

SONG OF SOLOMON (Teacher's Edition)

- I. The Beginning of Love** 1:1--5:1
- A. Falling in Love 1:1--3:5
 - 1. Bride's Longing for Affection 1:1-8
 - 2. Expressions of Mutual Love 1:9--2:7
 - 3. Visit of the King to the Bride's Home 2:8-17
 - 4. Bride's Dream of Separation 3:1-5
 - B. United in Love 3:6--5:1
 - 1. Wedding Procession 3:6-11
 - 2. Bride's Beauty Is Praised 4:1-15
 - 3. The Marriage Is Consummated 4:16--5:1
- II. Broadening of Love** 5:2--8:14
- A. Struggling in Love 5:2--7:10
 - 1. Bride's Second Dream of Separation 5:2-7
 - 2. Bridegroom's Handsomeness Is Praised 5:8--6:3
 - 3. Bride's Beauty Is Praised 6:4--7:10
 - B. Growing in Love 7:11--8:14
 - 1. Bride's Desire to Visit Her Home 7:11-8:4
 - 2. Journey and Homecoming 8:5-14

AUTHOR-

Traditionally, authorship of the Song of Solomon has been assigned to Solomon, since the book itself makes this claim (1:1). In fact, in verse one, the subtitle of the book is given and the text actually implies it was the "loveliest and best known" of all the songs of Solomon." This is noteworthy considering that, according to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon wrote 1005 songs!

But some scholars do not believe in Solomon's authorship. They insist it was a later collection of songs attributed to Solomon because of his reputation as a writer of psalms and proverbs (1 Kings 4:32). A careful analysis of the internal evidence, however, gives strong support to the view that Solomon wrote the book. Solomon is mentioned by name several times in the song (1:1,5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11-12), and he is specifically identified as the groom. The book also gives evidence of wealth, luxury, and exotic imported goods (3:6-11) a characteristic of his administration. The groom of the song also assures the Shulamite bride that she is "the only one" (6:9) among his "sixty queens and eighty concubines" (6:8)-probably a reference by Solomon to his royal harem. At the height of his power and influence, Solomon was known to have 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

The Song does not give us specifics in terms of background information. However, since we know internally how many wives and concubines Solomon has at the time of the song (60 & 80, respectively) and how many he ends up

with by the end of his life, it must have been written **early** in his reign, probably about **965 B.C.**

ABOUT THE BOOK-

This is one book in the Bible that most people do not believe belongs. It is extremely confusing as to purpose, meaning and how to interpret. This need not be!

The cause of much of the confusion is how to look at the book. There are three ways people try to interpret it: **the allegorical view** understands the book as a poem describing the relationship between **God and Israel** and Christ and the Church, **the typological view** understands the book by acknowledging the actual **history** involved and finds analogies in **the main aspects** of the story but not in all the details (in this view, people acknowledge the mutual love between Solomon and the Shulamite but go beyond it to **divine analogies** and more elevated and spiritual insights), and the **literal view** taking the song at face value as expressing true **human romantic love** at its best and most elevated form as intended by God, but nothing more than that.

As frustrating as this next statement may be, I believe we must look at this book from **ALL these perspectives** to truly receive what the Lord is saying!

According to the Scriptures, the relationship of God to the church is likened to **marriage**- Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes of this in **Ephesians 5:21-32**. Our God woos us and wants to know us intimately as a man and woman are to know each other in the sanctity of marriage. This is a continual theme throughout the Scriptures.

Without an exhaustive study here, simply put marriage is a **living illustrated sermon of Christ and the church**. In the marital relationship, the man plays the **role of Jesus**, the woman that of the **true disciple**. As the man **behaves toward** his wife, so the world should see an example of how Jesus is toward people. As the woman responds to her husband, so the world sees how a person should respond to God's dealings. The result of a couple's intimacy? **Fruitfulness**- i.e. children. The result of a believer's intimacy with God? **Fruitfulness**- i.e. **souls saved**.

It is in this understanding you should approach the Song of Songs. God takes a literal relationship and speaks to many different levels of what true love is and what true relationships are to be in the most **intimate and fruitful** of all human relationships. There are great spiritual and practical points to be made.

"Love" is a key word in the Song. This love, presented as the **passionate desire** between a man and woman, celebrates the joyous potential of marriage in light of sworn **covenant principles**. The basis for all human love should be **covenant love**, the master metaphor of the Bible. This covenant love is the foundation of the relationship between God and man. Hence, this again underscores what we have stated above: the Song properly applies to both **marriage** and covenant history!

Now as to the book itself, the Song of Solomon is a brief book of only eight chapters. But in spite of its brevity, it has a complicated structure that sometimes confuses the reader. Several different characters or personalities have speaking parts within this long lyrical poem. In most translations of the Bible, these speakers change abruptly with no identification to help the reader follow the narrative. But most Bibles clear up this confusion by publishing identification lines within the text. This helps the reader gain a clearer understanding of this beautiful song.

The three main parties with speaking parts in this long poem are: (1) **the groom**, King Solomon; (2) **the bride**, a woman referred to as "the Shulamite" (some believe her to be **Abishag of 1 Kings 1 & 2**, with Shulamite being a derivative of Shunammite) (6:13); and (3) the "daughters of Jerusalem" (2:7). These women of Jerusalem may have been royal servants who served as attendants to Solomon's Shulamite bride- they can also be representative of **the angelic host** who minister to the **heirs of salvation**, the bride of Christ. In this love song, they serve as a chorus to **echo the sentiments** of the Shulamite, emphasizing her love and affection for Solomon.

In addition to these main personalities, others are mentioned. I want to just bring out one group- the **little foxes that spoil the vines** (2:15). These foxes are the **demons** that try to **spoil** our relationships with each other and God.

This beautiful love song falls naturally into two major sections of about equal length- the beginning of love chaps. (1-4) and the broadening of love chaps. (5-8). In the first section, the Shulamite tells about Solomon's visit to her home in the country in the springtime (2:8-17). She also recalls the many happy experiences of their courtship when she visited Solomon in his palace in Jerusalem (2:4-7). This speaks to God's **working on us** and in His **goodness** and **kindness** leading us to **repentance and salvation**. She thinks about the painful separations from his love during this time (3:1-5), as well as the joyous wedding procession to Jerusalem to become the king's bride (3:6-11). Oh, how this speaks to the joy people experience in first **falling in love** in marriage as well as in their **first love** of initial salvation. Solomon also praises his bride-to be in a beautiful poem on the magic and wonder of love (chap. 4)- as a man should **rejoice in the wife** of his youth and as **God will sing over you** (Zephaniah 3:17)!

In the second section of the book, the love of the Shulamite and Solomon for each other continues **to deepen** after their marriage. She has a troubled dream when he seems **distant and unconcerned** (5:2-8). Couples go through this and need **affirmation** that can never be too frequent. This also happens in our walk with God. But Solomon (as Jesus does) **assures her** of his love and praises her beauty (6:4-7:9). Longing to visit her country home (7:10-8:4), she finally makes the trip with Solomon; and their love grows even stronger (8:5-7). The song closes with **an assurance** of each to the other that they will **always remain close** in their love. What great advice to us for our spiritual and physical relationships! One last thing I would like to bring up in this long section is a question I am sure many have. With his large harem, how could King Solomon write such a

beautiful love song to one specific wife? Perhaps his union with the Shulamite woman was the **only authentic marriage relationship** that Solomon ever knew. Most of his marriages were political arrangements, designed to seal treaties and trade agreements with other nations. In contrast, the Shulamite woman was not a cultured princess but a lowly vineyard keeper and the bride to whom Solomon declared, "How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices!" (4:10).

This has a real message about the nature of **true love**. Authentic love is much more than a **surface relationship**; it extends to the very core of one's being. Love like this cannot be **bought and sold** like some commodity on the open market. Solomon had many wives, but the Shulamite may have been the **only one** with whom he enjoyed a warm, enriching relationship. Jesus and the **spouse He gives you** are certainly the only ones with whom your soul will enjoy a truly enriching relationship. Be faithful to them both!

[Special note: The symbols and images that the groom uses to describe the beauty of his Shulamite bride may seem strange to modern readers. He portrays her hair as "a flock of goats, going down from Mount Gilead" (4:1). Her neck, he says, is like "the tower of David, built for an armory, on which hang a thousand bucklers" (4:4). Such compliments today would certainly not be flattering to most women!

In his use of these symbols, the groom is reflecting the **cultural patterns** of the ancient world. To those who lived in Solomon's time, the rippling effect of a flock of goats moving down a hillside was, indeed, a thing of beauty. And a stately tower atop a city wall reflected an aura of **stability and nobility**. The Shulamite woman would have been very pleased at such creative compliments from her poetic groom.]

A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF THE SONG OF SONGS (BASIC THEMES)-

Although we can discuss much about the spiritual connotations of this book regarding our devotional lives and intimacy with God, I want to look at the great spiritual lessons that are dealt with regarding our **sexuality and intimacy** with our spouses, as these are key themes in this great book.

The great message of the Song of Solomon is the beauty of love between a man and a woman as experienced in the relationship of marriage. In its frank but beautiful language, the song praises the **mutual love** which husband and wife feel toward each other in this highest of all human relationships.

The **sexual and physical** side of marriage is a **natural and proper** part of God's plan, reflecting His purpose and desire for the human race. This is the same truth so evident at the beginning of time in the Creation itself. God created man and woman and brought them together to serve as companions and to share their lives with one another: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be **joined** to his wife, and they shall become **one flesh**" (Gen 2:24). Like the Book of Genesis, the Song of Solomon says a bold yes to **the beauty and sanctity** of married love.

For whatever else may be said, this book categorically closes the door on any pietistic notions about human sexuality, married lovemaking, and sensual delights. Prudishness is not a requirement of spirituality. The Song is a forthright and graphic Holy Spirit inspired disclosure of God's delight in a married couple's delight in one another, both in their romantic feelings and in their sexual relationship. No other passage in the Bible is so clear about this, though there is NT teaching that supports it, teaching we need to consider. The instructions of 1 Corinthians 7:3-6 tell married couples that a cool or prudish withholding of oneself from a spouse is not consistent with God's order. This does not mean that affectionate exchange and sexual responsiveness within a marriage can be commandeered. It can only be achieved through shared tenderness, communication, praise, care, and respect. 1 Corinthians 7 actually says that when you marry, your body now belongs to your spouse! In Hebrews 13:4,5 (especially in the NAS version), we are again told, reemphasizing the Song's theme, of the worthiness and divine approval of the joys of the marriage bed. God desires husband and wife to explore how to please each other. But the Bible warns against insatiable lusts! In 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, many scholars see "own body" as really being "own vessel" and referring to one's wife. The idea is that in marriage not just anything goes. Lust is lust, and even couple can use their spouse in an inappropriate way to try and satisfy an insatiable drive. This is wrong, and the Bible texts not only speak against an immoral marriage bed, but also in lifting up the idea of sexuality as in the Song, call couples to defend their lovemaking against pollution. The simple purity, joyfulness, and pleasure-filled ecstasies of married love can and must be differentiated from any deadening, perverted practices of a world (and world of magazines) whose evil intentions are begotten in an atmosphere where warmth of love has been lost or has never been known. Here is something to remember: the pure fires of passion are to be allowed, and the hellish fires of perversion refused in a Godly couples relationship. One last point on this theme of love I would like to make is that this book also points beyond human love to the great Author of love. Authentic love is possible in the world because God brought love into being and planted that emotion in the hearts of His people. Even husbands and wives should remember that the love that they share for one another is not a product of their human goodness or kindness. We are able to love because the love of God is working in our lives: "We love because He first loved us."- 1 John 4:19

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

Without belaboring the point, my key word, considering all the above, is a phrase: LOVE IN MARRIAGE.

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)-

As to my key verse, it is to me one of the greatest verses on love in the Bible, speaking of the lasting power of true love: Song of Songs 8:7. As to my key

chapter, which I believe is hard to find in a poetical song, I chose **Song of Songs 8** because it speaks of their love **maturing** and growing stronger and culminates in their **assurance** that they will **always stay close** in their love for each other, a pledge we make to God upon salvation and to our spouse in our wedding vows and to our fellow believers when we “judge the body rightly” upon taking communion.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- **The lover is Jesus, Lover of our souls**
- **He is the rose of Sharon in 2:1**
- **The role of King speaks to Jesus’ role**
- **Jesus is love, the true love from above!**
- **He is the one roused under the apple tree in 8:5, as our sin at the tree brought about the plan of god that Jesus come, born of a virgin**

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- **The wooing that is demonstrated in the book speaks to the working of the Holy Spirit who draws people to Jesus**
- **The wind being called upon in 4:16 is the Spirit who brings the presence of Jesus**
- **According to Romans 5:5 the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, so the Holy Spirit is the bond and binding power of love**
- **In 7:9, you cannot escape the image of the wine going over lips straight to the lover as being anything but a foreshadowing of praying in tongues**

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Song 1:7,8

It is of utmost importance that we learn to accept our intended spouse as he/she is. It is wrong thinking to enter marriage with a hidden agenda to change that person. Do not follow through with plans to marry one you cannot accept as they are!

Song 2:14,15;

Before marrying, take time to identify and resolve potential problems. Face them honestly and candidly.

Song 8:6,7

Determine to build a strong and unbreakable commitment to each other in marriage!

Song 2:14 & 4:9

Consider this awesome call of God and how He feels about the intimacy of His prayer closet with you. Don’t tease God, be faithful and keep your rendezvous with Him daily!

Song 4:1-7; 6:4-9

To married couples: learn the lost art of verbal lovemaking. Learn to speak words of love that caress your mate's soul. Do not praise someone else- extol your spouse's virtues above those of others.

Song 7:10-13

To couples: set aside regular, periodic times away with your spouse to refresh and renew the romance in your marriage and to be intimate with one another without obstructions.

Song 8:10-12

For singles: value virginity very highly! Do not discredit the AWESOME value of being able to present your body and soul wholly undefiled and pure to your spouse.