

22 – Song of Solomon: My Beloved!

- The first verse **identifies Solomon as its writer**. It was written when he was younger, and is a huge contrast to Ecclesiastes. It is actually a **story told in song (like an opera)**. It is actually called the Book of Canticles (little song). The book is composed of several “little songs.”
- The *interpretation, not the inspiration of this book, causes difficulty*. Some feel it should not be in the Bible; however, it is included in the canon of Scripture. This book is **inspired**; it was part of the Scriptures when Jesus was on the earth. He put His seal of approval on the scriptures at that time when He said, “The Scripture cannot be broken.” (John 10:35) (see 2 Tim 3:16)
- It is a neglected book. The carnal Christian will misunderstand and misinterpret it. It is greatly abused by those who don’t understand it. **“This little book is personal. It is not for the ear of the unsaved man. But for the man who has a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.” (McGee)**
- Origen and Jerome indicate that the Jews would not permit their young men to read this book until they were 30 years old. They felt there was the danger of reading into it the suggestive, vulgar and sensuous. On the contrary, this is a wonderful picture of the beauty of physical, human, wedded love.
- The Jews called the Song of Solomon **the Holy of Holies of Scripture**. Not everyone was permitted inside its sacred enclosure. Some will abuse it, but if you love Jesus, this book will mean a great deal to you.
- This is perhaps the **most difficult and mysterious book** in the Bible. It has caused more diverse opinions over interpretation than any other biblical work. (Over 500 commentaries in the first 1700 years)
- There have been **four different and important meanings** found in this book:
 1. **The glory of wedded love as a God-given institution**. The Jews taught that it reveals the heart of a satisfied husband and that of a devoted wife. People today know a lot about sex, but little about love.
 2. **The love of Jehovah for Israel**. The prophets spoke of Israel as the wife of Jehovah. Hosea dwells on that theme. Idolatry in Israel is likened to a breach in wedded love.
 3. **A picture of Christ and the church**. The church is the bride of Christ. In this book God uses a picture of human affection to convey to our worldly and corrupt hearts His great love.
 4. **The communion of Christ and the individual believer**. It portrays the love of Christ for the individual and the soul's communion with Christ. It is a *personal relationship* with Jesus Christ—one that is filled with passion. **God uses the marriage analogy to convey his love for Israel as the “wife of God” and the great love of Jesus for the “Bride of Christ” throughout scripture**. We have corrupted marriage so much we don’t understand this like God wishes us to. This book helps us know this kind of love.
- There is some speculation that this girl is actually **Abishag**, who was selected to keep King David warm during his last years (that relationship was not sexual). Solomon was deeply attached to her. Adonijah tried to take her as his wife, and Solomon had Benaiah kill Adonijah. She was a country girl, a natural beauty. Abishag seems to fit the profile of the “Shulamite,” but we don’t know if she is the one here.
- **Psalm 45 is linked to this book. It prophetically speaks of the Messiah and His bride.**



Highlights

This story is a **series of scenes in a drama not told in chronological sequence**. It uses *antiphony*: one character speaks and another responds. Several characters: the young bride (the Shulamite, *some believe this actually means the king's wife, or the queen, “Mrs. Solomon”*), the daughters of Jerusalem, the bridegroom, and the Shulamite's family. In the family there is the father (who is dead), the mother, two daughters, and two or more sons. **“Beloved”** is the name for Him; **“love”** is the name for her. The book can be divided into several parts, each a short story in itself:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The Royal Wedding Relived 1 – 2:7 | 5. The King’s Meditation on His Bride 6:4-7:10 |
| 2. The Bride’s Courtship Reminiscences 2:8 –3:5 | 6. The Bride Longs to See Her Old Home 7:2-8:4 |
| 3. The Occasion of Betrothal Recalled 3:6-5:1 | 7. The Renewal of Love at Lebanon 8:5-8:14 |
| 4. The Bride’s Troubled Dream Related 5:2-6:3 | |

- The **setting is the palace in Jerusalem**, and some of the scenes are flashbacks. This is similar to the Greek drama where a chorus talks back and forth to the protagonists of the play. The daughters of Jerusalem carry along the tempo of the story. These dialogues are to be sung.
- The Shulamite says, *"Do not look upon me, because I am dark, Because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me the keeper of the vineyards, But my own vineyard I have not kept."* (1:6) The oldest daughter of this poor family is like Cinderella, forced by her brothers to keep the vineyard and tend sheep. She's darkened with sunburn from working in the vineyard. Apparently they lived in the hill country of Ephraim, and were tenant farmers. *"Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon; He leased the vineyard to keepers; Everyone was to bring for its fruit a thousand silver coins."* (8:11)
- This is the **setting where the first scene takes place**. The girl is sunburned and embarrassed. In that day a sunburn meant you were a laborer, a commoner. The women in the court wanted to keep their skin as fair as they could. She also says that she was unable to keep her own vineyard. Although a natural beauty, this probably means she hadn't been able to keep herself as lovely as she'd like.
- She worked along a caravan route. She would see the caravans of merchants and court men and women that passed by going between Jerusalem and Damascus. They didn't have a sunburn. They had a canopy over them as they traveled on camels or on elephants. She saw the beautiful jewels and satins, and smelled the frankincense and myrrh. *[A wonderful picture of Jesus both in His birth and in His death. They brought Him myrrh as a gift when He was born; when He was dead, they brought myrrh to put on His body. There are wonderful spiritual pictures here, truths that will draw us to the person of Christ.]*
- One day while tending her sheep, a handsome shepherd appeared. He fell in love with her. **(This is a picture of Christ and the church.)** The love song is full of beautiful poetic language. It is a picture of the love of Christ for the church, and for each individual. Finally she gave her heart to the shepherd, and they were very much in love. *(All she knew of him was that he was a shepherd, but evidently a very prominent one.)* He was an unusual shepherd. He didn't have any sheep she could see, and she asked him about it. One day he announced he was going away but he would return. *[This is an obvious parallel to the words of Jesus: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3)]*
- The days passed and she waited. Her family and friends began to ridicule her. They said, "You are just a simple, country girl taken in by him." *["This is exactly what Peter said would happen in our time: "...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)]* Yet she trusted him. She loved him. She dreamed of him. *[a note to us: Do we really miss Jesus? Do we long for Him?]*
- One restless night she noticed a fragrance in the room. In that day it was a custom that a lover would put some myrrh or frankincense in the opening to the door handle. She smelled the perfume and went to the door. She knew that he had been there. She knew that he really hadn't forgotten. Now she knew that her lover was near. *[The Lord Jesus said, "... Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20) "... I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)]*
- One day she is working in the vineyard and she sees a pillar of smoke rising down the road. The cry is heard, "Behold, King Solomon is coming!" But she is busy, and doesn't know King Solomon. Then someone comes to her excitedly and says, "King Solomon is asking for you!" And she says, "Asking for me? I don't know King Solomon. I've never met him, why would he ask for me?" So she is brought into the presence of King Solomon, who just happens to be her shepherd, and he has come for her. *["For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) Jesus has promised that He is coming again for us. One of these days He is going to call us out of this world.]*

There are so many beautiful verses that are a lovely analogy and tribute of Jesus' love for us, and our love for Him in return. *"Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; The time of singing has come, And the voice of the turtledove Is heard in our land."* (2:10-12) Will we be ready to "come away" with Jesus when He returns, or do we love this earth too much? *"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."* (2:4) The love of Jesus for us is our protection, our covering. **May these verses be our heart song as we await His return.** Use this as a wonderful personal devotion about our love for Jesus, and His for us.