

The Song of Songs Song of Solomon 1:1-17

Song of Solomon 1:1-4 - *“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.*

² *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth - for your love is better than wine.*

³ *Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you.*

⁴ *Draw me away! We will run after you. The king has brought me into his chambers.*

We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.”

Background Notes

In the Hebrew Bible the Song of Solomon is entitled “The Song of Songs,” named after the first words in the book. This book of Scripture is also known from the Latin as the “Canticles,” meaning simply “Songs.”

The first chapter tells us that Solomon was the author of the book, and sets the stage for the theme of the book: “Love and Marriage as God Intended.”

Like Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon is not an easy book to understand and interpret. One thing that can be said for sure about the Song of Solomon: it contains a lot of “love talk.” In fact, down through the years many believers have avoided studying this book of Scripture because, in their minds, it was too sensual. Some ancient rabbis actually said that a Jewish male should not read the Song of Solomon until he was thirty years of age. I’ve read some recent commentaries on the Song of Solomon that, I would say, a male should not read until he is married!

Why did God include this book as part of Holy Scripture? Furthermore, why did God choose Solomon, of all people, to be the author? In reference to his love life, Solomon was certainly not an ideal role model! Wouldn’t it have been more appropriate for the Lord to choose an author who followed the divine pattern for marriage: one man and one woman in life-long faithful marriage?

Doctrinal Points

1. The author of the Song of Solomon is Solomon.

Verse 1 tells us that Solomon is the inspired author of this book of Scripture. Although the Hebrew in verse 1 is sometimes translated “the song of songs which is about Solomon,” the traditional view that Solomon wrote this book is

likely the correct translation. The external evidence of Jewish tradition, as well as the internal evidence of royalty during the days of the united kingdom of Israel, both support the traditional view.

1 Kings 4:32 says that Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. So the Song of Songs is one of the 1005 songs that Solomon wrote. When did Solomon write this Song? Jewish tradition says that Solomon wrote Song when he was a young king and Proverbs in his middle years. Then he finally wrote Ecclesiastes when he was older, when he had experienced all that this world had to offer.

It's appealing to hold the view that Solomon wrote this Song about true love and marital fidelity when he was young, before he got entangled in polygamy. However, the record indicates that Solomon already had a large harem when he wrote the Song of Songs. Song 6:8 says that he already had sixty queens, eighty concubines - and virgins without number. Furthermore, we'll see the harem speaking throughout the Song of Solomon.

Later in his life Solomon had many more wives and concubines: *"And Solomon had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:3)*. So my conclusion is that, as Jewish tradition suggests, Solomon wrote the Song of Songs as a young king - but by the time he wrote he already had many wives and concubines, and a significant number of love affairs.

So why did God choose Solomon of all people to write a book about what true love and romance and marital fidelity are all about? Well, if God had chosen an author who was married to one woman, according to the divine pattern, no doubt critics of the Bible would say: "Oh sure, what does that author know? He hasn't experienced all the pleasures of unrestrained sex. He doesn't have a clue." But because Solomon wrote this book, my answer to the critic would be: "Oh yes he does have a clue! If anyone was an experienced authority on sex, it was Solomon." In the Song, the wisest man who ever lived - Solomon - wrote from experience.

True happiness and love and romance are only found in marital fidelity, according to the divine pattern.

2. The theme of the Song of Solomon is love and marriage.

Song of Solomon 1:5-7 – *"⁵ I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, Like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.*

⁶ 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.

⁷ Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon?

For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?"

Here are three views on the interpretation of Song of Solomon:

a. The allegorical view. In the allegorical view, the Song of Solomon is an allegory that portrays God's love for His people. Solomon and the Shulamite maiden are used symbolically throughout the book. In the allegorical view, the events of the book did not actually take place. They are simply an allegory.

b. The "typical" view. In the "typical" view, the Song of Solomon is a true story, and the events actually took place. God included this book in Scripture primarily to show the love relationship between Christ and His Church. The story is an extended "type." (A "type" is a picture or foreshadowing). In this view, Solomon would be a "type" of Christ, and Solomon's bride, the Shulamite maiden, would be a "type" of the Church.

c. The historical view. The historical view holds that the Song of Solomon is a true story. The main reason God included this book as part of Holy Scripture was to put His stamp of approval on love and romance - including love talk and sexual relations - within the boundaries that God has set up for the good of mankind. Thus the theme of the book would be, "Love and marriage as God intended."

We will be presenting the "historical view" in these Talks – the view that the book describes the true relationship between a man and a woman. Even though it is not an extended type, it certainly illustrates God's love for His people and Christ's love for His Church. In fact, all Christian marriages should be an illustration of God's love for His people, and Christ's love for the Church.

In our Talks we will be presenting the traditional "two-lover view": the love, romance and marriage of King Solomon and his Shulamite fiancée (6:13). In the historical view, there is a "triangular" or "three main character view." We'll discuss this in our next Talk.

The Shulamite maiden was a beautiful young woman, sun-tanned by an outdoor life of caring for her family's vineyards. She and King Solomon met and fell in love at a time when the king was probably visiting the royal vineyards in the north of Israel. There he proposed to her, and she accepted. She then moved to Jerusalem to prepare for the marriage (which will take place in chapter 3).

Throughout the book, it can be hard to determine who is speaking, and to whom. And sometimes it's difficult to determine - is the "speaker" only *thinking* about the other person - or are they actually *speaking* directly with each other?

For example, in verses 1-4, the Shulamite is speaking to herself about Solomon. But then in verses 5-7 it seems that she is speaking to the "*daughters of Jerusalem*," as she longs for her fiancé, Solomon, speaking of him in a poetic way as her shepherd.

Then the “daughters of Jerusalem” speak in verse 8. The daughters of Jerusalem may be the Shulamite’s friends, but more likely they are the women of Solomon’s harem. In verse 8 they seem to speak sarcastically to the Shulamite maiden, saying she should go back home and pasture her young goats if she wants to find her “shepherd”: *“If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds’ tents.”*

In verses 9-10, Solomon speaks to the Shulamite maiden and assures her of his love: *“I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh’s chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold.”* A “filly” or “mare” among the stallions that pulled chariots was a compliment.

In verse 11 the daughters of Jerusalem offer to help the Shulamite make herself more attractive to Solomon: *“We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver.”*

In verses 12-14, the Shulamite maiden again speaks of her love for Solomon: *“While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of En Gedi.”* The Shulamite woman describes her love for Solomon as beautiful blossoms, and like the expensive perfume that Hebrew women wore in small pouches around their necks.

It’s hard to determine who is conversing in verses 15-16. Solomon may be speaking in verse 15, and then the Shulamite maiden in verses 16-17. Or possibly Solomon is speaking to the Shulamite in all three verses. *“Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove’s eyes. Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green. The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir.”*

Verses 16-17 indicate that Solomon and the Shulamite maiden enjoyed spending time outdoors on green grass and under the trees in the countryside, rather than in a house or palace.

Practical Application

Use God’s great outdoors for romance!

Solomon and the Shulamite woman loved being outdoors, and it contributed to their relationship. In the same way, we should use God’s great outdoors for romance! The great outdoors is not just for sports, like fishing and skiing - but also for romance.

This holds true before marriage as well as after marriage. Go for walks and hikes and picnics and boating and other outings! Have fun in the sun! Enjoying the beauties of nature together is beneficial for the special relationship with the person that God has given you.

Use God’s great outdoors for romance!