

The Song of Solomon — The Progression of Love, and the Bride in Revelation 21

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The Song of Songs — What the World Cannot Give

Ecclesiastes is a book about emptiness. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity — soap bubbles of soap bubbles, as one once put it. All the attractive things the world offers, all its excitement, all its fads and trends: when the hand closes on them, there is nothing there. The Song of Solomon fills what Ecclesiastes empties, because the Song is about the person of Christ. And a person is not a soap bubble. He is real, He is substantial, He satisfies.

The Song of Songs — not a song, but the song, the best of songs — belongs not to the singer but to Solomon, the type of Christ in His millennial reign. And from its very first verse it introduces a love that is better than wine. Wine in Scripture is a picture of earthly joy. The bride says His love is better. She is comparing and finding everything else inferior. His name is as ointment poured forth — there is a fragrance in the person of Christ that ascends to God and gladdens every heart that is truly His. Therefore do the virgins love thee: those who have not given their hearts to another, who have no competing object, who love this one blessed person.

Three Verses, and the Lesson They Teach Together

Three verses in the Song of Solomon are almost identical, and their differences contain the whole lesson of the book. Song of Solomon 2:16: my beloved is mine, and I am his. He feedeth among the lilies. Song of Solomon 6:3: I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feedeth among the lilies. Song of

Solomon 7:10: I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

In the first verse, the order is: my beloved is mine — I get what I want first — and I am his — he gets what he wants second. Something for me, something for him, I go first. It is a precious verse. But notice where it ends: He feedeth among the lilies. He is out there where the lilies grow. She is not. There is still a separation between where she is and where he is.

In the second verse, the order has reversed: I am my beloved's — he gets his portion first — and my beloved is mine — I get mine second. A lesson has been learned. It is more important that he should get what he is interested in than that she should get what she wants. And yet He still feedeth among the lilies. She still has something to learn about being where He is.

In the third verse, the order completes the progression: I am my beloved's — he gets his portion — and his desire is toward me. Where is the part where she gets her portion? It is not in this verse. There is something for him, and something for him again. That is the highest and truest place. And in the eighth chapter, she comes up out of the wilderness leaning upon her beloved. She is no longer saying, he feedeth among the lilies and I am not there. She is there with him, leaning on him. She has gone from asking to receive to wholly giving, from My beloved is mine to I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? — Song of Solomon 8:5

Chapter 1 and Chapter 8 — The Language That Turns Around

The first chapter of the Song and the last chapter share the same vocabulary, but the perspective has inverted. Chapter 1, verse 2: let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. She is being kissed. Chapter 8, verse 1: I would kiss thee. Now she is kissing. Chapter 1: thy love is better than wine — she is drinking his wine, enjoying what he gives. Chapter 8: I would cause thee to drink of the spiced wine

of the juice of my pomegranate — she is giving, offering the full fruitfulness of her life to him. Chapter 1, verse 4: draw me, we will run after thee — a beautiful exercise, a heart being drawn. Chapter 8, verse 5: who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved — she has been drawn all the way out.

The progression is not doctrine learned but love deepened. The lesson of the Song is not information about Christ but transformation by the contemplation of Christ. As we behold His face, 2 Corinthians 3 tells us, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Looking at the loveliness of our Lord Jesus Christ turns us into leaners. It is a heart lesson, not a head lesson. And the world is not a green pasture — it is an empty wilderness. But who is this that cometh up from the wilderness? Not fleeing it, not conquered by it, but coming up out of it — leaning upon the beloved.

Revelation 21 — The Bride, the Lamb's Wife, in Her Glory

Revelation 21:9–27 completes the picture. One of the seven angels who had poured out the last plagues says: come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carries John in the Spirit to a great and high mountain — the place of heavenly visions, in contrast to the wilderness where Babylon the false bride had been shown. And he sees the holy city, new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Her shining was like unto a stone most precious, clear as crystal. That word shining is used in only one other place in the New Testament — Philippians 2:15, where believers are described as shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The city shines because she has been where the lilies grow. She has come up from the wilderness leaning on the beloved. She shines with His glory, because as we behold His face we are changed into the same image.

The wall is great and high — nothing can ever enter that city to defile it. The gates are twelve, with the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

God never forgets His earthly people, and they are ever before Him even in the fulfilment that belongs to the church. The foundations bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb — the church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone. The city is foursquare, its length and breadth and height equal — a perfect cube, as was the holy of holies in Solomon's temple. And the city has no need of the sun or the moon, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Not day and not night but something better than both — the Lamb Himself, the light that never fails, the beloved who feedeth among the lilies, now at last with His bride where He has always been.