

Introduction to the Song of Solomon

I. Introduction

- a. In this first session, we will examine basic principles of interpretation, introduce the main themes of the book that we hope to grow in as a spiritual family, and provide a basic overview of the book. This will allow us to understand the big picture of the Song and give each of us a practical way to study the book.
- b. King Solomon is the author of this eight chapter love song in approximately 900 B.C.. He most likely wrote the Song before his spiritual decline referenced in 1 Kings 11.
- c. All Scripture references will be taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted. The use of other bible translations and commentaries for personal study is strongly encouraged! It is often helpful to replace verses in the Song with New Testament truths when praying or meditating on this book.

II. Interpreting the Song

- a. ***Natural Interpretation:*** This view depicts a love story between King Solomon and his bride, the Shulamite Maiden. When reading with this lens, we take the book at face value as Solomon depicts the various stages of courtship, betrothal, and marriage. This interpretation has become more popular in the last century and is the subject of multiple commentaries.
- b. ***Spiritual Interpretation:*** This view interprets the book as an allegorical story using symbolism to emphasize the relationship between the Lord and His people as Bridegroom King. This is the approach we will take for this bible study. We will study the Song to gain deeper understanding of our relationship with Jesus as His beloved ones. This has been the most popular view of the the Song for the last 3,000 years (since it was written) by Jewish Scholars and Bible Teachers alike. You will find support and material written with this interpretation by famous Church leaders such as: Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, C.H. Spurgeon, J. Hudson Taylor, George Whitefield, John Wesley, Matthew Henry, Charles Finney, and many more.

- i. Jesus went through all 39 OT books and spoke of Himself on the road to Emmaus.

(Luke 24:27) “...He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures.”

- ii. The Holy Spirit inspired the entire bible and exalts Jesus in all He does.

(2 Timothy 3:16) “All Scripture is inspired by God...”

- iii. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit would not inspire a book of the bible that does not predominantly exalt Jesus as the primary theme. He has always existed in friendship with Jesus and is fierce in love to fill the body of Christ with passionate love for Him.

(John 16:14) "He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you."

III. Three Common Spiritual Interpretations

- a. The relationship between the Bridegroom God and Ethnic Israel as His Bride. This is the main approach of Jewish rabbis and was the approach of OT scribes.
- b. The relationship between Jesus and the corporate Church throughout history.
- c. *The relationship between Jesus and the individual believer.* This is the approach we will take in this study as it will provide us spiritual principles aid to help us grow in passion for Jesus.
 - i. When reading the Song with this paradigm, we will interpret all underlying sensual themes as allegorical representations of spiritual intimacy.

IV. Four Themes in the Song

- a. These themes are found throughout scripture and should be rooted in New Testament truths. The uniqueness of the Song is not in the presence of these themes, but in the fact that these themes are its primary focus. Through the lens of the Song, we will encounter the motivations and the emotional life of the heart of Jesus.
 - i. ***God's emotions:*** The revelation of Jesus' affection and enjoyment of His people.
 - ii. ***God's beauty:*** The revelation of Jesus' splendor as the Bridegroom King
 - iii. ***Our beauty:*** The revelation of the beauty of the individual believer to Jesus, even in our weakness. The Song reveals how God views us in amazing ways.
 - iv. ***Our partnership:*** As we study the Song, we will find principles that will help us grow in love and mature partnership with Jesus as His co-laboring Bride. This will primarily center around our commitment to obey the First Commandment.

(Matthew 22:37-38) "And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the great and foremost [first] commandment."

- b. One of the longings of the human heart is to be desired. This longing has been exploited by the enemy and produced the most emotionally wounded and sexually broken generation in recent history. I believe that the Lord is awakening the Church to these themes to restore us to intimacy and prepare us to ascend to new levels of authority and power.

(Psalm 24:3-6) “Who may ascend onto the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? 4 One who has clean hands and a pure heart... 5 He will receive a blessing... And righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 This is the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face...”

V. Two Main Sections of the Song

- a. ***Jesus is our inheritance:*** The first 4 chapters focus on the Bride understanding and enjoying her inheritance in Christ. These chapters emphasize how God views her and His desire for her.
- b. ***We are Jesus’ inheritance:*** We seek something from Him, but He is also seeking something from us! He wants us to love Him with all our heart (and we will!)
 - i. In Song 4:16, the Bride refers to her heart as her garden, then immediately calls it His garden. This marks the change of focus in the Song.
 - ii. The Father instructed Jesus to ask Him for an inheritance from every nation. The exhortation that follows describes a mature bride that **trembles** in the fear of the Lord, **rejoices** in the benefits of the cross, and figuratively **kisses** the Son by loving Him with our whole heart.

(Psalm 2:8-12) “Ask it of Me, and I will certainly give the nations as Your inheritance...10 Now then, you kings, use insight... 11 Serve the Lord with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son...”

- iii. Jesus asked the Father for us as an inheritance; that we would be with Him, see His glory, and love Him with our whole heart as He first loved us.

(John 17:24-26) “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory... 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them...”

VI. An Overview of the Allegorical Storyline

a. **The Divine Kiss & the Bride’s Life Vision - Song 1:1-4**

- i. The theme of the Song is the Bride’s journey to be drawn near in intimacy with Jesus and to run with Him in ministry partnership. We mature in both realities by receiving the kisses of God’s word touching our hearts.

(Song 1:2-4) “May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! [Word] For your love is sweeter than wine... 4 Draw me after you [intimacy] and let’s run together [partnership]!”

b. **Grace Displayed & Weak, but Sincere Love Affirmed - Song 1:5-11**

- i. The spiritual journey begins with the “grace paradox” of being dark in heart (our diminishing tendency toward sin), yet lovely to God in Christ (we steadily grow in the fruits of righteousness).

(Song 1:5-6) “I am black [dark in heart] and beautiful [to God]... I have not taken care of my own vineyard [heart].”

- ii. She cries out for more of Jesus and for Him to feed her spirit. He affirms her.

(Song 1:7-8) “Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock... For why should I be like one who veils herself Beside the flocks of your companions?” Solomon [Jesus], the Lover, Speaks 8 “If you yourself do not know, Most beautiful among women...”

c. **Understanding Her Identity and Resting in the Shade of God’s Love - Song 1:12-2:7**

- i. She has a revelation of Jesus’ beauty, which leads her to her own identity in Christ as a beautiful rose.

(Song 1:16) “How handsome [beautiful] you are, my beloved, And so delightful!”

(Song 2:1) “I am the rose of Sharon, The lily of the valleys.”

- ii. She experiences the superior pleasures of knowing God in His presence at His banqueting hall. She becomes lovesick, but is primarily focused on enjoying her life with God and being “spiritually happy” by encountering His presence. Later, her focus will live as His inheritance at any cost.

(Song 2:3-5) “...In his shade [grace; finished work of the cross] I took great delight and sat down, And his fruit was sweet to my taste. 4 He has brought me to his banquet hall, And his banner [leadership] over me is love. 5 Refresh me... Sustain me... Because I am lovesick.”

d. The Challenge to Come - Song 2:8-17

- i. Jesus is pictured as leaping over the mountains (overcoming obstacles) in His work to fulfill the Great Commission. She is accustomed to eating apples at His table, under the shade tree and refuses the call to come away out of fear and immaturity.

(Song 2:8-17) “Listen! My beloved! Behold, he is coming, Leaping on the mountains, Jumping on the hills! 9 My beloved is like a gazelle... 10 My beloved responded and said to me, ‘Arise, my darling... And come along... 14 Let me see how you look, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is pleasant, And you look delightful...’ 17 Until the cool of the day, when the shadows flee, Turn, my beloved...”

e. God’s Loving Discipline - Song 3:1-5

- i. God disciplines the Bride as He hides His face from her. The Father’s love is too great to allow anything to hinder us from full partnership with Jesus as His Bride. She soon arises to obey the call and Jesus responds to her obedience with His presence.

(Song 3:1-5) “On my bed night after night I sought him Whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him. 2 ‘I must arise now ...I must seek him whom my soul loves...’ 4 ... When I found him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let him go...”

f. Jesus Revealed as a Trustworthy Savior - Song 3:6-11

- i. The Bride’s fear of obedience flees as she receives revelation of Jesus as a safe savior. His splendor and might is described. She believes that it is safer to walk on the water with Jesus than to stay in the boat without Him.

g. Jesus Declares the Bride’s Prophetic Identity - Song 4:1-8

- i. Jesus declares eight “budding virtues” in the Bride. He views us through the cries in our spirit, not by our struggles. Before, she refused the call, but now she commits to go to the mountain of myrrh (loving God even in face of death). This is the beginning of her obedience which will mature through the Song.

h. Jesus’ Ravished Heart - Song 4:9-5:1

- i. The King now becomes the Bridegroom, ravished by the Bride's character.

(Song 4:9-10) You have enchanted [ravished] my heart, my sister [co-heir], my bride...with a single glance of your eyes... 10 How beautiful is your love...How much sweeter is your love than wine..."

- ii. Jesus describes her purity and compares her heart to a private garden for His enjoyment.

(Song 4:12) "A locked garden is my sister, my bride, A locked spring, a sealed fountain."

- iii. The Bride desires the fragrances of God's spices (fruit of righteousness) to increase and asks for the North winds (cold testing) and the South winds (warm refreshing) to blow through her heart and cause the fragrances to come out. "My garden" becomes "His garden" in her prayer in 4:16. Jesus receives the garden (her heart) from her gladly and affirms it as His possession, using the word "my" 9 times in 5:1.

(Song 4:16) "Awake, north wind, And come, wind of the south; Make my garden breathe out fragrance, May its balsam oils flow. May my beloved come into his garden And eat its delicious fruits!"

(Song 5:1) "I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk..."

i. The Bride is Tested - Song 5:2-8

- i. Jesus comes to the door asking her to open her heart to Him and embrace His sufferings. She responds willingly regardless of the cost of obedience. When she opens, He is gone. This is the first test of her obedience. Jesus asks us if we will love Him even when we are not experiencing His presence and blessings.

(Song 5:2-6) "...A voice! My beloved was knocking: 'Open to me, my sister, my darling, My dove, my perfect one! For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the dew drops of the night.' [Gethsemane]... 4... my feelings were stirred for him. 5 I arose to open to my beloved; And my hands dripped with myrrh [obedience even unto death]...On the handles of the bolt. 6 I opened to my beloved, But my beloved had turned away and had gone... I searched for him but I did not find him...he did not answer me."

- ii. She searches for her beloved and is overtaken by the watchmen in the city (spiritual leaders). They strike her and remove her shawl (spiritual covering) so that she can no longer function in ministry in the Body. She asks the less mature daughters of Jerusalem for help (less mature believers) in humility.

(Song 5:7-8) “The watchmen [spiritual leaders]... struck me and wounded me... took my shawl [ministry covering] away from me. 8 Swear to me, you daughters of Jerusalem [less mature believers], If you find my beloved, As to what you will tell him: For I am lovesick.”

j. The Bride Responds to Testing - Song 5:9-6:3

- i. The daughters of Jerusalem (immature believers) ask her how she can love Him in her unfortunate circumstances. She responds with 10 descriptions of the beauty and majesty of Jesus. This inspires the daughters to seek Him for themselves as she directs the way to find Him (discipleship).

(Song 5:16) “...he is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend...”

k. Jesus is “Conquered” by the Bride’s Love - Song 6:4-10

- i. Jesus hears her confession of love and breaks the silence. The season of testing is over and the famine of His presence has ended. He describes her beauty and is conquered by her extravagant love(6:5). He describes her maturity and devotion, her preeminence in His courts, and her crown of glory (6:10).

(Song 6:5) “Turn your eyes away from me, For they have confused [conquered; overwhelmed] me;

(Song 6:10) “Who is this who looks down like the dawn, As beautiful as the full moon, As pure as the sun, As awesome as an army with banners?””

l. The Bride Vindicated by Others and Affirmed by Jesus - Song 6:11-7:9

- i. The Bride visits the orchards to see the budding virtues in other believers. She is accepted in verse 13 by the body. Some interpret 7:1-5 as discerning believers vindicating the Bride and 7:6-9 as Jesus affirming the Bride.

m. Mature Partnership - Song 7:9-8:4

- i. She walks out mature bridal partnership with Jesus, expressed in obedience (7:9-10), intercession (7:11-13), boldness in public ministry (8:1-2), and full union with Jesus (8:3-4).

n. The Seal of Love - Song 8:5-7

- i. Jesus invites her to set the seal of fire upon her heart and arm (strength) in holy, jealous love. God is a consuming fire and imparts His fiery love into our hearts and seals it so that it cannot be quenched.

(Song 8:6-7) “Put me like a seal over your heart, Like a seal on your arm... Its flames are flames of fire, The flame of the Lord. 7 Many waters cannot quench love...”

o. Intercession for the Church and His Return - Song 8:8-14

- i. The Bride intercedes for the church (8:8-9) and for Jesus’ return (8:14). Her confidence is described as a wall (selfless motives), as a tower (supernaturally energized leadership and discipleship), and as one with peace (emotional wholeness). She experiences the power and enjoyment of living before His eyes instead of the eyes of men (Song 8:11-12).
- ii. Jesus’ final commission to the Bride (8:13-14). The Bride’s urgency is expressed in intercession.

(Song 8:13-14) “You who sit in the gardens [Bride]: My companions are listening for your voice— Let me [Jesus] hear it!” 14 [Bride responds in intercession] “Hurry, my beloved [Jesus], And be like a gazelle or a young stag On the mountains of balsam trees! [Maranatha]”

Summary:

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The Bride Vindicated by Others and Affirmed by Jesus - Song 6:11-7:9

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