

# Mid Week • Song of Solomon

## CHAPTER 1

### V. 1

1 Kings 4:32 tells us that Solomon composed 1,005 songs

In his own estimation, this was the most sublime of them all!

This was his favorite - so he calls it the "Song of songs"

## INTRODUCTION

Some background on the Song of Solomon is essential as we begin

This book is recognized as one of the most obscure and difficult books to interpret

And the reason for this is the large number of Hebrew words that are used only in this book

Another reason it's confusing is that there are 3 different people engaged in dialog all at the same time and it isn't a simple task to sort out who is talking at any given time

Historically, the Song of Solomon has been interpreted differently

There are those who see it as a simple love poem,

And there is plenty of evidence of ancient near east love poetry from this period

This view sees the Song as the expression of intimate marital love between a lover and her beloved

Others see the Song mainly as allegory - where the woman is a symbol of God's people and the man is God

Many Jewish commentators have viewed it this way, with Israel being the woman and God being the beloved

In the OT, God regularly refers to Israel as His wife

Understood this way, the Song is an expression of the kind of intimacy God desires to have with His elect

Of course, based on the NT references to the Church being the bride of Christ, Christian commentators have followed the Jewish lead and said that the Song is allegory for the relationship between Christ and the Church

Now - here's the problem with an purely allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon - it simply doesn't work

You see, allegory denies the historical or literal dimension of the story

It says that there was no literal way to understand the text - it is all purely symbolic

But the Song is quite explicit in it's description of marital love, and it would be crass to make these fits a purely spiritual application

I think the best way to understand the Song of Solomon is to see it as first, literal and historical, but that it also bears a broad *type*, or picture of God and His people

We'll see this in greater detail as we get into the text

As I mentioned, there are three main characters in the Song:

There is a woman who is called the Shulamite

There is a man who is her lover

And there is a chorus of women called the daughters of Jerusalem

As I mentioned, it is a bit of a challenge to know who's talking at any given time because there are no divisions in the original language

The way scholars have been able to sort things out is by taking advantage of the pronouns

In English, we do not use cases like masculine, feminine, and neuter

But Hebrew does, so it's a help in sorting out who is talking

Also, you can distinguish the different speakers in this way: the man always refers to the woman as "my love," and the woman calls him "my beloved."

The New King James has done a good service by adding heading before each person's words

Lastly, we are faced with the complex issue of the basic background of the Song

JUST WHAT IS GOING ON HERE? What's the story behind the song?

Well, as you might guess, there are several theories

But after a lot of study, I think the best way to understand the Song is like this .

..

This story takes place early in Solomon's reign

He already possesses large estates in the land and has some vineyards in the region of Baal Hamon that he has leased out to others to work

One of these leasees is a family that has several brothers and a daughter

And the brothers have pressed their sister into service in the vineyard

They keep making fun of her young age and tell her she isn't old enough for love or marriage

So this is kind of a Cinderella story

Now, the book of Ecclesiastes tells us that Solomon had investigated every kind of life and work

Apparently he had taken off his royal robes and donned the garments of a common person and lived incognito among the people of the land to get a feel for their life

It seems that he had played the part of being a shepherd, and had lead his flock around the countryside - checking up on those who had leased lands from him

Kind of an undercover investigation!

When he came to Baal Hamon, he saw this young gal working the vineyard, and was struck by her diligence and natural beauty

They conversed, and she was taken with him

Love sprung in their hearts toward each other

And the passion that come with love began to be aroused

Solomon then left, under the pretense that he had to return his flock to their homeland

Some time later, he returned to Baal Hamon, but this time, in all his royal regalia  
And when he arrived, he called for this young woman  
She then realized it were young shepherd was none other than King Solomon!  
They returned to Jerusalem, where they were wed  
Now, that's were the Song really begins, though there are flash backs in the Song to those days of waiting to be re-united, before she knew who here beloved was

Now, I have to be honest - this Song is pretty frank in it's description of marital love  
Of course, the language is symbolic, as is fitting for a poem  
This isn't a technical journal on love-making; it's a poem  
But the picture language it uses is of the act of sex between a husband and a wife  
And it is quite graphic!  
In fact, so graphic is it that in ancient Israel, Jews were not allowed to read the Song till they were 30 or married  
And even today, in Orthodox homes, it cannot be read till one has been bar or bat mitzvahed

It is entirely right and to be expected that God would include a book in the Bible that speaks to the issue of marital love  
I like what G. Lloyd Carr wrote:  
"The believing Christian comes to the Bible with the faith that it is God's word to mankind. But we are more than merely spiritual beings; we are human. If God is concerned about our human condition - and the incarnation makes it plain that he is - his revelation will be concerned with every aspect of that condition. And that includes human sexuality."  
EJ Young wrote:  
"The song celebrates the dignity and purity of human love. This is a fact that has not always been sufficiently stressed in the study of book. It comes to us in this world of sin, where lust and passion are on every hand, where fierce temptations assail us and try to turn us aside from the God given standard of marriage. And it reminds us in particularly beautiful fashion, how pure and noble true love is."

### ***Vs. 2-4a The Woman***

"Take me to Jerusalem!"  
She expresses her desire to be with him, to hold and kiss him  
She is yearning for the consummation of her love when they will be alone together after their wedding  
As she thinks about him, she thinks of a lovely fragrance  
His very name when it is spoken is like breathing a fragrant perfume

You know the only way we can understand this poem is to remember the first time  
we were head over heels in love  
Remember how it felt like you were going to bust?  
You got butterflies in your stomach whenever the object of your affection was  
around  
Your palms got sweaty - your brain turned to mush  
You couldn't even say a simple word like "Hello"  
It came out as %^\$#@FS#H  
You would practice saying his or her name out loud in private  
You would write it on your PEE CHEE or notebook cover  
You'd fill whole pages with doodles of your name and his or hers  
That's what she's saying here - his name is enough to send her into ecstasy!

Now, as we look at this as a picture of Christ and the Church, these would be the  
words of the engaged bride toward her bridegroom  
And indeed, with the Shulamite we can say, "Your name is ointment poured  
forth."  
How sweet is the name of Jesus to us? How precious the thought of Him!  
*Jesus - You're the sweetest name of all,*  
*Jesus - You always hear me when I call*  
*Jesus- You pick me up each time I fall*  
*You're the sweetest, the sweetest name of all.*  
And with the Shulamite we can also say, "Lead me away!"  
Isn't that how the Bible ends?  
With the Bride of Christ saying, "Even so Lord, come quickly!"

#### **V. 4b - The Woman, (Not the Daughters of Jerusalem)**

This is better translated as, "Let us run"  
It follows, "Lead me away."  
She's saying, "Quick, let's go because I want you!"  
And so now they arrive in Jerusalem and Solomon takes her into the royal harem .  
..

#### **Vs. 4c - The Woman**

Once in the harem, she meets the other women . . .

#### **Vs. 4d**

The first line is their greeting of the woman.  
The second line is their kind of corporate expression of love for Solomon.  
Then the woman says . . .

#### **V. 4e-6**

Her time in the vineyard at the instigation of her cruel brothers has meant she has  
become very tanned  
Today, we think a tan is a sign of beauty; white skin is deemed unhealthy,  
sickly

But in the ancient world, it was the opposite; white skin was considered lovely  
and tanned was considered common  
Here's why; Today - indoors / only those with leisure time, wealthy, can lay  
out  
In ancient world, only wealthy indoors, everyone else outdoors  
So the woman is dark from the sun  
And she sees this as a hindrance to her beauty  
She's apologetic when she comes in to the harem because all the other women  
are fair and light  
You know how it is when you go to the beach early in the year and haven't  
gotten a tan yet, and you see your friends  
You apologize for how white you are - she's doing that, but in reverse!

### ***Vs. 7 - The Woman***

The woman now turns from speaking to the other women of the harem and utters a  
plaintive cry to her beloved - where has he gone?  
How will she find him in the palace so filled with people as it is?  
She's no longer at home, she's in a foreign place filled with strangers, and she  
is lonely for him

### ***Vs. 8 - Harem***

The other women simply tell her where to find her beloved  
In essence they are saying, "Go look for him where you would expect him to  
be, shepherding the nation!"

### ***Vs. 9-11 - Solomon***

Several of the analogies that both the woman and the man use to express their love  
toward one another and how beautiful they are to each other may not be too  
appealing to us today  
But of course they were in that time  
Here Solomon likens her to his choice horse  
And you have to admit, there is something incredibly beautiful about a well  
bred, and well cared for horse  
She is so beautiful that jewelry actually looks better on her than it does by itself -  
she lends beauty to jewelry!  
So Solomon says that he will direct the jewelers to make her more!  
What woman wouldn't love that?

### ***Vs. 12-14 - The Woman***

Solomon may have to attend to his duties as king - but she doesn't care about any  
of that  
She wants him and is anticipating their wedding and consummation  
So she thinks to that time when they will be together and how pleasurable it  
will be

### ***Vs. 15 - 2:1 - Her & Him***

Notice that 2:1 is her statement! We often sing this of Jesus, but it is the woman who is saying it

As a picture of the Church and Christ, what we see in these verses is the expression of Jesus' great love for and devotion to His people

When He looks on us, though we may be worn and colored by life and living in this world, he sees beauty

And she has learned to see herself through his eyes rather than through the eyes of the world

So she says, "I am a rose, a lily."

One of the great secrets of the Christian life is learning to see ourselves as God sees us rather than in some kind of self-made image or that which others would seek to put on us

And how does Christ see you? V. 15 - Ephesians 1

## **CHAPTER 2**

### ***Vs. 2-3 - Him & Her***

Compared to other women, she is like a flower among weeds to him

And he is like a fruitful apple tree in the midst of a bunch of wild trees to her

### ***Vs. 4-7 - The Woman***

Now she is anticipating the consummation of her marriage to him

She is dreaming about it

And she is getting weak with the desire

So she asks for some food to sustain her

### ***Vs. 8-14 - The Woman***

This is more anticipation

She is dreaming about the moment he comes for her

Anyone who has been in love and thought about their wedding day can relate to this

### ***V. 15 - ?***

This verse is an enigma and seems to be out of place

Several suggestions have been made as to what it means but I have to confess that none of them are completely satisfactory

So here's what I'd like to propose: Consider the context and your own experience

She's just went seeking Solomon and found him attending to the business of state

So she probably found him in the throne room

And there it hit her that she was going to marry the KING!!!!!!!

Up to this point he had only been her shepherd-lover

Now she realizes the full weight of what she's getting in to and who Solomon was

So as she has this kind of dream about their soon coming wedding night, intruding into it is a remembrance of her family and home

And there was one task in the vineyard that she was never able to get a grip on,  
and that was the rodents that came in and ate the grapes  
So she takes advantage of her new position of favor with the king and asks  
him to help her family with their problems in the vineyard  
I realize this isn't an entirely satisfying answer to this verse, but let me tell you, it is  
far better than any of the commentaries I read!

She goes on . . .

### ***Vs. 16-17 - The Woman***

This is an invitation to Solomon to come and partake of what she has to offer

## **CHAPTER 3**

Now she has a dream sequence - it's kind of a flashback to the time after they first  
met and fell in love and then he left

### ***Vs. 1-4 - The Woman***

This is simply an honest expression of the passion of desire one feels toward  
someone you are in love with

Very simply, she had dreamed about making love to him in her home in Baal  
Hamon

And this dream and the sense of yearning it revealed moves her to say something  
to the other women of the harem -

### ***V. 5 - The Woman***

In other words - keep your passion in check and your desires in reserve until there  
is the opportunity to express them in the way they ought to be expressed  
Don't let your imagination run wild!

And don't let yourself get all worked up in a fit of desire until the time is right  
That is a word of counsel that ought to be loudly proclaimed to young and single  
people today.

It's sad how early young children are encouraged present themselves to  
members of the opposite sex as something to be desired

Girls are donning make-up and sexually alluring clothing while they are  
still just little girls

Planned Parenthood and other morally liberal organizations are advocating  
the teaching of and promotion of sex classes in the early years of  
school

And the curriculum teaches children how to perform all kinds of sexual  
behavior

These organizations make it sound like it is normal and healthy for children  
as young as 8 years old to engage in sex - as long as they do it  
responsibly

Isn't it interesting, that in this book, which is so liberal in its expression of joy in  
marital love-making, and so incredibly graphic, still contains this thrice  
repeated refrain - v. 5

The fact of the matter is - we are in control of our desires  
We do not need to inflame sexual desire by giving free reign to our  
imagination  
We ought not incite lust by viewing images that are aimed at only one  
thing, and that is to heighten desire  
To put this in modern terms - DON'T GO THERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Now, the woman reminisces back to the time when Solomon came to get her . . .

### ***Vs. 6-11 - The Woman***

## **CHAPTER 4**

### ***Vs. 1-2 - Solomon***

Up to this point, most of the words have been hers, but now he speaks at length  
And the images of beauty he uses, again, don't seem to appealing to us, but they  
were meaningful then  
Her hair is curly and hangs down in a way reminiscent of a flock of goats  
coming down a hillside  
Her teeth are all even and white, and she none are missing!

### ***Vs. 3-9 - Solomon***

Sister - frequent in love poetry ; not literally his sister, simply a term of intimate  
endearment

### ***Vs. 10-15 - Solomon***

Quite frankly, this is the *height* of erotic imagery  
Commentators are all agreed that the garden enclosed is a symbol for her  
virginity  
It is a special treasure that she has been saving for the special relationship of  
marriage  
And Solomon has now come to unlock it and enjoy it's fruit  
She now responds . . .

### ***Vs. 16 - The Woman***

This is where the relationship is now consummated  
She has opened to him and given him that special gift that God intends should  
be given only once and within the walls of marriage

It ought to be obvious to all who read this how very joyous is this occasion to the  
couple involved  
And it's place in Scripture should forever banish the idea that sex between a  
husband and a wife is somehow dirty or wrong

## **CHAPTER 5**



### ***Vs. 1 - Solomon***

While Solomon and his new wife were consummating their marriage in their bed-chamber, the wedding guests were outside enjoying the wedding feast  
The joy of the young couple was celebrated by all those who knew them  
-----

Now, we have a break in the poem and story

Some time has passed and Solomon and his wife have settled into something of a routine in their marriage

You know how that is

It's late one night, and the woman has gone to bed before Solomon

Then he comes to her room and calls to her from outside the door to open so they can make love

### ***Vs. 2-7 - The Woman***

She's in the place between sleep and being awake when he comes and calls

And she is slow in getting up

In fact, she tells him she's already in bed and doesn't want to be disturbed

But then she realizes that is a lame excuse - she wants him

So she gets out of bed and every second increases her desire for him

But when she gets to the door and opens it, he's gone - all that's left is the fragrance of his presence

So she puts on her clothes and runs out into the streets of the city to find him

But he is nowhere to be found

And when the keepers of the night-streets catch her, not recognizing her as the wife of Solomon, they strike her for disturbing the peace

### ***Vs. 8 - The Woman***

She asks the other women of the harem that if they see Solomon to tell him that she realizes her error and to tell him that she longs for him

I will be using these verses as the text for the message this Sunday

### ***Vs. 9-16 - The Woman***

Sounds like Solomon was quite a hunk!

## **CHAPTER 6**

### ***Vs. 1-3 - The Harem and Woman***

Solomon and his wife were re-united and now she tells the other women of the harem that all was well - normal relations have been restored

### ***Vs. 4-10 - Solomon***

Solomon eventually had 700 wives and 300 concubines,

But at this point, he only had 60 wives and 80 concubines, so this was still in the early years of his reign

Still - this was a lot of women; and it's hard for us to imagine how the woman

of the Song could have been so in love with Solomon with so many other women around with which he was intimate  
Well, remember that while most of the women of the harem and first learned of Solomon in his role as king, she had come to know and love him as nothing more than a humble shepherd  
Also, the culture of that time looked at this whole thing much differently than we do today  
It was an expected part of a king's wealth and power that he had an extensive harem  
The larger the harem, the more glory  
And since Solomon was the pre-eminent king of his day, it was fitting that he have a harem to beat all harems  
Certainly there would be jealousy between the wives if there were two, three or even four  
But when there are 60 wives, and another 80 concubines, it's hard to be jealous  
Instead, the women start to find comfort and solace in each other and develop deep friendships  
And instead of looking at Solomon as something to fight over, he becomes their corporate delight and joy that they all celebrate together

Now, does that make multiple wives and mistresses right? NOT AT ALL

It isn't right- it's just the way it was!

God had warned the kings of Israel in Deut 17:17 that they were not to multiply their wives

In fact, God told them there were several things they were not to do, and Solomon did all of them in spades!

In these verses, Solomon is telling her that she is the fairest of them all

Of course, you have to wonder how many others he said these words to!

### ***Vs. 11-13 - The Woman and Solomon***

Okay - these verses comprise what many commentators believe to be the MOST difficult passage in the entire bible

Though the words are all common words, their meaning in the way they are put together here is beyond our grasp

Generally, it seems that the woman went on a little trip to the country and Solomon missed her

He calls her to return - and she slyly taunts him by asking him if all he's interested in is love-making = "dance of the double camps"

Notice that she is called the Shulamite here

This is a word that is vague and uncertain in its origin

Some see it as referring to some unknown location that she came from

But the word is simply the feminine form of Solomon's name

And more than likely it simply was a way of referring to her as Mrs. Solomon!

## CHAPTER 7

### ***Vs. 1-9 - Solomon***

Nothing need be said -except this is another rather explicit and erotic passage that describes their love-making

### ***Vs. 10-13 - The Shulamite***

She wants to visit her home and take Solomon back to the place where they first fell in love

## CHAPTER 8

### ***Vs. 1-2 - The Shulamite***

She is wishing Solomon was hers only and not the king of Israel  
She wants him all to herself, like the husbands and wives of her family's village  
How often do the privileged wish they were like everyone else?  
There are definite advantages to be in a position of influence, wealth and power, but those things also carry a heavy price tag!

### ***Vs. 3-4 - The Shulamite***

So Solomon and the Shulamite make the trip back to her home

### ***Vs. 5a - Someone in the Village***

### ***Vs. 5b - Solomon***

As they are approaching the city, they pass the spot where they first met and  
Solomon points it out to her  
She was napping by a tree and he woke her  
They had spent time by that tree and she had shared that that was the very spot where she was born  
It became the place of her falling in love with the young shepherd

### ***Vs. 6-7 - The Shulamite***

As she has aged and love has mellowed with time, she has come to realize how very powerful love is  
There is nothing to compare with it - it is the greatest of all emotions, and certainly the most powerful, even stronger than death

### ***Vs. 8-9 - Her Brothers***

The Shulamite is remembering back to the early days when her brothers treated her as a little squirt  
She was too young for marriage and they delighted in keeping her locked up at home  
But they didn't think she was too young for work, hard work, in the vineyard  
But she has now grown up and blossomed into a mature woman . . .

### ***Vs. 10-12 - The Shulamite***

So here we get the setting of the scene for the whole story  
Solomon had many land holdings, many vineyards and orchards  
But one of them held a fruit unlike all the others - HER!

### ***Vs. 13-14 - Solomon & Her***

Once again, she invites him to make love

## **CONCLUSION**

As I mentioned at the outset, while we can't interpret the Song of Solomon allegorically, we can see it as a broad picture of Christ and the Church  
Just as Solomon came in disguise the first time to visit his vineyard, Jesus came the first time in disguise to His vineyard, the nation of Israel  
And while the leaders of the nation rejected Him, one small part of the nation fell in love with Him

That small, seemingly unlovely part was the common man, the disciples and later the Gentiles

But then He went away - really to prepare the palace for his marriage to the Shulamite

In the same way Jesus went away to prepare a place for us

And when He comes again, He comes in glory, as Solomon did

He will call us by name, and we shall go to meet Him and sit at the banqueting table

There we will hear the precious words of our Savior and King as He tells us of His great love and how lovely we are to Him

And we will finally be able to look Him in the eyes and tell him face to face of our great love for Him

That is the spiritual application of this book

But let's not miss out on the important practical application of this wonderful Song

And that is this: Marital love-making is a thing of joy and celebration

It is a rich, full, an enjoyable act that is meant by God to be a normal and regular part of marriage

Don't let your love life become dry, routine, and boring

Read the song together and see if you can't make the words and pictures of love-making your own.