

# Song of Solomon



NOTES & OUTLINES WITH

*J. Vernon McGee*

POETRY



# Song of Solomon

**WRITER:** Solomon (1:1). Solomon was the author of 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32), but we have only one (Song of Songs); as the name would indicate, it is the best.

**KEY WORDS:** “Beloved,” the name for Him; “love,” the name for her.

**KEY VERSES:**

*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.* (6:3)

*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be [rejected].* (8:7)

**THE MEANING:** The Song of Solomon is a parabolic poem. The *interpretation*, not the inspiration, causes the difficulty—although there are some who actually feel it should not be in the Bible. Since it is in the canon of Scripture, it is the great neglected book of the Bible. Often young preachers are counseled not to use it until they become old men. The Jews called it the Holy of Holies of Scripture. Origen and Jerome tell us that the Jews would not per-

mit their young men to read it until they were 30 years old. Surely any fragile flower requires delicate handling. There have been four different and important meanings found in this book:

- 1** It sets forth the glory of wedded love; declaring the sacredness of marital relationship and that marriage is a divine institution. To our occidental minds, it borders on the vulgar, but when it is compared to other oriental poetry, it is indeed tame and lacks the splash of color and extravagant terms which characterize oriental (e.g., Persian) poetry. The Jews taught that it sets forth the heart of a satisfied husband and a devoted wife.
- 2** It sets forth the love of Jehovah for Israel. The prophets spoke of Israel as the wife of Jehovah.

These two interpretations have been set forth by the scribes and rabbis of Israel and have been accepted by the church. However, there are two other interpretations:

- 3** It is a picture of Christ and the church. The church is the bride of Christ, a familiar figure of Scripture (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 21).
- 4** It depicts the communion of Christ and the individual believer. The soul's communion with Christ is here set forth.

"The Song of Solomon tests the spiritual capacity of the reader."

**STORY OUTLINE:** Since this book is a series of scenes in a drama that is not told in chronological sequence, we shall make no attempt to outline the book.

The popular interpretation, that it tells the story of a girl kidnapped by Solomon, is repugnant. The book of Dr. H. A. Ironside is especially recommended, as it contains the only adequate and satisfying interpretation that I have seen. The key to the story is found in 8:11. The story is of a poor family of Ephraim in which there is a girl who is a sort of Cinderella. The poverty of the family forces her into the vineyards where she meets the young shepherd. The story of their love is first told. Then he leaves her with the promise that he will return. He is absent for a long time, and she despairs of his return. One day, the electrifying word is shouted along the way that King Solomon is coming by. She is not interested and takes no further notice until word is brought to her that

King Solomon wants to see her. She is puzzled until she is brought into his presence where she recognizes him as her shepherd lover. He takes her to his palace in Jerusalem where most of the song takes place.

**COMMENT:** The setting of the drama is the palace in Jerusalem, and some of the scenes are flashbacks to a previous time. There is a reminder here of the Greek drama where a chorus talks back and forth to the protagonists of the play. The daughters of Jerusalem carry along the tempo of the story. Some of these dialogues were evidently to be sung. Several lovely scenes are introduced at Jerusalem which find a counterpart in the church.

When reading the Song of Solomon, take off the shoes from the natural man, for the ground on which you stand is spiritual ground.

**CHAPTER 1**—The drama opens at Baal-hamon, in the hill country of Ephraim.

VV. 2-4—The bride, in the palace in Jerusalem, reviews in her mind the meeting with the shepherd who was Solomon.

V. 5—She was sunburned, in contrast to the ladies of the court.

V. 6—She was forced by her brothers to keep the vineyard. Her “own vineyard” was her own beauty—she hadn’t been able to go to the beauty salon.

V. 7—The shepherd she met did not seem to have any sheep.

V. 8—The shepherd is evasive.

VV. 9-17—She falls in love with the shepherd, whom she later finds to be Solomon, the king.

## **CHAPTER 2**

VV. 1-7—A love scene in the palace.

V. 1—The bride speaks of herself. She is not boasting, but compares herself to the lowly and humble flowers of that land.

V. 2—The bridegroom contrasts the lily with the thorns to reveal his love for her.

VV. 3-7—The bride speaks of her love for the bridegroom. Any relationship of the believer to Christ must rest upon His love for the believer and the believer’s love for Him.

VV. 8-17—The return of the bridegroom after a trip abroad. The bride's happy anticipation of his return should be the attitude of the believer toward the return of Christ.

V. 8—"The voice" of the bridegroom is heard first (John 5:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

V. 13—"Fig tree" suggests the nation Israel.

V. 16—This is the highest spiritual expression of any relationship with Christ. It is the high note of the Rapture, the catching up of the believer to be with Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). This section puts into the lovely language of poetry the meaning of the Rapture. Read it again and again, and memorize it.

### CHAPTER 3

VV. 1-5—The bride *dreams of the bridegroom* while he is away. She seeks him at night and is found by the watchman. At last, she finds the bridegroom.

VV. 6-11—Solomon in all his glory enters Jerusalem with his bride.

### CHAPTER 4

VV. 1-15—*The love song of the bridegroom.* This is the expression of deep desire and strong passion. Compare v. 7 with Ephesians 5:25-27. It is impossible for the believer to know (vv. 9, 10) how much Christ loves him (Revelation 2:4).

V. 16—The response of the bride (Isaiah 53:11).

### CHAPTER 5

VV. 1-3—The bride is *reluctant to open the door* to the bridegroom after she has retired.

VV. 4, 5—A lovely custom of that day was for the lover to place sweet smelling myrrh inside the handle of the bride's door. When she rose up and placed her hand on the handle, she discovered the myrrh and knew he had been there and gone.

V. 6—While he was out looking for lost sheep, she was sleeping. This is a fitting picture of Christ and the contemporary church.

VV. 7, 8—The *bride goes looking for the bridegroom.* She meets the daughters of Jerusalem, inquires of them, and waxes eloquent concerning him.

V. 9–They are skeptical and cynical. The world asks us, “Who is Christ? Is He any different from other religious leaders?”

VV. 10-16–She knows him and knows he is different. This is a detailed and glowing description of him, which reveals that she both knows him and loves him.

## **CHAPTER 6**

V. 1–The daughters of Jerusalem are so impressed by her glowing description that they are turned from skeptics to believers.

VV. 2, 3–The bride continues her praise of him.

VV. 4-10–The bridegroom expresses his love and affection for the bride.

VV. 11, 12–The bride responds.

V. 13–The daughters of Jerusalem respond.

## **CHAPTER 7**

VV. 1-5–The daughters of Jerusalem praise the beauty of the bride. (See the description of the church as the bride of Christ in Revelation 21.)

VV. 6-13–An antiphony of love by the bride and bridegroom.

**CHAPTER 8**–The love song concludes.

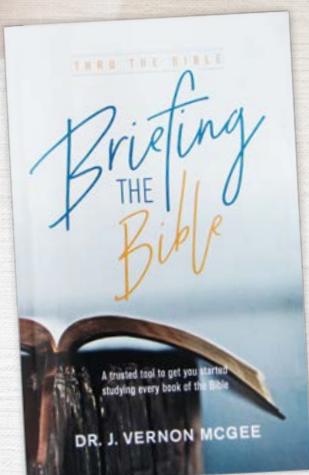
VV. 5-7–The bridegroom speaks of love and gives the theme of the song.

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**WRITER:** Matthew was a converted publican (tax collector) chosen to write to the Jews concerning their Messiah.

**KEY:** Matthew presents the program of God. A proper understanding of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" is essential to the proper interpretation of the Bible. The Kingdom of heaven is the same. The Jews of the first century in Palestine had a better understanding of the term than the average church



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