



LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

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THE SONG OF SOLOMON

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Comments Before Examining the Second Song

The sexual drive is one of the greatest forces present in human beings. It is stronger than hunger--stronger even than anger.

Sex and violence constitute much of the fare for TV viewers, for readers and for beholders of the printed and pictorial page.

Humans are different from animals in that they are almost always in an amorous state, whereas animals have their rutting season, in some instances limited to once a year. The rest of the time, the sex life of animals is dormant. What a different world this would be if the same phenomenon appertained to humans. The news media would undoubtedly be hard pressed for shocking reports.

Sex has been called the cosmic urge or nesting instinct. When it remains in its proper place, sex is a beautiful thing. It is the creation of God: God's arrangement whereby the propagation of the species is ensured. It was He who made creatures male and female. His blessing upon the matrimonial state is to "Be fruitful and multiply." (Genesis 1:28).

The hunger for a mate is altogether normal and proper. What a lovely time is the time of courtship, when passion is high; when one feels an irrepressible yearning to be ever near the cherished one; when self-forgetfulness is manifested in behalf of one's sweetheart. All of this is but a hunger that cannot be satisfied with bacon and beans. It is an implantation by the Sovereign Lord Himself.

The love that married people have for each other is to a very large extent spiritual, mental, and affectional, but in the act of marital relations, the love expressed and received is admittedly physical--the highest physical pleasure on earth. The Apostle Paul is straightforward and explicit in touching on the subject of reciprocal gratification. His comments are especially remarkable considering that he was a bachelor. However, remember that he was an inspired writer. His advice is often quoted by marriage counselors to couples in need of better understanding; for marriages, not infrequently, are made or broken on the connubial bed. Here are Paul's words:

"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency " (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

If sex remains within its proper bounds, it is a thing of surpassing beauty. God has, so to say, made a riverbed in which the stream of sex should flow; it is not to mount over its banks and run wild, hither and yon, and elsewhere.

Earthly Love with a Heavenly Meaning

The Second Song - 2:8-3:5

In the following paraphrasing, the Shulamite maiden engages in daydreaming. She fantasizes, saying to her Lover:

Beloved: "I can hardly wait for your coming, my Lover and groom. How gracefully and swiftly you come tripping down the mountainside like a gazelle or a young stag. My goodness! You have already arrived. You are peering through the window and glancing through the lattice to see whether I am here. Now I actually hear you speak." (2:8-10a).

Lover: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and steal away with me. Spring has come. Our love, too, blooms in rich profusion. There is a tang and freshness in knowing we have each other. All nature joins in celebrating the splendor of our betrothal. Spring is here, both for us and for the earth. The winter is past; the cold rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The mating songs of birds are heard in the land. The fig tree and the vines shed their fragrance abroad. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away with me " (2:10b-13).

The Lover, in fancy, continues his plea: "O my love, please don't be so secretive. Don't play hard to get. You remind me of a dove hiding furtively in the clefts of the palisades. You know I can't go on living without you. From the very depths of my being, I need you. Without you, my heart is cleft in twain; the other half palpitates in your bosom. Let me see you in your full stature. Let me hear your voice. Let me look into your face. One look is like balm to my aching heart.

"Once, in the long ago, you told me about the little foxes you observed. They were too small to reach and munch the leaves. Instead, they gnawed at the roots and young shoots and thus destroyed the vines. Take me to that place. I don't know how many vines survived, but of this I am sure: 'Our vineyards are in bloom.' Come away with me, my amiable companion " (2:14, 15).

She yields to his entreaties, as she continues to daydream. The wondrous realization bursts fully upon her: "My beloved is mine, and I am his. Earth holds no greater happiness. Wherever he is, that's where I want to be, for lilies surround him. It is a garden-spot wherever my Lover is.

"I will rejoice in him, until the day breaks and the shadows of this transitory life flee away. Turn to me, my favorite one; come to me as swiftly as the gazelle and the young stag do run. I need your companionship very much."

She lay asleep on her bed. In a dream she searched for her Lover, but could not find him. She determined to look for him in the marketplace and in the busy streets, but it was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. She inquired of the night patrol, "Have you seen him who is the pulse of my heart?" No, they hadn't; "so I moved on. Suddenly I espied him. I clasped him in my arms. I held him tight and wouldn't let go till we reached my mother's house and the very room where I was born. I wanted my mother to assure me that, contrary to the opinion of my brothers (1:6), she still approved of him." (3:1-4).

A chorus appears, similar to the chorus in a Greek drama. She addresses them as follows: "You daughters of Jerusalem, (or the Church) you don't know the frequent anguish of being in love, particularly when separation occurs. Now I am reunited with him. Promise me, by the swift-footed deer and the lustrous-eyed gazelles, that you will not disturb our togetherness " (3:5).

Heavenly Meaning

The dialogue between the Lover and the Beloved can also be construed as a parable: an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Christ and the Church are symbolically set forth as the Lover and the Beloved.

"My Beloved Is Mine, and I Am His"

Christ is the Pursuer, we the pursued. He says, "Rise up, my love, and come unto me. The harsh days spent away from me--wintry days they were, cold and rainy, when you felt isolated from the God who made you--are now over and past. I will lead you into a springtime mode of existence, a new world, one of refreshment and gladness. A thousand song-birds will warble in your bosom. Beauteous and fragrant flowers appear everywhere. The landscape is so radically changed, you will say, 'I am living in a different world. I am a new creature. I have been born a second time. The old man in me has perished '" (2:10-13).

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Romans 6:6-8).

"That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24).

In your regenerated state, having accepted Christ as your personal Savior, you experience something new. A beauteous world fronts you. "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." (2:13) Your personality has been changed for the better. Your outlook on the future is rosy with promise. You are on the Lord's side, as He has ever been on your side. You feel united with Him in the bonds of a mystical union. Gratefully and joyously you say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his " (2:16).

The Song of Solomon 3:6-5:1
Lesson 3

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PERSONAL APPLICATION

Lord Jesus, who died and rose for us, your Church, sanctifying us by water and the Word and presenting us in splendor without spot or wrinkle, that we might be holy in your sight, we give you thanks. Amen.



Remember to also give the allegorical answer when applicable - of Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His Bride

The Song of Solomon 3:6-5:1

1. The Shulamite maiden fancied her wedding day would be unique, outstanding, resplendent, almost regal like that of Solomon's. What two lofty signs, before and behind the procession, indicated its progress? (3:6)
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2. Who attended the wedding in person and furnished a bed for the groom to present to his bride? (3:7a) _____

3. How many seasoned veterans provided safe conduct for the people in the procession? (3:7a, 8) _____

Describe them: _____

4. Solomon himself rode in an ornate chariot. What precious metals and tapestry were used for embellishment in the construction of the chariot? (3:9, 10) _____
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5. For the Shulamite woman, her wedding day, she was sure, would prove as unforgettable _____ What special ceremony, performed by Solomon's mother, characterized his gladsome wedding day?

(3:11) _____

6. The Lover proclaims his undying love to his darling and spouse. His is an Oriental imagination, vivid and audacious. He uses descriptions, similes, and comparisons that strike us as being quite strange. For instance, what imagery does he use in describing her eyes and her hair? (4:1) _____

her teeth? (4:2) _____

her lips, speech, and temples? (4:3) _____

her neck? (4:4) _____

her breasts? (4:5) _____

7. How might a young man of today describe the woman he loves?

8. Three times the Lover assures her that she is surpassingly beautiful. How does he express himself?

4:1a: _____

4:7: _____

4:10a: _____

9. What additional compliments, comparisons, and fervid expressions does he use to express his devotedness?

4:8, 9: _____

4:10: _____

4:11: _____

4:12-15: _____

10. In this the Third Song, the Lover does almost all the talking (4:1-15). In the Fourth Song, she will do almost all the talking (5:2a, 5:3-16). He will be granted but one-half of one verse to have his say (5:2b). She, however, gets one full verse (4:16). In your own words, tell what she says.

11. Christ is the heavenly Bridegroom; the Church is His bride. What kind of bride did He intend her to be, after He had purchased her with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death?

(Ephesians 5:25-27)
