

Hymns: 51 Love Lifted Me 54 Oh, How I Love Jesus
33 In the Garden

Psalm 23

Good Morning! How many of you have a green thumb? We could use one right about now. We moved into a new house last fall and are deeply into landscaping and gardening. We're busy planting shrubs, trees, and flowers. On top of that, we have set aside a portion of the property for a vegetable garden. Betsy has started a few plants there.

Today we're going to continue our study of the Song of Songs and consider **another** garden.

Review

If you were here with us the past couple times, you know that we've ventured into something called *the theater of the mind* – much like those radio serial shows from many years ago.

You recall: our hero, the wealthy, wise King Solomon had just returned from his trip in his very fancy vehicle to pick up his bride and true love -- that most beautiful of women -- and bring her to his chambers. After months of anticipation that honeymoon had finally begun.

We left off last time with the beautiful bride, drifting **into a dream**. This is how the Bible expresses it.

Cant.5

Woman

[2] I sleep, but my heart waketh:

and then wondering what happened to her beloved husband.

*[6] I opened to my beloved;
but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone:
my soul failed when he spake:
I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.*

Can anyone guess what happened to her husband? We were given a big clue last time. While she slept, she was still aware, at some level, of activity going on around her.

Let's back up and try to unravel this. You recall from last time, the couple traveled from the beautiful woman's home in Lebanon to the King's chambers in Jerusalem. There the bride invited the groom to come to him. To refresh your memory, here's how the scripture expresses it:

Woman

*[16] Awake, O north wind; and
come, thou south;
blow upon my garden,*

*that the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his **garden**, and eat his pleasant fruits.*

That's where the story breaks, the curtain drops, and the lights go out on the intimate details of the honeymoon night. But what came next? Let's review.

Cant.5

Solomon

[1] *I am **come** into my **garden**, my sister, my spouse:
I have **gathered** my myrrh with my spice;
I have **eaten** my honeycomb with my honey;
I have **drunk** my wine with my milk:*

Where is Solomon? Who is he talking to? The next portion of the verse gives us the missing clue.

*eat, O friends;
drink,
yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

If someone refers to you as a *friend*, what would you expect your relationship to be with him? If he says you are *his* friend, would you not likely say that that person is *your* friend also? Of course. Now the word used for *friends* in the Hebrew is:

rā'·ah

In the KJV it is most often translated *neighbor* as in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:17) where it says not to covet your *neighbor's* (same word) ox. This word does not normally indicate a very intimate relationship like a husband to wife, mother to child, or Heavenly Father to His spiritual son or daughter, but a more casual one – a friend or a neighbor.

So we have friends saying to the wedding couple **to** eat and drink their fill of love. We know that friends would not be in the bridal chamber. That's a private place reserved for the bride and groom. But what did the groom do after he had united physically with his bride for the first time? He announced it.

And to whom did he make the announcement?
To his **friends** who were waiting outside.

Here's the pertinent part of the description of that custom taken from the description given last time:

*After the marriage was consummated, **the groom came out of the bridal chamber and announced the consummation of the marriage to the members of the wedding party** waiting outside.*

Let's read Solomon's announcement again and see if it makes sense:

Solomon

[1] I am **come** into my **garden**, my sister, my spouse:
I have **gathered** my myrrh with my spice;
I have **eaten** my honeycomb with my honey;
I have **drunk** my wine with my milk:

Where is Solomon? He's outside of the bridal chamber.
Where is his bride? She's still inside – dreaming.

Who's he talking to? He's talking to members of the bridal party – his **friends**.
Let's hear his friends reply to him and his announcement.

*eat, O friends;
drink,
yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

It all makes perfect sense. The bride in her dream is missing her beloved who **did** leave her side to go make his announcement to his friends.

Now that we've answered the hanging questions from last time, let's move on to the topic of the day -- that metaphor of the *garden*. Solomon brought it up in the verse we've been studying. But, let's back up and pick up some more clues regarding this *garden*.

We'll start back in Lebanon when the woman was still longing for Solomon to come claim her:

Cant.2

Woman

[1] I am the rose of Sharon,
and the **lily** of the valleys.

Solomon

[2] As the **lily** among thorns,
so is my love among the daughters.

Here the woman is clearly likened to a lily. Even today, that's a common metaphor and is easy for us to understand.

Woman

[16] My beloved is mine,
and I am his:
he feedeth among the **lilies**.

Is the woman fantasizing that her beloved is walking around in a lily patch eating flowers or eating a sandwich for that matter? I think not. This is clearly a bit less obvious, but what she's **saying** here is that her beloved **loves** her. He is **intoxicated** by her beauty and her love. He takes in all that she is.

Let's review a few of Solomon's references to his bride as a *garden* followed by his bride's reply also

referring to herself as a *garden*.

Cant.4

Solomon

[1] Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; ...

[12] A **garden** inclosed is my sister, my spouse;
a spring shut up,
a fountain sealed.

[15] A fountain of **gardens**,
a well of living waters,
and streams from Lebanon.

Woman

[16] Awake, O north wind;
and come, thou south;
blow upon my **garden**, that the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his **garden**, and **eat** his pleasant fruits.

Notice she speaks of Solomon in the garden and eating – very similar to feeding among the lilies. She is offering herself completely to him to be enjoyed and satisfied by her. Then if there be any doubt, we return one last time to the verse we've been studying:

Cant.5

Solomon

[1] I am come into my **garden**, my sister, my spouse:
I have **gathered** my myrrh with my spice;
I have **eaten** my honeycomb with my honey;
I have **drunk** my wine with my milk:

Solomon makes it clear as he announces to his friends that his *garden* is his intimate sister and his spouse. There's no doubt his *garden* is his *bride*, the beautiful woman. We need to keep this metaphor clearly in view as we proceed for we will encounter it again.

Now, let's return to our story as the woman continues with the description of her dream:

Woman

[7] The watchmen that went about the city
found me,
they **smote** me,
they **wounded** me;
the keepers of the walls **took away my veil** from me.

Clearly the bride is having a **nightmare**.
First, she loses her husband

and then she's beaten and has her veil taken.

You may recall she had a similar dream back in chapter 3 as she looked for her beloved in the night, but that time things went much better. The watchmen were **nice** to her, and she **found** her beloved.

Why is there such a stark difference between the two dreams? Let's sort this out.

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Where was she back in Chapter 3? | in her hometown in Lebanon |
| How long had she lived there? | her whole life |
| Where is she now? | Jerusalem |
| How long has she been there? | an hour or so |

The difference is fairly easy to see. When she was in her hometown, she was **known** by the watchmen, but when she just entered into Jerusalem, she was a **stranger**. She was just **expressing her fear** of being in a new place and of being a new bride.

Woman

*[8] I **charge** you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye **find** my beloved, that ye **tell** him, that I am [lovesick].*

Daughters

*[9] [How] is thy beloved [better] than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?
[how] is thy beloved [better] than another beloved, that thou dost so **charge** us?*

Keep in mind, she's still dreaming. Only her husband can be in the bridal chamber with her. Having had intimate contact with him, she replies with her most detailed description of her beloved husband:

Woman

*[10] My beloved is **white and ruddy**,
the **chiefest** among ten thousand.*

*[11] His **head** is as the most fine gold,
his **locks** are bushy, and black as a raven.*

*[12] His **eyes** are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.*

*[13] His **cheeks** are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers:
his **lips** like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*

*[14] His **hands** are as gold rings set with [] beryl:
his **belly** is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*

*[15] His **legs** are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold:
his **countenance** is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*

*[16] His **mouth** is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely.*

*This is **my beloved**,
and this is **my friend**,
O daughters of Jerusalem.*

Cant.6

Daughters

[1] *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?
whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.*

Woman

[2] *My beloved is gone down into his **garden**,
to the beds of spices, to feed in the **gardens**,
and to gather **lilies**.*

[3] *I am my beloved's,
and my beloved is mine:
he feedeth among the **lilies**.*

What is she saying here? Has her beloved returned to her side?
Could she be coming out of her dream?
Let's read on and see.

Solomon

[4] *Thou art **beautiful**, O my love, as Tirzah,
comely as Jerusalem,
[majestic] as an army with banners.*

He's speaking to her.
We expected him to return after making his announcement.
It looks like he is **indeed** at her side once more.

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

[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.*

[7] *As a piece of a pomegranate are thy **temples** within thy locks.*

[8] *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and **virgins** without number.*

[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.*

At this point, the seven-day honeymoon ends. As we learned last time:

*During the **seven days** of the wedding feast, the bride and groom remained **hidden** in the bridal chamber¹⁹ (Cf. Genesis 29:21-23, 27-28)²⁰ Afterwards, the groom came out of hiding, bringing his bride with him, **but with her veil removed** so that everyone could see her.*

The unveiling of a beautiful bride is always dramatic, but the unveiling of **this** most beautiful of women was **truly breathtaking**. The man continues:

Solomon

The daughters **saw** her,
and **blessed** her;
yea, the queens and the concubines, and they **praised** her.

Daughters
[10] Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
fair as the moon,
[pure and bright] as the sun,
and [majestic] as an army with banners?

Someday I want to see this woman – along with many others including Eve.

Solomon
[11] I went down into the [grove] of [nut trees] to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether
the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

He's been shut up in his chambers for seven days. After he emerged with his bride, he felt compelled to check on status of the local agriculture.

[12] [Before] I was aware [of it], my soul [set] me [on] the chariots of [my noble people].

Time flies when you're on your honeymoon, but after all: he is the king. Duty calls.

Daughters
[13] Return, return, O Shulamite;
return, return, that we may [gaze] upon thee.

They were held **spellbound** by her beauty and statue. Even Solomon was shocked by their reaction to her! He asks:

Solomon
What [do] ye see in the Shulamite? As [she walks between] two armies [of guests].

This term *Shulamite* appears twice in this verse and nowhere else in the Bible. What does it mean? It means Solomon's wife – the feminine form of Solomon – Mrs. Solomon if you will. Interestingly, the writer waits until the bride emerges unveiled before calling her *Shulamite*.

We understand that Solomon is headed back to his job as king of Israel, but why are the Daughters of Jerusalem telling Shulamite to return? Wasn't it Solomon who was said to be leaving? Where is **she** going?

Unfortunately, we're out of time for today. But **tune in** next time for the answer to these questions and **much**, much more.

Application

We've been considering a bit about gardens today. Of course, man had his beginning in that beautiful paradise -- the Garden of Eden. Man also fell to sin in that same garden and was banished from it. Jesus

prayed from the Garden of Gethsemane that this cup would pass from Him right before He went to the cross. And He demonstrated victory over death and rose again from a garden tomb.

We who trust in the promise of scripture and the saving grace of Jesus Christ can look forward to a garden-like paradise forever where the beauty of our environment and our loving Lord will outshine even that of the Shulamite. I'm looking forward to the day when I see Him revealed face to face and hope you are too.

Benediction

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5b-6)

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