

Spikenard at the king's table

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I'm afraid we should have to leave Exodus for the moment. I'd like to turn you to a verse in the Song of Solomon, chapter 1, verse 12.

While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

We're still in the region of the perfumer.

There's a sweet-smelling spikenard here.

But there's a condition to it going forth.

It's when the king sitteth at his table.

It's the language of the bride, I suppose, of the Old Testament. [00:01:03] But the principle can be applied to ourselves. It is only when Christ has his true place, when he's given his rightful place, sitting at his table, place of supremacy, that our spikenard can send forth the smell thereof.

This is the language of the bride who, in the earlier verses, was desiring most earnestly the affection of the bridegroom. She says, verse 2, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than mine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth. Therefore do the virgins love thee. Delightful picture, isn't it, of that which is fragrant, sweet-smelling, and attractive. [00:02:06] But again, I say, it is only when the Lord has his rightful place that this can be true of us. It's God's purpose that in all things he, God's blessed Son, should have preeminence. That's God's purpose, and the time is coming when that will be demonstrated in this world. I think we were reminded of it this afternoon, in the 72nd Psalm, I think it is, David says that the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. What a wonderful prospect that will be. This whole earth, or maybe the whole universe, we may say, answering to the purpose of God. [00:03:02] Bringing glory to God.

And it's no wonder, as our dear brother pointed out to us, that that is followed by the statement that the prayers of David are ended. What had he left to pray for if the whole earth, if he couldn't visualize it, but the whole earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. If we read this verse, we can't help thinking of the 12th chapter of John.

The king sitting at his table, the spikenard sending forth the smelter of, and the whole house filled with the odour of the ointment.

That was the dear sister, Mary, who brought her alabaster box of ointment.

[00:04:09] And she wiped, she poured it on his feet.

Wiped his feet with her hair.

Let me just read it to get the context. They made him a supper, Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. How precious this act of devotion, worship, must have been to the Lord Jesus, when we think that he was on his way to the cross.

[00:05:04] Mary didn't wait till it was her opportunity, like the other women, to bring their ointment to anoint the body of Jesus. She came beforehand to anoint his body for the burial. She was the one that spread the feast for Jesus.

There were those that made him a supper, but how could Mary enter into that? She knew that her Lord was about to go to Calvary's cross, to lay down his life, rejected and despised as men. She entered into it. She brought a box of ointment to anoint his feet with the ointment. I'm sure such an act of worship was very precious to the Lord. [00:06:10] Notice, going back for a moment to the Song of Solomon, it goes on to say, A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved and to me, we know what myrrh speaks of, the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Are they precious to us? We sing sometimes about thy precious love, Lord Jesus. Yes, in a measure, we appreciate that love, don't we? The myrrh speaks of the Lord's obedience unto death, laying down his precious life in death. And the bride here, she likens her bridegroom to a bundle of myrrh, [00:07:05] which she places in her bosom. And it says, in unauthorised he, the thought is it, the bundle of myrrh shall lie all night betwixt my breast. That is, she places this bundle of myrrh that speaks to her of the devotion of her loved one. She places it in the secret as it were of her affections. Have we got the Lord Jesus enshrined in our affections?

Is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith?

Do we give him the first place?

Notice it goes on to say, My beloved is unto me as a cluster campfire in the vineyards of Enchedi. [00:08:02] Now, I haven't studied the details of this, but I take it this is a different figure, not the bundle of myrrh, but the attractive blossom of the campfire, an object for the eye to rest upon. And Christ is an object for our hearts.

Where is he now?

The angel said to Mary Magdalene, he's not here, he's not in this grave, he's not on earth to us, he's not here, but he's risen. And so we have a glorified object. We have one who went down into death on our account, but now is raised to highest glory. And God means him to be the object of our hearts.

[00:09:01] You know, we're so inclined to get our affections centered on things down here. That's been emphasized, I think, more than once this afternoon. The Apostle Paul has to criticize, has to judge really, those who mind earthly things.

I don't think he's speaking of those exiles, shall we say, open apostates exactly, those perhaps that were still associated with the brethren. Maybe not showing outward acts of sin that could be judged and they could be put away, but the Apostle says they mind earthly things, their minds are centered on things of earth. [00:10:01] They're enemies of the cross of Christ.

Not only has the cross no attraction for them, but they are open enemies of the cross of Christ. What a sad, sad picture, and how it pinpoints the evil days in which we live. But the pride says here, my beloved, is unto me as a cluster of campfire, as an object of attraction, as that which draws out my admiration, and is the all attractive object of my heart.

Is it so with us?

I think the ministry we have this afternoon will help us and draw us closer to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. [00:11:08] Because that's what we want, isn't it? The Apostle Paul says in that chapter that I referred to, it's in the Epistle to the Philippians, the third chapter, where Christ in glory is brought before us.

While it's in my mind, let me give expression to it before it wanders from me. I remember some years ago, it must be probably sixty years ago, a magazine was put into my hands, a copy of Scripture Truth.

[00:12:02] And I remember an article there.

It was the report of an address given, I think by Brother J.T. Mawson. And he spoke about the two things that characterize Christianity.

He says, one thing is the fact that there's a glorified man in the presence of God, and another thing is that there's a divine person here on earth. He was speaking, I think, from the second of the Acts of the Apostles. Peter's sermon on the Pentecost, the substance of which was, that the one who was humbled and rejected, cast out and crucified, was now glorified in God's right hand. [00:13:03] Glorified man, the Lord Jesus as man in the presence of God. And consequent upon that, the presence of a divine person here on earth, the Holy Spirit, being dwelled in the Church, and taking up His abode in the hearts of His own. Those two things are rather characteristic of the present dispensation, true today as they were on the day of Pentecost.

And remember how it is recorded that the early disciples continued steadfastly.

Yes, there was no drawing back. They continued steadfastly. They persevered in the Apostles' doctrine, which at that time consisted of those two grand truths that I've mentioned. The breaking of prelude, which was the expression of their fellowship in prayer. [00:14:08] Their dependence. A weak company, but numerically maybe 120 or so.

But they felt their dependence. They had the Holy Spirit within them, it's true. They had the Lord Jesus as their object in heaven. But they felt their dependence, weak creatures here on earth. So

they met together in prayer.

And I'm sure their prayer wasn't limited to intercession. I'm sure their prayer resulted in outbursts of praise and thanksgiving to the One who had done such marvellous things in raising His Son from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand in heavenly glory. Well now, I must come to the scripture that I was going to bring before you.

[00:15:08] That was in Philippians chapter 3, I think. Yes, having said that, spoken about those that were enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction and so on, who mind earthly things, the Apostle says, our conversation, our citizenship is in heaven.

From whence also we look to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I understand that Philippi was a Roman colony at this time. And the Philippians, many of them no doubt, had been granted Roman citizenship so that they owed their allegiance to Rome [00:16:02] rather than to the old Macedonian capital, Philippi.

They could say bravely enough that our citizenship is in Rome.

And there were many suffering under the tyranny of that terrible emperor, Nero.

It was custom to call him Our Lord Nero.

But what a comfort to these believers to be winged away from such thoughts and things and to be reminded that there was one to whom they owed allegiance, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And they were looking for Him. [00:17:02] It says, from whence also we look for the Saviour.

I think that word look means eagerly awaiting. Not just casually thinking about it, but eagerly awaiting the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That's important, isn't it, that we need to be stirred up lest we get so sunk down with earthly things, things around us, legitimate in their way but tending to take up our time and thought and hindering us from enjoying our true heavenly portion.

We are partakers of a heavenly calling.

Now, that's in Hebrews.

I don't read any graphic description of the heavenly calling. [00:18:06] I don't read any detail.

I do read that the Lord Jesus, in His wondrous grace, became partakers with us in order that we might be partakers of that heavenly inheritance that He has secured for us. But what makes that inheritance a heavenly one?

Can you give me an answer to it? I'll tell you what I think. I think what makes it a heavenly inheritance is the fact that Christ is there. The very fact that He's there, what would the inheritance be apart from Him? If the Lord were missing, there'd be no inheritance at all, would it? So that we're going on to meet Him.

[00:19:05] Where He is is His desire, ye may be also.

And so here they look eagerly for the Lord's coming who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory. What a prospect that is.

You know, I was reading recently of a dear servant of the Lord who lived some years ago now, he's with the Lord. And he said what a tremendous effect it had when he first became acquainted that the Lord was coming. He said every night we went to bed thinking, praying that before the morning dawn the Lord might come.

And every morning we thought, well, this might be the day when the Lord will come. [00:20:08] When we should be ushered in to His presence. It was a spring slash.

Have we lost the joy of the Lord's coming? All I desire is that we become, that we grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Not to intellectual knowledge, but practical acquaintance with Him. Taking Him into our lives, getting in touch with Him, walking along life's way in company with Him. A lovely scene that he used to meditate upon in the 24th of June. Those two disciples walking along with Jesus. True, they were ignorant of who He was, but their hearts burned within them. I wonder how often our hearts burn like that. But let us cultivate constant communion with the Lord. [00:21:04] And may the prospect of His coming dawn more brightly in our hearts.