

THE SHULAMITE'S BEAUTY

TEXT: SONG OF SOLOMON 6:4-9

Introduction:

1. We have noted that one of the problems interpreting this beautiful love poem is that it is often difficult figuring out who is speaking.
2. For example, some commentators teach that King Solomon is speaking here in 6:4ff. According to some Bible teachers, this is Solomon's last effort to try and woo the Shulamite away from her beloved shepherd.
3. "Now comes the fiercest time of testing. Solomon, evidently moved to jealousy of the shepherd who has won the heart of the woman he himself covets, suddenly appears and begins actively to court the Shulamite with flattery" (John Phillips. *Exploring the Song of Solomon*).
4. However, I believe it is not King Solomon, but the shepherd who is speaking. In chapters 6 and 7 it is clear that the speaker is using very similar language to the speaker in chapter 4. For example:
 - "thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead" (6:5)
 - "thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead" (4:1)
 - "Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them" (6:6).
 - "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them" (4:2).
 - "As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks" (6:7).
 - "Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks" (4:3b).
 - "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins" (7:3).
 - "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins..." (4:5).
5. Therefore, it appears that the same man is speaking, and this man is not King Solomon, but the shepherd.
6. From this point to the end of the book there is unbroken communion between the shepherd and his beloved Shulamite.

I. THE COMELY SHULAMITE (6:4)

1. “Comely” is an old-fashioned word which means, “pleasing and wholesome in appearance; attractive.”
2. The Shulamite had once again declared her love for her shepherd (6:3), and the shepherd responded to her beloved by saying, “Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem...” (6:4).
3. “Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah...” (6:4). “Tirzah” (6:4) was a city known for its great beauty. It was an old Canaanite royal city (Joshua 12:24) and later became the royal residence of the kings of Israel, after the division of the kingdom, and up until King Omri built a new capital in Samaria. From that point on Samaria became the capital of the Northern Kingdom. But before the reign of King Omri, Tirzah was where the king of Israel lived.
4. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, “Tirzah” means “pleasantness.” So the shepherd was telling the Shulamite, “Thou art beautiful, O my love” and pleasant like Tirzah and “comely as Jerusalem” (6:4).
5. “Jerusalem” means “founded in peace” (Scofield), and was King Solomon’s great metropolis. “Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?” (Lam. 2:15b).
6. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:2).
7. The Shulamite was “terrible as an army with banners” (6:4b). “Terrible” means the Shulamite was imposing. She was awe-inspiring. Her beauty was breathtaking (cf. 6:5a).
8. The “army with banners” metaphor suggests that the beautiful Shulamite conquered his heart (6:4; cf. 6:10b).
9. Arthur G. Clarke said, “Oh, that the world could see the church of God as a bannered host united under the one divinely-appointed Leader! (Cf. Josh. 5:13-15). What a power for God she would then be in this world!” (*The Song of Songs*).
10. As we have noted, the shepherd is using the same language here that he used back in chapter 4 (vss. 1-3). In 4:1 he said she had “dove’s eyes.” Here in 6:5 he again mentions her eyes.

11. “Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead” (6:5).
12. “This is the language of the Heavenly Bridegroom to his spouse. In great condescension, he speaks to her, and bids her take note that her eyes have overcome him” (CH Spurgeon, *The Most Holy Place*).
13. In 4:1 the shepherd says the Shulamite’s hair is as a flock of goats from Mount Gilead, and he says basically the same thing in 6:5.
14. “The rippled sheen of her hair resembles a flock of goats moving together down the side of Mount Gilead in the sunshine” (William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*).
15. First Corinthians 11:15 says, “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.”
16. It is a shame that so many modern women have adopted mannish hairstyles and have cut off their “glory.” John R Rice said, “If women only knew the charm and beauty of long hair to intelligent men and the reverence it inspires for godly women, they would never cut their hair” (*Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives, and Women Preachers*).
17. “Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, 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” (6:6, 7).
18. The shepherd praises the Shulamite for her beauty, her eyes, her hair, her teeth, and her temples within her locks, just as he did in chapter 4.

II. THE POLYGAMOUS KING (6:8)

1. Song of Solomon 6:8 refers to King Solomon’s harem. The number of women in the harem seems to indicate that this a much earlier period in Solomon’s reign than that described in I Kings 11:1-3, where we are told King Solomon “had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.”
2. This is why King Solomon cannot be the Shulamite’s beloved. “This verse clinches the argument that Solomon

cannot possibly be a type of Christ in this song. Christ had only one Bride” (Phillips, *Exploring the Song of Solomon*).

3. You may recall Song of Solomon 3:11 refers to King Solomon’s “espousals,” a reminder of King Solomon’s polygamy.
4. In the Song of Solomon, King Solomon represents the tempter; the Shulamite represents the church, and the shepherd represents Christ the good shepherd.
5. To King Solomon, the Shulamite would be just another attractive addition to his harem (6:8). But to the shepherd she would be “the only one” (6:9).

III. AN UNDEFILED BRIDE (6:9; cf. 5:2)

1. In the Old Testament Hebrew, the word “undefiled” means, “without blemish, perfect, upright, without spot, uprightly, whole, sincerely, complete, and full.”
2. In the New Testament Greek, the word translated “undefiled” means, “unsoiled.”
3. The Hebrew word translated undefiled means, “without spot or blemish.”
4. The church is described in Ephesians 5:27 as “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
5. The Shulamite is an Old Testament picture of the New Testament church.
6. The shepherd declares how much his Shulamite was admired, not only by him, but by all that had acquaintance with her – her mother, the daughters of Jerusalem, and even the queens and the concubines (6:9).
7. They all blessed her and praised her. Today the church is either despised or ignored by the world. But when Christ returns, He shall be “glorified in his saints” (II Thess. 1:10).
8. In the meantime, we must be careful to give a good testimony to the world.
9. Our Lord said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

10. The apostle Paul said, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6).
11. First Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”
12. One of the qualifications for a pastor is, “Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without” (I Tim. 3:7).
13. The Shulamite had a good report (6:9).

CONCLUSION:

Matthew Henry said, ““When the church preserves her purity she secures her honour and victory; when she is *fair as the moon*, and *clear as the sun*, she is truly great and formidable.”