

The Seventh Dwelling Places

Chapter 2 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Continues on the same subject. Explains the difference between spiritual union and spiritual marriage. Describes this difference through some delicate comparisons.

Now let us deal with the **divine** and **spiritual marriage**. This great favor does **not** come to its perfect fullness on earth; for if we were to withdraw from God, this blessing would be **lost**.

The first time the favor is granted, His Majesty desires to show Himself to the soul through an **imaginative vision** of His most sacred humanity...

The **Lord represented Himself** to her just after she had received Communion, in the form ... He was after His **resurrection**. He told her that now it was time that she consider as her own what belonged to Him and that He would take care of what was hers...

2. ...At other times the Lord had represented Himself to her, but this experience was so **different** that it left her stupefied and frightened. **First** because the vision came with great force; **second** because of the words the Lord spoke to her; and, also in the **interior of her soul**, where He represented Himself to her, she had not seen other visions ...

It is important to understand that there is a **difference** between all the **previous visions** and those of this dwelling place. Between the **spiritual betrothal** and the **spiritual marriage** the difference is great...

3. ... It should be understood that in this state there is **no more thought** of the **body** than if the soul were not in it. One's thought is only of the **spirit**.

The spiritual marriage ... is a **secret union** that takes place in the very **interior center of the soul**, which must be where God

Himself is, and in my opinion there is no need of any **door** for Him to enter.

... All that has been said up until now seems to take place by means of the **senses** and **faculties** ...but that which comes to pass in the union of the **spiritual marriage** is very **different**. The Lord appears in this center of the soul, not in an imaginative vision but in an **intellectual one**... as He appeared to the apostles without entering through the door when He said to them *pax vobis*.

What God communicates here to the soul in an instant is a secret so great and a favor so sublime — and the delight the soul experiences so extreme — that I don't know what to compare it to. I can only say that the Lord wishes to reveal ... the glory of heaven. ... The **soul**, I mean the **spirit**, is made **one with God** ... He has desired to be so **joined** with the creature that, ... He doesn't want to be **separated** from the soul. 4. The **spiritual betrothal** is **different**, for the two often **separate**. The **union** is also **different**; though it is the joining of two things into one, ... the two can be **separated** ... We observe this ordinarily; the favor of union passes quickly and the soul remains without that company ...

In **spiritual marriage**, no. The soul always remains with its God in that **center**.

Let's say that **union** is like the joining of **two wax candles** to the extent the flames from both become one ... But one candle can be easily separated from the other.

In **spiritual marriage**, the **union** is like ... **rain** falling from the sky into a river or fount; all is water. The rain from heaven cannot be separated from the water of the river; or a stream entering the sea, there is no way of separating the two; or **bright light** entering a room through two different windows ... the two streams of light become one.

5. ... This **state** is the place where the little **butterfly dies**, and with the greatest joy because its **life is now Christ**.

6. ... Its life in Christ is better understood with time by the **effects**...

The soul understands clearly that **God gives it life** ... It is understood that there is Someone in the **interior depths** who shoots these arrows and gives life to this life, and that there is a **Sun** in the **interior of the soul** from which a **brilliant light** proceeds and is sent to the **faculties**. The soul does not move from the **center** nor is its **peace** lost; for the very One who gave peace to the apostles when they were together can give it to the soul.

7. It has occurred to me that this greeting of the Lord must be more than is apparent from its sound ... The Lord's **words** are **effected** in us as **deeds** ...

It is very **certain** that in emptying ourselves of all that is creature and detaching ourselves from it ... the Lord will **fill us with Himself** ...

All of us are included here, His Majesty said: ***I ask not only for them but for all those who also will believe in me***; and He says: ***I am in them***.

8. ... The **words of Christ Jesus** cannot **fail**. But since we fail by not disposing ourselves and turning from what hinders this light, we do not see ourselves in this **mirror** that we contemplate, where our **image is engraved**.

9. To return to what we were saying. The Lord puts the soul in this dwelling of His, which is the center of the soul ... where there are **none** of the movements that usually take place in the **faculties** and the **imagination** and do **harm** to the soul ... It seems I am saying that when the soul reaches this state... it is **sure of its salvation** and **safe from falling again**. I do not say such a thing, and if I so speak to suggest the **soul is secure** it means that as long as the divine Majesty keeps it in His **hand** and it does not **offend** Him.

I know the soul does not consider itself safe though it sees itself in this state ... Rather it goes about with much greater fear than before, guarding itself from any small offense against God. It also has the strongest desire to serve Him and habitual pain and

confusion at seeing the little it can do ...

The pain is no small cross but a very great penance ...

The true penance comes when God takes away the soul's health and strength for doing penance ... the pain is much more intense here...

What is there to marvel at in the desires this soul has since its true spirit has become one with the heavenly water?

10. To return to what I was saying, it should not be thought that the faculties, senses, and passions are always in this peace; the soul is, yes. But in those other dwelling places times of war, trial, and fatigue are never lacking; however they ... do not take the soul from its place and its peace; as a rule.

This center of our soul, or this spirit, is difficult to explain ... I do not know how to explain it. That there are trials and sufferings and the soul is in peace is a difficult thing to explain. I want to make one or more comparisons for you... I know I am speaking the truth.

11. The King is in His **palace**. There are many wars in His kingdom and many painful things going on yet the King does not fail to be at His post.

Although there is a lot of **noise** heard and many **poisonous creatures** in the other **dwelling places**, no one enters the **center dwelling place** and makes the soul leave; even though they cause it pain, the suffering is not enough to disturb it and take away its peace.

The **passions** are now conquered and fear entering the center for fear of being subdued.

Our entire body may ache; but if the head is sound, the head will not ache ...

I laugh to myself at these comparisons for they do not satisfy me but I don't know any others... What I have said is **true**. Amen