

SONG OF SOLOMON

This is a song, a love song. It is pastoral in character.

We know that Solomon (who is mentioned in 1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12) wrote 1,005 songs (cf. 1 Kings 4:32). This is the only one in the Bible.

We also know that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (cf. 1 Kings 11:3). The Song of Solomon was written about the one he loved the most.

In interpreting this very difficult song, we must insist, therefore, that it has a genuine historical background.

We can, however, expect that it would have some meaning in Scripture beyond its historical value. It seems that we have here:

- 1) A divine picture of what true love and marriage should be. ^{HOW UNUSUAL IN DAYS LIKE THESE!}
- 2) An Old Testament picture of God's relationship with Israel. Cf. Isa. 54:4-8; Jer. 3:14; ~~YER~~ 31:31, 32; Hosea 2:19, 20.
- 3) A type of the relationship to be established in the New Testament between Christ and the Church. Cf. Eph. 5:22-33.

First of all, in interpreting the Song we need to see what the historical situation was.

Solomon's lover and bride is called a "Shulamite"--an inhabitant of Shulem, or Shunem, in Issachar. Cf. 6:13. Delitzsch (p. 4) says that "she is but the daughter of a humble family in a remote part of Galilee; hence the child-like simplicity and the rural character of her thoughts, her joy in the open fields, and her longing after the quiet life of her village home."

This accounts for her complexion as described in chapter 1, and for the fact that she is a stranger to the daughters of Jerusalem. She is not a princess, but Solomon is to make her one.

Delitzsch calls this "the most obscure book of the Old Testament" (p. 1). Origen and Jerome taught that the Song should not be studied by any one until he was at least 30 years of age. This is because a certain amount of maturity, both natural and spiritual, is necessary before the Song can be understood.

Outline:

While the Song is not easy to outline, it seems that there are six parts to it.

- I. The Bride in Jerusalem (1:1-2:7). The discourse is mainly with the daughters of Jerusalem. The Bride is the principal speaker. It may be that Solomon says nothing in this section.
- II. The Bride tells of their courtship, and how Solomon sought her (2:8-3:5). She tells in 2:10-15 what Solomon said, and then her response in the latter part of ch. 2. In 3:1-4 we evidently have the record of a dream the bride had, so unbelievable was her experience, that she was troubled into thinking that it was not true after all.
- III. The Bridegroom brings his bride to Jerusalem (3:6-5:1).
In 3:6-10 it seems that the daughters of Jerusalem may be speaking from what is stated in v. 11.
Then practically all of ch. 4 is what Solomon says (except possibly the latter part of v. 16).

- IV. The Bride tells another dream, a troubled dream, in which her Bridegroom seems to have disappeared. ~~See~~ Cf. 5:2-6:9. She asks the daughters of Jerusalem to help her. See vv. 2-8 in ch. 5. They want to know why her ~~his~~ beloved is so important (5:9), and so she describes him to the end of ch. 5. At the beginning of ch. 6 (vv. 1-3) he is found, and then we hear what the Bridegroom has to say about his Bride in the concluding part of the section.
- V. In contrast with the above section, we now have the beauty of the Bride extolled (6:10-8:4). The daughters of Jerusalem praise her beauty in 7:1-5, after asking to see her in the latter part of ch. 6. Then the Bridegroom speaks in 7:6-9, after which the Bride finishes the section by asking the Groom to take her back to her home for a visit.
- VI. The Bride and Groom together at the Bride's home, recounting the early days of the Bride as compared with her present position (8:5-14).

Special lessons:

- 1) The wonderful grace of God as seen in the experience of the Bride--relating this both to Israel and to the Church, collectively and individually. From the dreams of the Bride it seems that she never got over the fact that she was the Bride of the King!
- 2) The evidence that the Bridegroom sought the Bride, beginning with 2:10.
- 3) The way in which the Bride then was always seeking her Bridegroom with the thrice repeated 2:7; 3:5; 8:4. *And also the love he had for her.*
- 5) The desire of the daughters of Jerusalem to know:
- a) What was so wonderful about the Bridegroom (5:9).
 - b) The beauty of the Bride (6:13a).
 - c) Her appearance to her family when she returned home in ch. 8.
- All of these show the evidence to be seen in the Bridegroom and the Bride of the attraction that they had seen in each other.
- 4) *The great expressions of love for each other.*
- a) *The Bride's description of the Groom (5:10-14).*
 - b) *The Groom's description of the Bride (4:7-15).*

3:14f.
5:6