

# SONG OF SONGS

## **Title:**

This name suggests that this is the most excellent of all songs.

## **Author:**

Judging from 1:1 the author was Solomon, but it should be noted that the Hebrew here could also mean “concerning Solomon”.

## **Date:**

If Solomon wrote it, which seems likely, then it was written sometime during his reign – 970-930 BC. However, many scholars believe that it was written sometime after the exile of Judah in Babylon, in the 5th century BC.

## **Theme:**

Commentators on this book do not agree about the theme, or even about the principal characters in the story. Some teach that the book is a mere poetic description of the love between King Solomon and his bride. Some modern commentators teach that it is the story of the love between an unknown shepherd and his bride and that King Solomon is the villain in the story who tries to take the shepherd’s bride for himself (this interpretation is unlikely. If we take the Song as an allegory which speaks of the heavenly King and His people, the allegory would be most meaningful if the literal bridegroom in the Song were a king himself). Some commentators teach that this story is not an allegory about the love that exists between God and believers, but others teach that this is the main theme of the book. The author of these notes believes that the principal characters in this story of love are King Solomon and his bride, but that the story is full of symbolic, spiritual meanings, is an allegory depicting the love that exists between Jesus Christ the King of kings and His redeemed people, or individual believers. The reasons for this belief are as follows:

1. Its title, given in the first verse, is as much a part of the inspired Scriptures as any other. And if the writer by the inspiration of the Spirit of God calls this the chief, the best, the greatest of all songs (and this is the meaning of “song of songs”) there must be good reasons for it. If it were merely a love story about Solomon and his bride how could it be called the best of all songs? In such case would it be greater than some of the marvelous songs of David the sweet singer of Israel? Would it be greater than Psalm 22 or 45 or 69 or 119? How could it be the greatest of all songs if Christ is not in it? If Christ is absent from this song, the title is an empty boast.
2. We have the analogy of other Scriptures such as Ps 45; Isa 54:5; Jer 3:14; 31:32; Ezek 16; 23; Hos 2:7,16; Matt 22:1-2; Rom 7:4; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-32; Rev 19:6-9. Since God is called the “husband” of the nation Israel, and since the church is called the “bride” of Christ, it is no surprising thing that a book of the Bible would set forth in the human language of love the love that ought to exist, and does exist, between Christ and His people. The above Scriptures should be read in connection with the study of this book. They set forth one of the great themes of the Bible.
3. We have the example of other subjects in Scripture where there are spiritual meanings beyond the physical. See notes on the tabernacle, priests, sacrifices, and other matters in Exodus and Leviticus. Those things were real and literal but they were much more than that – they were types, shadows, pictures of spiritual realities. And see Paul,

by the inspiration of God's Spirit, calling the story of Sarah and Hagar an allegory (Gal 4:21-27)! Surely there is as much reason to find an allegory in this Song of songs as in the history of Sarah and Hagar. We do not deny that this song refers to a literal bride and bridegroom any more than we would deny the literal existence in history of Sarah and Hagar. King Solomon and a woman called the Shulamite are here. But it seems clear that here is also a parable of heavenly love full of spiritual meaning for those who have eyes to see it. See also the example of Hosea and his wife in the book of Hosea. They were literal people, but we see in their story the love God had for his fallen people Israel.

4. We have the statements of Scripture like Luke 24:27; 2 Tim 3:16-17. Can we say that Christ is everywhere in the Old Testament Scriptures except in this one book? Should we try to see Him everywhere else and then try not to see Him in this song? How would this song help make the man or woman of God thoroughly equipped for every good work, if there is no Christ in it and no lessons of a spiritual, heavenly character?

5. There are expressions and scenes in this book which seem to require an allegorical or spiritual meaning. It is hard to imagine that the literal bride of King Solomon wandered alone at night about the streets looking for him (3:2-4), or that while doing so on a second occasion the watchmen beat her and took away her cloak (5:6-7). Or that she literally came up from the desert leaning on Solomon (8:5).

6. We have the interpretation of many spiritual commentators for many centuries both before and after Christ. The Jews thought it set forth the relationship between Jehovah and Israel, and Christians found in it Christ and His Church. This interpretation is not our invention or a recent novelty.

If these reasons do not seem adequate to the reader, he is at liberty to reject them and try to understand this song on the mere level of human love. Our views and interpretations of Scripture are not infallible. But we are convinced that by studying this book by the aid of the Holy Spirit we can get a vivid impression of how Christ loves believers and how they should love Him. And we believe that experience will be the best teacher of this book. Only those who know Christ's love can understand what is here.

Love is what this book is all about, and we see the arrangement of it something like this:

Love affirmed.....	1:2-4
Love's anxiety .....	1:5-7
Love in fellowship .....	1:9—2:7
Love longed for and invited .....	2:8—3:1
Love tested and proved .....	3:1-5
Love conveyed in splendor.....	3:6-11
Love's delight in the loved one.....	4:1-16
Love's satisfaction .....	5:1
Love weak, failing and reviving.....	5:2-8
Love confident .....	6:1-3
Love praises the loved one .....	6:4-13
Love conversing .....	7:1—8:4
Love's strength .....	8:6-7
Love's concern .....	8:8-12
Love's longing .....	8:13-14

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

*Bride*

- <sup>2</sup> Let him kiss me with the kisses  
of his mouth:  
for your love *is* better than wine.  
<sup>3</sup> The fragrance of your oil is  
pleasing;  
your name *is like* oil poured out,  
therefore the virgins love you.  
<sup>4</sup> Draw me after you. We will run!  
The king has brought me into  
his chambers.

*Friends*

We will be glad and rejoice in you;  
we will remember your love

more than wine.  
The upright love you.

*Bride*

- <sup>5</sup> I *am* black but lovely,  
O daughters of Jerusalem,  
like the tents of Kedar,  
like the curtains of Solomon.  
<sup>6</sup> Do not stare at me because  
I *am* black,  
because the sun has looked  
on me.  
My mother's children were angry  
with me.  
They made me watch over the  
vineyards,  
*but* my own vineyard I have not  
watched.

**1:1** The expression "song of songs" means the greatest of all songs, just as King of kings means the greatest of all kings and Lord of lords means the greatest of all lords. How could this be the greatest of all songs in the Bible (or out of it) if Christ is not in it? That song will be the greatest which has the greatest theme for its subject and which expresses that theme in high and holy language. There is no greater theme in the Bible or out of it than Christ's love for His people. This is a far more excellent theme than the love of a man and his wife – which is all that some think they see in this song.

**1:2** In the Hebrew there are no headings (Bridegroom, Friends, Bride). They have been inserted to make clear to the reader who is speaking in each case. The use of "Bride", and "Bridegroom" in these headings is determined primarily on the basis of the gender of the pronouns in the Hebrew text. The words of others are marked "Friends". In some cases the divisions and headings are open to debate.

In this verse the speaker represents all of Christ's own people. She speaks out their deepest longings – to enjoy the nearness of Christ, the manifestation of Christ's love. His love is more stimulating, more delightful to the mind and spirit than wine (or any other physical stimulant) could ever be to the body.

**1:3** In the Bible "name" often indicates the character and attributes of a person. The name of the LORD (Jehovah) in the Old Testament and of Jesus in the New Testament is a perfume poured forth from heaven to earth and filling the whole world with fragrance. Compare Ex 30:22-38; Ps 45:8; Matt 26:6-13. The spiritually pure (here signified by "virgins") will love God above all and everything.

**1:4** If the heavenly King Himself does not come to us and draw us into secret communion with

Himself we will never arrive there (John 6:44). The work is all His. But on our part there must be a willingness that is ready and eager to enter into His loving fellowship.

"Me", "we" – sometimes believers are regarded as a unit – the bride; sometimes as a group of individuals. Compare Ps 45:14-15; Rev 19:6-9.

"You" – the Hebrew is the masculine single form of the pronoun.

"Love you" – no more fitting thing can be imagined than for believers to love the King of heaven.

**1:5** The daughters of Jerusalem are probably the "virgins" of v 3 and the "friends" who speak in v 4, but we cannot be dogmatic about this.

"Black" – Kedar is mentioned in Gen 25:12-13. Their tents were woven of black goat's hair. Believers in Christ are both sinners and saints. God made man in His own image (Gen 1:26), and so with spiritual beauty. Believers know that they came into the world with a nature corrupted by sin, that any spiritual beauty they now possess is because of their union with Christ. All their beauty is a gift of God (Isa 61:10; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 4:22-24). In the words of the bride here is there an element of anxiety? She will learn that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

**1:6** "Black" – life "under the sun" (Eccl 1:3,14) has made our natures dark (Gen 8:21; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:9-19). Believers, knowing this, do not feel there is anything in them that is worthy of staring or admiring. The beauty they have is not their own but Christ's reflected beauty.

"Angry" – Isa 66:5; John 15:17.

"Vineyard" – here signifies the believer's personal life. It is possible to be so taken up with other work that our communion with God is neglected and our spiritual lives become like an untended garden.

<sup>7</sup> Tell me, O you whom my soul  
loves,  
where you graze *your sheep*,  
where you make *your flock* rest  
at noon;  
for why should I be like someone  
who turns aside by the flocks  
of your companions?

*Bridegroom*

<sup>8</sup> If you do not know,  
O you most beautiful  
of women,  
follow the tracks of the flock,  
and pasture your young goats  
beside  
the shepherds' tents.  
<sup>9</sup> I compare you, O my love,  
to a company of horses in  
Pharaoh's chariots.  
<sup>10</sup> Your cheeks are lovely with rows  
of *jewels*,  
your neck with chains of *gold*.  
<sup>11</sup> We will make ornaments  
of gold  
for you with studs of silver.

*Bride*

<sup>12</sup> While the king *sits* at  
his table,  
my spikenard sends out  
its aroma.  
<sup>13</sup> My beloved *is* to me *like* a bundle  
of myrrh which lies all night  
between my breasts.  
<sup>14</sup> My beloved *is* to me like a cluster  
of henna blossoms in the  
vineyards of Engedi.

*Bridegroom*

<sup>15</sup> How beautiful you are, my love!  
How beautiful you are!  
You have doves' eyes.

*Bride*

<sup>16</sup> How handsome you are,  
my beloved!  
Yes, delightful. And our bed  
is green.

*Bridegroom*

<sup>17</sup> The beams of our house are cedar,  
and our rafters of fir.

**1:7** Believers wish to experience always Christ's nearness and love. He never leaves them or forsakes them (Heb 13:5; John 14:16-18; Matt 28:20). But their experience of His nearness and love ebbs and flows and sometimes He seems to be gone altogether. This is especially the case if we neglect to keep our own "vineyard". When such is the case we should seek Him with our whole heart (Hos 10:12; Jer 29:13).

**1:8** If we search we can see where Christ has led His flock and can follow in the footsteps of the saints. In the fellowship of the church's pastors and under shepherds, appointed by Christ, and in feeding Christ's sheep we will find Him anew (John 21:15-17; 14:21). The bride is called the "fairest among women" (see also 1:15; 2:14; 4:1,7; 6:4; 7:1,6; Ps 45:11). Christ's church is the most beautiful thing in the world to Him. He sees her with the eyes of love; He sees what she will yet be by His grace (Eph 5:26-27). He sees the beauty God has given her. Believers are in Christ, united to Him, and all He has they have.

**1:9-11** Egypt's horses were the best, the most beautiful, the most expertly trained of all. They were imported to other countries (1 Kings 10:28-29). The king of Egypt would have the best of the best and the most beautifully decorated. Compare Prov 1:19; Isa 61:1-3; Ezek 16:9-14; 1 Tim 2:9-10;

1 Pet 3:3-4.

**1:12** Believers sit at the table of the heavenly King (Rev 3:20; 1 Cor 10:16-17). Believers in communion with Christ are a sweet fragrance to Him.

**1:13-14** But much more, Christ is a sweet fragrance to believers. What the best perfumes on earth are to the body, that His presence is to the spirit.

**1:15** "Beautiful"—v 8.

"My love"—v 9; 2:2; 4:1,7; 7:6. The language of love, the endearing terms in this song suggest Christ's great love for the church and for each believer (John 13:1; 14:21; 15:9; chapter 17; Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:1-2,25; 1 John 3:16; 4:16). The whole relationship of the believer and Christ is one of mutual love and self-giving and delight in the other.

"Dove's eyes"—the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God (Matt 3:16). The symbol speaks of holiness, heavenliness, innocence, and spiritual beauty. The Holy Spirit should shine through the eyes of believers. This is the only way they can really have "dove's eyes".

**1:16** Believers surely have more reason to see beauty in Christ than He in them (Ps 45:2).

"Green"—Ps 23:2; Isa 51:3.

**1:17** There is shelter for believers from all that could harm them (Ps 121:5-6). And in that shelter the eternal God's delight is to dwell with them (note at Ex 25:8).

*Bride*

**2** I am the rose of Sharon,  
and the lily of the valleys.

*Bridegroom*

<sup>2</sup> Like the lily among thorns,  
so is my love among the daughters.

*Bride*

<sup>3</sup> Like the apple tree among the trees  
of the woods,  
so is my beloved among the sons.  
I sat down under his shade with  
great delight,  
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.  
<sup>4</sup> He brought me to the banqueting house,  
and his banner over me was love.  
<sup>5</sup> Sustain me with raisins, refresh me  
with apples, for I am sick with love.  
<sup>6</sup> His left hand is under my head,  
and his right hand embraces me.  
<sup>7</sup> I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the gazelles and by the deer  
of the field,  
not to arouse or awaken my love,  
till he pleases.  
<sup>8</sup> The voice of my beloved! Look!

He comes leaping on the mountains,  
skipping on the hills.

<sup>9</sup> My beloved is like a gazelle or a  
young stag.

See, he stands behind our wall,  
he looks out the windows,  
peering through the lattice.

<sup>10</sup> My beloved spoke and said to me,  
“Rise up, my love, my beautiful  
one, and come away.

<sup>11</sup> For, see, the winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone,

<sup>12</sup> The flowers appear on the earth,  
the time of the singing of birds has  
come, and the voice of the  
turtledove is heard in our land.

<sup>13</sup> The fig tree puts forth its green figs,  
and the vines with the tender grapes  
give a good smell.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,  
and come away”.

*Bridegroom*

<sup>14</sup> O my dove in the clefts of the rock,  
in the secret places of the steep  
ledges,  
let me see your face, let me hear your  
voice;

**2:1** It is unclear from the Hebrew whether the speaker here is the bride or the bridegroom. Since in the next verse the bridegroom says to the bride, “you are a lily” it seems likely that the speaker in this verse is the bride. Believers in themselves are as fragile, as prone to wither and fade as flowers (Isa 40:6-8; 1 Pet 1:24). They are lowly like the flowers of plains and valleys, but they have a beauty and a fragrance to God that He has given them.

**2:2** “*My love*”— among men the only thing of beauty and fragrance to the Son of God is His Church. All others on earth are like thorns and briars – painful, ugly, harmful (Num 33:55; Jud 2:3; 2 Sam 23:6; Isa 27:4-5; 33:12; Matt 7:16; Luke 8:14; Heb 6:8; Rom 8:7-8).

**2:3** “*Tree*”— Christ is no mere flower to wither and fade. He is a fruitful tree who grew up on earth from the root of Jesse (Isa 11:1,10; 53:2; Rom 15:12). For His people He is the “shade” (Ps 91:1; 121:5; Isa 25:4; 32:2). He is the tree of life and His “fruit” is eternal salvation, joy and satisfaction forever. Have our desires been so corrupted by the evil fruits of the world that His fruit is not sweet to our taste?

**2:4** “*Banqueting house*”— Ps 23:5; Rev 3:20. Imagine, if you can, the sort of feast the Son of God is able to prepare.

“*Banner over me was love*”— banner speaks of something proudly displayed, clearly manifested (compare Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20). Love is written

large over all Christ’s dealings with His people. **2:5-7** The full experience of Christ’s love can be too much for human nature to bear. Such experiences cannot be produced by the efforts of others (daughters of Jerusalem). They can come only in Christ’s time and way.

**2:8-9** This is the experience of the bride. The divine lover is present, then He is gone off to the mountains, but comes rushing back. No reason here is given for this, but if our communion with Christ is broken we should look for the fault in ourselves, not in Him (Isa 59:1-2; Hos 5:6), if indeed there is any fault at all (it may be that He is testing us). Believers do not always enjoy His nearness as they would desire. One glimpse of Him fills them with expectation and longing.

**2:10-13** Jer 31:3; Deut 4:37. The bridegroom uses the language of love and poetry to woo His bride away from everything else that might attract her, and He calls her into beauty, into songs of joy, into the deepest fellowship with Himself. At last He will call her to enjoy eternal dwellings in His presence (John 14:2-3; 17:24; 1 Thess 4:16-18).

**2:14** Christ’s church is like a dove, born of the Holy Spirit, hiding in Christ the Rock of ages (Ex 33:21-22; Deut 32:4). Believers are so dear to Him He longs to see their face, to hear their voice. Is not this one reason behind all those divinely inspired Scriptures which urge us to pray and praise?

for your voice *is* sweet and your face  
*is* lovely.

<sup>15</sup> Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes,  
that spoil the vines;  
for our vines *have* tender grapes.

*Bride*

<sup>16</sup> My beloved *is* mine, and  
I *am* his.  
He grazes *his* flock among  
the lilies.

<sup>17</sup> Until the day breaks and the shadows  
flee away, turn, my beloved,  
and be like a gazelle or a young stag  
on the mountains of Bether.

**3** At night on my bed I sought him  
whom my soul loves.

I sought him, but I did not find him.

<sup>2</sup> I will arise now, and go about the city  
in the streets, and in the squares I  
will seek him whom my soul  
loves.

I sought him but I did not find him.

<sup>3</sup> The watchmen who go around the city  
found me. *I said to them:*

“Have you seen him whom my soul  
loves?”

<sup>4</sup> Scarcely had I passed on from them  
when I found him whom my soul  
loves.

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 who  
conceived me.

<sup>5</sup> I charge you, O daughters of  
Jerusalem,  
by the gazelles and by the deer of  
the field,  
not to arouse or awake *my* love,  
till he pleases.

<sup>6</sup> Who *is* this coming from the desert  
like pillars of smoke,  
perfumed with myrrh and  
frankincense,

**2:15** 1:6. Believers must guard against everything that would spoil their life in Christ and their fellowship with Him, against all sins of either commission or omission. They may be considered “small” sins, but can that be called small which works so much damage?

“*Vineyard*”— Ps 80:15; Isa 5:1-5; Jer 12:10; Luke 20:9-16 (so terribly may a vineyard be ruined).

**2:16** 6:3; 7:10. Believers can and should have the sweet assurance that they belong to Christ and Christ to them forever (John 17:6; Rom 7:4; 8:38-39; 1 Cor 3:21-23). They are not to spend their lives wondering whether it is so.

**2:17** If Christ seems to depart again and again to some far off hills, the believer longs for Him and prays for His return. What else can satisfy him once he has tasted of the sweetness of Christ’s love?

“*The mountains of Bether*”— or “The rugged mountains”. Bether means rugged. It is difficult to know whether a proper name is meant here.

**3:1-3** When God seems to be at a distance, when Christ’s fellowship is withdrawn, the believer is tested. What will he do? He should seek Christ again (Job 23:3; Ps 6:1-4; 13:1-3; 28:1-2; 38:21-22; 42:1-3; 63:1; 77:1-9; 105:4; 143:6-7; Hos 5:6,15; Amos 5:4,8). Sometimes Christian experience is similar to wandering in dark and lonely streets. But God has placed watchmen – faithful ministers to point the way to Christ.

**3:4** “*Found*”— Ps 9:10; 22:26; 69:32; 70:4; 105:3; Jer 29:13; Isa 45:19; Matt 7:7-8.

“*Not let him go*”— Gen 32:26; Ps 27:9; Luke 24:28-29.

**3:5** 2:7.

**3:6** The speaker here is either the “bride” or the “friends”. The words bring us back to the literal Solomon and his bride who signify the heavenly truths of this book. It seems in these verses that Solomon has come in royal magnificence to bear his bride away (compare 8:5) and this is surely not without spiritual significance to believers.

We should notice that a striking feature of this book is the sudden shift of scenes. The bride is looking for the bridegroom in the shepherds’ fields (1:7-8); the bridegroom is near (1:9-11); afterwards they are together in the house of the king (1:12-17); suddenly the bridegroom is away in the hills but comes quickly to the house and calls his bride away (2:8-15); again he is on the hills and she is left alone (2:16—3:3); they are together in her mother’s house (3:4-5); now he comes from the desert in beauty and splendor. The book continues in similar fashion.

In other words, the book does not give a regular story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Instead we have various and brief pictures that set forth the relationship of bride and bridegroom. The spiritual purpose is to show various experiences through which believers may go in their life in Christ, and to reveal something of His beauty, magnificence, and tender love for His Church.

In these verses we see something of His glory and might (compare Ps 45:3-5). Believers (whether or not they are aware of it) are riding through the world in a heavenly carriage with the King of glory at their side. Though there is still danger at night (v 8), there is full protection for the bride in this journey with the King (John 10:28).

with all the powdered *spices* of the merchant?  
<sup>7</sup> See, it *is* Solomon's palanquin!  
 Sixty valiant men, of the valiant of Israel, surround it.  
<sup>8</sup> They all hold swords, *being* expert in war.  
 Every man *has* his sword at his side,  
 because of fear in the night.  
<sup>9</sup> King Solomon made the carriage for himself from the wood of Lebanon.  
<sup>10</sup> He made its posts *of* silver, its bottom *of* gold, its covering *of* purple,  
 its interior being lovingly fitted by the daughters of Jerusalem.  
<sup>11</sup> Go out, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding,  
 and on the day of the gladness of his heart.

*Bridegroom*

**4** How beautiful you *are*, my love!  
 How beautiful you *are*!  
 You *have* doves' eyes behind your veil.  
 Your hair *is* like a flock of goats that appears from mount

Gilead.  
<sup>2</sup> Your teeth *are* like a flock of sheep just shorn,  
 which come up from the washing, each of which bears twins,  
 and none of them *is* barren.  
<sup>3</sup> Your lips *are* like a strip of scarlet, and your mouth *is* lovely.  
 Your temples *are* like a piece of a pomegranate behind your veil.  
<sup>4</sup> Your neck *is* like the tower of David built as an armoury,  
 where hang a thousand shields, all shields of mighty men.  
<sup>5</sup> Your two breasts *are* like two fawns that are twins,  
 which feed among the lilies.  
<sup>6</sup> Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away,  
 I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.  
<sup>7</sup> You *are* altogether beautiful, my love.  
*There is* no blemish in you.  
<sup>8</sup> Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,  
*come* 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.  
<sup>9</sup> You have ravished my heart,

**4:1** "Beautiful"— 1:5,8,9-11,15 – this whole chapter (except for the last verse) is spoken by the bridegroom to show His delight in the bride. Everything about her pleases Him because He looks with the eyes of love.

"Doves"— 1:15.

"Goats"— goats with long black hair moving down one of the rounded hills of the Gilead range suggest her black tresses.

**4:2** Her teeth – white, sparkling, perfectly matched.

**4:4** In other words, her neck is straight and ornamented with necklaces – 1:10.

**4:6** 2:17; 1:13; 3:6.

**4:7** "No blemish"— a wonderful thing to say! In itself the church is full of flaws, and individual believers have to make the same confession as Paul (Rom 7:18), and James (3:2), and John (1 John 1:8). Yet even now the righteousness which God puts to the believer's account is perfect and flawless (Isa 61:10; Jer 33:16; Rom 3:21-24; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9); the beauty

they have is God's perfect beauty (Ps 45:13-14; Ezek 16:14); and the result of God's work in the church and in the believer will result eventually in a perfection only God can produce (Rom 8:29; Eph 5:25-27; Heb 10:14; 1 John 3:2).

**4:8** The bridegroom says he will go to the mountain of myrrh and incense (v 6). The bride should be with him. But suddenly the bride seems to be somewhere among the mountain peaks on the northern borders of Israel, a place of rugged beauty and danger. He calls her away. The spiritual application is not difficult to make. There are high places in the world that have their beauties and attractions but are dangerous to believers. Christ calls us away from them to Himself.

**4:9** 6:5. Does Christ love His church so much? Does one glance of love from her move His heart like this? Yes, He has proved once and for all the intensity of His infinite love by laying down His life for the church. His love passes knowledge (Eph 3:19).

my sister, *my* bride.  
 You have ravished my heart with one  
*glance* of your eyes,  
 with one strand of your necklace.  
<sup>10</sup> How beautiful is your love,  
 my sister, *my* bride!  
 How much better is your love  
 than wine!  
 And the fragrance of your oils than  
 all spices!  
<sup>11</sup> Your lips, O *my* bride, drip *like* the  
 honeycomb.  
 Honey and milk *are* under your  
 tongue,  
 and the fragrance of your garments  
 is like the fragrance of  
 Lebanon.  
<sup>12</sup> A garden locked up *is* my sister,  
*my* bride;  
 a spring shut up, a fountain  
 sealed.  
<sup>13</sup> Your plants *are* an orchard of  
 pomegranates, with choice fruits,  
 henna with spikenard,  
<sup>14</sup> Spikenard and saffron, calamus  
 and cinnamon,  
 with all the trees of frankincense,

myrrh and aloes, with all the chief  
 spices.  
<sup>15</sup> *You are* a garden fountain,  
 a well of living waters,  
 and streams from Lebanon.  
<sup>16</sup> Awake, O north wind,  
 and come,  
 you south *wind!*  
 Blow on my garden *so that*  
*the fragrance of its spices may*  
 spread out.

*Bride*

Let my beloved come into his  
 garden,  
 and eat his choice fruits.

*Bridegroom*

**5** I have come into my garden,  
 my sister, *my* bride.  
 I have gathered my myrrh with  
 my spice.  
 I have eaten my honeycomb with  
 my honey.  
 I have drunk my wine with  
 my milk.

“*Sister*”—the Lord Jesus is the bridegroom, the Lord, the Head of the Church. But He is also called the “brother” of believers (Heb 2:11-12). He is their Kinsman-Redeemer (note at Ruth 2:20).

**4:10** The Lord delights in His people (Ps 147:11; 149:4; Zeph 3:17).

**4:11** The words of love we speak to the Lord from loving hearts are very sweet to Him. Our fellowship to Him is like the fragrance of flowers and green forests. He wants always to be with us. When we come to Him in prayer we must not think He is reluctant to receive us.

**4:12-14** In Ps 1:3 believers are compared to a fruitful tree. In Ps 80:8 they are compared to a vine. Here they are called a whole garden (see also Isa 58:11; Jer 31:12). The true church is Christ’s garden of Eden where He comes to walk and talk with men and delight in their fellowship (Gen 3:8). Only from believers will Christ get any fragrance or fruit. Apart from His church the whole world is like a desert to Him.

Notice that this garden is enclosed or “locked up”. In other words, believers are Christ’s garden alone. No one else is to walk there. They are His possession (Rom 14:7-8; 1 Cor 6:19-20); they are for His delight. He puts a wall about them to keep out enemies and to prevent the world from trampling them underfoot. They are to be separate, holy, completely dedicated to

Him (John 17; Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 6:14-18). And they are to bear the fruits which please Him (John 15:8,16; Rom 7:4; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9; Col 1:6,10).

**4:15** The true church is also like a “fountain” and “well” and water flowing from mountain heights – a source of great satisfaction to Christ. This fountain is sealed – that is, kept for Him alone (2 Cor 11:2). The true church is not like a tank or pond in which the water may stagnate or dry up altogether. The church which is Christ’s body has the deep fountains of the Holy Spirit in it, springing up eternally (John 4:14; 7:37-39).

**4:16** This is the bridegroom still speaking for he says “my” garden. Wind makes a fine symbol of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8 – the words for wind, breath, and spirit in both Hebrew and Greek are identical). Only if God’s Spirit is blowing through the church will its fragrance spread.

“*My beloved*”—the bride speaks and welcomes Him with a loving heart – the only proper response.

**5:1** Isa 65:24. And what sweetness and satisfaction He finds in her fellowship! The Lord Jesus comes to commune with those who want Him and who are prepared for Him (John 14:23). And He wants others whom He here calls “friends” and “beloved ones” to share with Him in the church.



Eat, O friends!  
 Drink, yes, drink abundantly,  
 O beloved!

*Bride*

- <sup>2</sup> I sleep, but my heart *is* awake.  
*It is* the voice of my beloved  
 who knocks, saying,  
 “Open to me, my sister, my love,  
 my dove, my undefiled,  
 for my head is drenched with dew,  
 and my locks with the moisture  
 of the night”.
- <sup>3</sup> I have taken off my robe.  
 How can I put it *back* on?  
 I have washed my feet.  
 How can I soil them *again*?
- <sup>4</sup> My beloved put his hand in through  
 the hole *in the door*,  
 and my inmost being was moved  
 for him.
- <sup>5</sup> I got up to open to my beloved,  
 and my hands dripped  
*with myrrh*,  
 and my fingers with sweet smelling  
 myrrh, on the handles of the lock.
- <sup>6</sup> I opened to my beloved;  
 but my beloved had turned away  
 and was gone.  
 My soul went out to him as  
 he spoke.

- I looked for him, but I could not  
 find him.  
 I called to him, but he gave me no  
 answer.
- <sup>7</sup> The watchmen who went around  
 the city found me.  
 They struck me; they wounded me.  
 The guards of the walls took  
 my veil away from me.
- <sup>8</sup> I charge you, O daughters of  
 Jerusalem,  
 if you find my beloved, will you not  
 tell him that I *am* sick  
 with love?

*Friends*

- <sup>9</sup> What *is* your beloved more than  
*another* beloved,  
 O you most beautiful of women?  
 What *is* your beloved more than  
*another*  
 beloved, that you charge us so?

*Bride*

- <sup>10</sup> My beloved *is* radiant and ruddy,  
 the chief among ten thousand.
- <sup>11</sup> His head *is like* the most fine gold.  
*The locks of his hair* are bushy,  
 black as a raven.
- <sup>12</sup> His eyes *are like the eyes* of doves by  
 the streams of water,

**5:2-6** Another scene, another time. She is somewhere alone at night and the bridegroom comes and calls to her. He has come from a distance, or else has been standing outside for some time, for his head is wet with dew. In either case his love is clear. She is excited at his coming but reluctant to get up and open the door (v 3). She delays. When she does get up at last she is more occupied with herself than with him (v 5) – a fault seen in her before (1:5,12; 2:1). Her delay and evident lack of eagerness for his presence grieves him and he departs (v 6).

Christ will not give His fellowship where He is not wanted. In the believer's spiritual life with the Lord Jesus, if fellowship is broken it will not be His fault. He will come far for it; He will patiently wait for some time. But carelessness and reluctance to open to Him (which show a loss of first love) will grieve Him. And occupation with self rather than with Him will make it impossible to enjoy His fellowship. The Lord Jesus in His love does not call us to slothfulness and self-admiration. God's grace, God's gifts to us are not so we might look at self and applaud self. Those who want more of His fellowship and show that they want it will have it. Any lover wants the

beloved to love as he loves (8:6-7; Matt 22:37). The most important thing to us should be not our own convenience or pleasure but to love Him so much we want to please only Him.

**5:7-8** The watchmen now act differently toward her than they did in 3:3. Perhaps the scene in chapter 3 suggests a test of the genuineness of her love. Here she is at fault and must suffer for it. The words of God's faithful watchmen can be like blows to the one who has lost fellowship with Christ by one's own fault. Their words strip the sinning believer of his veil – thus exposing her true countenance and enabling her to see more clearly.

**5:8** “*Sick with love*” – 2:5; Ps 84:2; 119:81.

**5:10-16** Now the bride is fully occupied with the lover! Her experiences recorded in vs 2-8 have taught her something. This is the only place in this book where she attempts to describe him. The spiritual beauty of the Lord Jesus can only be hinted at by human descriptions, not revealed. It is interesting that in the Gospels there is nothing said about what the Lord Jesus looked like – as if it were entirely unimportant, as indeed it is. All the emphasis is on His character, His acts, His motives, His attributes.

washed with milk *and* fitly set.

<sup>13</sup> His cheeks *are* like a bed of spices,  
*like* sweet flowers.

His lips like lilies, dripping sweet  
smelling myrrh.

<sup>14</sup> His hands *are like* gold rods set  
with beryl.

His waist *is like* bright ivory  
inlaid *with* sapphires.

<sup>15</sup> His legs *are like* pillars of marble,  
set on sockets of fine gold.

His face *is like* Lebanon,  
excellent as the cedars.

<sup>16</sup> His mouth *is* very sweet.

Yes, he *is* altogether delightful.

This *is* my beloved, and this *is*  
my friend,

O daughters of Jerusalem.

#### Friends

**6** Where has your beloved gone,  
O most beautiful of women?  
Which way did your beloved turn?  
*Tell us* so that we may seek him  
with you.

#### Bride

<sup>2</sup> My beloved has gone down into  
his garden,  
to the beds of spices,  
to graze *his flock* in the gardens,  
and to gather lilies.

<sup>3</sup> I *am* my beloved's,  
and my beloved *is* mine.  
He feeds *his flock* among  
the lilies.

#### Bridegroom

<sup>4</sup> You *are* as beautiful, O my love,  
as Tirzah,

lovely as Jerusalem,  
awesome as *an army* with  
banners.

<sup>5</sup> Turn your eyes away from me,  
for they have overcome me.

Your hair *is* like a flock of  
goats that appears from  
Gilead.

<sup>6</sup> Your teeth *are* like a flock of sheep  
which goes up from  
the washing,  
each one of which bears twins,  
and *there is* not one barren among  
them.

<sup>7</sup> Like a piece of a pomegranate *are*  
your temples behind  
your veil.

<sup>8</sup> There are sixty queens, and eighty  
concubines,  
and virgins without number.

<sup>9</sup> My dove, my undefiled is unique.  
She *is* the *only* one of her mother,  
the favorite of the one who  
bore her.

The daughters saw her,  
and called her blessed;  
yes, the queens and the concubines,  
and they praised her.

<sup>10</sup> Who *is* she *who* appears like the  
dawn,  
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,  
*and* awesome as *an army* with  
banners?

**5:16** We cannot even begin to describe all of Christ's beauty, but we know that He is the altogether beautiful and perfect one.

"Friend"— see John 15:15.

**6:1** Our longings for Christ's fellowship, our praise of His qualities, will stir others up to seek Him.

**6:2** She suddenly realizes where her lover will be, and ceases her fruitless wanderings about the city's streets.

**6:3** See 2:16; 7:10.

**6:4-9** Throughout the Song of songs we see that he is far more taken up with her than she is with him. She gets distracted by other things but he does not. Christ's love for His church in this world is far more fervent and real than the church's love for Christ. His love is the example of what ours should be.

**6:4** "Tirzah"— the word means "pleasure", "beauty". The town was later chosen as the first capital of the northern kingdom of Israel

(1 Kings 14:17; 15:21,33; 16:6,23). Evidently it was a place famous for beauty.

"Jerusalem"— Ps 48:2; 50:2.

"Army"— the church is also a mighty spiritual army.

**6:5-7** Similar to 4:1-3. Her look of love stirs up such love in Him that He can hardly bear it (v 5. Also 4:9).

**6:9** "Unique", "blessed"— Israel in the Old Testament and Christ's church in the New Testament are absolutely unique in the whole history of man (Ex 19:5-6; Deut 7:6; Ps 135:4; John 17:6,9; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9-10). Though there be thousands of tribes, peoples, societies, organizations in the world, the church is the only bride of Christ. Blessed indeed!

**6:10** The true church is as beautiful and majestic in Christ's eyes as the most beautiful things in creation. The grace and glory of God rest on her.

*Bride*

- <sup>11</sup> I went down into the garden of  
nut trees to see the fruits of the  
valley,  
and to see whether the vine  
flourished,  
and the pomegranates budded.  
<sup>12</sup> Before I was aware, my soul set me  
among the chariots of Amminadab.

*Friends*

- <sup>13</sup> Come back, come back, O Shulamite!  
Come back, come back,  
that we may gaze at you.

*Bridegroom*

What do you see in the Shulamite?  
As it were the dance of two camps.

- 7** How beautiful are your sandaled feet,  
O prince's daughter!  
The curve of your thighs are like  
jewels,  
the work of the hands of a skillful  
craftsman.  
<sup>2</sup> Your navel is like a round goblet,  
not lacking mixed wine.  
Your waist is like a heap of wheat  
encircled with lilies.  
<sup>3</sup> Your two breasts are like two young  
gazelles that are twins.

- <sup>4</sup> Your neck is like a tower of ivory.  
Your eyes are like the pools in  
Heshbon,  
by the gate of Bath-Rabbim.  
Your nose is like the tower of  
Lebanon which looks toward  
Damascus.  
<sup>5</sup> Your head crowns you like Carmel,  
and the hair of your head is like  
purple;  
the king is held captive by  
its tresses.  
<sup>6</sup> How beautiful and how pleasing  
you are, O love,  
with your charms!  
<sup>7</sup> Your stature is like a palm tree,  
and your breasts like its clusters  
of fruit.  
<sup>8</sup> I said, "I will go up to the palm tree,  
I will take hold of its boughs"  
Now may your breasts be like  
clusters of the vine,  
and the fragrance of your breath  
like apples,  
<sup>9</sup> And the roof of your mouth is like  
the best wine for my beloved,  
that flows gently over the lips  
of those who are asleep.

*Bride*

- <sup>10</sup> I am my beloved's,

**6:11-12** Who is speaking? Judging from v 13 it is the bride whom the friends call back. The Hebrew of v 12 is obscure, so both the literal meaning and the spiritual application are equally so. Verse 11 shows her concern that her garden grow and produce fruit (compare 1:6). If we do not care about our garden, which really belongs to Christ, we show that we do not care much about Christ whose garden we are.

**6:12** "Among the chariots of Amminadab"—or "among the royal chariots of my people" or "among the chariots of my willing people". Amminadab may or may not be a proper name here.

**6:13** We cannot be certain why the bride is called "Shulamite" here. The name was possibly derived from the Solomon's name in Hebrew – Shlomo. Shulamite could be the feminine form of that name and may indicate one who belonged to Solomon. Or it may possibly be derived from a town called Shulam (or, possibly, Shunem). The first part of this verse evidently is spoken by the friends or virgins who long to gaze on the grace and beauty of the bride. The second part of the verse is spoken by the bridegroom. It is in the form of a question but he knows very well her beauty and why others would gaze on her.

"Dance of two camps"—or "company of two armies". The language here suggests a sacred dance of joy. Compare Ex 15:20; 2 Sam 6:14-15; Ps 30:11; 149:3; 150:4; Jer 31:13. The Hebrew word for two camps or armies is Mahanaim. See Gen 32:1-2. It may suggest here the nearness of heavenly hosts.

**7:1-9** 4:1-15; 6:4-9. The true church is a "prince's daughter", perfectly formed (1 Cor 12:14-27; Eph 4:15-16). Every part (person) is placed carefully by God in the Body to contribute to the beauty and usefulness of the whole. He loves to gaze on her and to describe her loveliness in His eyes. The relationship between husband and wife is the most intimate in the world, and this is the relationship that the Holy Spirit has used a number of times in the Bible as a symbol of that loving, intimate, spiritual relationship between God and His own special people. There is no deeper love, no more intimate fellowship, no greater delight than in this relationship between God who is Spirit with His spiritual people. This is suggested by the language of this passage.

**7:10** See 2:16. In the closing words of v 9 and in this verse she expresses her full assurance that the wine of her love is acceptable to him, that they are one in heart.

and his desire *is* for me.  
<sup>11</sup> Come, my beloved, let us go out  
 into the field.  
 Let us spend the night in  
 the villages.  
<sup>12</sup> Let us get up early to the  
 vineyards.  
 Let us see if the vine flourishes,  
*whether* the tender grape appears,  
*and* the pomegranates bud.  
 There I will give you my love.  
<sup>13</sup> The mandrakes give a fragrance,  
 and at our gates *are* all kinds  
 of choice *fruits*, new and old,  
*which* I have stored up for you,  
 O my beloved.

**8** O that you *were* like a brother  
 to me,  
 who nursed at the breasts of my  
 mother!  
 When I found you outside,  
 I would kiss you.  
 Yes, I would not be despised.  
<sup>2</sup> I would lead you, *and* bring you  
 into my mother's house,  
*who* instructed me.  
 I would have you drink spiced wine  
 from the juice of my pomegranate.  
<sup>3</sup> His left hand *would be* under  
 my head,

and his right hand would embrace  
 me.  
<sup>4</sup> I charge you, O daughters of  
 Jerusalem,  
 not to arouse or awaken *my* love,  
 until he pleases.

*Friends*

<sup>5</sup> Who is this who comes up from  
 the desert,  
 leaning on her beloved?

*Bride*

I awakened you under the  
 apple tree.  
 There your mother brought  
 you forth.  
 There she *who* bore you brought  
 you forth.  
<sup>6</sup> Set me like a seal over your  
 heart,  
 like a seal on your arm.  
 For love *is* strong as death;  
 Jealousy *is* severe as the grave;  
 its coals *are* coals of fire,  
*with* a very fierce flame.  
<sup>7</sup> Many waters cannot quench love,  
 nor can the floods drown it.  
 If a man were to give all the wealth  
 of his house for love,  
 it would be utterly despised.

**7:11-12** In 2:1-13 He calls her into the fields. Here she invites him. If the fields and villages speak of God's work in the world we can learn from these two references that Christ first calls us to this work, then His love in our hearts moves us to desire it and to pray that He go with us.

**7:13** When there is love there is a desire to give gifts and to give oneself to the loved one. This is what love between two persons is all about – mutual self-giving. Our love for Christ, or lack of it, will be measured by what we give Him or what we withhold from Him. Believers are not to store up for themselves but for Christ. What they would keep for themselves they will lose. What they store up for Christ they will keep and enjoy with Him forever. Our fruit should be all for Him (John 15:1-2; Rom 7:4).

**8:1** In this fallen world those who love Christ and are loved by Him often become an object of scorn and hatred to godless men (John 15:18-21; 16:33; 1 Pet 4:12-16). The bride here wishes that circumstances were different. But has she forgotten the bridegroom's words in 4:9-10,12; 5:1-2 – where he calls her "sister" five times?

**8:2** 7:13. A heart that wants to give is the surest mark of love.

**8:3-4** 2:6-7.

**8:5** "Desert" – 3:6. Israel came from Egypt through the desert and into the land of Canaan leaning on the strong arm of Jehovah. The church moves from the desert of this world toward the heavenly Jerusalem leaning on Christ.

**8:6** "Seal" – this may refer to a jewel having the name of the loved one engraved on it. Compare Ex 28:9-12,17-21; Isa 49:16. The spiritual meaning may be this: the loved one wants herself (or himself) permanently impressed on the affections of the one who loves as a seal leaves an impression on wax.

"Death" – death, man's enemy, is very powerful and holds its victims fast. God's love, man's greatest friend, is no less powerful. God's love will never let His own go (Rom 8:38-39).

"Jealousy" – or "ardor" or "zeal" – Ex 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24. The greater the love the greater the jealousy concerning all that might turn the loved one away.

"Grave" – in Hebrew "Sheol" – note at Gen 37:35.

**8:7** God's love is such a fire that the mightiest floods can not quench the tiniest spark of it. There is nothing on earth that remotely approaches it in value. It is also supreme among all spiritual graces and virtues (1 Cor 13).

*Friends*

- <sup>8</sup> We have a little sister, and she has no breasts.  
 What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for?  
<sup>9</sup> If she is a wall, we will build a palace of silver on her,  
 and if she is a door, we will enclose her with panels of cedar.

*Bride*

- <sup>10</sup> I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers.  
 Then I was in his eyes like one who found peace.  
<sup>11</sup> Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon.  
 He let out the vineyard to

caretakers.

- For its fruit each one was to bring a thousand *pieces* of silver.  
<sup>12</sup> My vineyard, which is mine, is before me.  
 The thousand *shekels* are for you,  
 O Solomon, and two hundred for Those who watch over its fruit.

*Bridegroom*

- <sup>13</sup> O you who dwell in the gardens, companions listen to your voice.  
 cause me to hear it.

*Bride*

- <sup>14</sup> Hurry, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

**8:8-9** The speakers here may be the “friends”, the daughters of Jerusalem, or the “brothers” mentioned in 1:6. The spiritual meaning would be the same in any case. Some commentators think the little sister indicates the New Testament church. Some think she represents any persons who are not yet converted to Christ but who will be. A wall is for the purpose of keeping out that which should be outside. A door is to let in those who are prepared to come inside.

**8:10-12** She already is what her little sister may become – mature and able to enter into the marriage relationship. She is no longer under

the control of her brothers (1:6). The language of verses 11,12 bring to mind the parables of the Lord Jesus about vineyards (Matt 20:1-16; 21:33-40), and speaks to us of the responsibility of Christians as tenants in God’s vineyard.

**8:12** “*Thousand shekels*” – about 11.5 kilograms.

**8:13** This is the last request of the bridegroom in this book.

**8:14** Here is the last request of the bride. It is similar to the last prayer of the Bible – Rev 22:20. It brings us back to an early chapter – 2:17. Our longings for Christ should not diminish with the passage of time and we should always endeavor to keep His coming as the object of our hope.

