

Preview of Song of Solomon

The Song of Solomon is also called the Song of Songs, a title emphasizing its superlative nature. King Solomon commemorates his love for his bride, identified as the Shulamite. The frequent use of the words love and beloved identify the theme of the book.

Unregenerate people tend to corrupt and make light of this book. To ne spiritual mind, however, it is eminently chaste, and it offers counsel and inspiration. The Hebrews of old used this song in their worship.

This song has several levels of meaning for us. In its first level of meaning, it offers a wealth of practical teaching and advice for a beautiful marriage relationship. It clearly depicts the beauty, satisfaction, and security of sanctified human love. This book also increases our understanding of God's relationship with Israel. The Old Testament portrays God's love for and covenant with Israel as a husband–wife relationship. Thus, this book provides an insight into the desires and feelings between God and Israel.

The real meaning and beauty for us today comes in viewing the relationship between the bride and bridegroom in this book as a type of the relationship between Christ and the church. The New Testament describes Christ's relationship to the church in this way. Christ's love for the church is stronger and even more amazing than Solomon's love for the Shulamite. And the church's love for Christ calls for nurture, expression, and commitment that parallel the Shulamite's experiences.

Although couched in figurative language, the basic outline of the story becomes apparent as we study the book. The king had come from a distance to visit the Shulamite's area. Disguised as a shepherd, he had won the love of the Shulamite. He had then returned to his home, promising to come for her at some future time.

In the shepherd–king's absence, the Shulamite expressed her anticipation of his return by extolling the virtues of her loved one. She is misunderstood, questioned, and persecuted. On two occasions (Song 2:10-3:11 and 5:1-6:3) she allows selfishness and indifference to mar her relationship with her loved one. But finally her longings are fulfilled as the shepherd, now revealed as the king of Israel, rides forth gloriously in his bridal chariot to claim his bride and take her back to his palace in Jerusalem.

As we view the beauty of the relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite, we are inspired to rejoice in Christ's love for us and in our love for Him. The heavenly Bridegroom, though gone for a short while, shall surely return in all His glory, claim His bride for Himself, and take her out of this world to be forever with Him in the New Jerusalem!

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."



Lesson 11 11 January, 2014

The Covenant of Love Initiated

Lesson Scope: [Song of Solomon chapters 1 & 2](#)

Lesson Focus

Many today view love as an emotion over which one has little control. The modern definition of love is fickle—that love is something a person "falls into." Not surprisingly, a person can "fall out" of love just as quickly. Sincere love, though accompanied by emotion, is based primarily on the commitment a person makes to the one he loves. It is this commitment that gives love its lifelong endurance. Jesus referred to commitment when He spoke of someone putting "his hand to the plough"—a commitment of duty. While the Christian life is one of duty, the burden of duty is lightened or even removed by a relationship of love with Jesus Christ.

In contrast to human relationships, the relationship between God and man is that of the greater loving the lesser. Man's beauty was marred by sin, and his relationship with God was severed. Yet God in His mercy provided a plan to restore sinful man to a beautiful relationship with Him.

Jesus sees in every sinner the potential for beauty. With tender love and infinite grace, He seeks to draw all men unto Himself. Awakened by that love, the repentant, believing heart responds with devotion and commitment.

The Song of Songs gives us a beauty of human love that is rich with spiritual analogies. The New Testament describes the church as a bride with Christ, the Bridegroom. The physical love of this song illustrates the relationship between the saint and his Saviour and also between the church and Christ. The Scriptures use this emblem of marriage to describe a relationship that is the firmest, closest, and most sure relationship on earth. What better analogy can be found to describe what our relationship with Jesus must be like! The relationship between Christ and the believer is one of commitment, faith, love, and service through both pleasant and hard times. A mere emotional relationship with Jesus, as so much of mainstream Christianity focuses on today, is shallow and seldom results in sanctified living.

The Song of Solomon is based on the courtship and marriage practices of the Middle Eastern culture. A study of this culture may aid in understanding some of the terminology and word pictures used by the writer.

Lesson Aim: To see essentials for establishing a relationship of love with Jesus Christ.

Theme Verse: [1 John 4:19](#). We love him, because he first loved us.

Lesson Text

Ardent Desire

[Song of Songs 1:1-7](#) ¹The song of songs, which *is* Solomon's. ²Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love *is* better than wine. ³Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name *is as* ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. ⁴Draw 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. ⁵I *am* black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. ⁶Look 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. ⁷Tell 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?

Exclusive Choice

Song of Songs 1:8-12 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. ⁹ I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. ¹⁰ Thy cheeks are comely with rows of *jewels*, thy neck with chains of *gold*. ¹¹ We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver. ¹² While the king *sitteth* at his table, my spike-nard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

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

Song of Songs 2:1-4 ¹ I *am* the rose of Sharon, *and* the lily of the valleys. ² As the lily among thorns, so *is* my love among the daughters. 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. ⁴ He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me *was* love.

Total Commitment

Song of Songs 2:8-14 ⁸ The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. 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. ¹⁰ My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. ¹¹ For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over *and* gone; 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; 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. 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.

Questions for Study

Ardent Desire

1. How does the response of the bride in Song 1:4 compare with the experience of Christ and the believer?
2. List ways that we demonstrate the sweetness of Jesus' name.

3. How does the bride view herself? What is the spiritual lesson we can learn from such a view?

4. What are some other flocks that the believer might be tempted to turn aside to?

Exclusive Choice

5. Where did the bride's beauty and adornment come from? Is spiritual beauty of man or of God?

6. What is the significance of the bride's reference to herself in Song 2:1? of the bridegroom's response in Song 2:2?

Total Commitment

7. What is the spiritual significance of the invitation given by the bridegroom in Song 2:10, 13?

8. What are some indications of a full commitment to Christ?

Analyzing the Passage

The text of the Song of Solomon is basically a verbal interchange between the bridegroom and his bride. Although the speakers are not always clearly identified, the bridegroom uses the term my love when referring to the bride, and the bride speaks of him as my beloved. The "daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 1:5) are onlookers who refer to the bride as "thou fairest among women" (Song 1:8).

The bride humbly describes herself as unattractive. She is black (Song 1:5-6) of sunburn, and she states that she has not kept (Song 1:6) her own vineyard, implying that she was unable to preserve her personal appearance because of the work she was compelled to do.

The bride is concerned that she be able to find the bridegroom's flock (Song 1:7). In seeking her bridegroom, she does not want to become lost or led astray.

Camphire (Song 1:14) was an ornamental plant that was much admired by the Orientals. Its beauty was especially eye-catching in the drab desert plains of Engedi.

The turtle (Song 2:12) refers to the turtledove.

Principles and Applications

Ardent Desire

1. Through salvation, man is reconciled to God and finds a close relationship with Christ (Song 1:2). It is through the great plan and won-

drous work of salvation that any barrier that would hinder a relationship with Christ is removed. Sin is forgiven, and man can have the assurance of pardon, filling him with peace and joy. Souls who are saved will find much pleasure in loving Christ and being loved by Him.

2. Christ's bride values her relationship with Him above any earthly pleasure (1:2, 4). Since there is nothing on earth that can do for us what Jesus has done in providing pardon for sin, His love is more precious to us than anything earth has to offer. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Christ asks for our all, and our relationship with Him is satisfying only when we surrender everything to Him.

3. The name of Jesus is sweet to His chosen ones (Song 1:3). God has given to Jesus "a name which is above every name." To everyone who has discovered his own emptiness and Christ's infinite fullness, His name is "as ointment poured forth," and it draws them to Christ in sweet confidence and love. "Precious name, / O how sweet! / Hope of earth and joy of heav'n." Do we take His name with us?

4. Christ's bride must recognize her unworthiness of His love (Song 1:5-6). "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The Christian should not forget that he is defiled and sinful by nature, deformed by the results of sin. Only Christ can make the soul beautiful, clean, and free from sin. To see beauty or merit in and of ourselves is merely pride and self-deception.

5. A relationship of love with Christ is nourished by feeding on His Word and walking in His ways (Song 1:7-8). God's Word clearly states what our responsibilities are in finding Christ. One who loves Christ will search the Scriptures carefully and diligently and will obey what the Word tells him to do. Constant communication through prayer, meditating on the Word in personal devotions and family worship, attending worship services, and keeping Christ in focus in every area of our lives will help us maintain a healthy relationship with Christ.

Exclusive Choice

6. Christ sees great potential in His bride (Song 1:9-11). Even though the bride's beauty was marred by hard work and exposure to the elements, the bridegroom still recognized her beauty and sought to adorn her with gifts to enhance her charm. Christ also invests His grace in the

church because He sees the prospective beauty that will glorify the church when she is united with Him in eternity.

7. Christ's bride, though in the world, must be set apart by her purity and beauty (Song 2:1-2). Even though the bride thought herself less than ordinary, the bridegroom always emphasized her beauty as matchless and declared her the sole object of his admiration. The church, though still bearing the marks of sin, is purified and kept by Christ because of His love for her. The church must respond to her Bridegroom with singleness of heart and a desire to please Him and to love Him above anything this world can offer. She must remain untainted by sin. Only then can she experience all the pleasures and blessings Christ has promised for her.

8. Christ is as a fruitful apple tree, giving rest, protection, and nourishment to the believer (Song 2:3). Christ invites, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The sin-burdened seeker can find relief from the burden of sin. The believer can taste the pleasant fruits of Christ's free redemption. His all-encompassing presence protects the church from the darkness of evil and unbelief.

Total Commitment

9. The bride of Christ must leave the chill and gloom of sin and experience joy and pleasure in walking with Christ (Song 2:10-13). Christ invites the Christian to come out of the winter of despair, darkness, and sin and to leave misery, guilt, and unfruitfulness behind. Accepting Christ's invitation awakens a whole new experience of peace and fruitfulness that is possible only because of God's grace. The resurrected life is one that is committed to heed the call of Christ, following the path of duty no matter where the path may lead. Christ calls to His church, "Rise up, and come away!" We must come away from all the allurements this world offers, away from apathy and indifference, and away from secret sin and hypocrisy if we want to enjoy the pleasures at the right hand of God forevermore.

Answers to Questions

1. How does the response of the bride in Song 1:4 compare with the experience of Christ and the believer?

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw

him" (John 6:44). Christ desires to draw the believer into a closer relationship by His grace, and the true seeker will desire that invitation. The Christian must respond to the calling of Christ, and Christ in return will not only allow us to follow or "run after" Him, but He also raises us up together and makes us sit together in heavenly places in His very presence! (See Ephesians 2:6.)

2. List ways that we demonstrate the sweetness of Jesus' name.

If Jesus' name is sweet to us, we will find it easy to talk about Him and about why His name is sweet to us. We also will not tolerate when His name is taken in vain and will speak up in defense of that sweet name. Our songs of praise and our diligence in prayer life also indicate that we consider the name of Jesus precious.

3. How does the bride view herself? What is the spiritual lesson we can learn from such a view?

The bride viewed herself as common, unattractive, and undesirable. Her physical beauty was marred by exposure to the elements and by hard work.

We too must view ourselves in light of the sin nature we have within us, which marred our souls. It is pride to feel superior over the ungodly around us because of what Christ has done for us. All have sinned and come short of God's glory.

4. What are some other flocks that the believer might be tempted to turn aside to?

Following after the things of this world is a constant threat to lead the believer astray. A true seeker must also guard against tolerance of sin, false doctrine, and pluralism found everywhere among mainstream Christianity today. Materialism, fashion, prestige, and business can all be flocks that cause us to lose our way if we follow them instead of the flock of Jesus Christ, the church.

5. Where did the bride's beauty and adornment come from? Is spiritual beauty of man or of God?

The bridegroom decorated her with gifts and ornaments to beautify her supposedly unattractive person.

The spiritual beauty of man does not issue from our own works, and our own righteousness is merely filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6). It is by God's grace that we are made beautiful in His sight. Any merit we have is from God, and He deserves the recognition for it.

6. What is the significance of the bride's reference to herself in Song 2:1? of the bridegroom's response in Song 2:2?

The rose of Sharon was an insignificant bush, and the lily of the valley grew in masses. The bride is referring to herself as common and nothing of value above all the other brides the shepherd could have chosen.

The bridegroom saw the potential in her as in no other and indicated that she stood out from all others as a lily among thorns. This typifies how the believer should be, and also how Christ views the church.

7. What is the spiritual significance of the invitation given by the bridegroom in Song 2:10, 13?

Christ is asking each of us to leave the gloom and cold of sin and self. The life promised to each believer who comes "out of darkness into his marvellous light" is one that springs forth into new life, a resurrection from the dead, as symbolized by spring after winter. All who respond to this invitation must come away from sin and selfishness and submit to Christ, allowing Him to renew their lives.

8. What are some indications of a full commitment to Christ?

A full commitment will cause us to willingly give up time, money, wealth, or freedom for the sake of following Christ. When we face hardship in life, a full commitment will result in the strengthening of our faith.

Important Teachings

1. Through salvation, man is reconciled to God and finds a close relationship with Christ (Song 1:2).

2. Christ's bride values her relationship with Him above any earthly pleasure (Song 1:2-4).

3. The name of Jesus is sweet to His chosen ones (Song 1:3).

4. Christ's bride must recognize her unworthiness of His love (Song 1:5-6).

5. A relationship of love with Christ is nourished by feeding on His Word and walking in His ways (Song 1:7-8).

6. Christ sees great potential in His bride (Song 1:9-11).

7. Christ's bride, though in the world, must be set apart by her purity and beauty (Song 2:1-2).

8. Christ is as a fruitful apple tree, giving rest, protection, and nourishment to the believer (Song 2:3).

9. The bride of Christ must leave the chill and gloom of sin and experience joy and pleasure in walking with Christ (Song 2:10-13).

Summarizing the Lesson

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Research Guide

Read Ephesians 5:22-33 for a beautiful description of what Christ is doing with the church.