

Marriage of Joshua David Jaques and Victoria Lynne Phelps
April 3, 2021

Dearly beloved, we “are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:22-24). This is the reality of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We gather today in the presence of God and all the inhabitants of heaven to witness the joining together of Joshua David Jaques and Victoria Lynne Phelps in marriage. The members of this body of Christ give our assent, and attest, that this marriage is appropriate and scriptural: neither of you is bound to another spouse, and you are equally yoked together in Christ (you have each made, and currently maintain, a good profession of Christ in your words and your deeds).

Marriage was the first covenant between human beings, being instituted by God Himself in the Garden of Eden, and His standard applies to every human who would enter into this covenant: one man, one woman, one lifetime.

“And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him...And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*” (Genesis 2:18, 21-24).

This covenant is emblematic of Christ and His bride, the church. Therefore, as we rejoice with this man and this woman on this joyous occasion, I pray that our hearts would also be renewed with a fervent love for, and a longing to see, our Bridegroom.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” (Revelation 19:7-9)

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

Joshua, please take the ring that you have brought and place it upon Victoria’s finger while I recite the vows that you are hereby entering into with her as your wife:

Do you, Joshua David Jaques, take this woman, Victoria Lynne Phelps, to be your wife; to love, nourish, and cherish her above every other creature, and to render unto her due benevolence; to dwell with her according to knowledge, giving honor unto her as unto the weaker vessel; to have your heart safely trust in her; to provide for her temporal and spiritual good; to be not bitter against her, and to deal not treacherously against her in any way, but rather to remember that she is your companion and the wife of your youth and of your covenant; and to keep yourself only to her as being heirs together of the grace of life, until the day comes that Christ returns in power and glory or that God Almighty sees fit to separate you from her in death?*

Victoria, please take the ring that you have brought and place it upon Joshua’s finger while I recite the vows that you are hereby entering into with him as your husband:

Do you, Victoria Lynne Phelps, take this man, Joshua David Jaques, to be your husband; to love him above every other creature, and to render unto him due benevolence; to reverence and submit yourself to him as the guide of your youth and as your head, even as Christ is the head of the church; to adorn yourself with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, being in subjection to him, as it is fit in the Lord, not having a contentious, brawling or angry spirit, but rather obeying him with a willing heart, doing well, and not being afraid with any amazement;

and to keep yourself only to him as being heirs together of the grace of life, until the day comes that Christ returns in power and glory or that God Almighty sees fit to separate you from him in death?*

You are now husband and wife – no longer twain, but one flesh. The membership of this called out assembly of believers now bears witness to this covenant that you have both made before God. We bear witness that you both have done so willingly, with understanding, and in accordance with scripture, and that it is therefore lawful and binding in the eyes of God Almighty.

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:6)

* Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Corinthians 7:3, 1 Peter 3:3-7, Proverbs 31:11, 1 Timothy 5:8, Colossians 3:18-19, Malachi 2:14-16, Matthew 22:30, Proverbs 5:15-21, Proverbs 2:17, Proverbs 21:19, Proverbs 27:15, Proverbs 21:9, Proverbs 25:24, Genesis 18:12

Wedding of Joshua David Jaques and Victoria Lynne Phelps – Saturday, April 3, 2021

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” (Revelation 19:7)

It is unavoidable that this event today fills us with human emotion. A son, a daughter, a friend, a brother, a sister, fellow laborers in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ ... will now be joined together into a new body; ***“they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.” (Mark 10:8)*** All the expressions of affection that pour out from happy souls who rejoice with the bridegroom and bride make the day take a decidedly remarkable air. Senses are more tuned. Energy is higher.

But when we capture the truth of this event ... when we put it into its proper place in that blessed Word of God that rules our very existence in this dark wilderness ... I sometimes believe that as human creatures we simply cannot generate sufficient joy, delight, exhilaration, happiness, contentment, peace, celebration. This little ceremony today is a type of an event that will change all of humanity ... all of the world ... the heavens and all things therein; for ***“as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” (Isaiah 62:5)***

Two short expressions that I’ve provided here – from Revelation and Isaiah – identify the archetype of what we’re doing today. Christ being joined with His bride the Church and God Almighty being rejoined with the Jewish redeemed. Both are intimately wrapped up into the Covenant of Grace for which the whole of the universe was created and according to which it will all be finally and fully resolved. When we are coming together to engage in a matter so close to the Godhead – in the type that He has established – we should feel the full and joyful weight of it. It should make our souls sing out to our Father for the absolute honor and joy we feel in anticipation of being present when such eternal matters come to pass.

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” (Isaiah 61:10)

After this event today, this new body will exit and go into a period of time when all will be and seem good. That newness will transition, because you will see and understand each other better than any other can see or understand. The pressures of this life, the duties of your state, peel off every façade and open wounds that will need care. So I’m going to take my greatest opportunity to speak to you – and to the whole of the church – about that.

“[Bride] Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother’s children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. ¶ Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where

thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? [Groom:] If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver."

(Song 1:6-11)

This work that is the Song of Solomon deserves our attention if, at any time in our lives, we have need to cement our understanding of the unmatched love that flows between Christ and His Bride the Church – and by proper extension between any husband and wife who profess this faith. So, as we consider the words in exposition of this passage we should simultaneously consider our relationship with our Savior and the relationship with our spouse. Those in this body who are married or are not married possess the solemn duty to strain every nerve to pattern our lives after this antetype.

The first verse of this dialog quoted above between Solomon and the Shulamite – between Christ and His Bride the Church – between the husband and the wife – is actually the end of the previous oracle within the writing of the Song (or at least the translators). It is necessary, though, to see the context. The flow of the exchange is that the Bride is seeking to return to the good graces of her Husband. A breach has occurred. Conflict – at least as the Bride plainly perceives the state of the relationship – has separated her heart from his. That happens ... it happens in the relationship between Christ and His Church and it happens in the relationship between a husband and wife. Pretending it doesn't happen is irresponsible. Being stoic and dismissive about the gravity of the event is dangerous and destructive. If it were not a horribly disruptive thing it would not be part of the eternal record in His Word.

In this instance, the Bride has articulated the cause as she understands it. Remarkably, she owns her failure even while acknowledging that she is powerless to do anything about it. She's guilty. The members of the Church are guilty. We utterly lack any power to work out our own righteousness in this endlessly contentious wilderness within which we are assigned to dwell: ***"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"***. (Isaiah 64:6) Having owned her guilt, yet wanting the close companionship to return, she calls out to her surest help and her greatest hope.

I'm comforted by the words of John Trapp in expounding the opening of this verse of her petition, ***"Tell me, O though whom my soul loveth"***: *"The sins of God's elect turn to their good ... make them cry more upon Christ, love him more with all their soul, desire more earnestly to be joined unto him, use all holy means of attaining thereunto; and that with such affection, that when others are at their rest or repast, the Christian can neither eat nor rest, unless he be with Christ."* Similarly, should the bride pine for the close affection of her husband ... particularly when her actions have distanced them. Her soul being knit to his finds her greatest peace when she finds him and is resolved. Her

heart is full of affection and is aching to have that affection returned, so she asks him why he is treating her as though she is not his uniquely ... like she's just another among all the candidates for marriage: ***"why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?"***. She loves and wants him. Only Him!

This sounds a little romantic ... but if that is all you're hearing from me you are not hearing me. You can see from the words Christ first utters to the Bride that we are talking about a rift between them that is 100% in accordance with a perfect and beautiful standard. The Bride has been tending to the ***"the cares of this world"*** (Mark 4:19) as she has been made keeper of her mother's children's vineyard – a term that refers to the unregenerate of mankind – and consequently says ***"mine own vineyard have I not kept"*** (Song 1:6). She's let her duties to her husband slip. The Church has waxed somewhat cold toward Christ! But the response is not some arbitrary, arrogant, pride-dripping nonsense. He says. My sweet bride, there is a path that has been trodden by God's faithful servants from the first day! There are shepherds appointed to every little beloved lamb to show them where to find Christ and how to walk there: ***"go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents"***. He's not being abusive and manipulative; He's setting a proper standard in this most precious relationship, which He shows by His opening words: ***"O thou fairest among women"***. I love you! I am ***"the savior of the body"*** (Ephesians 5:23) and I only want there to be truth-grounded peace and comfort between us.

We see here a bilateral relationship between the husband and the wife ... not a competition or human-based hierarchy. Each knows the duties required to ***"consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works"*** (Hebrews 10:24). This duty – the responsibility to be continually considering each the other's weaknesses and needs toward your love of the brethren and good works – underpins and tempers the natural aspect of being married: ***"he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife ... she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."*** (1 Corinthians 7:33-34) Being even righteously engaged in the work of tending to your daily ebb and flow of the relationship will never rid you of the responsibility to be provoking each other to the work of God in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. That work creates tensions. Tensions can put you out of your clear and focused mind and spirit from time to time. Being out of that proper framing may put you at odds with each other. But there is a plain scriptural remedy to that, and by ***"feed[ing] thy kids beside the shepherds' tents"*** – by seeking the counsel and guidance engineered by God through the presence of the shepherds dwelling nearby – you will see your way back to the proper disposition and walk.

This theme of distemper and conflict between the Bride and Christ repeats itself throughout this beautiful book. It truly is throughout all of scripture, but the expression of it in Solomon's Song has such beauty and peacefulness that I would recommend it to be read routinely by all of us here – but particularly those who are married, because ***"he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better."*** (1 Corinthians 7:38) So if there is a place where the danger most strongly exists to run cold against our Savior I would suggest that at least Paul's words

indicate it is in this state of marriage between man and woman. The conflict between what will get your best affection – the things of the world or the things of God – runs continuously, and thus this beautiful work of Solomon’s Song will be immensely valuable.

Having given to His Bride the clearest and best truth in how she can bring her cause around to clarity, peace, and loving companionship again with her Husband ... the conversation shifts. The spirit of contention ... even the hint of contention ... is gone. The spirit of peace and reconciliation completely returns to this body.

“Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” (Ezekiel 16:8)

The Husband sets about the business of expressing the magnitude of love He has for the Bride. ***“I have compared thee”*** He says. You want to know the motivation behind Christ in His work in guiding the Church through distresses, temptations, afflictions, trials? It is that in His view, we are ***“fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (Song 6:10)***. You want to know how the husband properly sees his wife? That she is ***“comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners” (Song 6:4)***. To what does Christ compare His Bride? To ***“a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots”***. Beautiful ... stately ... majestic ... courageous ... unwavering in battle ... priceless.

“Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.” (Proverbs 31:10)

Jon recently spoke of the glories involved in Christ making Himself the surety for His people – together with all the duties and sacrifices and glories that entailed. Though with an entirely different metaphoric presentation, this passage expresses that same love toward His Bride: ***“when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isaiah 53:10)***. That is how this Husband perceives His Bride. And though nothing any human spouse has to offer to the other could ever compare to the sinless majesty and glories of the triune God, it should properly be your disposition toward each other as you see how you lose your two selves to the one body. The selfish tendency to want things your way has to be disposed of. The affection of the husband to his wife is to be patterned – such as humans can pattern the perfections of Christ – after the disposition of our Savior toward us. It is never to be an object to trade for personal interests or vanities of the flesh. That love must be always unfeigned and must be only for her ... as Christ’s affections for His Church are always unfeigned and are only for us!

Now the verse we’ve just examined ... ***“I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots”*** ... expresses the Bridegroom’s view of His Bride. The next expression, that closes this oracle, focuses on the bridegroom’s actions:

“Thy cheeks are comely with rows [of jewels], thy neck with chains [of gold]. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.” (Song 1:10-11)

Translators interpolated the descriptions with the terms *“of jewels”* and *“of gold”*, though the original text said the Bride’s cheeks are *“comely with rows”* and her neck *“with chains”*. The interpolated language is good enough to capture what is beautiful to humans in the expression of the most glorious of covering that the Bridegroom can produce for His Beloved.

Gill: *“Thy cheeks are comely with rows [of jewels]: [] these may respect the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, with which the church is ornamented; and are many and various, and are orderly and regularly disposed, and make very comely and lovely ... thy neck with chains [of gold]: The church has her golden chain, or pearl necklace; which are either the graces of the Spirit, so linked together, that where there is one there are all; and which consists of those ten links, or pearls, faith, hope, love, repentance, humility, patience, self-denial, contentment in every state, spiritual knowledge, longsuffering, or forbearance; sincerity goes through them all.”*

Throughout Solomon’s Song you will find the use of beautiful metaphors to depict the pouring out of graces from Christ onto His Bride the Church. These graces flow from Him, and whether they be in the form of spices to make the odors of the Bride most becoming or as the grandest jewels in the human creation to sparkle and present her with radiance of beauty – they are always bestowed upon her by Him. The generation we live in mocks and perverts this blessed truth because, as one of my friends here recently tweeted, “one that forsakes the truth, has never seen the glory of it.”

What we observe, in these comforting passages about the proper affections and duties of a husband toward his wife, is the depiction of a living and continual duty. When the husband quits himself with the appropriate demeanor, as instructed by this blessed Word, then he is encouraging his bride to be of proper spirit and presentation to the world.

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. ¶ Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” (1 Timothy 3:2-12)

This language is expressly aimed at the necessary repute of any man who would be a bishop or deacon within the church, but that is not to suggest that it is appropriate for any who profess this faith to discard these duties as inapplicable to him. The point rather, is that as husbands in the flesh should see that in the faithful pursuit of these characteristics you provide your wife with the framework that adorns her in her own work and presentation to the church and to the world. Christ, in His infinite perfections, has fulfilled the Covenant of Grace and is now **“ascended up on high, [after] he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”** (Ephesians 4:8). These gifts are these ornaments granted to His Bride the Church ... and clearly such ornamentations of perfection could not be possessed or granted by a human husband.

But when you consider the descriptions of that spiritual Bride – and the proper type of the fleshly bride – in Proverbs chapter 31¹, you must consider what is required of the husband to prepare that way for his wife to do that work. This captures the concepts of the final words in our oracle out of Solomon’s Song, **“we will make thee borders”**. The concept in the term **“borders”** is structure ... framing ... order. The husband sets the order of the household, making for his wife every proper thing for her to do the work of her new office. This is the only way she will be ornamented as she ought when she does her business with her husband ... her family ... the church.

I, your mother and your father, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ love you two with all of our substance. The evidence is that you are loved of God and therefore have a hope to be with His elect people for eternity. As you go forth from this house, commit yourselves to go this good way with all of your strengths. See in each other all of the beauties that Christ and His Bride the Church see in each other. Go to the archetype for wisdom and strength as this new body undertakes to serve God and His people until this life or this world comes to its appointed end.

¹ Here is the text of Proverbs 31:10-31:

“¶ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.” (Proverbs 31:10-31)