

The Death of a Bride

Towards the end of the Book of Judges, in its final chapters, is found a most beautiful picture of the Spirit and the Bride. Although portions of this story could seem unsettling, to view it through dove's eyes that are opened by the Holy Spirit is to behold the beauty of the Lamb. As we search the Scriptures, may God's Word become His instrument of circumcising our hearts that we may not be found separate from His nature, but formed in His Image. In our pursuit to know Him, may we go beyond even hearing to being swallowed up of Life! Let us look at the basic narrative as set forth in these scriptures found in Judges chapters 19 –21.

A Levite and His Concubine

There was a man of God, a certain Levite who had joined himself to a woman from Bethlehem-Judah. At some point this woman, his concubine, chose to leave the Levite and their home above in the hill country of Ephraim. She determined to go back to her father's house, separating herself from the Levite and their home above in the hills. After four months of absence from each other, her Levite husband went after her to bring her back to himself and their home above. As she heard his word and saw his face, the woman's heart turned back to her husband, and together they departed from her father's house.

In Search of Rest Among the People of God

As they journeyed home, it began to grow dark. The Levite, his concubine, and their servant found themselves approaching Jerusalem, a city possessed by the Jebusites at this time. The servant suggested that they bunk down in Jerusalem, but the Levite refused to turn aside and stay the night in a city of foreigners who were not of the Israelites. And so they passed on and continued to travel with the sun going down on them until they came to Gibeah, a city that belonged to the Benjaminites. Although they sought refuge among their brothers, none was given. So they sat down in the public square of the city since none of the men of Benjamin would take them into their homes. As they were sitting there without a place to lodge, the Levite looked up and saw an old man that was returning from his work in the field. It just so happened that this old man was also from above in the hill country of Ephraim and was just staying in Gibeah at this time. The old man approached the desolate group and asked the Levite where he was going. The Levite explained to the old man that they had come from Bethlehem in Judah, and that they were traveling towards Mount Ephraim, and then he added, almost prophetically, that right now they were going to the house of the Lord, even the Lord's tabernacle. And so the old man from above took them into his home, saying "Peace be with you, let all your wants lie on me, only do not lodge in the street." Consequently the small group found refuge, rest, and fellowship in this old man's home.

A Savor of Life A Savor of Death

And so within this old man's house was the communion and fellowship of those from above. After this old man washed their feet, they began to eat and drink. As they were "making their hearts merry", some of the evil men of the city began to gather around that house in the dark hours of the night. Compelled to bring the man of God out into the darkness and inflict harm, these evil men surrounded the house, and beating upon it's door they cried out, "Bring out the man that came into your house that we may deeply abuse him!" The old man, with intense desire to cover this man of God from such shame, sought to sooth their terror by offering his own daughter and the concubine. But their evil would not be sated. They demanded that the Levite be

offered up to them. And so the Levite came out to the wicked men and presented his concubine to them.

The Hour and Power of Darkness

This woman who had left father and mother to come away with the Levite to the House of the Lord was ravished and abused incessantly as the dark hours of the night prevailed. At the coming of the dawn, even as the sun began to rise, the men released her and fled. “Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man’s house where her lord was, until it was light”(Jdg. 19:26). When the Levite came forth from the house and opened the door, he found her lying at the entrance of the house with her hands upon the threshold. The Levite discovered that she had no life in her, so he put her on his donkey and left for home.

One Bride in Twelve pieces

When the Levite arrived home, he took his concubine and cut her limb by limb into twelve pieces, a condition quite similar to the state of Israel at that time. He then sent her, piece by piece, to all twelve tribes of Israel. Everyone who saw it was horrified at the manifestation of one woman in twelve pieces. “Never has such a thing happened or been seen from the time Israel came up from Egypt till today” (Jdg. 19:30). It seems that all of Israel was greatly affected by her death, and they were asked by the Levite to meditate upon her death and to ponder their response.

A Gathering Happens

Immediately following the sending forth of her limbs, a great gathering takes place. “Then all Israel came out, and from Dan to Beersheba and also from Gilead, the whole community gathered together as one man” (Judges 20:1). All the people rose like one man. “None of us will go to his tent”, they said, “or leave to go home” (Judges 20:4). And again it says, “So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man” (Jdg. 20:11). From this point on there is civil war in Israel with the tribe of Benjamin, yet the heart condition and manner of the army that gathered against Benjamin is to be noted. They loved their brother Benjamin, and prayed for him, seeking the Lord’s guidance every step of the way (*see for ref.* Jdg. 20:26-28). There is much to be said about the spirit that permeates their proceedings and the method in which Benjamin is eventually gathered and restored, but the purpose of this article is to focus specifically on the ministry of the Spirit and the bride, therefore in that view we will continue.

A Heart Turning Towards Her Lord

In the beginning of this passage, the concubine woman’s heart had returned to her former identity. She had left her husband and his place to go back to her father and mother. Her husband came back for her and began to wash her with the words from his heart as he was unveiling himself to her. During this time of knowing him, she “came to herself” (*Lk. 15:17*) as she saw him to whom she was joined. To know her husband in this way resulted in her heart determining to follow him back to his place, above in the hills. And so as her heart was being turned by oneness, she began to come away with the Levite. She was making the transition from a separate status into oneness, successfully leaving father and mother so that in all things she might join to her husband as one. In this sense she was also leaving her concubine form

and coming into the heart condition of a bride. There must have been a great and deep departure from her old identity at this time, for soon she will manifest one who has truly pressed beyond just following her Lord into deeply bearing his image and nature. To have entered into oneness in such a living way, she must have become saturated in his words and swallowed up of his life. We shall see evidence that this truly happened in her as we continue in these scriptures.

The Communion of One Brought Persecution

“Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”
II Cor. 2:14-16

*“Afterward, he brought me again unto the door of the house, and, behold, waters issued out from under the **threshold** of the house eastward; for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.”* Ezek. 47:1

Although the Levite, his woman, and his servant found no fellowship with those inhabitants in the earthly city of Benjamin, as they lifted up their eyes they beheld a man who was also from above. Within this man’s house was joy and fellowship. Could it possibly be said that, being that these people were from above, their fellowship may have been centered on the heart of Jesus and knowing Him as those who partook of His Life? Maybe the true place from whence they came was the New Jerusalem from above, that which is married to the Lamb. Within the walls of that house was perhaps a picture of the communion of the Body of Christ; the Body partaking of the Lamb together as one.

But the walls of that house could not contain the Life and Light that was emanating forth from within it. Possibly from the threshold of this house poured forth waters of Life, for the Lamb was enthroned within it, even as the threshold of God’s House in Ezekiel has waters pouring forth from it, for “the Lord is there” (Ezk. 48:35). And so, the House of God is manifesting here as those from above fellowship in the Lamb. This flowing forth of Christ was a savor of death to those who were perishing. And so the wicked men in that city said, “What is going on in that house? Jesus “is going on” in that house!” And so these evil men gathered together in the dark hours of the night determining in their hearts that they would silence this intrusion into their darkness. “We do not want this Life here, we will snuff it out! Give us the Son, give us that man of God in there! He will no longer be a Levite when we are through with him.”

The Dying of the Lord Jesus

Here is where we must look from the shadow to the reality. God has already delivered up His Son unto death by the hands of wicked men. Christ was crucified once and for all (Heb. 10:10). This sacrifice of the Son has already been accomplished, and now that which is His Body will be that which bears the dying of the Lord Jesus in its mortal flesh (II Cor. 4:10). We see the beauty of the Lamb of God crucified for us, but do we know that in His resurrection we are the Body of that same Lamb, containing His nature which is Christ? The Bride is that which contains the Life of her husband, the Lamb (Rev. 21:23). She is his flesh and bones. She is his

body. And so now the Lord comes forth through the vessel of His bride. Consider this understanding as we watch the Levite allow his concubine to be sent forth into the darkness of that which is outside the house (Rev. 22:15).

Do Not Ever Urge Me To Go

“Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn away from following after thee; for where thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death part thee and me.”
Ruth 1:16-17

Some may say she never quite made it to her destination, the tabernacle of the Lord and her home above in the hills (understood possibly as Mount Zion). Yet others may see a heart that has been so deeply gathered into God’s true tabernacle that nothing could break it’s joining. Her abiding, like branch to vine, had been such an effective process of grafting into Him that His Life was saturating her every limb. Her “journey” to the Lord’s house may not seem conventional, but as she continued to receive His words declaring oneness, that which was in Him began to be formed in her.

Prepared For Sending by Seeing

As this woman beheld the heart of her husband, their covenant of oneness became effectual, for she was being changed into his same image, awakening in his likeness. Her testimony was becoming, “No longer is it me, but truly his life is beginning to flow forth.” And in this relationship of face to face communion she must have seen, hidden deep in her husband’s heart, the things that were dear and precious to him. In the sense of one who is coming to know Jesus, she must have seen the bride through His eyes, the Zion of His Heart. She may have begun to see the house of His dwelling, the Body of His resurrection. She must have gone behind the veil to know as He knows the things purposed in His heart from before the foundations of the world. Can you sense the magnitude of her knowing her Lord, surpassing even knowledge? His Name to her was no longer a mere title, but her new identity. She truly was no longer of her father and mother’s house, but was being “clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (II Cor. 5:2). And so we can begin to understand this woman who was sent outside the house and into the darkness.

Overcome by Darkness, or the Hidden Wisdom of God?

At this point the question may arise in someone’s heart, “Would the Lord allow us to suffer and endure harsh treatment at the hands of wicked men?” Paul said, “As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20). Revelation 13:7 states, “It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.” God may allow the dying of the Lord Jesus to work in us that Life may work in others. There was never a greater release of God’s Life than when Jesus was “overcome” on the Cross at the hands of wicked men. His death gave them Life. Christ paid for the sins of the world once and for all, but the Life-giving spirit of the Lamb is still alive and well in the heart of His body, His bride. What may be an unjust and cruel situation will not stop the Life of Christ within her from being magnified. You cannot murder Jesus. His Life is in us through all circumstances. Man cannot hinder the plan of God because it is the hidden wisdom of God that comes forth as the Lamb Himself is made manifest.

Her Hands Were Upon the Threshold

*"Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, till it was light. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way; and behold, the woman, his concubine, was fallen down at the door of the house, **and her hands were upon the threshold.**" Judges 19:26-27*

In this picture, we see that her heart did come away, and the hands extending from her heart were laid on the threshold, never releasing her union into His heart concerning His bride and His house. Though all that bore the name of "bride" and "Israel" and "Son of My Right Hand" may have had a foreign spirit, she was not being removed from abiding in the Jerusalem that is alive in and one with the Lord. In this heart of faith and love she was partaking of that altar, and the result was that in her death His fragrance was released in great measure.

Even as she experienced deep abuse at the hands of the men of that city, her hands remained upon the threshold of the Lord's house. Her heart was ever towards His heart. Her hand held onto what was in the Lord's heart concerning His house. She would not release her faith in order that what was in God's heart could manifest and be found alive in her. She died believing in all that she knew was true in Him. She was keeping her heart and hand on His house. She was saying, "Lord, Your house will stand. Though at times men may not gather in the right spirit, having Your name but not having Your nature, I still see what is in Your heart concerning Your bride, Your house, and what You have brought forth in Your resurrection. My hand will be upon the threshold of Your house, and my heart will be abiding there. I will abide in that house which is raised up in You, and not break union with You. I will stay in this position of faith that You may receive Your corporate bride. I will stay in this heart condition that Your house may be built. I have seen what is in Your heart concerning Your bride, the Son of Your Right Hand, and Your house. I have gathered and pressed into what is in You, Lord. In my journey to come away I did not stop at my fathers house, I did not stop in the foreign city of the Jebusites, I did not stop at the earthly Jerusalem or the earthly Benjamin, for my eyes remained fixed on You, Lord. I will be clothed upon by my heavenly home. And no matter what happens to me on this earth, there is no testimony in man that can be greater than what I have seen in the heart of Jesus. And I will die in this condition, and a greater resurrection is going to come forth. I refuse to release my hold on what I have seen in You. I will not forsake gathering according to the bride of Your heart. I will not stop believing that she will come forth in Your nature. I will not break union with the body of Your resurrection, for I will not separate into individual form again. I choose not to leave You even when I feel hurt by those who don't know you, and when there is no manifestation of what I see in You, Lord. I will die, I will literally die in this heart condition." And her lord allowed her to die in the spirit of the Lamb.

Wounded, but not Infected

Have you ever had something happen where you felt you were mistreated, and the wounding was so deep that you were tempted to allow the wound to fester and cause separation and division in your heart? Much of Israel was in this heart condition throughout the Book of Judges, divided and following after their own understandings. Yet, when the wounding is deep enough, it could be easy to respond to this kind of pain with thoughts such as, "I am not going to be a part of what I have seen in the Lord's heart. I am not going to be a part of gathering as His corporate bride, I will not allow the house that is above to manifest. I am not going to be gathered." But this woman was wounded unto death, and still she died in the Spirit of the Lamb, not releasing her hands from His threshold. She had seen something in the heart of

Jesus that was above her circumstances in the earth. She wasn't beholding the darkness in the earth, but was cleaving to the true reality that is in the Lord. Look at this picture of the bride of Christ. Put to death by wicked hands, and yet a heart set towards Jerusalem. Severely mistreated by her brothers in Benjamin, and yet her heart remained set towards the heart of the Lamb.

Rising Her Dawning Fills His Eyes

"And when the day began to dawn, they let her go. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, till it was light. And her lord rose up in the morning." Judges 19:25b-27a

With every death that proceeds out from the Spirit of Christ, there will also come forth a resurrection. This woman had died in the Spirit of the Lamb, but her story does not end there. Shortly after her death, even as the sun was coming up following the dark hours of that horrible night, it says that "her lord rose up in the morning." Yet in this "rising up of her lord", there was also the involvement of this woman, for as her lord rose up in the morning opening the doors of the house, he beheld her fallen upon the door of the threshold having died as one that partook of His Spirit. She had bore the dying of the Lord Jesus in her body. His nature had come forth through His bride.

Is it possible to comprehend what it may mean to the heart of Jesus to have one with Him that is after His kind? That He could have one who is joined to him so completely that she would know Him in the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship in His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death (Phil. 3:10)? This is not a doctrinal relationship but a love union that has permeated her being and brought fellowship to the Lord. To see her come forth in His image must deeply minister to the heart of the Lord.

A Sending Forth

"And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel." Judges 19:29

Then that man of God said, "This death will not be for nothing, I will send her parts to the 12 tribes. The word of her death will be published all over Israel, for I will cause it to reach every tribe and coast. I will send forth this body that is saturated with His Life. I will distribute the limbs of this body that are filled with the Lamb and disseminate them to the 12 tribes so that they might partake of the Lamb also."

Each one of her limbs was bringing Life to others. Her limbs dispersed among the house of God represented a death that worked in her, but Life beginning to work in them so much so that the tribes began to gather as one man. That which was touched by her received Life, and when those tribes touched her bones, they began to gather as one... bone to its bone (Ezek. 37:7-10). Flesh came upon them and an army 40,000 strong rose up. In the spirit of the heart of Jesus, the spirit that she died in, they came together and gathered as one man.

She died in that same spirit in which Jesus died, bearing in her body the dying of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit of God disseminated her pieces, and the death that worked in her brought His Life to others. God's people then gathered properly, coming together in the Spirit of Christ, for

there was Life in the body.

Some Christians might say, “Lord, I want the body of Christ to reach all corners of the earth, I want the body of Christ to be sent to every tribe and nation! SEND ME LORD!!” What if the Lord answered, “Would you mind if I send one of your limbs?!” You could go one place, but how about I have you go 12 places at once?! Would you be open to being that kind of a missionary? Thank God for the precious laborers who pour out their lives in ministry and service to the Lord’s people, and yet possibly what happened to this woman could also be a part of Christ being magnified and spread. How wonderful to get so caught up in the Lord’s heart that whatever happens to us will redound to His house being built, so much so that His body will start to assemble. And to see the Lord so deeply that our lives will be an incense, an essence, a fragrance of Christ wherever we go so that in whatever way He chooses to disseminate us, it will gather men to His heart. The ministry of Christ our Life will edify the body of Christ, whether it be by life or by death. Christ will be magnified in us because we would not turn to the right hand nor to the left but kept our hearts in love and faith. I can hear this Levite saying of his wife as he beheld her poured out unto death on the threshold of the house, “She did not leave me. She did not leave me.”

The Winds of the Spirit Blow upon Her Death

“Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that it’s spices may flow out.” Song of Solomon 4:16

“Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.” Ezekiel 37:9-10

The Spirit of Christ was released in such great measure through her death that the Holy Spirit could blow on that fragrance and disseminate it to the ends of the earth. In this manner there was a gathering of the tribes, bone to it’s bone until they came together as one, even standing as an army.

You can hear a similar cry concerning the house of Israel in chapter 37 of Ezekiel. Possibly Ezekiel had such thoughts as, ‘Lord, these bones are so dry, how can they live? The bones are laying in pieces, parched, barren, disjointed and divided. There is no semblance of oneness and there is no manifestation of life among them. There is no semblance of the heavenly Jerusalem and the city of God here. HOW is this all going to come together? God, only Thou knowest!’ And then God moved blowing from the four winds. God moved. But what did He move upon? Perhaps the Spirit of God blew from the four winds on that which was a savor of Christ. Maybe, like in the case of this woman in Judges, the Holy Spirit “sent forth her limbs” by moving the fragrance of Christ right out from her death. If those limbs and bones carried in them the life giving Spirit of the Lamb, then the Spirit of God could blow upon them.

The Spirit in which this bride had died was saturated into every limb. When the tribes touched those limbs, they received Life, the Lord’s Life. Immediately after her body parts were sent forth, it says that those tribes gathered as one man, and an army rose up.

The bride dies in the Spirit of the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit blows on her death from the four

winds, causing the bones to start to gather, and an army rises with Judah leading. This army goes into battle weeping, fasting, and seeking the Lord, and on the third day Benjamin is delivered into their hands. Soon thereafter, in the spirit of oneness, Benjamin is restored. No longer does Israel appear as one bride cut in twelve pieces, but rather twelve that are one in the Spirit of the Lord.

The Spirit and the Bride Say Come

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17

"And it was given unto Him to make war with the saints, and to overcome the; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." Rev. 13:7

Jesus died, but the Holy Spirit is the One who bears witness of His death and brings the savor of it to our hearts. It could be possible to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit as seen in the sending forth of this woman's limbs. This woman died in the Spirit of Christ, but the scent of her death was blown forth to all Israel by the Holy Spirit, represented by the Levite sending her pieces to all of Israel.

In the Song of Songs when the north and south winds came together it created a tension, even a storm that would cause the Life of Christ that was within the Shulamite to flow beyond her own walls. The Spirit of God is like the wind that blows the fragrance of Christ's Life all over the earth. One body cannot cover the earth, but the fragrance of Christ blown by the Spirit of God can. Therefore, the Spirit and the bride together say come. She has the Life and He blows it.

In the Book of Revelation those who are from above that are saying "Come" as they shine forth the Lamb even when delivered up to death. The emphasis mentioned here is not so much focused on preaching as it is the testimony of the Lamb being seen in the bride. That living message through her is gathering the nations. This could be a picture of Zion, hand on the threshold, heart poured out. Zion has come in her heart. The scriptures speak of the nations gathering to Zion. How do they know to gather to Zion and why would they want to? Perhaps something is coming out of her, something that is being sent forth. Perhaps they are drawn to the Life that is shining out from her. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth" (Ps. 50:2). The nations are going, "Let us come into this Life, and draw near to this Nature." For us with our carnal eye her death is repulsive and uncomely, but when you see what is happening in the spirit, it is beautiful. She is clothed upon with Christ, wrapped in robes of His right Spirit, and the savor of Christ is ascending to the throne of God.

The Savor of the knowledge of Christ is manifesting (II Cor. 2:14-16). A savor, not just a knowledge to preach, but the savor of a knowledge that the Spirit can blow on and cover the multitudes with is manifesting. His name has become like ointment poured forth that the Holy Spirit can spread. His Life is coming out of her, and the Holy Spirit can fan that fragrance, spreading that savor to manifestly share Him as Life. The Lord's nature coming out of us gathers, draws, disciples, and evangelizes, for by Him and through Him all things consist (Rm. 11:36, Col.1:17). But without that savor what can the Holy Spirit blow on? (see I Cor.13:3) If it is us doing our best, laying down our lives, sacrificing ourselves without the savor of His Life, then the Spirit of God has nothing to blow on. The heart of someone who really loves Jesus may say, "I will die and I will just let everybody abuse me for the Lord's sake." But if that is not the Lamb's death, if it was not accomplished through Christ and in His purpose, then there is nothing for the Holy Spirit to move upon and He cannot send that forth to the 12 tribes.

If it is just our death then it will stink. People might respond by saying that they find religion distasteful, and that they do not feel compelled to gather. But if someone becomes a living sacrifice through the Life of Lamb, then the Holy Spirit can blow that all over the earth. It is very important that we do what we do by Christ. We do not want to hinder the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but rather be so conformed to the image of Christ that we are of one mind and heart with the Holy Spirit as we invite all to come. *