

The Song of Solomon (5)

Geoff Cave

This article considers Scenes 7 (5:2–6:10) and 8 (6:11–13). Scene 7 sees a marked change in the Song. The [two scenes before](#) saw the Beloved and his Bride making their vows to be faithful in their betrothal covenant. The Beloved does remain faithful in his promises to succour and protect his Bride until the new day dawns and the shadows flee away, but Scene 7 shows how the Bride falls short, later being restored to favour with her Beloved. The Song surely teaches that, although we may wander from the path of life, our Lord will restore us to favour, albeit through chastisement. It gives much encouragement and promise of future blessing, but in this scene it gives timely warnings to the believer who is becoming more focused on this life and less focused on the glories of the coming age.

SCENE 7 begins with the bride half asleep and half awake: “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (5:2). The words of Paul come to mind: “let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night” (1 Thess. 5:6,7). And again, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping” (Mk. 13:35,36).

For the Bride, her Beloved had come and was knocking on the door (Song 5:2), but she was not ready for him, being taken by surprise. The first reason she was reluctant to open the door once she had come to herself was that she had “put off [her] coat” (v. 3) and did not know how to “put it on.” The Hebrew for “coat” here is *kethoneth*, which first appears in Genesis 3:21: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” It represents the Divine covering for sin. The Master warns in Revelation 16:15: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” She was not watching and she had lost her garment.

The next reason she was reluctant to open the door is given in Song 5:3: “I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?” She thought she was clean: “I have washed my feet.” Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the church: “. . . 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” (Eph. 5:26,27).

The Bride, however, does open the door, only to find her “beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake:

I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer” (Song 5:6). As on other occasions in the Song, she heard his voice but he was not there. Providentially for her, he had not come at this stage to take her to the marriage, for she had not “made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). She was not ready for the following reasons:

- 1 she had fallen asleep and was not watching for her Beloved
- 2 she had lost the covering for her sin
- 3 she thought she had made herself clean
- 4 she still frequented the city (v. 7)
- 5 she had a ‘man-made’ covering for her sin.

Looking for her Beloved

In verse 7 the Bride goes out into the city to look for her Beloved, and there she encounters the watchmen again (as in 3:3), but this time their reaction is entirely different. On the first occasion she goes into the city she is still learning of her Beloved and can be forgiven for thinking he might be found in the city (see comments on 3:3 in [Article 3](#)), but now she is betrothed to him and should know better. She recalls how the watchmen “smote” her. Psalm 141:5 states: “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which

shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."

The watchmen also take away her veil (Heb. *radiyd*); according to Strong, this was a wide wrapper or large veil. Here is a contrast with the coat of skins she could not put on. *Radiyd* occurs only twice in Scripture, here in the Song and in Isaiah 3:23, where the prophet describes the attire of the "haughty" and "wanton" daughters of Zion (v. 16). The links between Isaiah 3 and the Song are striking: verse 17 states that "the Lord will smite"; verse 18 states that "the Lord will take away."

The veil represents the covering devised by man, like the fig leaves in the garden of Eden. The Bride had "taken off" the only covering acceptable by Divine appointment and had put on the man-devised covering; the watchmen took it from her to show that she was in fact naked. Returning to Revelation 16:15, the Lord Jesus warns the believer today: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

As already mentioned, the Lord Jesus had not come at this stage to take his Bride to the marriage, but had come to warn her and to use the watchmen to humble and correct her.

To her credit, there is no hint of the Bride retaliating and smiting the watchmen. The experience has focused her mind on her Beloved; she is desperate to be united with him: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love" (Song 5:8). This prompts the response from the daughters of Jerusalem: "what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" (v. 9).

The Bride replies with a detailed description in symbol of her Beloved. She begins by saying, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." "White" signifies 'dazzling'; the Lord Jesus is "the brightness of His [the Father's] glory, and the express image of His person" (Heb. 1:3). He is also "ruddy." The Hebrew word here is *adom*—'of man'. Jesus is the only white and dazzling son of Adam, born of woman yet displaying the characteristics of his Father.

The Bride says her Beloved is "the chiefest among ten thousand." The margin for "chiefest" here is 'standard-bearer.' He is the leader of the Shulamite army (see Song 6:13) in the battle against sin. He holds the standard high: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Jno. 12:32). Inscribed on the banner in the days of his flesh were the words, "Thy will

be done." When he returns in power and glory the banner will be displayed to the nations: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7).

This is my Beloved

The following details describing the Beloved show why he is the chiefest among ten thousand.

"His head is as the most fine gold" (v. 11).

Gold is a symbol of tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7). Here is the most fine gold with no imperfections at all; when tried to the uttermost, Jesus' faith in his Father remained strong.

"His locks are bushy, and black as a raven" (v. 11).

He has the full vigour and vitality of youth; indeed, he is alive for evermore.

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves" (v. 12).

They are focused on one thing, as are the eyes of a dove, and not easily distracted; they are "fitly set"; "by the rivers of waters, washed with milk." The focus is on the rivers of water of life, that is, on the Word of God.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh" (v. 13).

His whole demeanour is pleasing to his Father and his Bride; the myrrh, which is bitter to drink, has a sweet fragrance. He drank the bitter cup of pain, and in so doing the pleasure of the Lord prospered in his hand (Isa. 53:10).

"His hands are as gold rings" (v. 14).

The hands symbolise action; he is faithful, not only in thought and word, but also in action.

"His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires" (v. 14).

This is a difficult symbol to decipher from Scripture; the Hebrew word for "belly" is *shen*, from the root *shanan*, which is translated "diligently" in Deuteronomy 6:7: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

"His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold" (v. 15).

The Hebrew for "marble" is translated as "fine linen" in Exodus, so here is a foundation of faith and righteousness.

"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars" (v. 15).

The word "excellent" means 'chosen'; as Solomon chose the cedars of Lebanon for the building of the temple, so the Bride has chosen her Beloved; he is the chiefest among ten thousand. He is also chosen by the Father: "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:1). He is "altogether lovely," meaning he is greatly to be desired. He is to be desired above all others: "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 5:16).

Whither is thy Beloved turned aside?

This description causes the daughters of Jerusalem to say, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee"(6:1). The suggestion was made at the start of the series that the daughters of Jerusalem represent those who are interested but have not yet committed themselves to Christ. The words of the Bride result in this interest developing into a determined seeking.

The Bride informs the daughters where her Beloved is and what he is doing there; he is in his garden feeding (the sheep—see note on 2:16) and gathering lilies. The Bride is described as a garden in 4:12 and as a lily among the thorns in 2:2. The symbols here show the Beloved both feeding the sheep in the Bride community and gathering the lost sheep to bring them into the fold. This scene concludes with a further description of the Bride given by the Beloved.

Attributes of the Bride

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem" (6:4).

Taking the meanings of Tirzah and Jerusalem, the Beloved is saying that his Bride is both pleasing and peaceable.

"Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me" (v. 5).

"Overcome" is translated as 'strengthen' and 'make sure' elsewhere. The Bride is looking to her Beloved, not wishing him to vanish from sight, as he did earlier in the night; but the Beloved can see she is now determined to stay with him, as the look in her eyes assures him of this. He appears to be saying, in effect, "You do not need to keep me in your gaze continually, as I am now sure you will remain faithful to me."

The Testimony, January 2011

"Thy hair is as a flock of goats" (v. 5).

A woman's hair is for a covering (1 Cor. 11:15), and the tabernacle was covered with goats' hair (Ex. 36:14); the Beloved sees his Bride as being within the tabernacle and therefore separated to God.

"Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing" (v. 6).

The teeth are used to chew the food that enters the body. The Bride takes in and digests the meat of the Word of life; the teeth are also washed by the Word. Thus the Bride is strengthened by meditating on the Word; she is also refreshed and cleansed by the water of the Word. The result of this is a healthy and fruitful ecclesia: "whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them."

"As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks" (v. 7).

See note on 4:3.

"There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number" (v. 8).

The Beloved describes his corporate Bride as a great multitude and yet united as one, as the next phrase shows: "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother" (v. 9).

The Beloved concludes this description of his Bride by saying, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (v. 10). Four aspects of the Bride are listed in this statement:

- 1 She looks for the morning without clouds (2 Sam. 23:4).
- 2 She is fair as the moon. The Lord Jesus is the Bridegroom, described as the Sun of Righteousness, his Bride here being described as the moon.
- 3 She is also clear as the sun; she is one with her husband, and indeed she is part of the multitudinous Christ.
- 4 She is terrible as an army with banners. The word "army" is not in the original; however, a militant aspect is being described. She is 'awesome with banners'; her Lord is the chief standard-bearer (see note on 5:10).

Scene 8 (6:11-13)

In this short scene the Bride goes to examine the garden—a little introspection, for she *is* the garden (see 4:12). This is something we must all

do: to 'take stock' and see how the fruits of the Spirit are growing.

While the Bride is looking at the fruits of the garden she becomes "aware" of something; she says: "my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Concerning Amminadib, Strong says, "An unknown person noted for the swiftness of his chariots. Or possibly not a person but should be translated 'my willing people.'" There is food for thought in both of these comments. Did she become aware of the swiftness of her time of probation, and that the time to make herself ready was short? Or was she "aware" of the fact that she was not alone but with 'her people'? This is possibly the better explanation, for we know that we are encouraged knowing we are surrounded by 'my willing people,' those who are willing to follow their Lord: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth" (Ps. 110:3).

The daughters of Jerusalem now call to the Bride, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee" (Song 6:13). They wish to be with her to behold her qualities, as they now know her union with the Beloved will lead to salvation and they wish to

share such blessings. The Beloved replies to them with a question designed to determine what they understand about his Bride: "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" Their reply reflects a good level of understanding: "As it were the company of two armies."

The Bride community consists of two armies, or camps, and yet one. They are one through the sacrifice of their Lord. Paul reminds the Gentile believers in Ephesus, "For he is our peace, who hath made both [Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:14,15).

The RV renders the phrase "the company of two armies" as "the dance of Mahanaim." The name Mahanaim means 'two camps,' and the AV word for "company" is also translated as 'dance.' The redeemed will indeed rejoice in the dance when they are united with their Saviour. Regarding the saved from Israel, Jeremiah says: "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (31:13).

[\(To be continued\)](#)