

Christ and His Church

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[0 : 00] Let us turn again to the chapter which we have read, the first chapter of Judges, and let us look at these words beginning at verse 12.

And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kibjah-sephor and taketh it, to him will I give Aksa my daughter to wife.

And Ophniel, the son of Cana, Caleb's younger brother, took it and he gave him Aksa his daughter to wife.

But it came to pass when she came to him that she moved him to ask of her father a field. And she lighted from off her ass and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

And she said unto him, Give me a blessing, for thou hast given me a south land. Give me also springs of water.

[0 : 57] And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. Now all genuine Christian experience is the outcome of a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is one of the fundamental principles of New Testament teaching. There is no freedom, no rest, no joy, no victory that does not have its source in the life of the risen Savior.

This great fact is illustrated in the New Testament in various ways. We think for example of the Savior's own picture, that of the vine and the branches.

He emphatically taught his disciples, I am the vine, ye are the branches. Unless united to him, the disciples would be unfruitful and unprofitable.

One of Paul's favorite figures for the believers union with Christ was that of marriage. In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, verses 22 to 33, Paul speaks of the marriage relationship as being typical of the church's relationship to Christ.

[2 : 19] Of that union, he observes, this is a great mystery. But I speak concerning Christ and the church.

And elsewhere, in Romans chapter 7 verse 4, Paul uses the same figure and states that it is God's purpose in our salvation that we should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.

Now, in order that we may understand the involvements and the implications of our marriage to Christ, we want to look at one of the brides of the Old Testament whose story so wonderfully typifies the story of Christ and the church.

We refer to Asa, daughter of Caleb, whose story is found in our text. Asa, daughter of Caleb, whose story is found in our salvation, it is our conviction that read in the light of the New Testament, this vivid account of Old Testament romance will greatly help us to appreciate the unique privileges and powers that are ours because we have been married to Christ.

Asa's wonderful story will enlighten us. We will consider progressively three simple aspects of the account.

[3 : 50] First, what Asa had. Second, what Asa wanted. And third, what Asa got.

First then consider what Asa had. Now we read in our chapter that Caleb arranged for Asa to have a husband.

Now we grant that there is nothing unusual about that. In those days there were probably many other Israelite girls who had husbands.

But our interest lies not merely in the fact that Asa had a husband. What interests us is the way in which she got a husband.

Caleb, Asa's father, was one of the grand old men of Israel's army. Indeed he was one of the men of faith who believed God was able to overcome all the inhabitants of the land.

[4 : 56] After the entrance into the land by the army of Israel, it fell to Caleb's luck to undertake the invasion and conquest of an area which lay in the territory now known as the Negev.

One of the main fortresses of the area was known as Debora or Kirjath Zephrah. As Caleb considered the best strategy whereby he might be able to subdue Debora, he came up with a brilliant plan.

At home he had a daughter called Asa. Now it was rumored that Asa was surpassingly beautiful. A real belle, well worth trying to win.

Perhaps some of the gallant young officers in Caleb's army had already been seeking her hand in marriage. But no one had yet been successful.

Here is Caleb's plan. Caleb decided that he would present the challenge of Debora to his officers. He would then promise the victor access and in marriage.

[6 : 10] It was as simple as that. Well, what happened? There was one young man who was definitely attracted by the proposal.

Or was it by Asa? What was his name? Othniel. While we know nothing of Othniel's prior interest in Asa, we can only conclude from his readiness to win her hand that this young officer had fallen in love with Caleb's daughter.

Othniel led his band of soldiers against Debora and successfully took over the city.

And, through to his wife, Father Caleb gave his daughter Asa to the victorious young officer. Now, you can imagine how Asa, in later years, would tell this story to her children and grandchildren of how Othniel won his bride.

Now, that is a thrilling story indeed. But our concern is to relate this story in its essentials to the most wonderful romance in history.

[7 : 30] The love story of Christ and the church. At several points, this history of Asa and Othniel is prophetic of the love story of the ages.

To begin with, we see in this story from the first chapter of Judges how Christ won his church on the basis of covenant.

Asa and Othniel's father solemnly promised his daughter of marriage to the first young man to capture Debora. Othniel responded and he won his bride on the basis of meeting the requirements of the covenant.

And here is one aspect that foreshadows the New Testament account of Christ winning his bride. In eternity past, God the Father promised the church to the one who would defeat the enemy.

The writer to the Hebrews speaks of the everlasting covenant. And it was on the basis of this covenant that Christ won his bride.

[8 : 45] But again, we learn from the story of Asa and Othniel that Othniel won his bride on the basis of consecration to the will of Caleb.

and Othniel's father in his awry worthy of will, The Arab Son, too, And what we called them that Othniel laughter overpate, the Lord adverted the communion of Th I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will, O God.

Throughout his life on earth he could say, I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And he maintained that steadfast devotion to his father's will right to Calvary. He became obedient unto death.

Once more we learn from Othniel's story that he won his bride on the basis of conquest. Othniel defeated Debora. He was triumphant over the enemy and as he returned from battle there was Caleb ready to award his daughter to the conquering hero.

Our Lord Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom, went to the cross and there he was triumphant over all his enemies. Paul wrote, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. That is either his cross or his body.

[10 : 50] Othniel won her hand on the basis of covenant, consecration and conquest. And when we think of Christ and his church, we see how Acts's story is our story. Christ won us by meeting the requirements of the eternal covenant, by consecrating himself to do the Father's will and by triumphing over the enemy.

We have found from our reading in Judges chapter 1, just what Akasa had. Now let's find out what she wanted.

Akasa had a husband, but she wasn't content. Some cynics will say at this point that she is just like all wives, never contented. But Akasa wanted something. What was it she wanted? Well, first she wanted a field.

Yes, that's right, she wanted a field. Now, wasn't that a strange request? It may be that her father had already spoken of this matter of giving her a field. And Aksa was simply informing her husband of her father's promise.

Now, consider that Aksa's request showed insight and discernment. She didn't ask for a fortune or for a mansion.

[12 : 40] She didn't ask for a field. She didn't ask for a field. Now, a field involves what? Plowing, sowing, cultivating, reaping. A field means service and effort and toil. Have you ever considered that our spiritual maturity, our spiritual discernment is revealed by what we ask for? James says that there are Christians who ask and receive not because they ask amiss, asking in order that they may consume what God gives them upon their lusts. Fellow believer, what are you asking God for? What is the content of your petitions at the throne of grace?

Are you asking in line with God's will or your own wishes? Are you asking in line with God's will or your own wishes? Let me be more specific still. Have you ever really asked God for a field? I mean, of course, a field of service, a field that you can plough for God, a field where you can sow the seed of God's word, watch over it in prayer and reap a harvest for God's glory.

That is this matter of asking for a field of service that lies at the basis of all missionary service. Sometimes we are told that it does not matter about the place, that God's will is not a matter of geography. This, however, is only part of the truth. The field of service is important. We think of God's command to Jonah, arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and to Amos, go prophesy unto my people Israel.

The matter of place is important in God's will. You who are seeking God's will, are you asking for a future that is guaranteed?

Are you seeking an income that will bring security for the rest of your life? Or are you seeking a field from God?

[15 : 18] But Aksa asked for more. She had a husband, she asked for a field, and she asked for springs of water.

Look at verses 14 and 15, she lighted from off her ass, and Caleb said unto her, what wilt thou? And she said unto him, give me a blessing, for thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water.

Ah, what wisdom is expressed in this request. Aksa had a vision. She saw her field open to the heat of the sun, and she saw her field arid and dry and parched. She saw her field turned into a desert. She knew the answer, springs of living water. Then she saw her field, and she saw her field, and the thirsty land springs of water.

Ahsah realized that she and Othniel could walk faultlessly in their field. They could toil and labor, they could plough and break up the fallow ground, but unless there were springs of water, all their work would be in vain. There would be neither foliage, fragrance, nor fruitfulness.

Oh, the tragedy of Christian work today. There are many Christian men and women who have sought God for a field of service, but they have never asked for springs of water. They are faithful in their work, they plough, they sow, they labor, ah, but there are no green shoots springing up in their field to announce the coming harvest. The tragedy is made even worse by the fact that many have accepted the status quo, and never asked why it is that they see no signs of a harvest.

[17 : 43] My dear friends, having a field from God is not enough. You may be married to Christ, you may be slavishly serving in some field, but if you do not have springs of life-giving water, your work will bring no result, no reward.

Now we've looked at what Aksa had and at what she wanted. Look now at what Aksa got.

Evidently Aksa got her field. And we learn from our chapter that she got her field by appealing to her victorious husband to ask her father for it. It came to pass when she came to him, that is Othniel, her husband, it came to pass when she came to him that she moved him to ask of her father a field. What a pattern for us to adopt. We can ask our glorious Prince divine to intercede for us to the father.

We can ask on the basis of the Savior's conquest on Calvary. We can come to the throne of grace through his merits and ask for spiritual blessing. But Aksa got more than her field. She also got fountains.

[19 : 33] And Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing, for thou hast given me a south land. Give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

What a wonderful gift. What an amazing provision. Upper and lower springs. Now here is a supply that was abundant. The very words themselves announced the sufficiency of the provision. Upper and lower springs. Caleb gave lavishly to his beloved daughter and her prince charming. Here was no miserly, niggardly giving. Here was giving commensurate with Caleb's status as one of the leading men of Israel. And this too is the measure of heaven's supply. The divine promise is, I will open rivers in high places. There is the upper springs. And fountains in the midst of the valleys. There's the lower springs. [20 : 53] I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. Read you Isaiah chapter 41 verse 18.

Caleb's supply for his daughter was abundant. But the springs, the springs were well distributed. There were upper springs and lower springs. There were springs suited to meet the needs of the seasons. There would never be a time when there was not water available for irrigating the land. But the springs, though, is that we might see that we might see that God's provision partakes of the same quality. God designs that there should be springs for the home life, as well as for the public life. Springs for the work day, as well as for the Sabbath. springs for the factory as well as for the church, springs for times of adversity as well as for times of prosperity, springs for the time of sorrow and for the time of joy. [22 : 05] God never intended that the springs of the divine provision should be limited to special occasions or specific seasons. He never intended that they should freeze over or dry up.

Finally, we know that Caleb's provision for his daughter was permanent. He granted her request and he gave her springs, springs, not a dam, not a reservoir, but springs of water that would constantly pour the refreshing flood onto her field. We are told that on one occasion at the Keswick Convention, when an opportunity was given for testimony, a Christian worker arose and said, I thank God for Keswick. It's like a filling station. I'm now refueled for another year. Kindly but firmly, the chairman of the meeting reminded the Christian worker, You've missed the point. Keswick is not meant to be a filling station. It's meant to direct you to the oil well itself. My Christian friend, have you learned yet not to look to secondary sources for blessing, sources that are temporary and finite? [23 : 42] Have you learned to say with the psalmist, All my springs are in thee. Listen for yourself. The spring of life and liberty. The spring of joy and peace. The spring of victory and triumph. The spring of fullness and freedom. The spring of rest and contentment. All, all are in God. And God, by virtue of his own nature, is abiding. How did Asa receive the springs? There's no mystery here. Asa asked for them on the basis of her relationship to the conqueror of Debar. She was a daughter of Caleb and she was the wife of the victor. And that too, my friend, is the basis for your asking in faith. [24 : 49] You have been married to the conqueror of Calvary. You have been united to the hero of Golgotha. Asa asked for the springs directly. She knew her need and she asked specifically for that which would meet her need. And on this point, we could well learn from Asa. Ask, seek, knock was the Savior's direction to his disciples. But only too often we ask for secondary things. Asa didn't ask for equipment to cultivate the field. She asked for an endowment that would saturate the field. She put first things first. Asa asked for the springs of water humbly. She alighted from the ass in which she was riding. Presented a request to her father in a spirit of humility and lowliness. [26 : 00] Give me a blessing, she asked. For thou hast given me a south land. Give me also springs of water. There was no spirit of arrogance or of self-will. Oh, she was bold, but she was not brazen. While we are exhorted to come boldly unto the throne of grace, we are nevertheless to remember that we are to be in subjection unto the Father of spirits.

God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in good time.

This then is the church's glorious privilege as the bride of Christ, to come to the heavenly Father and receive all that is needed for life and for godliness.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

[27 : 14] Amen. Amen. Let us pray. O gracious and ever blessed one, we give thee thanks for the love that thy dear son has for his people.

And we pray thee gracious one, that something of that love may be in our hearts and overflow from us to others. Gracious one, gracious one, gracious one, gracious one, teach us what we should ask for.

Gracious one, may we even now seek what it is that thou wouldst have us to do. And may we, O Lord, enter into our labors, seeking to further the cause of Christ in this place in which our lot has been cast.

May thy spirit, O Lord, be with us continually, strengthening us, guiding us, directing us, and ever refreshing us.

And may we yet, O Lord, see a Jerusalem in this green and pleasant land. O gracious one, may we ever be diligent in seeking to do what thou wouldst have us to do.

[28 : 45] And may we yet hear thy voice saying unto us, Well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Go with us, O Lord, as we leave this thy house. See us to our homes in safety. Watch over us till we meet again whether in this world or the world to come.

Enable us to walk, gracious one, so as to please thee. For this is our design. Amen. Amen.