

THE GARDEN OF THE LORD (Songs 4:8-16)

The Song of Solomon is a love story concerning the relationship between the Bridegroom and the Bride. It is couched in the most romantic symbolism and often embraces the most intimate of vocabulary.

Another of the idiosyncrasies of this book is that you will not find the name of God mentioned. Neither will you find this book quoted anywhere in the New Testament. In its initial, - and primary, - Old Testament setting, the Jewish people are described as the Bride, and Jehovah as the Bridegroom.

Yet, in this present dispensation of grace, through the symbolism of the bride and the bridegroom we find more fully and completely expressed the love of the Lord Jesus Christ (the Bridegroom) and the Church (the Bride). Indeed, that is how Paul used the symbolism in Eph. 5:25 Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

By way of a very brief synopsis to the book ... In chapter one King Solomon, the author, introduces the courtship in the words of the bride, 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love [*is*] better than wine. But, she all-so-quickly is very aware of her own failings and inadequacies, v.6 Look not upon me, because I [*am*] black [*dark*], because the sun hath looked upon [*scorched*] me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; [*but*] mine own vineyard have I not kept. Nevertheless, the bridegroom assures her, v.15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair. ... It is the beautiful truth that Christ can see what His Bride shall become through grace.

In chapter two the language of love continues. And in verse eight she is eagerly anticipating him, The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills To which he replies, v.14 let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet [*is*] thy voice, and thy countenance [*is*] comely.

In chapter three, she is lying in bed at night and earnestly longs to be with her bridegroom, v.1 on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. ... She is looking for his return, and to be reunited with him.

The longing for her bridegroom takes her from her bed out into the streets to search for him. Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? (v.3) she asked the watchman.

... The bridegroom is silent though in chapter three, but he begins to speak again at the beginning of chapter four, v.1 Behold, thou [*art*] fair, my love; behold, thou [*art*] fair ... v.7 Thou [*art*] all fair, my love; [*there is*] no spot in thee.

Then, he presents her with the invitation, v.8 Come with me from Lebanon, [*my*] spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana [*a mountain in Lebanon*], from the top of Shenir [*the Amorite name for Mount Hermon*] and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. ... Such a beautiful and intimate picture he is presenting ... v.8 Come with me from Lebanon, [*my*] spouse, with me from Lebanon There is an emphasis we would do well not to miss. ... Lebanon, - to the north of modern Israel, - was first mentioned in Scripture in chapter one of Deuteronomy. On that occasion Moses was approaching the end of his life, and was standing with his people **Dt. 1:1** ... on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab ... ³ And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month ... It's so exact because it was such a great and memorable occasion.

Standing there, he reminded the people of Israel concerning the promise of God that the land would one day become theirs, **Dt. 1:6** The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: **7** Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites [*i.e. to the land of Canaan*], in particular the hill country of Judah and Ephraim], and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates [*originating in eastern Turkey, flowing through Syria and Iraq, and out into the Persian Gulf*]. **8** Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them. ... All that vast area was promised to the people of Israel and will one day come under their control for rather than the nations stripping them of what they already have, the Lord will add to their territory when Christ comes to reign.

Now, the bride is in Lebanon, - away to the north, - but the king, - the Bridegroom, - is calling her into his palace in Jerusalem for his palace is to become her home, ⁹ Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, [*my*] spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. ¹⁰ How fair is thy love, my sister, [*my*] spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! ¹¹ Thy lips, O [*my*] spouse, drop [*as*] the honeycomb: honey and milk [*are*] under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments [*is*] like the smell of Lebanon. ¹² A garden inclosed [*is*] my sister, [*my*] spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. ¹³ Thy plants [*are*] an orchard of pomegranates, with

pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, ¹⁴ Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: ¹⁵ A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

At that point the bride replies, 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. ... Let's go down into the garden and consider three simple observations that relate to our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom. First of all, we see the garden as ...

A WALLED GARDEN

v.12 A garden inclosed [*is*] my sister, [*my*] spouse

It is cut off from the rest of the world and it is for the bridegroom and his bride alone. It is not a public park or a right-away. The bride refers to it in 2:7 as *our wall*. I think we can safely assume this *garden inclosed* was for the purpose of this most intimate of relationships between the king and his spouse.

He calls her *my sister*, [*my*] spouse and it is evident He has the deepest of affections for her. There is not another in His heart that occupies the place he has for her. She has 'ravished' his heart (v.9), - *labab*, to make the heart beat faster. At present they are parted ... and that is why he invites her, v.8 *Come with me from Lebanon*, [*my*] spouse, with me from Lebanon ... He longs for her company, her conversation, and her fragrance.

Twice He calls her [*my*] spouse (v.8,11), and three times He calls her *my sister*, [*my*] spouse (v.9,10,12). Isaiah used the same picture language in relation to Christ and the Church, 62:5 [*as*] the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, [*so*] shall thy God rejoice over thee. No words can describe the love God had for His people. Even today, as we read through the Song of Solomon, some of its language seems almost too lewd and inappropriately descriptive to be reading in a church ... but the fault is not with the Word of God, the fault lies with how a sinful society has cankered our thoughts that it's hard to raise them out of the gutter. ... No, there is nothing crude in the language of the Song of Solomon. It's all about, - as Matthew Henry says, - "a marriage-covenant between Christ and His church, between Christ and every true believer".

And look at what He says we are ... *a garden inclosed*. That means He has surrounded us with a wall of protection that keeps His people in ... and keeps the enemy out. In fact, it is such a strong word he uses for 'inclosed'; it translates the word *na'al* which means 'to bar, to lock, to bolt', - that is how secure our salvation is in Christ. We are 'locked in' with Jesus, and the enemy

is 'locked out'. It is like when the shepherd has his sheep in the safety of the sheepfold he lies across the entrance for their protection and care.

When you trusted in Him for your salvation you are in a [garden enclosed](#). He is 'lying across the door'. He made it so that 'once in Him, in Him forever'! ... Yes, this garden was closed off from the outside. It protected the occupants on the inside. It had its wall of protection to keep all the threats and attacks of the enemies of Christ away. This is what He has done for the Church ... In sovereign grace, He has enclosed us within His keeping. ...

“Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding ...
 What from Christ my soul can sever,
 Bound by everlasting bands?
 Once in Him, in Him forever
 The eternal cov'nant stands;
 None can pluck me, none can pluck me
 From the Father's mighty hands.”

Why does He call her 'my sister'? We can understand Him calling her 'my spouse' ... but why does He call her 'my sister'? The answer lies in the most simplest of explanations ... For Him to describe her as 'my sister' He had to take on flesh ... and that was what He did, [Jn. 3:16](#) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son ... [Gal. 4:4](#) when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman ... [Phil. 2:7](#) made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ... He is not ashamed to own her, and to belong to her as the Church belongs to Him. ... She is in a **walled garden** ... safe within the eternal plan of God.

A WATERED GARDEN

[v.15 A fountain of gardens](#)

In his description of his love for the bride, the bridegroom also envisages her as a [fountain of gardens](#), a [well of living waters](#), and [streams from Lebanon](#). There is no part of the garden that is dry or withered for the waters are flowing from Lebanon in the north, through the countryside and underground to the source of the fountain ... in the garden. Its living waters, - pure and clear as crystal, would never run dry and they beautifully maintained its great array of all the most beautiful plants and trees, shrubs and herbs. Everything in the garden was perfect ... irrigated by this fountain of living waters.

Isaiah refers to a similar picture, [58:11](#) thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. ... What a promise! One day, as the Lord Jesus was standing at Jacob's well in Samaria, He was thirsty but He had

nothing to lower into the well to bring the water to the surface. Imagine, the God Who created the heavens and the earth was sitting at a well *being weary with His journey* (Jn. 4:6). Along came a woman with a dubious reputation in the area, and He saith unto her, *Give me to drink* (v.7).

After further discussion, Jesus said to her, v.10 *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. ... She didn't understand, and so He said to her again, v.13 Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

That is the fountain that keeps on watering the garden belonging to the bridegroom and his bride. The apostle John describes it ... *Rev. 22:1 a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ... Another hymn writer wrote, "I'm living where the healing waters flow." A walled garden ... a watered garden*

A WELCOME GARDEN v.16 *Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits*

Yes, it is *His* garden. He planned it and laid it out in the fashion and form His own mind decreed. He chose the plants and the trees. He set the rocks in their place ... and He planned the direction the living streams would flow from the fountain. Yes, it is *his* garden ... and what a privilege it is for the bride to be transported there! It is the place she never worked to deserve, and yet she shares it with Him.

She had no part to play in how it was planned for the bridegroom planned it all! Remember how Mary Magdalene came to the garden in which there was the tomb where Jesus was laid. The stone had been rolled away, and she feared His body had been stolen. She went to the One who she thought was the gardener (Jn. 20:15) ... In the Song of Solomon 4:16 it *is* His garden ... and He *is* the Gardener! Isaac Watts wrote, "We are a garden walled around, Chosen and made peculiar ground; A little spot enclosed by grace Out of the world's wide wilderness." ... Just think of that! ... "Out of the world's wide wilderness." And with God as its gardener, the words of Gen. 2:9 take on a very special resonance, *out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden. ... And we see that tree of life again in the garden described in the final chapter of the*

Bible, and it is as fruitful as it has always been, for it bare twelve [*manner of*] fruits, [*and*] yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree [*were*] for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

Yes, at the commencement of the verse she speaks about *her* garden ... I wonder if that garden had been kept anything like the garden in 1:6 that hadn't been cared for as carefully as it ought to have been?! *It* was like a wilderness, - she was always so busy doing other things and looking after other people's gardens! ... But she had been taken out of that wilderness into a garden where there were 'pleasant fruits' to eat, - she had not taken herself out ... but the Bridegroom had taken her out because He loved her, **6:4** *Thou art beautiful, O my love ... 7:6* *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! ... And so she replies, 10* *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

CONCLUSION

This is a true love story which began before the foundation of this world for that is how long God has loved you. He has, - as it were, - taken you from away out 'in the wilds' and He has brought you down to 'Jerusalem', and into His own garden, - the Garden of the Lord. That is the place which speaks of the profession of your faith in Him. *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?* We are not particularly speaking about some profound doctrinal truth here ... We are simply looking at the relationship every truly born-again believer enjoys with the Lord. ... This was how Jesus described it in the parable concerning the five young virgins who were prepared for His appearing, **Mt. 25:10** *And while they [the five foolish and unprepared virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.*

Yes, I know that as long as we are in this world we have problems to deal with ... but at the heart of it all, as believers, we ought to know about the walled garden that is watered and welcoming for His Bride, - you and me. It is into His company that we can go for safety, - "safe in the arms of Jesus" ... and at the same time, when we are thirsty and in need of the strength that comes from Him alone ... He is always there. Like the river, the welcome never runs dry, **Is. 55:1** *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ... "There is a river, and it flows from deep within, There is a fountain, that frees the soul from sin. Come to this water, there is a vast supply; There is a river, that never shall run dry"*

The bride was asked in Songs 6:1, *whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.* She knew exactly where he was ... and she was going

to be with Him, v.2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. ... He is preparing the garden for His Beloved. That is when it will be complete, - when both He and her are together forever.

That is what she was looking forward to ... and that is what we are looking forward to also. We can say with her, I [*am*] my beloved's, and my beloved [*is*] mine (v.3). ... He has saved me and He has a home waiting for me in Glory, and for all those to whom His saving grace has been applied. ... “Love Divine, all loves excelling ... Till in Heaven we take our place, Till we cast our crowns before Thee, Lost in wonder, love, and praise”.

And so the best conclusion we can come to is contained in the words of the penultimate verse of Scripture, **Rev. 22:20** He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.