

Place: Lurgan Baptist 4:11:2014

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Song of Solomon 5:9-16

23. THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Many people are surprised to find the Song of Solomon included in the Bible. It is only one of two books in the Bible where God is not even mentioned once. Esther is the other. In fact there is no mention of anything distinctly spiritual in it from beginning to end. There is no reference to God, no mention of sin, nor any religious theme, yet the Jews have revered this poem as unique. The Jews compare Proverbs to the outer court of the temple, Ecclesiastes to the holy place and the Song of Solomon to the most holy place. Now there are several things I want to notice about this book. Consider,

1. The Introduction to the Book:

(a) Look at Its Name:

" *The Song of Songs*," Do you how many songs Solomon wrote ? He wrote 1005, songs but this one is " *the song of songs*," (1:1) that is the greatest of all songs. It is also sometimes called " *Canticles*," which is derived from the Latin meaning " *a series of songs*." You see, just as the " *Holy of Holies*," is the highest place and the " *King of kings*," is the highest of all kings, so the " *song of songs*," is the greatest of all songs. There is none like it for

excellence. Ecclesiastes mournfully testified, " *I tried the broken cisterns Lord, but ah the waters failed.*" The Song of Solomon lifts us to a higher note, " *Now none but Christ can satisfy, none other name for me, there's love and life and lasting joy, Lord Jesus found in Thee.*"

(b) Look at Its Author:

" *The Song of songs which is Solomon's*," that can be translated " *which is of Solomon*," or " *which is about Solomon*." This means that it was written by him or written about him. Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:24) and his name appears in the book seven times. (1:1 1:5, 3:7,9,11 8:11-12) Now do you recall tha Solomon wrote three books of the Bible ? He wrote the Song of Solomon when he was young and in love. *It is a book of the heart.* He wrote Proverbs when he was middle aged and his intellectual powers were at their zenith. *It is a book of the will.* He wrote Ecclesiastes when he was old, disappointed and disillusioned with the carnality of much of his life. *It is a book of the mind* In other words Solomon wrote this book when he was in a) healthy spiritual state, before his tragic decline.

(1 Kings 11:3-4) Some think that it was composed around 965 B.C. which would place it about the time of the building of the first temple in Jerusalem.

(966-959 B.C.)

(3) Look at Its Story:

I mean what is it all about ? Well, it's " *a love story*," and the main characters of the story are Solomon, a Shulamite

woman and a group called " *the daughters of Jerusalem*. " Now some Bible students see another character in the story a shepherd lover (1:7) from whose affection Solomon tries to lure the Shulamite woman away. Now what view you take, it's good to keep in mind the words of John Phillips " *The abiding value of the Song of Solomon is clear whichever is taken. As human life, finds its highest fulfilment in the love of man and woman, so spiritual life finds its highest fulfilment in the love of Christ and His church.*" Now what is the story here ?

Well, King Solomon had a vineyard in the hill country of Ephraim about 50 miles north of Jerusalem. He let it out to keepers (8:11) consisting of a mother, two sons (1:6) and two daughters, the Shulamite (6:13) and a little sister (8:8) The Shulamite seems to have been " *the Cinderella*," of the family (1:5) she was naturally beautiful but unnoticed. Her brothers who were probably half brothers (1:6) made her work hard tending the vineyards so that she had little opportunity to care for her personal appearance. (1:6)

She pruned the vines and set traps for the little foxes. (2:15) She also kept the flocks (1:8) but being open in the open so much she sunburned. (1:5) One day a handsome stranger came to the vineyard. It was Solomon but he was disguised. He showed an 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 her 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 one day he would return. She dreamed of him at night and sometimes thought that he was near. (3:1) Finally, he did return not as a shepherd but as the king to make her his bride. (3:6-7) Now that in essence is the setting of the story. But it's when we move from the introduction to the book, to

2. The Interpretation of the Book:

That we find, ourselves in difficulty. You see, there are numerous interpretations with arguments for and against by a host of Christian scholars. We are left with the Saviour's challenge, "*How readest thou ?*" (LK 10:26) Or "*what is your reading of it ?*" Well, we could look at this book in at least four ways. We could view it,

(a) LITERALLY:

For what we have here is a precious love story. On the one hand this book denounces asceticism and on the other hand it denounces lust. What does it tell us ? That there is a God ordained place for the enjoyment of physical love) between husband and wife and that there is no other place for physical love except in the confines of the covenant of marriage. My in a day when sexual love is debased, exploited and publicly paraded there is need for Christian married couples to know that physical relationships can be pure and holy. Indeed Hebrews 13: 4 captures the heart of this song, " *marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*"

The love of a man and wife ought to be a beautiful experience, as described in this book, but sin can destroy this beautiful gift. In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon warns against sexual sins, in Song of Solomon, he extols the beauty and joy of married love. *Now some of the expressions in this book are such that Jewish leaders advised their young people not to read it before the age of thirty.*

(b)HISTORICALLY:

From the earliest days, the Jews saw in this story a picture of the relationship between Jehovah God and Israel. Israel was " *wedded*, " to the Lord at Mt. Sinai, when the nation accepted the Law. Do you recall the words of Isaiah ? " *For thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.*" (54:5) God says through Jeremiah " *Turn, O backsliding Israel for I am married unto you.*" (Jer 3:14) Israel was not faithful to her Divine husband (Hosea) and " *played the harlot,*" with the idolatrous nations of the world." She turned her back on her Beloved. However, there will come a day when Israel will return home and be restored to her Beloved.

(c) TYPICALLY:

For the marriage relationship is used to describe the relationship between Christ and the church.
(Eph 5:23-33) In searching for the true interpretation of the Song of Solomon we should be like the Ethiopian Eunuch. Do you recall what he said when he was reading

Isaiah (Ch 53) ? " *Of whom speaketh the prophet this ? Of himself or of some other man ?*" (Acts 8:34) My the Ethiopian Eunuch was questioning Philip about Isaiah's prophecy. Was Isaiah speaking about himself or someone else ? And Philip shows him that the subject of (Is Ch 53) is not Isaiah but the Lord Jesus. " *Then Philip opened his mouth and preached unto him Jesus.*" (Acts 8:35) In just the same way, in this Song of Solomon the author is speaking about Christ. If we expect to find Christ in this book because Christ is to be found " *in all the Scriptures,*" (Lk 24:27) we shall not be disappointed. You see, there are some who feel that Solomon cannot be a fitting type of the Heavenly Bridegroom. How shall we answer this ? Well, look with me at (Psalm 45) Do you see the title to the Psalm ? " *A Song of Loves,*" or " *A Song of Love.*" But we can go further for this is a song of royal love. This is a song of praise to the king on his wedding day.

Can you see the bride was a foreign princess ? (45:10-11) Can you see the international prominence of the king ? Many dignitaries are coming to this festive occasion bringing their costly gifts. (45:12) You see, this is a royal marriage hymn and it refers to Solomon. (1 Kings 3:1) But while the primary reference is to Solomon the ultimate reference is to Christ. Look at (45:6-7) Do you know where that is quoted ? In the Hebrew epistle for it takes (45:6-7) and applies them directly to Christ. Therefore, as Solomon is a type of Christ in his wisdom and in his wealth, so here in the forty fifth psalm he is a type in this marriage union. You see, this Psalm goes hand in hand, with the Song of Songs.

(d) **DEVOTIONALLY:**

For this book presents a vivid picture of faithful love and deepening communion. The intimate terms used only illustrate the wonderful love between Christ and the Christian. Robert Murray McCheyne wrote,

No book furnishes a better test than does the Song of the depth of a man's Christianity. If his religion be in his head only, a dry form of doctrines, or if it hath place merely in his fancy like Pliable in Pilgrim's Progress he will see nothing here to attract him. But if his religion have a hold on his heart, this will be a favourite portion of the Word of God.

My the heart of Christianity is a very personal relationship. Its grasping the truth of Paul's words, " *the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.*" (Gal 2:20)

**O Love Divine how sweet Thou art
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The fullness of redeeming love
The love of Christ to me**

Samuel Rutherford could spend a whole night in prayer. His wife would miss him during the night and would get up and go looking for him. Even on cold nights she would find him on his knees praying, and she would take his big overcoat and throw it around him. Men like Dwight L.

Moody and Robert McCheyne, and Spurgeon men who really knew close communion with the Saviour.

This is not some kind of second experience, as some people try to describe it. It is more than an experience. *It is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, seeing how wonderful He is, how glorious He is.* You see, we need to come to the place where it can truly be said of us that we love Him because He first loved us. To open up this little book will be like the breaking of Mary's alabaster box of ointment, and I trust that the fragrance of it will fill our lives and spread out to others. Now many see three sections in the book, (1) **Courtship Days: (1:2-3:5)** (2) **The Wedding: (3:6-5:1)** (3) **Married Life: (5:2-8:14)** The problem comes that if we try to fit Christian experience into this pattern we will be left with many problems. Let's just try and look at the three sections literally, typically and devotionally.

**(1)COURTSHIP 1:1-3:5
Events Preceding the Wedding**

With no explanation of who she is or what wonderful things have happened to her, the Shulamite launches into a statement about her love for the king. Notice,

(a) *THE APPEAL FOR LOVE:*

You see, she yearns for expressions of his love. Do you see (1:2) ? The expressions of love include *touch* (kisses) *taste* (wine) and *smell* (ointment) No wonder she cries out, " *take me with you.*" (1:4) True love is likened her to a banquet. Frequently in the Song of

Solomon you will find love compared to the enjoyment of food and drink such as fruit, (2:3-4) wine (1:2 5:1) and honey and milk (5:1) Do you recall that Scripture compares the future reign of Christ to a great marriage feast ? (Is 25:6 Matt 8:11 Lk 13:29 Rev 19:6-9) Here Solomon's love draws her to his chambers where a great banquet has been prepared. It's here that she confesses her unworthiness (1:5-6) and he extols her beauty and calls her " *my love*. " (1:15 2:2, 10, 13 4:1, 7, 5:2 6:4) Is this not what the Christian life is all about ? Being a Christian is being in love with the Lord. My being a believer is not merely going to church, reading a Bible, or engaged in service. ***It's a heart relationship with the Lord Jesus.*** The question that the Risen Lord asked Peter is the one He asks you. "*Lovest thou me.*" (Jn 21:17) " *Peter, do you love me ?*"

George Muller of Bristol considered it the first and most important duty of the day to get his own soul happy in the Lord. You see, if we keep our hearts singing in His love, our minds filled with thoughts of Him, and our wills enslaved to His, then the world will not get very far. (a)

(b) THE AWAKENING OF LOVE:

It seems that after the banquet the king left the scene and we assume that his courtiers escorted the Shulamite safely home to her house in the north. She went back to her normal life but her eyes and ears were always open as she anticipated his return. Love was awakening in her heart. Do you remember when you were in love ? I mean all you could do was think about him and talk about him, and talk

to him. Will at this Shulamite maid ? (6:13) Can you see the awakening of love in her heart ? Well,

She testified, " I love Him," (3:1) You see, all she can do is think about him, all she can do is talk about him. Are you so in love with your King that all you can do is think about Him and talk about Him ?

the testified, " I listen for Him," Do you see (2:8) ? Look at (2:10) He wanted her to leave her work and go with him for an adventure in the country. You she is listening for the sound of His voice. Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus ? " *My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.*" (Jn 10:27) Do you know where you can hear His voice ? In His Word. Are you listening to His voice as He speaks to you though His Word ?

She testified, " I live for Him," she says, "*My beloved is mine and I am his,*" (2:16) "*He belongs to me and I belong to Him. I exist for him. My world is Him.*" Incidentally, as a married couple do you live for each other ? You certainly do before you get married, but sometimes things change. One girl told her mother, "*John spends so much money on me. I wish I could think of some way to get him to quit spending so much.*" Do you know what her mother said ? "*Marry him.*" But tell me, are you living for your king ? Can you say with Paul, " *For to me to live is Christ ?*" (Phil 1:21)

She testified, " I look for Him," (3:1-3) She goes to bed and has a dream about her lover. She is looking for him.

Are you " *looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ?* " (Titus 2:13) So ends the first part in this song.

(2) RELATIONSHIP 3:6-5:1

Events Accompanying the Wedding

I mean can you picture this ? One day she is out in the fields and notices horses and chariots and a great cloud of dust appearing. She asks her brothers who it is. They tell her it's the landlord, King Solomon has come from Jerusalem to visit his estates. They get ready to bow down low before the king. *She has never seen him, and so she takes a look, only to find that the King in the big chariot is her young man.* So she leaves the farm and travels south to live in the city. They are married and set up home together. Now I want you to notice here,

(a) *THE BRIDEGROOM:*

Look at (3:6-7) Now keep in mind that Solomon was both a king (1:4, 12 3:9) and a shepherd. (1:7-8 2:16 6:2-3) In Old Testament days rulers were called shepherds. (Jer 23:4 Ezek 34:2) The eastern sheik was the father of a household, the shepherd of a flock and a king over a realm. (Lk 12:32) But look here is the King coming to claim his bride. Can you see something of *His Pomp:* in (3:6) of *His Power:* (3:7-8) of *His Prosperity* in (3:9-10) The daughters of Jerusalem get excited and sing to each other, " *Go forth O ye daughters of Zion.* "

(3:11) The bride has her attendants, the king has joy in his heart and the time has finally come for the wedding to take place. Do we not have here a reminder of the coming of the King of Kings to claim His bride the church ?

(b) *THE BRIDE:*

You know, in modern marriages, the bride is the center of attention, and " *What did the bride wear ?*" is the big question. I want you to see here that the king is more concerned with her own beauty than with her dress. He has claimed her for himself and it is now their wedding night. She will lay aside her veil as a symbol that she belongs to him and that she has nothing to hide.

(Gen 24:65) To the Ephesian believers Paul said three things about the church. *He compared the church to a Building, that has to do with the Foundation of the church.* *He compared the church to as Body, that has to do with the Function of the church.* Finally, *he compared the church to a Bride, that has to do with the Fidelity of the church.* Do you see how the groom opens his speech ?

)" *Behold thou art fair my love.*" (4:1) Do you see how he closes his speech ? " *Thou art all fair my love.*" (4:7) He says " *You are beautiful.*" My what a day that will be when we shall be presented " *to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" (Eph 5:27) As J. N. Darby wrote,

*And is it so I shall be like thy Son
Is this the grace which He for me has won ?
Father of glory thought beyond all thought
In glory, to His own likeness brought*

(c) THE BLISS:

Wedding bliss. And is this not what God intended when He brought Adam and Eve together ? " *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked the man and his wife and they were not ashamed.*"

(Gen 2:24-25) Do you what God's kind of marriage is ? ***It's a total commitment of the total person with another person until death.*** Incidentally, did you notice that Solomon rejoiced that his bride is a virgin ? Look at (4:12) These are terms of exclusiveness. A walled garden is one that only the owner and the garden can enter. Solomon's bride did not give herself to anyone but only to him.

Then in (4:16) she portrays herself as an " *open garden.*" In other words, it was not until she was married that they could enjoy physical love. Do you know something ? God wants us to stay sexually pure. People today speak of safe sex. My the only safe sex is within the confines of the marriage bond. So here the marriage is consummated. They are enjoying " *a mountain top,*" experience as they share their love. (1) (2)

**(3)FELLOWSHIP 5:2-8:14
Events Following the Wedding**

Do you recall what a Jewish wedding was like ? It could last for a week and during the week of the marriage celebration the bride and groom are treated like a King and a Queen. They were treated like royalty. Modern couples have a " *honeymoon,* " and usually travel to some place where they be left alone. But eventually the couple has to return to life with its problems and duties and so did Solomon and his wife. You'll notice that the y.hulamite had another disturbing dream (3:1) Look at,

(a) HER DREAM:

(5:2) Apparently she had locked the door and gone to bed without him. She is asleep, but the voice of her beloved comes from outside the door. He wants her to share her love with him, but she is too lazy to get up. Do you see what she says ? " *I have put off my coat ... I have washed my feet.*" (5:3-4) It is as though she says, " *Please, don't bother me. I'm too comfortable.*" Then she sees his hand (5:4) and realizes her sin. Remember His hands are pierced. She then rises, but, alas, her beloved has gone. Are there times when the Lord wants to fellowship with you but you are too busy ? Like Martha are you troubled about " *many things,*" but have you neglected that " *one thing ?*" (Lk 10:38-42)

Some Christians who would not think of missing the Lord's Table make that observance the sum total of their commitment to the local church. They think they can sit back and relax after that they have " *washed their feet,*" so to speak. Realizing her mistake the Shulamite sought him. She called but he did not answer, so she went

seeking him. This time the city guards didn't cooperate with her (3:3) and she told the daughters of Jerusalem that she was faint from love. (5:8) They asked her what made her beloved so special and in reply we see,

(b) *HER DESCRIPTION:*

Do you see how she describes her beloved ? She talks about,

1. His Purity:

" *My beloved is white and ruddy,*" white is the symbol of purity and holiness, ruddy is the symbol of glowing health. The Bible says Christ knew no sin. He did no sin. In Him is no sin. He is the flawless, faultless, sinless, spotless One.

2. His Position:

He is the "*chiefest among ten thousand*" (5:10) My Christ is the chiefest not merely of ten thousand but the chiefest among every ten thousand that the heart can conceive or the mind can imagine.

3. His Person:

For notice, that she describes everything about Him and comes to this conclusion. " *Yea he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend O daughters of Jerusalem.*" (6:16) Its now daylight and the women of

Jerusalem offer to help her to find her husband but do you see,

(c) *HER DISCERNMENT:*

The Shulamite knows him well and knows where he has gone. How well do you know your spouse ? One of the important elements in a marriage is getting to know each other so that we can " *read each other's minds,*" and anticipate actions and words. You see, Solomon was not lost to her even though they were not together. He was feeding his flock in the garden and she knew where to go. And the moment he saw her he began to speak about,

(d) *HER DELIGHTFULNESS:*

Tirzah was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel before Samaria was built. It was situated in a beautiful part of the country. The very name " *Tirzah,* " means " *delightful.*" What Solomon was saying was this " *You are fit for a king.*" In (6:4-7) he tells her that she is **Fair:** In (6:8) he tells her that she is **First:** You see, in the eyes of the Shulamite Solomon was " *altogether lovely,*" beautiful and in Solomon's eyes his wife " was the only one of her kind, unique." (6:9) Even the daughters of Jerusalem praised the Shulamite for her beauty. (6:9) In (Ch 7) they express their mutual love and then we see,

(e) *HER DESIRE:*

As she wants to make a visit to the country, something Solomon had wanted to do before and she had refused.

(2:8-17) You know, sometimes visiting another place gives a freshness to a married couple and she gives promises to give him her love. (7:12) In the final section of the book the daughters of Jerusalem see the couple returning home from their honeymoon trip to the villages and they notice,

(f) *HER DEPENDENCY:*

For she is leaning on her beloved. (8:5)

What have I to dread what have I to fear
Leaning on the everlasting arms
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near
Leaning on the everlasting arms

The book closes with the Shulamite in her garden chatting with some friends and her husband calls to her because he wants to hear her voice. You see, there is a place for other friends but no one must replace the spouse God gives to us. How does the bride respond to her groom ? Do you see,

(g) *HER DECLARATION:*

She tells him " *to hurry up,*" for she is waiting to experience his love. So this love song ends, where the book of Revelation ends, where the Bible itself ends. " *Even so come, Lord Jesus.*" (Rev 22:20) For does this book not ultimately speak of Christ ? And can we not say of Him, " *My beloved is mine and I am His,* " *Yea He is altogether lovely.*" In the words of Dr. Sidow Baxter,

**Sweet wonder, all Divine
That He should now be mine
The rapture who can tell
Where He has cast His spell
Perfection's crown is He
The sum of bliss to me
My endless heaven to be
Is Jesus**

In September of this year 2014 Ulster lost one of its most renowned preachers. Here's how Dr. Paisley spoke of Christ.

**He is purity without alloy. He is beauty without defect.
He is loveliness without flaw. Every way our Saviour is
viewed he is altogether lovely.**

**He is altogether lovely in His Person:
He is altogether lovely in His Passion:
He is altogether lovely in His Pardon:
He is altogether lovely in His Peace:
He is altogether lovely in His Provision:
He is altogether lovely in His Priesthood:
He is altogether lovely in His Power:**

**We exalt Him. We adore Him. We worship Him. We
bless Him. We praise Him. We gaze upon Him. We love
Him. We want no other. We desire no other. We will
have no other. We will cling to no other. We will seek
no other. We will look to no other. We will love no
other. "My beloved is mine and I am His." " Yea He is
altogether lovely."**