

52. Jezebel's Wedding

Psa 45

We are on hand for this felicitous state occasion, and savour every moment, as the bride and the groom are praised in turn.

Here is the court poet, ready to recite his poem for the royal wedding. Those present fall silent. The poet gives us his verse of self-introduction:

My heart overflows with a good theme,
I speak the verses I have made to the King.
My tongue is the pen of a ready scribe.

In the poem proper, he will give 8 verses each to the groom and to the bride.¹

The wedding procession approaches. First, the King. The poet addresses him with appropriate words, praising his appearance, his martial qualities, and last, more important even than his martial virtues, his *civic* virtues: justice and uprightness, which alone can give glory to his rule.

- 1 Thou art fairer than the children of men;
 Grace is poured into thy lips,
 Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
- 2 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one,
 Thy glory and thy majesty,
- 3 And in thy majesty ride on prosperously,
 Because of truth and meekness and righteousness;
 And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
- 4 Thine arrows are sharp,
 The peoples fall under thee
 In the heart of the King's enemies.
- 5 Thy throne, O Divine One, is for ever and ever,
 A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom,
- 6 Thou has loved righteousness, and hated wickedness;
 Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
 With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
- 7 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia;
 Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad.
- 8 Kings' daughters are among thy honored women;
 At thy right hand stands the Queen, in gold of Ophir.

The King has had his eight verses. As he takes his place, his bride appears. She is from Tyre: a King's daughter, accompanied by her Tyrian maidens.

What will the poet say to her?

¹For clarity, here numbered that way. In our Bibles, the self-introduction is v1.

He begins with counsel. She is to forget her own people and cleave to him, to secure his love forever. Her great wealth is praised; her splendid clothing. Her generosity will make her beloved by her new subjects.

Her procession now approaches, and thus sings the poet:

- 1 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;
 Forget thine own people, and thy father's house;
- 2 So will the King desire thy beauty.
 For he is thy lord, and do thou reverence him.
- 3 And the daughter of Tyre will be there with a gift:
 The rich among the people shall entreat thy favor.
- 4 The king's daughter is within; all is glorious;
 Her clothing is inwrought with gold.
- 5 She shall be led unto the King in brodered work
 The virgins, her companions that followed her,
 shall be brought unto thee.
- 6 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be led;
 They shall enter into the King's palace . . .

And now, in the last couplet, comes the poet's promise to the bride:

- 7 Instead of thy* fathers, shall be thy* children,
 Whom thou* shalt make princes in all the earth.
- 8 I will make thy* name to be remembered in all generations,
 Therefore shall the peoples give thee* thanks for ever and ever.

That promise he can keep: remembrance is a gift within a poet's power.

Ahab succeeded in 876 to the throne of Samaria; his wedding probably followed soon after. To the established worship of the Canaanite god El, the bride, a priestess as well as a princess in her own country, introduced the gods of Tyre: the Baals. And for this, she was deeply hated by the Yahweh party, who gave her, in 2 Kings 9:30-37, the most gruesome death they could devise.

Some insist that the good wish at the end of Psalm 45 cannot apply to *her*, but is meant instead for King Ahab.² The form of the poem says otherwise. Groom and bride each get their share of the blessing: eight verses each. And it is their union, not the qualities of either alone, that promise a glorious future. *This is a marriage song.*

Fear not, readers; Jezebel will get what she has coming under King Jehu. But that is thirty years in the future. Meanwhile, we must make do with Elijah.

²Pursuant to this conviction, it seems that the pronouns in the last two verses (asterisked above) were at some point changed from feminine to masculine. Those lines make little sense if applied to Ahab, whose ancestors remain in the picture: it is *her* fathers who must be forgotten. She is no longer Princess of Tyre, but Queen of Samaria. Her hopes (his too, if one stop to think about it) rest on the sons she will bear to Ahab.