

THE SHEPHERD SPEAKS

TEXT: SONG OF SOLOMON 4:1—5:1

Introduction:

1. It is evident that the scene changes in chapter 4.
2. The procession has moved on and apparently King Solomon has too.
3. I have mentioned in previous messages that some commentators teach that the shepherd and Solomon are one and the same. I do not think so.
4. In the Song of Solomon, sometimes it is difficult to discern who is speaking.
5. The shepherd now appears in chapter 4, and I believe it is the shepherd who is speaking.
6. And it is he who is speaking up to verse 15. Then in 4:16, the Shulamite speaks. And in 5:1 the shepherd speaks again.
7. Once again, I want to stress that the Song of Solomon is poetic, and it has a twofold interpretation: Primarily, the book is an expression of pure marital love as ordained by God in creation. The secondary and larger interpretation is of the Lord Jesus Christ and His heavenly bride, the Church.
8. The church is referred to as the bride of Christ in II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-33; and Revelation 19:7-9.

I. THE RADIANCE OF THE SHULAMITE (4:1-6).

1. Using beautiful poetic language, the shepherd describes his beloved Shulamite's charms.
2. The church may not look like much to worldly people but in the eyes of the Shepherd she is quite beautiful (4:1-5).
3. Ephesians 5:27 says that the Lord looks upon His church and sees us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.
4. The Shulamite had "doves' eyes" (4:1; cf. 1:15). The eye is the most expressive member of the human body, sometimes called "the mirror of the soul," reflecting the secrets of the heart.
5. The Shulamite has doves' eyes. In the Bible, the dove represents the Holy Spirit. When our Lord was baptized in the Jordan River, we are told that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him "like a dove" (Matt. 3:16).
6. So when Christ looks at His church, He sees the Holy Spirit indwelling every believer. One preacher wrote, "How wonderful it would be if, every time the Lord Jesus looked at

us, He could see that wonderful Holy Spirit of love, joy, peace, grace, truth, wisdom, faith, and power shining out of our eyes” (John Phillips).

7. Next, the shepherd compliments the Shulamite on her beautiful, long hair. He likens her long flowing locks to a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead (4:1b).
8. In the Bible, a woman’s hair is the symbol of her glory (I Cor. 11:14, 15).
9. Next, the shepherd compares the Shulamite’s teeth to a flock of sheep that are even shorn (4:2). There were no dentists back in those days and it was rare for a man or a woman to have beautiful white teeth.
10. The Shulamite’s teeth were perfect. There was nothing to mar her beautiful smile. There should be nothing in the life of a believer to mar his smile. We should be so filled with the Holy Spirit that we are always radiating joy and gladness.
11. In verse 3, the shepherd says, “Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet...” Like the eye, the mouth is also a very expressive part of the face. The lips can smile or frown. The mouth can register hardness or tenderness, sorrow or mirth, pain or surprise, humor or terror.
12. Abraham Lincoln once said that he distrusted a certain man. One of his aides asked him why. President Lincoln said, “I do not like his looks.” The aide replied, “But surely no man is responsible for his looks.” Mr. Lincoln said, “After the age of 40, every man is responsible for his looks.”
13. We had a fellow who worked in our church who was always frowning and scowling. This is a poor testimony for a Christian.
14. It is not just our lips that are important – it is what comes out of our lips that is even more important. The shepherd said, “And thy speech is comely” (4:3). Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”
15. The Shulamite’s temples (including her cheeks) were ruby colored like a piece of pomegranate (4:3b).
16. The Shulamite carried herself with poise and dignity. She bore herself with strength of character. Her neck was “like the tower of David builded for an armory” (4:4).

17. Her “two breasts were like two young roes that are twins...” (4:5). In his commentary on the Song of Solomon, Arthur G. Clarke wrote, “It is well to remind ourselves here that such a description of a female’s physical attractions is not to be judged by our Western standards...Among Orientals it is not considered immodest or unbecoming to refer to the physical features mentioned...The description here shows that the maturity of womanhood has been reached and capability to fulfill in due course the duties of motherhood” (*The Song of Songs*).
18. These descriptive terms suggest delicate and tender beauty.
19. “The mountain of myrrh” and “the hill of frankincense” appear to be references to the wonderful place where the shepherd would feed his flock.
20. But being poetic and allegorical it can also describe heaven when the church will be united her beloved shepherd. “Until the day break...” (4:6) would refer to the rapture when we will be translated into heaven.

II. THE PERFECTIONS OF THE SHULAMITE (4:7-15).

1. “There is no spot in thee” (4:7). Again we are reminded of Ephesians 5:27.
2. Note the words in Eph. 5:27, “that He might present it to Himself...” (this is still future). And, “but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
3. The church might be blemished now but it will not be blemished in heaven when she is presented as a spotless and holy bride to Christ.
4. There are three aspects of sanctification in the life of a Christian. When a Christian gets saved he is holy positionally. Then he grows in holiness as he becomes more like the Lord Jesus Christ. This is called “progressive sanctification.”
5. Then someday we will all be in heaven where there is no sin. We will have glorified resurrection bodies. This is called “glorification.”
6. Sometimes people ask me if I believe in so-called “sinless perfection.” I say, “Yes – when we get to heaven.”
7. Christ sees His church, His bride, with no blemish in her at all. Christ sees the church, not as she appears now, in this world of

- sin, but as she will be in that glorious day when she will be presented as His redeemed, justified, and sanctified bride.
8. First John 3:2 says, “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him.”
 9. The shepherd tells the Shulamite, “Come with me...” (4:8). Since they were not in Lebanon at that time the language appears to be figurative and poetic, describing what we often call a “mountain top experience.”
 10. The shepherd tells the Shulamite that she had “ravished” his heart (4:9). Romans 5:8 says that, “God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
 11. First John 4:19 says, “We love Him, because He first loved us.”
 12. The Shulamite was betrothed to the shepherd but they had not yet consummated their marriage. That is why he calls her, “my sister” as well as “my spouse” (4:9).
 13. This is very interesting. When the Bible describes the church in its present state it is referred to as a family. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).
 14. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14).
 15. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26).
 16. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2).
 17. Ephesians 2:19 says we are “of the household (family) of God,” and Ephesians 3:15 refers to the “family” of God.
 18. So when the Bible describes the church in its present state it is referred to as a family; but when the Bible refers to the church in its future state it is called the bride of Christ (see II Corinthians 11:2 and Revelation 19:7-9).
 19. It has been truly said that the love between Christ and His church is so sacred that human language can hardly express it (4:10, 11).
 20. The shepherd has been talking to the Shulamite about her person, her perfections, her position, her passion, and now her protection (4:12).

21. In verses 13 through 15, the shepherd uses poetic language in expressing his desire to consummate their marriage. This is a beautiful picture of the paradise that awaits the church at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19).
22. The Shulamite invites the shepherd into the garden (4:16). Note that it is “his (the shepherd’s) garden” (4:16).
23. In 5:1, the shepherd responds to the Shulamite’s invitation and enters the garden.
24. The latter part of 5:1 may be an anonymous encouragement from various spectators, or it could be the voice of God adding His blessing to their union – “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved” (5:1b).

III. THE PROTECTION OF THE SHULAMITE (4:12—5:1).

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CONCLUSION:

1. It is interesting to note that the Shulamite’s words and responses are much shorter and less magnificent than the shepherd’s. He has much to say; she says very little.
2. 4:16 is a quick little prayer compared to the beautiful outpouring from the heart of the shepherd.
3. And so it seems that our Shepherd has much more to say to us than we ever say to Him. Let us try and remedy that tonight as we gather for prayer.