



“The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion
to the Book of
**Song of
Solomon**

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By

Bill Daniels

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“I am my beloved's,
and his desire
is toward me”

(Song of Sol. 7:10)

Introduction

The Song of Solomon is the fifth and final Old Testament (O.T.) book of poetry, and King Solomon's third contribution to God's Book of books. Of Solomon's three books;

- The book of *Proverbs* emphasizes the wise *practice* of man or how he *acts* – **Actions**.
- The book of *Ecclesiastes* focuses on the right *philosophy* of man or how he *thinks* – **Intellect**.
- The *Song of Solomon* is aimed at the *emotions* of man or how he *feels* – **Emotions**.

This final book of Solomon's is an expression of the right and proper passion of love. It's a biblically balanced answer to a couple of typical human extremes;

- Asceticism, or stoic, passionless, rigorous self-discipline and self-denial. God answers here with the genuine joy of love for another.
- Unbridled lust. God does hold up the love relationship between man and woman. Yet in doing so He lifts it, putting the intimacy of human love where it belongs, within marriage.

Distinctives

Solomon's song is put in the form of poetic dialogue or conversation. The book seems to be a series of stanzas of varying lengths, expressing what Ryrie referred to as "snapshots" or little glimpses of various stages in the developing love relationship between a man and a woman, from soon after meeting to mature marital love.

The three main characters are Solomon, the Shulamite woman (6:13), and the daughters of Jerusalem. There is uncertainty where "Shulam" was. The reference may have been to "Shunem" near Jezreel (I Ki. 1:3). There is uncertainty as well as to who these daughters were.

Harry Ironside gave the following description of the basic story of the book (summarized by Merrill Unger);

"King Solomon had a vineyard in the hill country of Ephraim, about 50 miles north of Jerusalem, 8:11. He let it out to keepers, 8:11, consisting of a mother . . . sons, 1:6, and . . . daughters . . . The Shulamite was 'the Cinderella' of the family, 1:5, naturally beautiful but unnoticed. Her brothers were likely half brothers, 1:6. They made her work very hard tending the vineyards, so that she had little opportunity to

care for her personal appearance, 1:6. She pruned the vines and . . . kept the flocks, 1:8. Being out in the open so much, she became sunburned, 1:5.

One day a handsome stranger came to the vineyard. It was Solomon disguised. He showed interest in her, and she became embarrassed concerning her personal appearance, 1:6. She took him for a shepherd and asked about his flocks, 1:7. He answered evasively, 1:8, but also spoke loving words to her, 1:8-10, and promised rich gifts for the future, 1:11. He won her heart and left with the promise that some day he would return. She dreamed of him at night and sometimes thought he was near, 3:1. Finally he did return in all his kingly splendour to make her his bride, 3:6-7.”

The application to Christ and the church becomes obvious. Jesus also came veiled in flesh and poverty, or disguised. He too loved and won His bride in the vineyard of earth. And in His ascension to the Father He left promise of His return. He too will come for the church in the Rapture, coming to take her as His bride, after the manner of a Jewish marriage procession.

Title

The opening verse gives the title to the book, “*The*

Song of songs, which is Solomon's (1:1). The Hebrew O.T. simply titles the book by the first four words (*two* words in the Hebrew), “The Song of Songs”. In the English Bible the change was made to “The Song of Solomon”, which is a shortened version of the whole of verse 1. The Latin title is “Canticles”, which means “songs” or “a series of songs”. Both the English and Latin titles lose much of the significance of the opening phrase, for “song of songs” is a Hebrew idiom meaning the best or most important of songs. As we would speak of the “King of kings” or “Lord of lords” or “Book of books”, or the Latin phrase “crème de la crème” (cream of the cream) as the very best of the lot. Thus is the nature of the opening phrase here. In I Kings 4:32 we discover that Solomon composed 1,005 songs. But this one was the crème de la crème, the only one God considered worth keeping.

Consider the fact that this is a *song*. Because God considered many songs worth keeping in His Book of books (Psalms, Rev. etc.), therefore we can conclude that He meant singing and songs to be an important part of our walk before Him.

Purposes

One purpose of this Song of Songs is to lift marital love to a level of purity. That God would include this

little human love story in His Bible displays the honour He places on human love and the proper relationship between a man and a woman in marriage (Heb. 13:4). He made man and woman. And He made us capable of experiencing and expressing the passion of love. The joy of a man and woman in their relationship with each other is *God's* pleasure. It is a right and good thing and by His design, when handled appropriately. Sinful, selfish abuse of human love and intimacy destroys the beauty of this precious gift of God. While the book of Proverbs strongly admonishes us against sexual sin and encourages self-control, here the beauty and joy of married love is lifted high.

Another purpose of this book is to display the intimate love relationship between the Lord and His people and to stir up feelings of love in God's people for their God. Christ our Redeemer "*is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend*" (5:16). And not only is the relationship between Israel and her God on display here, but between Christ and the church. Compare Eph. 5:22-33, where the love relationship of betrothal and marriage is also used to describe our relation to Christ. This intimate relation applies not only to the church as a whole but to individual believers. In II Cor. 11:2 we see that Paul considered the church of believers as engaged or betrothed to Christ. And Paul highlights

in that context the danger of being seduced by Satan and the world to sin and unfaithfulness to Christ. Just as a loving husband and wife are one with each other, so the church (and individual believers) are to be one with Christ. We're committed to each other. Indeed we're a part of each other, He in us and we in Him. *"I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine"*. This speaks of the commitment of biblical betrothal, as binding as marriage. The marriage is yet to come at the Rapture, when Christ returns to take His bride (Rev. 19:7-9).

Interpretive Approach

People have differing opinions as to how we should read or interpret this book. Some writers understand Song of Solomon entirely in an allegorical manner, seeing only Jesus and the church in Solomon and the Shulamite. Many writers approach the book historically, but see *four* main characters; King Solomon, the Shulamite woman, the daughters of Jerusalem, and a shepherd whom the Shulamite truly loved. These interpreters see Solomon as the bad guy of the story, holding up before the Shulamite all that marriage to him promised in attempting to lure her away from her true love. According to this approach Solomon represents the world in its attempts to lure the affections of the believer away from Christ. Such writers are led to this conclusion

through a consideration of Solomon's marital mess, concluding that his overboard love life could never be presented by God in any kind of a sanctified light (I Ki. 11). Solomon could never be a positive example in marriage they insist, neither could his love appropriately symbolize Christ's love for the church. As Will Varner put it, "How can Solomon be an example of true married love, and, furthermore, how can he be a type of Christ, in light of his lecherous 'love' life?"

Yet we need to ask the question of whether Solomon, though involved in multiple marriages, was ever confronted by the Lord for immorality or infidelity? The only problem the Lord raised with Solomon in I Kings 11 is the *kind* of women he was willing to marry, "*strange women*", who brought false faith in foreign gods into their marriage. *Mixed* marriage was the Lord's concern with Solomon, not *multiple* marriage, and never immorality. To represent Solomon in a lecherous light is a judgment that goes beyond God's. Such a view would in fact disqualify King Solomon from any righteous input into God's Book, where God has included his input as a true record of divine wisdom.

It seems best to see this book as the historical record of King Solomon's love for a young woman of Shulam.

Apparently the King came to her family's vineyard in disguise (perhaps examining the tenant operation of his own vineyard there incognito). There he met and fell in love with the Shulamite, won her love, and ultimately made her his bride. It was similar to that "chance" meeting of Ruth with Boaz in his barley field one day, an event in Solomon's not so distant family history. For Boaz and Ruth were Solomon's great, great grandparents (Ruth 4:21-22). The story of their meeting and romance would have been well known to him.

As well, there is surely some typical representation in this Song of Songs of the love relationship between the Lord and His people;

- Between Jehovah and Israel. The Jewish people of O.T. times were quite convinced of this typical purpose of Solomon's Song, picturing the love relationship between the Lord and Israel. Remember how the nation of Israel entered into covenant with the Lord on Mt. Sinai. That covenant bond between the Lord and His people was as marriage. Many O.T. portions describe Israel's relation to her God as a marriage (Isa. 54:5-6), and her unfaithfulness with all of the idolatry around her as "*playing the harlot*", turning her back on the One who loved her and drew her close.

Compare Ezek. 16 & Hosea. But always the Lord makes it clear that there is coming a day of restoration for the righteous remnant of Israel, which is not fulfilled in the church (Ezek. 16:60-63).

- Also there is surely a typical representation of Christ and His relation to His bride, the church (Eph. 5:25-32; II Cor. 11:1-2; Rev. 19:7-9), as well as in His relation to the individual believer.

In Ecclesiastes we learn that we cannot find satisfaction without the Lord, though we might possess or experience everything under the sun. In Song of Solomon we discover that we cannot begin to fathom the depth of the preciousness of the Lord, who is our joy and portion.

Ponder Points

Presented in this book is a graphic picture of that proper intimacy of relation between Christ and the true believer. We are as if married to Christ (Rom. 7:4), certainly betrothed. Give thought to some ways in which love and marriage describe our Christian experience;

- When a man loves a woman, his mind, will,

and emotions are involved. He first comes to know her, to know the truth about her with his mind. And then with his growing knowledge comes a growing feeling for her as his emotions become stirred. There then follows an act of his will, where he makes the decision to commit himself to that special one in love. He comes to know (mind), then to feel (emotions), then to decide or commit (will).

Even so a soul finds life in Jesus Christ in the same way. We first come to know or understand with our mind the truth concerning Jesus, who He really is and what he has done for us. Then we find ourselves beginning to feel the anguish of a Saviour who gave Himself in our place and of our sin that made His suffering necessary. Oh the unimaginable grace of God who made the way of salvation available when we were worthy only of His wrath and judgment. With time and understanding we are gradually drawn to God by cords of love. Not just one cord, but cords, in all of the *many* ways in which we become impressed with His greatness and great goodness, all twisting into a mighty cable drawing our hearts after Him. And then finally we come to commit ourselves to Him in that moment of decision to be His. As in marriage,

it's an *event*, not a *process* of reformation. And not until that event, not until that moment of faithful committal is a soul truly united with Him. Have you come to that moment of faith? The world is full of people who *know* about Jesus. Many there are who even have some *feelings* for Him. Perhaps some have experienced powerfully moving emotional experiences which seemed in some way related to Christ or Christianity. But until there comes that moment of personal commitment, that moment of handing over to Him, that moment when you say "I do", "I will", to Christ Himself, until that moment there is no belonging to Him.

- We also see in the maturing process of the love between Solomon and the Shulamite the developing relationship between the believer and Christ;
 - 2:16 – "*My beloved is mine, and I am his*" – Early in their relationship her commitment involves the careful marking of *mutual* expectations, with emphasis upon what's mine.
 - 6:3 – "*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine*" – As their relationship matures,

or perhaps as she matures in it, there is still the hold to mutual expectations, but now with a shift in focus away from what she had, to what “*I am*” for him, now mentioned first.

- 7:10 – “*I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me*” – With greater maturity in love there is no longer any mention of equal commitment, but an unconditional handing over, with joy that his desire is “*toward me*”. The only thought of belonging now is my belonging to Him. See how there is more of an expression of complete trust here. We, with the Shulamite, come to the full realization that He deserves all, that it is for our best that He have our all, and that we are foolish to hold anything back. *I am His!* I am given! As in marriage so in Christ, there should be a developing desire in us to please the other regardless of returns, without keeping score. “*She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life*” (Prov. 31:12). This is the nature of biblical love.

As in marriage, where our own body is not even

our own but is now a shared possession (I Cor. 7:1-5), so in Christ our body is for Him (Rom. 12:1-2). We now live to please the Lord, not only ourselves. We now rejoice to be conformed to His will.

- Another point of comparison is in the matter of communion. There is communication taking place throughout this book between a man and a woman, and the desire for it (2:14). Our God went to the extremes to which His love carried Him that we might walk with Him in fellowship in the light (I John 1). How greatly our God desires our communion with Him. We cannot miss this vital truth.
- Perhaps we see a glimpse of a natural human tendency in chap. 5. The bridegroom longed for the fellowship of his bride (vs. 2) and came to her just as God did/does with us. But her response was sluggish (vs. 3). “I don’t want to put my coat back on!” “I don’t want to dirty my feet!” “Don’t bother me when I’m so comfortable where I am!” “Don’t mess up *my* programme!” Get the picture? And when finally she was pricked in her heart and responded, it was too late and He was gone (vs. 4-6). How the Lord would draw His own into

fellowship with Him. But *we're* the ones who are too slow. We're the ones not interested. We're too busy with *our* programme, forgetting that all that matters is *His* programme. Like Martha, we can get too busy serving (Him?); too "*careful and troubled about many things*" to take time for that "*one thing [that] is needful*", as Mary found, to sit at His feet in communion with Him (Lk. 10:38-42). How much happier, and more fulfilling, and more fruitful our lives might be if we would walk with Him there in the light, moment by moment.

- We, His bride, are not yet married to Christ. We're engaged or betrothed, and the engagement ring is the indwelling Spirit of God (Eph. 1:13-14). But one day, after the pattern of a Jewish wedding, Jesus will come "*with a shout*", and we will hear the voice of the Bridegroom with His attendants coming for His bride. "*And so shall we ever be with the Lord*". Thus the bride closes this book crying "*make haste, my beloved*" (8:13), even as the New Testament closes with "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*".

Basic Outline

1:2-3:5 – Budding Relationship.

3:6-5:1 – Marriage.

5:2-8:14 – Deepening Relationship.

“Behold, thou art fair, my love;
behold, thou art fair;
thou hast doves’ eyes”

(Song of Sol. 1:15)

Chapter 1

Son 1:1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

Son 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

Son 1:3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

1:2-4 – Shulamite's Thoughts

Vs. 2 – The Shulamite begins by expressing her growing love for the one she has met and the delightfully thrilling nature of their love, “*better than wine*”. Her love naturally leads to a desire for physical intimacy with the one she loves. Though this natural human desire is often expressed, even in the early stage of their relationship, restraint is maintained. She was still pure on their wedding night, still “*a garden inclosed*” (4:12). Look well to the implication here. Romantic love and its longings for physical expression when handled properly is not a dirty or evil thing, but good and right. Compare Prov. 5:19 where we hear God’s encouragement, even command, to the man to be “*ravished [intoxicated] always*” with the love of his wife, and that speaking of physical expression (“*let her breasts satisfy thee at*

Son 1:4 Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

Son 1:5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

Son 1:6 Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

all times”). That interest and the desire for its expression does not just turn on with the wedding bells, and that’s alright! But of course this natural desire to express our love through physical intimacy can never be made to justify immorality. God never condones the world’s attitude that “It must be right if it feels so right”, or “It’s O.K. for us to be physically involved because we’re in love”, or “It’s alright since we’re planning to be married”, and all of the other ridiculous excuses people use for living in sin.

Vs. 3-4 – Even the refreshing smell of him added to the thrill of being near him. She makes reference to the name of her lover, speaking of his reputation or character. This too was an attractive and important aspect of this man, such that all who were upright loved him (compare Eccl. 7:1 & Prov. 22:1). The latter half of vs. 4 may be the response of “*the daughters of Jerusalem*” (vs. 5).

*Son 1:7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou
feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon:
for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the
flocks of thy companions?*

*Son 1:8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed
thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*

1:5-7 – Shulamite's Insecurity

Vs. 5-6 – *“I am black, but comely”* – In describing herself she used the word *“black”* referring to her skin suntanned through her outdoor work. A more desirable condition today than back then.

Vs. 6 – *“My mother's children”* – The phrase may indicate that the brothers she lived with were actually stepbrothers rather than full brothers. Because she was forced to work in the vineyards she was unable to care for her own appearance, which she refers to as *“mine own vineyard”*.

Vs. 7 – She seems to mistake Solomon for a local shepherd. This is perhaps indication of his royalty veiled in the dress of a common shepherd. Again, it seems he came disguised in this way in visiting one of his own vineyards in order to observe how the tenant keepers were conducting themselves without them knowing they were under the eye of the owner

Son 1:9 I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

Son 1:10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.

himself.

1:8-11 – Solomon's Response

Again, vs. 8 & 11 may be comments from the daughters of Jerusalem.

Vs. 9-10 – “*I have compared thee . . .*” – The first words Solomon speaks to her are words of praise. He denies her low self-estimation and counters with uplifting assurance of her beauty in his eyes. How very often he calls her “*fair*” or beautiful in this little book (1:15; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7; 6:4; 7:1, 6). I’m reminded of the words of Boaz to Ruth. He always met her with encouraging words of praise (Ruth 2:8-12; 3:10-11). In the case of Boaz, praise of Ruth’s virtuous character rather than praise of beauty as here. Praise of others, of wife and husband, is often foreign to our tongues. It takes humility to speak praise.

Compare Christ in His dealings with the church. We are so utterly unworthy of Him, and yet He is quick

Son 1:11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

Son 1:12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

Son 1:13 A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

to encourage and lift our hearts in His love. He calls us “*friends*” (Jn. 15), He promises to return to us and prepares a place for us (Jn. 14), He desires that we be with Him always (Jn. 17).

1:12-14 – Shulamite’s Thoughts

Vs. 12 – The smell of her perfumed sachet worn as a necklace (a common practice in that day) was a reminder of her beloved.

Vs. 13 – “*A bundle of myrrh is my beloved*” – As she was ever aware of the aroma of her perfume, so he was constantly in her thoughts day and night. She speaks of her wish that as that sweet-smelling sachet lay “*betwixt*” her breasts, so her beloved might lie with her all night. Again, her growing love for him led naturally to her longing for physical intimacy with him.

Here are the first of many references to differing

Son 1:14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.

Son 1:15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

Son 1:16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

Son 1:17 The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

plants and animals of the land of Israel in this book. A reminder of Solomon's great interest in the study of plants and animals mentioned in I Kings 4:33.

1:15 – Solomon's Praise of Her Beauty

"Behold, thou art fair, my love" – This he repeats for emphasis.

1:16-17 – Shulamite's Response

She too praises his attractiveness to her, and the charm of his character (*"pleasant"*). She describes a delightful country setting, perhaps that memorable place where they fell in love. The green grass is described as a couch under them as they spoke together. The branches of the cedars and fir trees were as if rafter beams above.

Chapter 2

Son 2:1 I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

Son 2:2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

Son 2:3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

2:1 – Shulamite to Solomon

Her insecurity seems to fade in the warmth of his praise. Yet she perhaps still suggests her commonness in comparing herself to common flowers of the field.

2:2 – Solomon Adds to Her Self-description

Not only was she as a lily, but as one among thorns, he suggests, highlighting her special uniqueness to him above all other women. Lessons on how to impress a lady here gentlemen.

2:3-6 – Shulamite's Response

Vs. 3 – As he had described her rare preciousness,

*Son 2:4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his
banner over me was love.*

*Son 2:5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples:
for I am sick of love.*

*Son 2:6 His left hand is under my head, and his right
hand doth embrace me.*

likening her to a lily among thorns, so she likened him to an apple tree among all the other common trees of the forest. A rare find, offering both refreshing shade *and* sweet fruit.

Vs. 4 – “*His banner over me was love*” – That he flew his banner or flag of love over her speaks of her delight that he openly (publicly) delighted in her. These images speak of the reassurance of his sheltering protection and public acknowledgement of her as his choice above all others. He was not ashamed or embarrassed by her. He was not shy to publish his love for her. He flew it like a flag.

Compare Christ with His bride, the church. Though He has every cause to be embarrassed by His association with her, yet He too gladly, publicly embraces her. Consider the contrast with us. We have every reason to not be ashamed of Him, yet how often we quietly blush when questioned of our

*Son 2:7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the
roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up,
nor awake my love, till he please.*

*Son 2:8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh
leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

*Son 2:9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold,
he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the
windows, shewing himself through the lattice.*

relation to Jesus Christ.

Vs. 5-6 – *“I am sick of love”* – She was faint with love or lovesick, and found comfort and strength in his embrace. Perhaps she expresses here the *wish* for his embrace rather than the reality of it as yet.

2:7 – To the Daughters

Here is a refrain or chorus appearing three times (also 3:5; 8:4). Each time this refrain is found it seems to mark a turning point in the message of the song. The challenge to the daughters here could perhaps refer to love itself rather than to the object of love (see NKJV). Don’t stir up the passion of love until “it please”, until the time is right. Allow love to develop in its own time without forcing things. She perhaps suggests that if you want a truly rewarding relationship like theirs, wait patiently on the Lord to bring it to pass. Much of modern dating would seem

*Son 2:10 My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up,
my love, my fair one, and come away.*

*Son 2:11 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and
gone;*

*Son 2:12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the
singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is
heard in our land;*

to run impatiently against such wise counsel.

2:8-16 – Shulamite’s Narrative

Vs. 8-9 – The Shulamite recalls her beloved coming to see her. How attractive and strong he is! She heard the voice of her beloved, even as Adam & Eve “*heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day*” (Gen. 3:8). God takes the initiative to overcome all obstacles, every mountain and hill, in coming to us.

Vs. 10-15 – She remembers his words.

Vs. 10-13 – “*Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*” – He invited her to walk with him out in the countryside. How the fresh beauty of Spring matched the joy of their budding relationship.

Vs. 14 – “*Let me hear her voice*” – He longed to see her and to hear her speak to him. Even so the Lord

Son 2:13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Son 2:14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

bids those of His bride to arise out of lost humanity and “*come away*” to Him (Matt. 11:28). Even so the Lord bids believers to come to Him and call upon Him in ongoing fellowship. It’s His wish to see us come boldly to His presence and to hear our voice in communion with Him. There is a mutual love between redeemed and Redeemer and they long to be together. Thus the wonder of that promise of God, “*and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (I Thess. 4:17).

Compare as well this image of the fragile dove hiding in “*the clefts of the rock*” with we who are saved. We are so weak in ourselves, but find refuge in the clefts or wounds of the Rock of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 10:4; Ex. 33:18-23). And there in that place of refuge in Him He bids us come to Him and commune with Him, for “*the prayer of the upright is His delight*” (Prov. 15:8). There He expresses His longing and long-suffering love for we who are His, His bride.

Son 2:15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

Vs. 15 – “*Take us the foxes*” – They covenanted together to deal quickly with every little thing that might eat away at the foundations and fruitfulness of their relationship and ultimately bring it to ruin. The picture is of little foxes sneaking into the vineyard, eating the grapes and ruining the crop. S. Craig Glickman wrote of what those little foxes might represent; “The foxes represent as many obstacles or temptations as have plagued lovers throughout the centuries. Perhaps it is the fox of uncontrolled desire, which drives a wedge of guilt between a couple. Perhaps it is the foxes of mistrust and jealousy, which break the bond of love. Or it may be the fox of selfishness and pride, which refuses to let one acknowledge his fault to another. Or it may be an unforgiving spirit which will not accept the apology of the other. These foxes have been ruining vineyards for years and the end of their work is not in sight”. Genuine, mature love will overcome all obstacles to keep close to the object of its love.

Even so the Lord bids us to join Him in catching “*the little foxes that spoil the vines*” of our relationship with Him. “*Little foxes*”. Not great life-shaking things

Son 2:16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

Son 2:17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

but little things, little things that get in the way, little things that grow into big things, little things adding to other little things to become wedges big enough to drive us apart, little things unconfessed and never made right with Him. *“The [little] cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful”* (Mk. 4:19). May we resolve together with the Lord to work with Him toward keeping any littlest thing from coming between. It is our God who invites us to walk with Him in the light that our joy *“might be full”* (I John 1:7-9). He doesn’t want us to sit down *“under His shadow”* only to find shelter, but to find Him sweet to our taste as well (2:3). Such a love as the Lord’s for us should cause a turning in us, a turning to Him. Compare the movement in Rom. 5:1-11 from what He has done for us and in us (5:1-10) to our joy in Him (vs. 11).

Note how Solomon always used illustrations from the life with which she was familiar. It’s a mark of a wise teacher or preacher. Even so Christ in His parables.

Vs. 16 – “*My beloved is mine, and I am his*” – She revels in the thrill of their mutual possession of each other.

Apparently Solomon returned to Jerusalem at this point, while the Shulamite remained at her country home. She held close her hope in the promise of his love and the assurance of their coming marriage.

Chapter 3

Son 3:1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

Son 3:2 I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

3:1-4 – Shulamite’s Dream

Vs. 1 – She sought for “*him whom my soul loveth*” on her bed “*by night*”, referring to a dream she had before his return to their wedding. Perhaps this dream arose out of her fear of losing the one she so dearly loved. Notice that in all four verses describing her dream the phrase “*him whom my soul loveth*” appears. Her heart was consumed with Him. In this life, fleeting as a dream (Ps. 73:20; 90:5), God’s promise is, “*seek and you shall find*” Him, for He is “*a rewarder of the them that diligently seek Him*”, “*and ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart*” (Jer. 29:13). There is none so worthy of our most intense love and pursuit as our gracious Lord. May we be consumed with Him!

Vs. 2 – “*I will seek him*” – In her dream she searched

Son 3:3 The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

Son 3:4 It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

Son 3:5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

throughout the city but she was unable to find her beloved.

Vs. 3 – The watchmen of the city were unable to help her.

Vs. 4 – “*But I found him*” – Soon after leaving the watchmen in her dream she *did* find her beloved. And she held him so tight and would not let him go, until she had brought him into her mother’s house. Even so we should cling to Christ, our beloved. Compare Col. 2:19.

3:5 – Refrain

Again we find the same refrain as in 2:7. And again it marks a turning point in the message of the book, with Solomon’s name suddenly becoming prominent (vs. 7, 9, 11). The bride-to-be, upon awaking and in

Son 3:6 Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

Son 3:7 Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.

Son 3:8 They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

her longing for her beloved in His absence, admonishes patience in love's development. It's a mark of character that she would exercise and admonish patience in love when she so longed to be his.

3:6-5:1 – Solomon Comes for His Bride

3:6-11 – “*Who is this that cometh*” – Here is now the wedding procession or ceremony. One of the important aspects of a Jewish wedding was the procession of the groom and friends to the bride's home to take her back to her new home in his father's house. There in his father's house would begin the marriage feast, which would often last for many days. The newlyweds would begin sleeping together from that first night of festivities. There is no reference to the marriage feast here in Solomon's Song, but we find great attention on the marriage procession (3:6-

Son 3:9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.

Son 3:10 He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.

Son 3:11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown herewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

11) and their wedding night (4:1-5:1). The bride (or some other narrator perhaps) describes in poetic terms the exhilaration and stunning sights of that moment of her beloved coming to take her in marriage.

- Vs. 7-8 – She describes Solomon’s well-guarded travelling couch or carriage on which he was carried in the procession.
- Vs. 9-10 – She relates the beautiful construction of his chariot or carriage. Perhaps the same travelling seat mentioned in vs. 7.

Chapter 4

Son 4:1 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

Son 4:2 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

Son 4:3 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

4:1-5:1 – Wedding Night

4:1-7 – Solomon again prized and praised the beauty of his bride. Three times that night he assured her of her beauty (vs. 1, 7).

Vs. 1 – Her dark soft eyes were like a dove's. Her flowing hair was like dark flocks of goats, seen from a distance as they streamed down the side of Mount Gilead.

Vs. 2 – Her teeth were white and even. Sheep are never so white as when newly shorn and washed. It's lessons on good hygiene here, for all was clean and pleasant smells.

Son 4:4 Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

Son 4:5 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

Son 4:6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

Son 4:7 Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

Son 4:8 Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

Vs. 3 – Her lips were soft and attractive, like a red satin ribbon. Her speech was so becoming to his ear. The sides of her blushing face were as ruby red as a pomegranate.

Vs. 4 – Her neck he describes in a strong and stately figure. It's a reference perhaps to her majestic bearing.

Vs. 5 – Her breasts were like soft, young deer, set in a context of loveliness (*"among the lilies"*).

Vs. 7 – To him she was spotlessly lovely.

4:8-15 – Solomon described her intoxicating effect upon him. He began to refer to her as his *"spouse"*

Son 4:9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

Son 4:10 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

Son 4:11 Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

Son 4:12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

(vs. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), and his “*sister*” (vs. 9, 10, 12, 5:1-2), an affectionate term for a wife.

Vs. 9 – He tells how she had ravished his heart. He was utterly carried away in his passion for her.

Vs. 10 – The enchantment of her love was “*better than wine*”, borrowing her analogy (1:2).

Vs. 10-11 – Her smell and lips he compared to things fragrant and sweet.

Vs. 12-15 – “*A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse*” – She was like the most delightful garden to him, with orchards and fountains and springs and the most fragrant of plants. Yet the point he affirms is that she was *for him*, for at that point she remained a sealed garden. Note his emphasis in vs. 12,

Son 4:13 *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,
with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,*
Son 4:14 *Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with
all the chief spices:*
Son 4:15 *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
and streams from Lebanon.*
Son 4:16 *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may
flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and
eat his pleasant fruits.*

“inclosed”, “shut”, “sealed”. Here is her husband’s praise that she had kept herself “sealed”, preserving her purity only for him.

Obviously he was gently knocking on the door of that garden, which had now become his to enjoy, tenderly bidding entry. And to this she responds with willing invitation at the end of chap. 4, “*Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits*”. What he had referred to as *her* garden (“thy plants”) in vs. 13, she now freely gives to him (“his garden . . . his pleasant fruits”). Such free enjoyment of each other was now finally right and good. Such a complete giving of ourselves to the other is a part of the undefiled marriage bed (I Cor. 7:3-5; Heb. 13:4).

Chapter 5

*Son 5:1 I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse:
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten
my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine
with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink
abundantly, O beloved.*

5:1 Marriage Consummated

“I am come into my garden” – Solomon entered his garden of intimacy with his dearly loved wife. See his great emphasis upon the fruits of her garden now become his (9 times *“my”* in this verse). He had made her his own. Together they partook freely of the beauty of the physical relationship, which God has created to be enjoyed with thanksgiving. And behold now, how the Lord Himself seems to quietly enter on the scene to speak His blessing and approval over their happy union, saying,

“Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

Some think these are perhaps the words of the friends of bride and groom, but they wouldn’t belong in such a place. The love for each other these two experienced was a gift from God. And their ability to

Son 5:2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

physically express their love for each other was from the Lord's hand as well. And so it's He Himself who invites them to enjoy that gift He has prepared for them (us), as if He would invite them to the pleasure of a feast, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved".

Now could He have spoken with such pleasure over their pleasure if this had taken place *prior* to their marriage? Or extra-marital? Of course not! The *sanctity* of the physical relationship between a man and woman is preserved when we see God so elevating it, and delighting in it. It's carried far beyond just the "*don't*" of immorality. It becomes the pleasant "*do*" of a delightful gift of God within marriage.

5:2-6:3 – Lovers Separated

The events now described appear to have taken place quite some time after their wedding.

*Son 5:3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I
have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?
Son 5:4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the
door, and my bowels were moved for him.*

Vs. 2-3 – The wife’s resistance.

Vs. 2 – Her husband came to her in the night looking for the comfort of her companionship. He had apparently been out working (“*my head is filled with dew*”).

Vs. 3 – Her initial response to him was to refuse the inconvenience he represented. She was not interested in messing up her routine to accommodate his will. Her excuse was silly, and expressed a measure of coolness toward him. How we must ever guard our hearts against any such fall from complete earnestness toward the Lord and His perfect will in and through us.

Vs. 4-6 – The husband’s retreat.

Vs. 4 – Not to be easily put off, the husband tried the door but found it locked. This effort on his part stirred her to sympathy and regret.

*Son 5:5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands
dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet
smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.*

*Son 5:6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had
withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed
when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.*

Vs. 5 – When she finally did rise to open for him, she found the smell of his perfume on the door handle. A sweet yet bitter reminder that he had been there but was now gone.

Vs. 6 – Her heart broke as she remembered his request and now found him gone. The phrase “*withdrawn himself*” seems to indicate more than only the idea of his turning to go, but suggests a purposeful response to her coolness.

Vs. 5:6-6:1 – The Search.

Vs. 6 – No longer was there any thought of preserving her comfortable circumstances or carefully washed feet. She looked and shouted for her beloved, “*but he gave me no answer*”. Again, perhaps implying more than just his absence, but some measure of refusal to respond. She didn’t say that he didn’t hear. Perhaps he was now responding to her in kind (Prov.

*Son 5:7 The watchmen that went about the city found me,
they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the
walls took away my veil from me.*

*Son 5:8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find
my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*

1:24-33). Compare the Lord's Prayer that He "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*". It's a request that God respond to us according to our response.

Vs. 7 – The watchmen of the city (police) apparently now mistook her for a worthless sort to be handled roughly. See now how anguish and trouble came to her immediately upon her separation from that one who was her protector. For he was the source of her joy and peace.

What can we say of the most beautiful or seemingly significant person who is *without* the beloved Saviour? Is it not true that a soul is nothing without Jesus, fit only to be roughly thrown ("*cast*") into hell? Man's only worth is in *union* with Jesus Christ, that blessed Bridegroom of the bride.

Vs. 8 – She called upon the daughters of Jerusalem for help, instructing them that if they found her beloved they must tell him that she was love-sick for

Son 5:9 What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?
Son 5:10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.
Son 5:11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

him. Her attitude was now completely transformed from the lethargy displayed earlier. Now she so earnestly longed for his embrace.

Vs. 9 – “*What is thy beloved more than another beloved*” – The response of the daughters was mild scorn, to the effect, “what makes him so special?” And oh did they ever get an earful!! For that challenging question asked at that desperate moment drew from the Shulamite the most extensive and exultant description found in this book of that love of her heart.

Even so the Lord sometimes puts His own children in the vice of hard circumstances that He might squeeze out of us the sweet juices of His finest works through us. For it’s there in the press of hard times that we (and the world) find what’s in us; either the sweet wine of the Lord’s miraculously transforming touch (Jn. 2) or the bitter gall of a false, unredeemed

Son 5:12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

Son 5:13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

Son 5:14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

heart. John Bunyon's treasured Pilgrim's Progress was produced while in the press of prison. Martin Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress" came out of that time when his enemies were pursuing his life. Paul's most Christ-exalting "Prison Epistles" (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon) were written while under Roman bondage.

Vs. 10-16 – The Shulamite's description of her beloved is all of things golden and beautiful of sight and smell. She spoke with passion of his stately, strong, impressive body and bearing. And she concludes her jubilant elation over that one whom her soul loved with the summary statement, "*yea, he is altogether lovely*" (vs. 16). This is no discussion of what she had received from him or of any personal advantages gained through her association with him. This is a song of the glory of *him*, without the slightest reservation, nothing held back. Here was perhaps the whole purpose of the exercise, of her beloved responding in this way. Part of the Lord's purpose in

Son 5:15 His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

Son 5:16 His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

our hardships is to see how far under the surface (if under there at all) is just such happy praise of Him as this. Compare Job, who fell down upon the ground and worshipped in those darkest moments of his life, saying, “*blessed be the name of the Lord*”. Her response here is truly wonderful, a far cry from the normal apathy so characteristic of Christians. Where is the one utterly in awe of the wonder of Christ, as this one was consumed with the splendour of her beloved. This is no invitation to *church*. This is no description of Christianity’s *advantages*. This is no typical modern effort to attract folks to Christianity by mingling in a dose of the world. *This is Christ – only Christ!* This is ecstatic wonder in *Him*, an overflow of elation in that beloved Person. Look well at the difference between a soul merely *dressed* with Christianity and a soul truly *transformed* by Christ. See the difference between interest in what Jesus can do (John 6:26-27) and being consumed with who He is (“*what manner of man is this*”, Mk. 4:41). This is wonder in the *person* of our Beloved,

not in His methods or gifts or advantages. Compare Abraham's flawed response with what God was to him in Gen. 15:1-2.

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On the Side

Did you notice that this is something of the Shulamite's dream (3:1-6) become real, but with some changes in real life. Note some comparisons of her dream with reality;

- Dream – *She* desired, sought, and found her beloved.
- Reality – *He* desired and sought her, but she was sluggish, putting silly things before him. In real life she learned how unreasonable her own response, and yet how long-suffering the love of her beloved.
- Dream – Watchmen were civil.
- Reality – Watchmen were abusive. This perhaps as a result of her having separated herself from her protector.
- Dream – She was not responsible for the separation.
- Reality – She was responsible.

Our dreams and thoughts of ourselves do tend to

cast us in a more complimentary light. Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream of coming kingdoms in Dan. 2 saw them as forming an awesome statue. God's representation of the same kingdoms through the dreams of His prophet saw them as *beasts* (Dan. 7-8).

Chapter 6

Son 6:1 Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

Son 6:2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

Son 6:3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

Son 6:4 Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.

6:1 – “*Whither is thy beloved gone*” – The response of the listening daughters is striking. See how she has stirred their thirst for him too. For here is an example of truly effective witnessing.

6:2-13 – Love’s Solution

Vs. 2 – When pressed by the daughters where her beloved might be found she suddenly knew where she could find him.

Vs. 3 – “*I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine*” – Her heart delights again in their mutual possession of each other (2:16), but now with greater focus on her givenness to him.

Vs. 4-10 – His praise. As always, when finally she

Son 6:5 Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

Son 6:6 Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

Son 6:7 As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

Son 6:8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.

found him he met her with praise. When we might expect God's wrath, with a right heart of repentance, we instead find His comfort, and this is grace. "*O LORD, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me*" (Isa. 12:1).

Vs. 4 – He compared her to the majestic attractiveness of cities known for their beauty, and to the awesome splendour of a marching army with flags proudly flying.

Vs. 5-7 – He spoke many of the same words of praise as on their wedding night (4:1-3), indicating that things hadn't changed in his commitment and appraisal of her.

Vs. 8-9 – Again he describes her as "*the lily among thorns*" (2:2), the best of them all in his eyes.

Son 6:9 My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

Son 6:10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

Son 6:11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

Look well how he met her with praise rather than the scorn she might have expected as her due. For he loved her! And through his separation he had accomplished in her that for which he had longed. He had drawn out of her the expression of her love and praise of him. Never do we see them apart again after this. Through these hard events and lessons their love became settled and matured.

Vs. 10 – This may be the daughters of Jerusalem chiming in, joining in his admiration of her.

Vs. 11-13 – This portion is a bit obscure. It may perhaps be the Shulamite's description of their reconciliation.

Vs. 11 – She went to the garden where she now knew her beloved to be (vs. 2), to be reconciled to him. She perhaps describes in poetic form her checking on the

*Son 6:12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the
chariots of Amminadib.*

*Son 6:13 Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that
we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the
Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.*

indications of their love, whether it was still healthy and growing, as if checking on the status of the garden fruit. She was unsure of the damage done to their relationship. And of course, when she found him there he met her with praise (vs. 4-9).

Vs. 12 – Before she knew it her husband had scooped her up into his chariot? This is a very difficult verse to translate (see the marginal note). There is here perhaps something to the effect of her surprise as her beloved lifted her spirit when she found him rather than scorning her.

Chapter 7

Son 7:1 How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

Son 7:2 Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.

Son 7:3 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.

Son 7:4 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

Son 7:5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.

7:1-8:14 – Deepening Relationship

7:1-9 - Appreciation for her beauty.

Vs. 5 – “*The king is held in the galleries*” – The Hebrew word translated “*galleries*” could perhaps refer to the flowing curls of her hair. The king was held captive in her curls?

Do you notice the difference here from his previous praise in 4:1-7? Apart from a feet to head progression here rather than head to feet in 4:1-7,

Son 7:6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

Son 7:7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

Son 7:8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;

Son 7:9 And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

this time he praised the vision of her *naked* body. They were naked before each other and not ashamed. Marriage is something of a return to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:25). Here the husband looks upon the body of his wife in the good and proper context of marriage and there's nothing wrong with that. It is an appropriate part of that relationship between man and wife. It is a natural human curiosity, to be satisfied in God's proper way and time and place. A married couple are asking for trouble if they neglect the simple and obvious implications here.

7:9-10 – Her response to him is in the last part of vs. 9, beginning with “*for my beloved . . .*”.

Vs. 9 – What she had to offer was for him. If he saw her as sweet as wine, it was wine for *him* to drink.

Son 7:10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

*Son 7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;
let us lodge in the villages.*

*Son 7:12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if
the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear,
and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee
my loves.*

*Son 7:13 The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates
are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which
I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.*

Vs. 10 – “*I am my beloved's*” – Now she holds nothing back from him. He had proven his sincere love for her, that “*his desire is toward me*”, and that without guile. Therefore she could freely trust her all to him. Proper givenness in marriage is a picture of our all given wholly to Christ, holding nothing back in the complete trust of ourselves, soul and body, to Him. Do you see how by coming through their troubles and finding love still intact she was confirmed in his love? Trial and discipline formed in her a deeper trust, such that she could freely give herself wholly to him. Praise God for our afflictions if they lead us to the same.

7:11-8:14 – A visit to her country home.

7:11-13 – This time it's she who pleads for his companionship, in contrast to 2:10-13.

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
as a seal upon thine arm:
for love is strong as death”

(Song of Sol 8:6)

Chapter 8

Son 8:1 O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

Son 8:2 I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

Son 8:3 His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.

Son 8:4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

Son 8:5 Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

8:1-3 – “*O that thou wert as my brother*” – She playfully wished she could freely express her love for him in public (“*without*”, vs. 1). In their culture a brother and sister were apparently free to embrace and kiss, but not a husband and wife.

8:4 – Again this refrain we’ve seen before (2:7; 3:5), encouraging others to allow love to develop in its own time and way.

8:5a – “*Who is this that cometh*” – This may express the question on the lips of the people of her home country as the couple approached.

Son 8:6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

Son 8:7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

8:5b – Solomon spoke his delight in her birth and in their meeting.

8:6-7 – The Shulamite’s challenge to her husband.

Vs. 6 – “*Set me as a seal upon thine heart*” – A seal was a symbol of ownership or authority over someone or something. Her request is that he seal her upon his heart as ever to be his own. Compare David and Jonathan’s vow of forever love for each other in I Sam. 18:1-4 & 23:16-18.

Five characteristics of true love (from Will Varner & Bible Knowledge Commentary);

- Love is permanent (vs. 6) – “*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm*”. True love does not come and then leave. Love involves a lasting commitment.
- Love is possessive – “*For love is strong as*

Son 8:8 *We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts:
what shall we do for our sister in the day when she
shall be spoken for?*

Son 8:9 *If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of
silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with
boards of cedar.*

death, jealousy is cruel as sheol". As death and the grave eventually possess us all, so love lays claim to (takes and holds) its object.

- Love is powerful – It's *"coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame"*. True love is a powerful force that comes only from God.
- Love is persevering (vs. 7) – *"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it"*. Troubles, trials, temptations, and tests will never destroy true love.
- Love is priceless – *"If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be rejected"*. Love cannot be purchased. It is something that must be given and received freely.

Here is a vital message for a day of "trial" marriages, cheap love, and marital infidelity.

Son 8:10 I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

Son 8:11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

8:8-9 – “*We have a little sister*” – The Shulamite remembers what her brothers (guardians) had said of her when she was young. If she remained morally pure (“*a wall*”) as she grew up, they would allow her freedom and reward her. But if she became loose (“*a door*”), inviting or open to the inappropriate attentions of men, then her brothers would be forced to restrain her. See here the reminder that freedoms are *earned* through responsible behaviour. Usually those who demand freedom the loudest are least worthy of it.

8:10 – “*I am a wall*” – Having kept herself pure for her husband, she could rejoice at the last in his pleasure in her. Look well at the blessings of submission. She chose the way of submission in respecting her brothers’ wishes, both that she remain pure, and in labouring in the vineyard [1:6]. And there is where she met her beloved. That she found the love of her life and was able to please him well were the direct results of her submission to her guardian brothers. Compare Ruth’s quiet patience

*Son 8:12 My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou,
O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep
the fruit thereof two hundred.*

*Son 8:13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the
companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*

*Son 8:14 Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a
roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

and submissive love for her mother-in-law rewarded with God's gift in Boaz.

8:11-12 – Though her husband had much (vs. 11), she had only herself to offer, which she freely gave to him (vs. 12). She seems to ask of her husband, by way of illustration from the standard vineyard keeper arrangements, that her husband take care of her family (*“those that keep the fruit”* of her vineyard). As they had

blessed her through their wise guidance in her upbringing, so she would see them well cared for in return.

8:13-14 – We come out the end of the book with the bridegroom pleading again to hear the voice of his beloved (vs. 13), and the bride pleading for his soon return (vs. 14). Is this not precisely where we stand today? The Lord longs to bring his own into

communion with Him. Concerning our voice He pleads, “*cause Me to hear it*”. And the heart of all who love Him plead, “*Make haste, my Beloved*”!

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Ponder Points

How much better and closer the relationship of these two after that painful time of separation and search, brought on by her sluggish indifference and intensified by his retreat, bringing her to a time of trial. The pressure of that hardship drew from her soul that supreme, public expression of her loving appreciation for him. Consider again how the Lord does this with His own (Job, and Jacob at Peniel). Such times are meant by God to draw out and display our true heart’s devotion or what we’re really trusting and treasuring.

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Never is our witness so effective as when we’re moved by our circumstances to complete surrender and delighted devotion to Christ. As soon as the Shulamite expressed the resplendent loveliness of her beloved she had all the daughters looking for him too. Behold the power of an earnest testimony. Don’t be ashamed to tell of Christ. It is your unreserved expression of loving devotion to *Him* that stirs the heart of the unsaved to thirst after Him too, not our

invitation to our church or efforts at impressing folks with advantages for them in Christianity. It's our sincere love for Jesus Christ that wins them, He who *"is altogether lovely"*.

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As with the Shulamite's beloved in 5:2, so the Lord stands at the door and knocks, bidding entry (Rev. 3:20). With how many churches, as the disappointing one there at Laodicea, is the Lord Himself actually left outside with no open door of entrance and no real presence within?

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Note well that when the Shulamite denied her husband's advance (5:2-3) he didn't go running off to someone else. When she finally found him she did not find him in the arms of another. His heart was still wholly hers and consumed with delight in her, praise falling from his lips as readily as on their wedding night. It's an expression of what our love should be in marriage and of the Lord's faithful love for His own. Compare the father's response to the returning prodigal in Lk. 15:20. Though our faith be weak, the Lord abides faithful (II Tim. 2:13). Though we grieve Him, He cannot be grieved away.

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Consider again the overwhelming reality of a Saviour and God *“who loved me, and gave Himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20).

*“Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood”* (Rev. 1:5).

