

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
January 10, 2015

Lesson Text: Song of Solomon 6:4-12
Lesson Title: The Most Beautiful Bride

Introduction

King Solomon is the author of the poetical book, Song of Solomon (Song of Solomon 1:1). He also authored Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. His name appears seven times in the book (Song of Solomon 1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12). Of the three books he wrote, Song of Solomon was most likely written first during his younger years.

Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32), but this one is “*the song of songs*” (Song of Solomon 1:1), that is, the greatest of all songs. The word “*song*” means “music” or “singing.” It appears the Song of Solomon could be compared to a musical, an opera, or a melo-drama. This is one of many methods God used to speak to His people.

The Song of Solomon is a book like no other in the Old Testament. It is not a sermon like the prophetic books, but a series of conversations and dialogues between a man and a woman and some women in Jerusalem. The book can be approached from four basic angles. First, if you read the book *redemptively*, you can see the love between Christ and His church. Second, if you read the book *dispensationally*, the love of God for Israel is seen. Third, if you read the book *spiritually*, it can reveal much about the love of the Savior for the sinner. While each of the first three approaches have merit, they can easily be exaggerated. The good student of Scripture will avoid such temptations.

The fourth approach seems to be the most logical. If you read the book *literally*, it obviously speaks of the beauty of wedded love. In light of the importance of love in the relationship between a man and woman, it should not surprise us to find a biblical discussion of the subject. Elsewhere Scripture condemns the perverse sexual relationships of homosexuals (Genesis 19; Romans 1) and heterosexuals who engage in sexual relations outside of marriage (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 15; 2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 14:24; Proverbs 7; Matthew 5:28; 19:9; Galatians 5:19). In the Song of Solomon, there is a positive description of love and sexuality.

The Song of Solomon is based upon a romance between a man and a woman. It is believed Solomon is speaking about himself and a Shulamite girl he loved and eventually married. A brief description of events in the book will help us

understand the movement and actions of Solomon as he expressed his love for her and she expressed her love for him.

The first two chapters describe mutual expressions of love between Solomon and his love. Solomon tells her how beautiful she is (1:9-10, 15); then she thinks about what he has said and speaks of her admiration of him (1:16-17). The two spend time together in the spring and when Solomon leaves she dreams about him and goes looking for him in the night (2:10-14; 3:1-5). She cannot stand to be without him.

Chapters three through five describe a beautiful wedding procession and records praises from Solomon about his bride's appearance (4:1-6). He desires to be with her and expresses his love to her through God ordained sexual pleasure (4:7-15). She accepts his love and they become intimately one in what Solomon calls, "*his garden*" (4:16).

Apparently Solomon is away from his bride after the wedding and she misses him. She dreams about him and is desperate to be united with him. While he is away she sings songs, which express her deep love for her husband (5:10-16). Finally, he returns to her "*garden*" of love (6:2-3) and tells of his love for her.

The Beauty of the Bridegrooms Love Expressed to His Bride (Song of Solomon 6:1-10)

The expressions and intimate sexual descriptions between Solomon, the bridegroom, and the Shulamite woman, his bride, occur as they mature in their marital relationship. How they relate and verbally communicate to each other is powerful and beneficial in their relationship.

Verse 4

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners."

Solomon (bridegroom) is the speaker in this verse. He is speaking to the Shulamite woman (bride). He addresses her as "my love." "Love" is her name throughout the book. She addresses him as "beloved" throughout the book.

Solomon tells his bride she is as "beautiful as Tirzah." "Tirzah" was for a short time a northern capital under King Omri (1 Kings 16:8,15,17,23). It was known for its great natural beauty and had extensive gardens. It also had an abundant water supply. Solomon is complementing his bride on her natural beauty.

He also tells her she is as "comely as Jerusalem." "Comely" means "lovely." Psalm 48:1-2 says of Jerusalem, "*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised*

in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” There is great beauty in the city of Jerusalem. Still today, in spite of the ruins, turmoil, and tension, Jerusalem is one of the most beautiful spots in the world.

The phrase “terrible as an army with banners” sounds a little insulting, but it is actually a powerful complement. Solomon is telling her she is splendid or awesome to look upon. I wonder what most wives would do if their husbands told them they were “terrible as an army with banners”?

Verse 5

“Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.”

“Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me” means this woman stirred Solomon emotionally just by looking at him! When a husband has love in his heart for his wife, that is what just one look of the eyes can do. What a contrast to the stares and “look like they want to kill you looks” of our day.

Solomon’s statement “thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead” is a reference to her consistent and unchanging beauty. In chapter 4:1, on or near their wedding night, he had said to her, “...*thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.*” It is difficult to know the elapsed time between chapter four and chapter six, but she knows what he is saying. As they have aged and matured, he still sees her as he saw her when he first loved her.

Verse 6

“Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.”

Solomon comments on the magnificence and beauty of her smile. Her “teeth” are clean and white like a “flock of sheep” coming “from the washing.” The picture here is of clean shorn sheep fresh and energetic with their young. “Every one beareth twins” means her teeth were in perfect proportion. “There is not one barren among them” means she had no teeth missing.

Lest you think Solomon’s descriptions of his bride are comical, think again. At least he knows her. Do you know the color of your spouse’s eyes? When was the last time you gave him or her a personal compliment?

Verse 7

“As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.”

Solomon has commented on the beauty of his bride's eyes, hair, and teeth. Now he mentions her temples. The face of his bride would have been veiled prior to their wedding night. That is most likely the meaning of the words "within thy locks." It is possible he had held her veiled cheeks in his hands prior to actually seeing her face and now he tells her how that felt. He had already spoken these words to her in chapter 4 verse 3.

Comparing her cheeks to "a piece of pomegranate" would mean her cheeks were soft and radiant. A "pomegranate" looks something like an orange on the outside, but when it is sliced, the inside appears a rich red. Perhaps this is a reference to her modest blush on their wedding night. There was nothing forward or brash about Solomon's bride. She was not a manly woman! She was a woman of beauty, modesty, and virtue. That delighted Solomon.

Verse 8

"There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number."

Solomon is praising his bride for her prominence above all other women. The text does not say Solomon had these women at this time. The text does not say, "I have" but "There are." He is saying, "There may be sixty queens, eighty concubines, and even countless unmarried and pure women in the world, but there is none like you!"

Verse 9

"My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her."

Another name for Solomon's bride is "My dove, my undefiled." The "dove" is known for its faithfulness, devotion, softness, and gentle spirit. "Undefiled" means "perfect, upright." Solomon's bride has no impurities about her.

Solomon's praise for his bride continues in regard to her place in the heart of her mother. He says, "She is the choice one of her that bare her." Solomon is not the only one who views her as special and beautiful. This is amazing! The husband and his mother-in-law agree about something!

He refers to the praise of other people when he says, "The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her." The word "blessed" carries the idea of "happy" or "congratulations." When the women of the court saw Solomon's bride and the look she had on her face along with the love in her heart for Solomon, they knew she was "blessed" and

should be congratulated. They “praised” her. The word “praised” is our English word “hallelujah.” The court women knew Solomon could have any woman in the world he wanted, but he chose this special Shulamite woman. They “praised” her because Solomon “praised” her. Some women go through life and never have such wonderful things said about them.

Verse 10

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?”

It is possible the “daughters” or court women are asking this question. It is also possible Solomon is still speaking. Either way, the question asked reveals the power of the bride’s attractiveness upon Solomon. Solomon’s bride is as bright as a full “moon” and “clear” or bright as the sun. That means she is beautiful and radiant. She is again compared to being as awesome “as an army with banners” (see verse 4). She was magnificent and captivating to look upon.

The Beauty of the Bride’s Love Expressed to the Bridegroom (Song of Solomon 6:11-12)

Verse 11-12

“I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”

In response to Solomon’s verbal outpouring of love to his bride, the words of this verse reveals some anxiety from her. It seems she is not sure whether Solomon’s love has “flourished” and “budded.” This anxiety may partially be in response to the dream she had about him in chapter 5 verses 2-8. In her dream, Solomon’s bride dreams her husband came home late from work and desired to make love with her after she had already gone to sleep. She was weary from a hard days work and did not respond to him.

The point of her dream is that marriage and sexual relationships in marriage are not perfect. When problems arise, there must be communication and resolution of the problems. That is the heart of her questions in verses 11-12. She is asking, “Will he hold her rejection against her?” She wanted to know if his desire to be with her would “flourish” and “blossom” again. Remember, what she is referencing here was only a dream but it was real to her.

The beautiful truth in verses 11-12 is how Solomon’s bride discovered the depth of Solomon’s love and forgiveness. “Or ever I was aware” means “before I realized it, I felt like a queen again riding in the king’s chariot.” “Amminadib” refers to a princely or noble people. The “chariots” are a reference to nobility,

speed, and grace. She is saying she quickly realized again how much Solomon loved her. He loved her with all his heart and wanted everyone to know she was his bride and lover!

Conclusion

Solomon begins and ends with verse 4 and verse 10, by saying how “beautiful” his bride is. The first and last words out of his mouth are about her beauty. If you are a husband you might be saying, “Words are cheap.” If you are a woman, you might be saying, “He’s saying all of this because he wants to make love.” There is more here than words and sex.

For men, words are not cheap. Actually, they are about the most expensive thing a husband can give to his wife. Solomon gives and keeps on giving words of affirmation and praise. He does not get distracted from what he needs to say to her.

Most of us want to experience an overpowering love relationship with our spouse, but we simply do not know where to begin. Why not start where Solomon started, with words. Verse 5 reminds us, it is not always easy to look into the eyes of the one we love and say what we need to say. If you must, ask your wife to “turn away her eyes” for a moment so you will not be embarrassed. Do whatever you need to do, but tell your beautiful wife how much you love her and what she means to you. When you do, the love she is looking for will flourish and blossom.

Amen.