see here the Glory of God portrayed!)

**Pr 10:17 He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, But he who forsakes reproof goes astray.**

**Pr 15:24 The path of life leads upward for the wise, That he may keep away from Sheol below.**

Why is it a secret place? What is so secret about it? Scripture depicts that the King of kings has secrets to make known to those who *have ears to hear*. Scripture reveals that is only given to some to know the secrets of the Kingdom of the heavens, not because the message is exclusive to some few elite Christians. (That is just silly talk.) The secrets (mysteries) of the kingdom of the heavens *is open to any Christian* who will have eyes to see and ears to hear! Open to those who will take the time and energy to search it out:

**Proverbs 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.**

Jesus is the King of Glory, and the King of kings! He will share HIS GLORY with those who will reign with Him as kings, because they will have taken the time to search out the concealed matter!

Jesus began teaching in parables after a time of teaching openly to all of Israel. Initially, He went from city to city proclaiming the Kingdom of the heavens, for that is what He was sent to do. He was giving the message to both those who would hear and those who would not hear. But there came a time when He drew the line. At that time, He began using parables when He was speaking to the crowds, and once that began, He taught nothing apart from the use of a parable.

**Mark 4:33 And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; 34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.**

When Jesus first began teaching in parables, He first gave the parable of the Sower and the Seed. The disciples must have been taken back by this, as we see in **Matthew 13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” 11 And He answered and said to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries [the secrets] of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.**

**12 For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.**

Whoever has what? Within the context here, it would be referring to possessing an understanding of the mysteries/secrets of the kingdom. Whoever has been granted to know these mysteries — these secrets — to him shall [more] be given. More of what?

More knowledge of the mysteries! A greater possession of understanding the mysteries/secrets of the kingdom! And he shall have an abundance. An abundance of what? An abundance of understanding the secrets/mysteries of the kingdom. But whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. What shall be taken away from him who does not have much? Whatever degree of understanding he has had concerning the mysteries of the kingdom, if he does not continue in his understanding of the things, then even what he had, will be taken away from him!

So again: Why does Jesus begin speaking to the crowds in parables? He continues in His answer to the disciples' question: **13 Therefore I speak to them** [those who do *not* have a possession of understanding] **in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.** **14 And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.'** **16 But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17 For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.**

What was it that the 'many prophets and righteous men' desired to see and hear, but did not? They desired to have an abundant *understanding* of the mysteries, about which they were writing! But the veil surrounding the mysteries concerning the kingdom of the heavens had not yet been lifted. It was only removed when Jesus came in fulfillment of the OT prophecies and types! The mysteries were only opened up when Jesus began His public ministry, and continued to be opened up throughout Paul's ministry.

So just to make sure that the disciples understood (and by extension, we now understand) what the parables are about, Jesus makes it abundantly clear:

**18 Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom...**

The subject matter of the mysteries had all to do with the Christ and His kingdom. It is the Glory of God to conceal the matter and the glory of kings to search it out! And so we are warned: **Matthew 25: 13 Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.**

Tomorrow morning we will look more closely at the Song of Songs in order to grasp a better understanding of our own potential pitfalls. Please pray for our ears to be open to what the Spirit says to the Church!