

NOTES ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON (1:7-11)

Daniel E. Parks

The Banquet (1:2-2:7)

[The Shulamite, having spoken to the daughters of Jerusalem in 1:5-6, now speaks to her husband]

1:7 Tell me, O you whom I love, ... | The Shulamite had spoken to the “daughters of Jerusalem” in the preceding two verses (vv.5f), telling them that she had been greatly persecuted and darkened by those who forced her from her own vineyard and into their own. She here returns to speaking to her Beloved, addressing him as “you whom I love”. She with these words would have him know that all that she had suffered had not diminished her love for him. So it is with saints to Christ. All that they suffer when driven from His presence does not diminish their love to Him. Yea, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder!” She therefore pleads “Tell me, O you whom I love, ...

... **Where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. ...** | Note the good opinion that saints have of Christ. They know that He is the Good Shepherd, and that He is faithful to daily feed His flock in green pastures and to provide rest for it in the heat of the day. The Shulamite now cites her reason for her question:

... **For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?** | Here is described the condition of saints when driven from Christ’s flock and into the flocks of their persecutors. They are made to be like a harlot in false religions. This is against their own will, for they do not desire to be viewed as deserters of Christ. They therefore ask “Why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?”

1. This “one who veils herself” is a harlot. (She is “one that turneth aside” in KJV, which aptly describes the conduct of a harlot, not of Christ’s wife.) The Hebrew word here employed means “to cover, enwrap, wrap oneself, envelop oneself” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon*). It is elsewhere used of one who is covered with shame and disgrace (Psalm 109:29; 89:45), reproach and dishonor (Psalm 71:13). One sort of woman who would veil herself with these would be a prostitute, as when “Judah thought Tamar was a harlot, because she had covered her face” with a veil (Genesis 38:14f). This is fitting attire for those who are in “the flocks of your companions”.

2. These “flocks of your companions” are the churches of false shepherds. These shepherds are *false* companions of Christ pretending to be His *true* companions.

i. Christ speaks of His sheep under these false shepherds in Jeremiah 50:6: “My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray; they have turned them away on the mountains.

They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place.”

ii. Christ speaks of these false shepherds over His sheep in Jeremiah 23:1-2: “1 ‘Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!’ says Jehovah. 2 Therefore thus says Jehovah Elohim of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: ‘You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,’ says Jehovah.”

[The Beloved]

Christ here speaks for the first time in this Song.

(However, some commentators assign v.8 to the Shulamite’s attendants.) He does so in response to His wife’s question: mildly rebuking her ignorance (v.8a); sweetly expressing her status (v.8a), graciously answering her question (v.8c); briefly describing her beauty (vv.9f).

1:8 If you do not know, ... | This is Christ’s mild rebuke regarding His wife’s question “Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon” (v.7a). Sometimes our questions to Christ reveal our ignorance of the obvious. This was evidenced in a conversation between Jesus and His apostles at the end of His earthly ministry (John 14:7-9): “7 [Jesus said,] ‘If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on *you know Him and have seen Him* [emphasis added].’

8 Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’ 9 Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father?”’” Note the mildness of Jesus’ rebuke to Philip. He shows the same mildness in here rebuking the Shulamite. He will state the obvious means of finding His flock after addressing her as ...

... **O fairest among women, ...** | (The Hebrew word here translated *fair* means “beautiful”, not “moderately good; acceptable or satisfactory”. This Hebrew word is translated *beautiful* in 6:4 and 7:1.)

1. Christ here speaks of His wife as the most beautiful woman there is. This is despite the fact that her skin had been greatly darkened by being forced to work in the sun and by the wounds and bruises she had suffered from her persecutors (v.6). (And is not Christ beautiful to His people even when they see Him covered in wounds and bruises?) This is because, when Christ looks upon His church, He sees her arrayed in His grace, His goodness, His

righteousness, and His holiness. Surely the woman arrayed in these is the most beautiful woman ever.

2. Christ repeatedly speaks of how fair or beautiful His wife is – using the same Hebrew word in these instances: “Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! ...” (1:15); “O my love, you are ... beautiful” (6:4). Surely the godly husband of a godly wife would imitate Christ in this regard!

-- Christ now states the obvious means of finding His flock:

... ***Follow in the footsteps of the flock, ...*** | Here is the first means cited for finding where Christ feeds His flock and gives rest to it: follow His flock, because they are following Him to this place. The Good Shepherd says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27). “And when He brings out His own sheep [from the fold], He goes before them; and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice” (John 10:4). Heed them when they beckon, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths” (Isaiah 2:3).

... ***And feed your little goats beside the shepherds’ tents.*** | Here is the second means cited for finding where Christ feeds His flock and gives rest to it: sit under the ministry of faithful shepherds, who are gospel preachers, Christ’s under-shepherds – and bring your little children with you! Christ does not feed His sheep or give rest to them under the ministries of legalists leading to the law, freewillers leading to works, sabbatarians leading to a weekday, pharisees leading to self-righteousness and holier-than-thouness, sacramentalists leading to water or an altar or some other place where they claim saving grace is conferred by them.

1:9 I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh’s chariots. | (The Hebrew word here translated *filly* [*company of horses* in KJV] means “mare”, and is found only here in the Old Testament. Also, the Hebrew word is singular in number.) Solomon here probably alludes to a mare and to chariots given to him by Pharaoh, King of Egypt. (Solomon was married to Pharaoh’s daughter [1 Kings 9:16].) Christ may find many points of comparison between a horse and His wife, including beauty, gracefulness, strength, boldness, usefulness.

1:10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. | It is here intimated that the heads of Solomon’s horses were lavishly decorated. Regarding ancient women’s heads being lavishly decorated, many commentators here cite Adam Olearius (1599-1671), German ambassador to the Shah of Safavid Persia (present-day Iran), saying that Persian

ladies wear two or three rows of pearls round the head, beginning on the forehead and descending down to the cheeks and under the chin, so that their faces seem to be set in pearls. One can see in this description a similarity to the manner in which Christ arrayed and adorned the head of His wife (Ezekiel 16:11-13): “**11** I adorned you with ornaments, ... and [put] a chain on your neck. **12** And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head.

13 Thus you were adorned with gold and silver” All these beautiful pieces of jewelry found on the head of Christ’s wife speak of the graces with which He has arrayed and adorned her.

1:11 We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver.

1. Some commentators assign these words to the daughters of Jerusalem, the Shulamite’s attendants, rather than to Solomon (representing Christ), because the speaker here changes from the singular “I” to the plural “We”. But perhaps it is better to assign these words to Christ, as speaking for the triune God, including not only Himself but also God the Father and the Holy Spirit.
2. Christ here speaks of the graces with which the Holy Trinity would adorn and array His wife in this New Testament day. (Note the future tense of the verb.) These are in addition to those with which He had adorned and arrayed her in the Old Testament day (see v.10). These new graces include:
 - i. the New Covenant, which abrogated and replaced the Old Covenant
 - ii. The Gospel, which is more glorious than the law
 - iii. Christian Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which are more glorious ordinances than those of the law
 - iv. Christ as Prophet, who is a greater prophet than Moses and all other prophets who preceded Him
 - v. Christ as Priest, who is a greater priest than Aaron and all other priests who preceded Him
 - vi. Christ as King, who is a greater king than David and all other kings who preceded Him
 - vii. Christ as the Sacrifice, who is a greater sacrifice than those which preceded Him
 - viii. Christ as the Sabbath and Rest, who is a greater sabbath than the seventh day and all other days of rest that preceded Him
3. Furthermore, these graces from the Triune God to His church far surpass the ornaments that could have been given to the Shulamite by the daughters of Jerusalem.