Session 11 – Affirmation after testing – 6:1 – 10

A. INTRODUCTION

The Shulamite passed through the dark night of testing and emerged victorious. She found the strength to follow the King's leading in the revelation of the cross (Chapter 3:6-11), and in His prophetic affirmations of her beauty (Chapter 4:1-15). She remained unoffended through her trial by focusing on the attributes of Jesus, and emerged from the test declaring with her mouth the testimony of His majesty and worth (Chapter 5). As she stands in this place of victory, those around her recognize the beauty that has burst forth in her character, and inquire how they too can come to know this man Jesus.

B. THE MAIDENS' SEARCH FOR HIS PRESENCE

[1]Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?

1. The Shulamite's journey has caused their hearts to long for relationship with the King. The Daughters desire is to seek Him in relationship with her. They have recognized the power of His beauty in sustaining the Shulamite through the difficulties of her journey. The presence of such a sustaining love is attractive and compelling to those who observe the Bride's experience.

2. They recognize the beauty of the Bride. They see her now as the most beautiful, the fairest among women because her attachment to the King has completely transformed her character. No longer is she fearful or filled with self-hatred. She has become consumed with her Beloved, and as a result everything about her has been transformed into beauty.

3. The Bride's testing resulted in the lives of others being dramatically changed. We never know who is watching us as we love and trust Jesus in our difficulties, or how our loving obedience may inspire them to find grace and blessing in Him. The Holy Spirit is raising up lovesick worshipers who know Jesus in a way that will deeply impact others and bring His blessing upon their lives.

C. THE SHULAMITE'S RESPONSE

My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies.

1. The King has gone to His garden, now dwelling in the place of extravagant worship. The beds of spices speak of the costly worship that has arisen during the season of darkness and loneliness. This is a profound reality, for His garden is the Bride's heart. He has entered into partnership with her, and has now clothed Himself with her, operating in and through her as His bridal partner.

2. He is feeding His flock in partnership with His Bride. The Bride's part is to love and worship Him; the King's life and ministry is now expressed through her. We must allow the Holy Spirit to teach us that Christ operates in us as we give ourselves to Him in love. The King is gathering His beautiful ones to Himself in partnership with her. As the Bride is conformed to His image through the journey, the joy of Jesus' heart is to gather His people to Himself as He expresses His life through the Bride. This is the secret of effective ministry in partnership with Jesus. This is clearly expressed in the life of John the Baptist:

John 3:29–30 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease.

3. The Shulamite's growing understanding of their relationship

[3] I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

a. Her first statement reflects a shift in her heart. The King's ownership of her life now has first place in her understanding. She has given Him control, and her life is no longer centred on her or the meeting of her felt needs, but on serving His priorities.

b. She then declares that this shift releases Him to be fully hers, for she is now trusting Him to be her inheritance. Before this, she maintained control over the meeting of her needs, and therefore could never fully enjoy His provision. Now she is fully His, and therefore His resources can be fully hers.

c. She is coming to the amazing revelation that the King is at work in her to minister to His people. He is moving, not separate from her, but *in her, through her, as her*.

To be His bride is to understand that our existence on earth is for Him. We are not to spend life on our self, but being poured out for Him, for His glory, for His purpose. Her one desire is to be His inheritance. No one else has any claims on her. She is His and His alone, shared by none other.

The truth of the matter is that her story is our story, a transition from self-centred life to a life that is only His. All of us begin our journey into the heart of Jesus with the desire to please ourselves. Our own enjoyment of Jesus is the focus, not His enjoyment of us. We talk about what Jesus has done for us and what He is to us, which is the wonderful joy of knowing Him, and it is legitimate pleasure. But in time, we must mature in love, acknowledging His rights to enjoy us. We are Jesus' inheritance. He died to have us. *(The Sacred Journey - Brian and Candice Simmons)*

D. THE KING'S AFFIRMATION AFTER TESTING

1. Suddenly the King steps into the picture once again, and begins to affirm and bless the Bride in her new state of mature partnership. May our hearts be encouraged to embrace the journey by the knowledge of the blessing that awaits us as we go forward.

[4] You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners. [5] Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me—Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. [6] Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young. [7] Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. [8] There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. [9] My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her. [10] "Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?"

2. In the first phrases of the Song of Solomon, the Shulamite declared her desire that the King would kiss her with the kisses of His mouth. In other words, that the power and truth of His Word would impact her heart with the truth of how things really are according to His perspective. In these phrases in Chapter Six, the Spirit of God declares over the mature Bride how things really are. We are to take these phrases as food to our souls, knowing that as we trust and obey Him, the Holy Spirit will bring us to this place of mature love.

E. JESUS AFFIRMS HER BEAUTY AS HIS DWELLING PLACE

1. ***You are as beautiful as Tirzah.*** In these following phrases, the Holy Spirit affirms that the intended result of these testing seasons is the beauty of the Bride – her qualification to be the King's bridal partner. The name "Tirzah" literally means "pleasure, or beauty." Tirzah was the capital city of the northern Canaanite kingdom, and is seen by many commentators as referring to the Bride's beauty revealed among the Gentile people – the unbelievers of the day. The mature Bride of Christ will be seen as lovely and desirable among unbelievers who are seeking God's truth. The Holy Spirit will move in the hearts of people because of the beauty and power of the Bride's character and anointing.

2. ***You are as lovely as Jerusalem.*** God ordained Jerusalem as His city, the centre of national worship. It is the city of the great King (Matthew 5:35), the beautiful city of God's dwelling, the place where His Shekinah glory resides. The City of God is ultimately both a place and a people fully adorned with God's grace and power. It is His Bride in full maturity, changed into His likeness by the power of His Word, and made fit as the dwelling place of God for all eternity.

Revelation 21:2–3 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

This is the identity of the Bride in Jesus' eyes, made ready for full partnership with Him. The construction of His city is now complete and the King can move in.

F. JESUS AFFIRMS THE POWER OF HER INFLUENCE

1. ***You are awesome as an army with banners.*** The army with banners is the army that has been victorious in battle. The defeated enemy kings would march behind them in chains, emphasizing the victory in battle. The Shulamite had won the battle during the dark night of testing. She did not become offended at or bitter against God or against His people in the process of being qualified. Rather, she anchored her soul in the power of Jesus' love, and allowed the Holy Spirit to form His character in her through the process. All the accusations against her, against God, and against His people are silenced and defeated through this process.

2. A victorious army will show signs of the battle (damage and wounds) but return rejoicing in victory. We come through the darkness with rejoicing as we see the enemy's schemes to destroy our faith and gentleness defeated. We have become like Jesus who endured the cross for the joy set before Him.

3. ***Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me.*** She has gained power over Him (authority in prayer) by virtue of passing the test. The King can no longer resist her glance, can no longer deny her desires, for they have been refined and made pure in the fires of testing.

4. What overwhelms God? He spans the heavens with His hand (Isaiah 40:12). He calls the stars by name (Isaiah 40:26). He calls the sustenance of the universe "the mere edges of His ways" (Job 26:14). The strategies of earthly kings don't move Him (Psalm 2), and the armies of His enemies are nothing before Him (Joel 3; Revelation 19). Only the gaze of His lovesick Bride moves His heart, and causes Him to bend His power toward her. The power and privilege of intimacy with God is beyond comprehension, and must become the focal point of our lives as members of His Bride. It's the glory of the King to be overcome by a bride that agrees with his agenda.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Revelation 7:14–15 . . . So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15] Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

G. JESUS AFFIRMS THE MATURITY OF HER CHARACTER

The King repeats the affirmations of Chapter Four. Now they are no longer merely prophetic promises. Rather, they are mature character traits that have emerged in the refining fires of the dark night.

1. Her dedication to Him has been demonstrated – ***"Your hair is like a flock of goats . . ."*** Under the pressure of persecution and rejection, her heart remained loyal to Him, trusting His love for her. She refused to abandon faith, being resolute in trust when it seemed futile. Notice the context of "the flock" – her maturity is in the context of the corporate Bride, moving as one entity.

2 Chronicles 16:9 [9] For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those <u>whose heart is loyal to Him</u>.

2. Her digestion of His Word was evident – ***"Your teeth are like a flock of sheep . . ."*** The teeth speak of the ability to digest and absorb the Word into our hearts. Again, notice the context of "the flock." The Shulamite lived by the sustaining power of the Word during the dark season when she couldn't find the King's presence. She depended on the truth of the Word to keep her safe, just as Jesus did during His testing in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

3. ***"Come up from the washing"*** – the interpretation of the Word is clean and pure because of the revelation of the Holy Spirit in line with the written Word of God. Fleshly zeal and self-serving interpretations have been washed away (James 1:21).

4. ***"Every one bears twins"*** – the Word has been received deeply, planted in the good soil of a pure heart, and has brought forth good fruit in multiplied measure (Matthew 13:23).

5. Her emotions were stable and beautiful through the testing time – ***"Like a piece of pomegranate are your temples behind your veil."*** The veil of shame that separated the Shulamite from full intimacy was torn away during the dark night encounter. It has now been replaced by a new veil, her new identity as the Bride, covered by the King's blessing and anointing. The veil also refers to the Bride's secret life with God, hidden in the quiet place of her own devotion. This is who she is when no one is watching. The temples, or cheeks, speak of her emotions that came to full maturity and sweetness during the testing time.

H. JESUS AFFIRMS HER BEAUTY COMPARED TO HUMAN AND ANGELIC HOSTS

[8] There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. [9] My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

1. The first level of interpretation here is that Jesus is comparing His Bride to all the other people groups of the earth. Though all are significant in view of being created in God's image and for His pleasure, only the Bride gives Him the joy of intimate friendship and partnership. This declaration is made primarily over the corporate Bride, coming into fullness as the whole Body of Christ, growing together in love by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:15–16 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— [16] from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

2. The beauty of the corporate Bride emerges as "every part does its share," resulting in personal experience of the corporate blessing. As each individual embraces the journey to intimacy and authority, the whole Body, which is the Bride, grows into the perfection of the image of Jesus.

Ephesians 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

3. The second level of interpretation is that Jesus is comparing His Bride to the angelic host of heaven, declaring that the glory of the angels cannot be compared to the glory that rests upon the mature Bride. Hebrews 2 makes it clear that the ultimate understanding of this is fulfilled in Jesus, who by His life, death, and resurrection as a man <u>brings us with Himself into His glory</u>.

Hebrews 2:6–11 [6] But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? [7] You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honour, And set him over the works of Your hands. . . . [9] But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. [10] For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. [11] <u>For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,</u>

4. With all the majesty of heaven's glory, the great prize in the eyes of Jesus is the mature Bride, made perfect by His sacrifice and His sustaining power. All the host of heaven will honour the Lamb's Bride, and give glory to Him for what He has accomplished with us.

I. JESUS DECLARES THE MYSTERY OF THE BRIDE'S NEW IDENTITY

[10] "Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?"

1. ***Who is this?*** This is a rhetorical question revealing the captured heart of Jesus over His mature Bride. The humility of Jesus stands out as He focuses the attention of His listeners on His beloved.

2. She ***looks down like the dawn*** – her victory over the darkness of her own soul. The dark night of her testing has passed, and the shadows have been driven away. The new day of freedom and maturity has dawned, and the shining of the Bride's countenance declares her victory in the battle with her own soul.

Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

This is the resolution of the Bride's faith statement in Chapter 4:6 – ***"until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountains of myrrh and the hill of frankincense."*** The shadows are now gone, and the light of the morning has come.

3. She is ***beautiful as the moon*** – perfect in her reflection of the King's beauty during the night-time of the present evil age. This statement refers to the beauty of the King reflected in the life of His Bride. The moon is the lesser of the great lights in the heavens, and reflects the brightness of the sun. The moon gives light to the world in darkness.

4. She is ***bright as the sun*** – the internal shining of the light of Christ has dawned in her heart, and will emerge in fullness in the age to come. Here is part of the great mystery of salvation. We are not only to reflect the beauty of Jesus as we walk with Him. We are also to become light, shining with the beauty and the power of His Spirit in us.

Acts 6:15 And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at (Stephen), saw his face as the face of an angel.

5. Even as Jesus is the Light of the world, so He declares to us that we are the light of the world. He uses the same word in each instance – *phos*, light. From this word we derive the word *phosphorescent*.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world."

Matthew 5:14 You (Jesus' disciples) are the light of the world.

In Revelation 12 the Bride is pictured as being clothed with the sun.

Revelation 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

6. She is awesome as an army with banners – terrifying to the enemy, victorious in spiritual warfare. The King speaks for the second time about her victory in the warfare she has faced. In the first instance, she was victorious over the personal issues that she faced during the dark night of her testing. She pressed into the beauty of the Lord during the battle, refusing to give in to the temptation to bitterness, or to comfort herself with alternatives to the presence of the Lord. In the context here, Jesus is affirming her as victorious over the realm of the spirit, prophesying of the ultimate victory that will be ours at Jesus' side when He returns to establish His Kingdom on the earth. The enemies of God will bow in terror before Him and before His Bride, standing together in unity and power.

Psalm 149:4–9 For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. [5] Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. [6] Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, [7] To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples; [8]to bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; [9] To execute on them the written judgment— This honour have all His saints. Praise the LORD!

Revelation 3:9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.