

The Royal Wedding
Song of Songs 3:6 – 5:1

This is the third message in a series on the Song of Songs, also known as the Song of Solomon. I was very much impressed to learn that the Hebrew title can be read: “Of all the songs this is the Song!”

The **Song** is a drama with two soloists. The female voice is “the beloved” and the male voice is “the lover.” The transitions between the two soloists are sung by “the daughters of Jerusalem.”

Although it has been over a month since the last message in Song; it is not practical for me to try to rehearse for you the previous two messages and that would be tiresome for you as well. My hope is that the content of each message will stand on its own and give you a grasp of this admittedly difficult portion of God’s inspired and Holy Scripture.

The scene is the wedding of King Solomon to the Shulamite, but beyond that historical fact, it is a picture of the royal wedding of Christ, the Bridegroom, and the church, His bride.

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” **ESV**

The Song of Songs is an affirmation of the beauty of committed, married love in all its aspects: emotional, physical, and spiritual.

The Song has been much abused by some who do not see the purpose of a book with such explicit sexual language that is in the Song, but the Bible is honest and deals with humanity as it is.

The Song is in Scripture to reveal that God approves of human sexuality as He created it and meant it to be. It is sinful man that has corrupted everything that is good.

The Song is in the Bible because it is a picture of the nature and purpose of the marriage union and reveals principles that can make married love a source of joy and personal intimacy. Marriage is a bonding of two into one: “the two shall become one flesh.” Scriptural marriage is an exclusive commitment of one man to one woman.

The Song illustrates the passionate affection that Christ, the Bridegroom, has for His bride, the church; and likewise the church’s response to His love.

There are those who believe all sex is sinful, even in marriage. This is the basis for the Roman Catholic doctrine of celibacy for the clergy. But the Scripture, including Song, teaches that sex within the context of marriage between one man and one woman is blessed by God. It is just as wrong to think of sex in marriage as evil as it is to think that fornication, adultery, and homosexuality somehow has the approval of God.

1. The Wedding March

In the previous message we saw the Shulamite anticipating her wedding day. Now the day has arrived! The royal wedding procession is featured as the groom comes to the bride's home to bring her home with him.

a. Here comes the bride: Song 3:6, 9-10

⁶ What is that coming up from the wilderness
like columns of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
with all the fragrant powders of a merchant?

⁹ King Solomon made himself a carriage
from the wood of Lebanon.

¹⁰ He made its posts of silver,
its back of gold, its seat of purple;
its interior was inlaid with love
by the daughters of Jerusalem.

The bride is the center of attention. She is carried on a palanquin which is an enclosed carriage borne on poles on the shoulders of a team of men. Around her carriage swirls a fragrant cloud of smoke rising from the burning of costly incense.

There are two different Hebrew words describing the conveyances.

In verse 7, the litter *mitta* is a portable couch on which Solomon is carried.

In verse 9, *appiryon* is the enclosed carriage or sedan chair.

The bridal carriage is constructed of the finest materials; Lebanese wood, silver posts set in a base of gold. The upholstery is made of purple cloth dyed with a very expensive dye from a rare shellfish. The interior of the carriage was crafted by the daughters of Jerusalem "with love," referring to their motive.

b. Here comes the groom: Song 3:7-8

⁷ Behold, it is the litter of Solomon!
Around it are sixty mighty men,
some of the mighty men of Israel,
⁸ all of them wearing swords
and expert in war,
each with his sword at his thigh,
against terror by night.

The groom is King Solomon. He is escorted by 60 of Israel's finest warriors in full battle dress. These mighty warriors are a strong deterrent to any attack by the bands of robbers who often harassed travelers.

A legitimate question is how someone as lascivious as Solomon could be inspired by the Holy Spirit to compose a picture of holy love between a man and a woman such as we have in the Song? We know that Solomon married 700 wives and kept 300 concubines, most of them pagan, which he followed into sexually depraved forms of idolatry. Cf. 1 Kings 11:1-13

1 Kings 11:1-13

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. ³ He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶ So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸ And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

⁹ And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. ¹² Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen." **ESV**

How could Solomon be the groom in this picture of two people pledging themselves exclusively to each other?

Perhaps the best explanation is that Solomon's marriage to the Shulamite was his first. The queens and concubines mentioned in Song 6:8 were either his father's, inherited with the throne, or they represent no particular harem, just numbers of royal women in the court. His love for and commitment to the Shulamite was real, from a heart that was pure because he had not yet strayed from his passion for the Lord. Cf. 1 Kings 3:3-5

1 Kings 3:3-9

³ Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. ⁴ And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." ⁶ And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. ⁷ And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. ⁹ Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

2. Consummation

This chapter is not for those who are embarrassed at the mention of sex. It begins with his praise of her and ends with her specifically inviting him to possess her sexually.

a. The Praise: Song 4:1-7

Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
behold, you are beautiful!
Your eyes are doves
behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
leaping down the slopes of Gilead.
² Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
that have come up from the washing,
all of which bear twins,
and not one among them has lost its young.
³ Your lips are like a scarlet thread,
and your mouth is lovely.
Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.
⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David,
built in rows of stone;
on it hang a thousand shields,
all of them shields of warriors.
⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle,
that graze among the lilies.
⁶ Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
I will go away to the mountain of myrrh
and the hill of frankincense.
⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.

Solomon and Shulamith are alone in the privacy of the bridal chamber on their wedding night. Solomon finds seven ways to affirm her character and charm.

1. Solomon praises her eyes [1]. Due to its nonaggressive nature the dove symbolizes peace. Peter urges wives to adorn themselves with a gentle and quiet spirit.

1 Peter 3:1-7

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives—² when they see your respectful and pure conduct. ³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing—⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

2. He praises her hair [1]. As strange as this may sound to you ladies it was high praise indeed. These goats were black with long hair. Her long black hair reminded him of a flock of goats playing down a mountain slope.

3. He praises her smile [2]. He doesn't just say, "I like your smile." He uses an image meant to stir the heart of a shepherdess; the sight of newly shorn sheep glistening in the sunlight after washing in the river. What's more she has all of her teeth with no gaps!

4. He praises her lips [3]. He has kissed them [1:2]. Now he uses a scarlet ribbon to picture the delicate shape of her mouth.

5. He praises the way she blushes [3]. The pomegranate is a highly valued desert fruit of reddish color. Solomon praises her healthy, natural beauty and the sensitivity shown by her as he praises her.

6. He praises her queenly stature [4]. To picture her inner beauty he uses a national symbol every Israelite would recognize. Rising above Jerusalem's walls is a tower, built by King David as an early warning station in case of an attack. In times of peace the battle shields are polished and hung around the top of the tower, where they gleam in the sunlight.

7. He praises her breasts [5-6]. In describing her breasts as twin gazelle fawns, he pictures her modesty and feminine beauty. Gazelle fawns do not appear at midday; you might catch a glimpse of them at dawn or at dusk. Solomon is aware of her anxiety at revealing that intimate part of her body to him. The "mountains of myrrh" and "hill of frankincense" are further references to her breasts. She has no flaw [7].

b. Sharing Feelings: Song 4:9-11

⁹ You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride;
you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.
¹⁰ How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!
How much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!
¹¹ Your lips drip nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue;
the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

Solomon continues his praise with emphasis now on how her love for him makes him feel.

She has "captivated" his heart.

She pleases him more than wine.

She smells better than exotic spices.

Her kisses are sweeter than honey.

c. The Secret Garden: Song 4:12 – 5:1

¹² A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a spring locked, a fountain sealed.
¹³ Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna with nard,
¹⁴ nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes,
with all chief spices—
¹⁵ a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.
¹⁶ Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden,
let its spices flow.

SHE

Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.

HE

5 I came to my garden, my sister, my bride,
I gathered my myrrh with my spice,
I ate my honeycomb with my honey,
I drank my wine with my milk.

OTHERS

Eat, friends, drink,
and be drunk with love!

The “locked garden” is a metaphor for the girl and her sexuality. So are the “spring” and the “fountain”. See Proverbs 5:15-19 where Solomon advises young men to be chaste and uses the same metaphors.

Her “garden” is locked to all but to her spouse. Solomon says she is a picture of an orchard full of delightful fruit.

“Awake!” Her garden is his garden and now is the right time to consummate their love physically.

She invites him to possess and enjoy his garden.

I trust that this message has shown the love that Christ has for His bride, the church. The Holy Spirit used an actual man and woman, Solomon and Shulamith, with fairly sensual language, to picture a royal wedding.

Ephesian 5:25-33

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.