

Introduction: Song of Songs
Song of Solomon 1:1; 1 Corinthians 10:11-12
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Greg L. Price

There are various analogies that are used in Scripture to describe the union and communion that exists between Jesus Christ and believers. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who feeds and leads His sheep. Jesus is the Vine who gives life to believing branches. Jesus is the King who rules over and defends believers as citizens of His Kingdom. Jesus is the Bread of Life who nourishes and strengthens believers. Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone who is united to believers as living stones to form a holy temple in which to worship our God. But, dear ones, there is not a more precious and intimate analogy and display of the believer's union and communion with Jesus Christ than Him being the Heavenly Husband who loved and chose an unworthy, sinful bride in order to redeem her, purify her, and to be united to her forever in the glories of His eternal home.

All of history from its very beginning revolves around this love story. It is the greatest love story ever told—every other love story fails to reach even the bottom of the feet of this love story by comparison. It is this love story that is the substance of the Song of Solomon (“the song of songs”)—the infinite grace of Jesus Christ for a bride whom He loved not because of her beauty, righteousness, wisdom, or wealth, but in spite of her ugliness due to sin, her moral depravity, her foolishness, and her utter poverty. She had nothing to give Him except her corruption, and He who knew no sin took upon Himself her sin and bore God's holy wrath that she might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Today we begin a scriptural journey into this unfathomable love story. We will not be able to reach the depths or climb to the heights of Christ's love for you who trust in Him, but we will (by God's grace) seek to understand as much as we can of this love story. We do not obey the Lord Jesus and find in Him our greatest delight because we do not understand the unbreakable cords of His perfect and sacrificial love. If we did, we would be transformed by it. There would be no sacrifice on our parts too great for such a glorious Savior. That in part is why the Holy Spirit has included in the sacred canon of Scripture this divine love song—the Song of Solomon.

The sermon today is an introduction to the Song of Solomon and will focus upon the following two main points in the first verse: (1) The Author; (2) The Supreme Love Song.

I. The Author.

A. The divine author of this love song is the Holy Spirit.

1. The Song of Solomon was included in the sacred canon of Scripture that was received by the Lord Jesus and the apostles (John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Its canonicity is uncontested by the Old Testament and the New Testament Church. Though there is no specific citation from this inspired song in the New Testament, the allusions to it are surely clear (as in Ephesians 5:32). The Song of Solomon is likewise “a great mystery” in portraying the love of Christ for His bride.

2. God's name (Yah) is only mentioned once (Song 8:6—literally, “a flame of Yah” shortened from Yahweh). However, consider the expressive names of the Lord Jesus found in this love song: king, rose of Sharon, lily of the valleys, beloved, my love, etc.

B. The human author used by the Holy Spirit to pen this love song is Solomon, the King of Israel and son of David (Song 1:1).

1. Solomon was also the human author of Proverbs (Proverbs 1:1) and Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 1:1). Solomon's wealth was unrivaled (2 Chronicles 1:15) as was his wisdom (1 Kings 3:12). He

was prolific in his building projects (the temple etc.), his knowledge of nature, his musical abilities, and kings and queens came from far away (Queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 10) to hear and to see the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 4:30-34).

2. Here was the wisest mere man that ever lived, and yet he had one sinful weakness more than any other that the enemy targeted to draw him away from faithfulness to the Lord God of Israel—lust. This is the testimony of Scripture (1 Kings 11:1-4).

3. The purpose of Ecclesiastes was to demonstrate that all that Solomon had was vanity (a vanishing vapor) without the Lord (Ecclesiastes 1:2). The things of this world (no matter what you gain) are perishing. Only Jesus endures (Philippians 1:21).

4. Solomon also learned that the lusts of the flesh and sexual pleasure are likewise nothing without the Lord. Everywhere people seek to satisfy their sexual desires, but like an addiction to drugs, they are never satisfied. The desires only grow like a cancer to eat them alive. It is against this backdrop that this love song was written—to show the supreme love of all loves (the love of Christ for His bride) which surpasses all human love upon earth (even marital love) and alone gives meaning to human love and marital love. This love song may very well be Solomon’s testimony to all who will hear as to what he learned by the grace and mercy of God from his great fall in feeding all his sexual desires.

5. We learn more from being humbled by our sin than from being exalted in pride by our mere outward obedience (this was true of Solomon). Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon are written so that you might not repeat Solomon’s backsliding ways. Solomon writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that you might know that supreme love of Jesus Christ and daily live in His love. He is pleading with you today. If he could fall (the wisest of all men), so can you—so can I (1 Corinthians 10:11-12).

II. The Supreme Love Song.

A. How people become so warm and emotional over popular love songs (most of which are simply expressing lust and not true sacrificial love, which is the biblical meaning of *agape* love exemplified in Jesus Christ, Ephesians 5:25). Solomon in verse 1 calls this love song, “the song of songs.” This in Hebrew is the way of expressing the supreme (superlative) song of all the songs that he composed (just as “the holy of holies”= the supreme place of holiness that God designated at that time upon earth which pointed to the abode of God in heaven; and just as “the King of kings and Lord of lords”= the supreme King and Lord).

B. This is an inspired love song between the Lord Jesus and His Church. Though it is a canonical love song, the Holy Spirit did not include it in the canonical hymnal (the Psalter), which supplies us with the inspired psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that we are commanded to use in our worship to Him (Ephesians 5:19—which are all titles used at the beginning of the various Psalms in the Psalter.). When God gives to us an inspired hymnal (composed of 150 psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs), it is presumption in our own hearts to push it aside as not sufficient (especially when there is no evidence in Scripture that any other inspired songs were used in worship after their composition, 2 Chronicles 29:25-30). Neither the prophets nor the apostles (nor anyone else) was given the spiritual gift of composing new psalms. Jesus sang these 150 inspired songs from the Psalter, as did the apostles and the early church. We are certain that we are offering to God the inspired songs that He has authorized when we sing His Psalms to Him in worship.

C. How is this divine love song to be interpreted? Is it to be understood as based upon actual historical events? Or is it to be understood as an allegory that is figurative of one greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42)?

1. Reasons why this is not based upon actual historical events.

a. If understand in a literal way, the inspired purpose of this “song of songs” becomes a song about mere human love (marital love) rather than divine love. That is not to say that marital

love or marital intimacy is not pure or that they do not glorify God. God ordained marital love and sexual intimacy as something good from the very beginning of creation (Hebrews 13:4). Solomon himself says that married men should be ravished with the wife of their youth (Proverbs 5:18-19). Paul speaks highly of the “due benevolence” (or marital intimacy) that a husband and wife owe to one another (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). But is the purpose of this love song (“the song of songs”) to exalt the benefits of marital intimacy? This certainly seems to be the prevalent view of most ministers today (it has become for many simply a sex manual). But that wasn’t always true in church history. The near universal consensus has been that “the song of songs” is an allegory that uses the expression of human love and marital intimacy as a way to explain the love between Jesus Christ and His Church. This was the position of the early church and the reformation church. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* includes verses from the Song of Solomon concerning Christ and the church in the following places: 10.1, 18.4, 17.3 (as does the *Larger Catechism* in questions 81 and 175). The *Westminster Annotations* (found in “The Argument”) states “the song of songs” is not actual history, but is an allegory:

[G]enerally it is acknowledged ... not as an history, or prophecy (as some conceive it) but as a divine Parable, wherein naturall and visible things allegorize things supernaturall, and under the figures of Solomon and his Love, is shadowed the true Prince of peace, and his rich affections to his Church and people.

b. If this is to be understood as portraying actual historical events, there are a number of problems one will find. For example, Solomon was not a shepherd (1:7). Should a bride approve of other women loving her husband (1:3; 3:10-11)? Should a bride offer her younger sister to her husband (8:8)? Should a husband have multiple wives, concubines, and virgins (6:8-9)? Should a husband hide himself from his wife (3:1; 5:4-6)? Should a husband marry his sister (4:9-12; 5:1-2)? If it is literal, it limits the entire love song to those who are married, but not to those who are young or unmarried. Inspired books in Scripture are intended for the whole church. The entire love song is filled with figures of speech which should move one away from a literal approach.

2. Reasons why this “song of songs” is an allegory.

a. After considering the problems just mentioned, these are not problems at all if it is to be understood as an allegory of Christ and His spiritual bride (as we shall see, for there is a spiritual significance to each of these strange incidents).

b. An allegory is a figurative story that is used to convey spiritual truth. A familiar allegory to many of us is Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. The characters, places, and details of the text are not historical, but are merely literary vehicles for spiritual realities. An allegory is essentially another term for a parable (like that of the Good Samaritan or like that of Prodigal Son or like that of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus).

c. This allegory depicts a very common spiritual truth that is true for both the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church: the marital union by way of the covenant of grace between Christ and His Church (Isaiah 54:5—married at Mt. Sinai; Ezekiel 16:1-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 21:2). The similarity in language and features of this allegory are especially seen in Psalm 45—“A Song of Loves.” Who is this king? Psalm 45:6>Hebrews 1:8—Jesus Christ. Who is the bride? The Church of Jesus Christ.

d. Only the infinite love of Jesus Christ for His Church can truly be called “the song of songs” i.e. the supreme love song of all time (even from eternity to eternity). No other love can measure up to the love of Christ. All other human love fails by comparison. The two main characters of this love song are, therefore, Jesus and His Church. The saints in the Old Testament could benefit from this love song as could especially the saints in the New Testament. This is not a type because it would have to be demonstrated that

the Song of Solomon was actual history (types are based upon actual, true events). This is not a prophecy of church history (like the Book of Revelation)—it is not apocalyptic literature, but rather a love song.

D. This love song depicts in figurative speech the many varied conditions of the Church Visible, the Church Invisible, mere professing Christians, and truly regenerate Christians. The love of Jesus Christ conquers all and overcomes all of the weaknesses, sins, failures, and longings of the bride. The love of Jesus Christ is sovereign in accomplishing the redemption, sanctification, and glorification of His elect bride who will be presented to Him without spot or wrinkle. By the close of this love song, the bride has come to know to a much greater degree the love of her Heavenly Husband for her (Song 8:6-7). You will squirm at times. You will blush at times. You will weep at times. You will rejoice at times. You will be humbled and glorify the Lord at such amazing love that He has for you who are united to Him by faith alone in that marital covenant of grace. As we close, consider the testimony of love that the Rev. Samuel Rutherford came to know and experience through his union with Jesus Christ (may it likewise be ours):

Love, love (I mean Christ's love), is the hottest coal that ever I felt. Oh, but the smoke of it be hot! Cast all the salt sea on it, it will flame; hell cannot quench it; many many waters will not quench love. Christ is turned over to His poor prisoner in a mass and globe of love. I wonder that He should waste so much love upon such a waster as I am; but He is no waster, but abundant in mercy (*Rutherford's Letters*, "Letter CLII", p. 283).

Let's prepare to dive into that bottomless ocean of Christ's love for His Church in the weeks and months ahead.

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