

The Song of Solomon (2)

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In this section the writer looks at the developing relationship between the Bride and the Bridegroom. In turn each describes the desirable attributes of the other. This is presented as a pattern for the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IN THE FIRST SCENE, which takes place in the King's chambers, the King (the bridegroom) is absent and the dialogue is between the bride and her companions, the virgins, the daughters of Jerusalem. Solomon is always referred to in the Song as the "beloved". The betrothed bride (hereafter referred to as the bride) greatly desires the company of the bridegroom (hereafter referred to as the beloved) and expresses the many reasons why she wishes to be with him.

Regarding the details, the reader will doubtless be able to add to what is presented here; indeed, every symbol can result in a study in itself when it is traced through the pages of Scripture. Comments will be made on the key phrases in each verse, as comment on every detail is not possible within this short series.

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine" (1:2).

The bride wishes to be greeted with kisses from her beloved. She says that his love is better than wine; Psalm 104:15 shows how wine cheers the heart; the bride wishes to be cheered by the presence of her beloved. We, too, look forward to the time of rejoicing when we are united with the Lord Jesus; his presence will be as a pleasing fragrance, like "ointment poured forth" (v. 3).

"Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee" (v. 4).

Knowing the vast gulf between her and her beloved, she wishes to be drawn to him. This is the correct approach, as we must allow the Scriptures to lift us to the level of Christ; we must not try to pull the Master down to our level. The beloved has said, "No man can come to me, except the Father Which hath sent me draw him" (Jno. 6:44);

we were once "far off", but we have been "made nigh", and if we remain faithful we shall be as the bride in Song 8:6, sealed with him in thought and action.

This process involves 'running after him', "because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Although our Lord is absent, we have already been brought into the king's chambers, as the psalmist states: "a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand" (Ps. 84:10).

"I am black, but comely . . . Look 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" (v. 5,6).

The bride is black, or dark (Young's Literal translation), as a result of labouring in the sun; but the virgins reply, ". . . but comely", "as the curtains of Solomon"; they see her as belonging to Solomon. Do others see us as belonging to Christ? The bride has suffered at the hands of her earthly family, who have made her labour to bring forth the fruit of the earthly vineyards, but now she knows of her beloved, she knows of his vineyard and that she has not been labouring to bring forth the fruit of the true vineyard. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Gal. 5:22); and, "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph. 5:9).

"Tell 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 [mg. one that is veiled] by the flocks of thy companions?" (v. 7).

The bride cries out to her beloved, wishing to be part of his flock; she feels alone without her lord, afraid even to approach his flock. The beloved, although absent, immediately replies, "go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock". As we learn of the Lord Jesus, one of the first things we do is to mix with other members of the corporate

bride—that is, to attend meetings of the ecclesia. This can be a daunting process initially, but once this is done we learn of the responsibility each has to ‘feed the kids’ of the flock (v. 8).

Scene 2

The setting for Scene 2 is still in the environs of the palace, possibly in the gardens, where Solomon is now present, and it begins by describing in symbol some of the attributes of his bride.

The beloved sees his bride as “a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots” (vv. 9-11).

Here is the first reference to the ‘militant’ aspect of the bride (see 4:4; 6:10,13). Our battle is with the impulses of the flesh and with anything around us in opposition to our Lord. Horses pulling a chariot must work in unison to be effective, just as members of the ecclesia should all pull in the same direction to follow the Master.

Solomon sees the cheeks of his bride as “comely”, meaning beautiful and befitting; the beauty is seen in the “rows of jewels” set in the cheeks. “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Mal. 3:16,17).

The true beauty of the bride is seen in those who fear the Lord: “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30). The virgins in the Song wish to make her even more attractive: “We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver”. We can help one another to be more acceptable to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The bride now responds knowing that her presence is as pleasing to him as he is to her. She wishes to hold him close “all night” (vv. 12-14).

The Master exhorts us, “hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11). If we are honest we will admit that, although this is our aim, we do not always hold him fast when we go where he would not go and do things he would not do. This is reflected in the Song, as the bride does not hold him fast “all night”, for twice in the night she is looking for him (3:1; 5:2).

Nevertheless on this her first meeting she says, “My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire

in the vineyards of En-gedi”. “Camphire” is the Hebrew word *kopher*, which is translated ‘ransom’ eight times: it is taken from the root word *kaphar*, which is translated ‘atonement’ seventy-one times, ‘purge’ seven times, ‘reconciliation’ four times, ‘reconcile’ three times, ‘forgive’ three times, and ‘purge away’ twice. The bride understands her need for reconciliation with her God, and she knows that her beloved is the one through whom this is possible.

Solomon responds, “thou hast doves’ eyes” (v. 15).

The dove is a bird with a strong homing instinct, hence the link with the previous verse and the desire for reconciliation. Hosea 7:11 states, “Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria”. The nation would not return to their Maker and be reconciled and therefore saved, as their eyes were closed towards Him. They will, however, ultimately respond: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” (Isa. 60:8). The Lord Jesus sees in his bride those who seek reconciliation with his Father, even as he did in the days of his flesh. Although he was at one with Him in purpose and action, he shared our nature, which is not at one with the Father. Hence we read of the beloved in Song 5:12: “His eyes are as the eyes of doves”.

The bride now responds by affirming again the qualities of her beloved and then speaking of the couch where they share each other’s company: “our bed is green” (v. 16).

“Green” (Heb. *ra’anan*) here carries the idea of being fruitful and flourishing; she speaks of the fruitful relationship which is developing between them, a lasting relationship wherein the fruits of righteousness increase with the years. “Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing [*ra’anan*]; to shew that the LORD is upright” (Ps. 92:13-15).

The bride next speaks of their house with beams of cedar and rafters of fir; their developing relationship has the strength of the cedar and the refined finish of the fir.

The bride sees herself as the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys—two very common flowers; nothing special. Here is humility (2:1,2).

Solomon responds, “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters”. He speaks of

the difference between his bride and those in the 'world': "but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb. 6:8). The bride, however, will be saved when the thorns are burned.

The bride now makes a contrast between herself, a humble flower, and her beloved, a stately tree. He is a fruit-bearing tree bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. He brought her into the "banqueting house", which means the 'house of wine'; here is the pure wine of the Word as opposed to the adulterated wine of the world (vv. 3-6).

We, too, are in this banqueting house every time we open the Word of Life: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isa. 55:1,2).

The bride is comforted with "flagons" of wine, representing the Word of Life, and with "apples", representing the fruits of the Spirit, which he has brought forth to perfection to obtain her redemption. She sees her Lord with a banner of love over her (see mg. of 5:10); he is the standard-bearer and holds the standard for his bride to follow. Written on the standard in the days of his flesh were the words, "Thy will be done", for his bride to follow.

When he returns, he will display the banner for all to see, not just for the eyes of the bride; then the words on the banner will be, "Fear God, and give glory to Him" (Rev. 14:7). Both aspects of the banner show forth the love of God. The bride then concludes her description of the love her beloved has for her: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me". The hands and arms symbolise action, the love Christ has for his bride being not just in word but also in deed.

The phrase "stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please" occurs three times in the Song (v. 7).

It cannot mean our Lord is asleep, for he shares his Father's nature, and "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). The word "my" is not in the original text, and the phrase "till he please" appears in the RV and ESV as "till it please". Thus the phrase may be read, 'stir not up, nor awaken love, till it please'.

The warning is given to the daughters of Jerusalem, who are showing great interest in Solomon, the bride warning them to think carefully before becoming part of the bride. The saying, 'Marry in haste, repent at leisure', comes to mind. We should warn those who are contemplating becoming part of the corporate bride of the Lamb to think carefully and 'count the cost' before taking an irreversible decision. The blessings are great, but so are the responsibilities.

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