

Christ my Beloved – Song Series

Lesson 2 – Black but Beautiful

Text: Song of Solomon 1:5-8

Introduction:

“There is no Book of the Bible which affords a better test of the depth of a man’s Christianity than the Song of Solomon. If a man’s religion be all in his head, - a well-set form of doctrines, built like mason work, stone above stone, - but exercising no influence upon his heart, this book cannot but offend him...” Robert Murray McCheyne

1. Review of correct interpretation
 - A. The 3 main schools of thought
 1. Literal – Marital love/ideal marriage. The problem with this interpretation is that the bride is not the only one pursuing the bridegroom (Refer 1:3, 4, 5:9 & 6:1)
 2. Allegorical – No historical facts but a poetic composition to picture Christ’s relationship to His people. The problem with this interpretation is that it ignores the clear references to actual people and places.
 3. Typical – Recognises the historical setting (Real places & real people) and understands it as pointing to Christ and the church.
 - B. Key N.T. Verses
 1. Eph. 5:32 *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*
 2. 2 Cor 11:2 *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*
 3. Luke 24:44 *“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”*
 - C. Key principles for unlocking the message of the Song
 1. Seek to discern the main themes: To what does the passage point? Similar to parables, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Not all points demand equal attention.
 2. Identify the speaker: Solomon and the Shulamite maiden. The bridegroom addresses her as “my love”; the bride addresses Him as “my beloved”. Look for the masculine and feminine pronouns (he, him, she, her)

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I. A Humble Confession (Vs. 5-6)

A. Blackness (Vs. 5)

1. Confessed – ***“I am black”***

- a. The experience of being drawn into intimate fellowship with Christ as portrayed in Vs. 2-4 produces the confession in the Christian that comes in Vs. 5-6. Having seen the glorious wonder of her bridegroom and having tasted something of the sweetness of His fellowship, the bride now has a new understanding of her own imperfections. **A right view of Christ will produce a right view of self.**
- b. *“Every Christian, in proportion as he lives near to God, will feel this self-abasement, this lowness of heart;”* C.H. Spurgeon
- c. *“Nothing humbles the soul like sacred and intimate communion with the LORD... Things once called “little negligences” are seen with new eyes in “the secret of His presence.”* Hudson Taylor
- d. Two further Biblical examples:
 - i. **The Prophet Isaiah:** *“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”* Isaiah 6:1-5
 - ii. **The Apostle John:** *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Song of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me,*

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saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.”

Revelation 1:12-17

- e. Consider the example of Christ as revealed in Philippians 2
2. Discussed – **“daughters of Jerusalem”** – speaks of those who have an interest in the bridegroom but have not yet given themselves to him. Refer 5:8-9 & 6:1. This confession is the bride’s testimony and witness to those with an inquiring heart for the bridegroom. They could represent immature believers or seekers after the bridegroom.
3. Illustrated – **“as the tents of Kedar”**

Kedar was one of the firstborn sons of Ishmael (Gen 25:13; 1 Chr. 1:29). The Kedarites were a nomadic people who dwelt in tents made of rough, coarse goat’s hair in the area known as the wilderness of Shur (between Shur and Havilah) where Mt Sinai is located. These tents would be further blackened by the heat of the Eastern Sun and the blast of the desert winds.
4. Explained (Vs. 6)
 - a. She had Suffered
 - i. **“the sun hath looked upon me”** – the heat of the sun speaks of toil, labour and suffering. We bear the marks and imperfections that life imprints upon us.
 - ii. **“made me the keeper of the vineyards”**
 - b. She had Failed – **“mine own vineyard have I not kept”** = misplaced priorities; empty works. Busy in accomplishing the will of others but neglecting the will of her Lord. A vineyard speaks of fruitfulness (Jn 15). For a vineyard to produce, it needs watering, care and nurturing.
- B. Beauty (Vs. 5)
 1. Declared – **“I am comely”**
 - a. The paradox – a Christian is both a sinner and a saint. He is black but beautiful. Black in Adam but comely in Christ.
 - b. Psa 149:4 *“For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.”*
 2. Illustrated - **“curtains of Solomon”**
 - a. A contrast to the tents of Kedar. The curtains of Solomon’s palace would have been made of the finest material; finely woven and spotless.
 - b. They speak of the fine linen of the believer’s imputed righteousness.
 - i. Rev 19:7-8 *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”*

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- ii. Isaiah 61:10 *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the **garments of salvation**, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”*
- iii. Illustration: Christ’s seamless robe (His robes for mine)
John 19:23 *“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: **now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.**”*
- iv. **The wonderful exchange:** *“His robes for mine O wonderful exchange! Clothed in my sin, Christ suffered neath God’s rage. Draped in His righteousness, I’m justified. In Christ I live for in my place He died.”* My sin placed on Him; His salvation bestowed upon me. My corruption exchanged for His Perfection; my unloveliness for His holiness; my weakness for His strength; my ugliness for His beauty; my wrong for His righteousness; my filthy rags for His spotless robe.
- v. Illustration of Joshua the High Priest: Zec 3:1-5 *“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was **clothed with filthy garments**, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, **Take away the filthy garments from him.** And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and **I will clothe thee with change of raiment.** And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and **clothed him with garments.** And the angel of the LORD stood by.”*
- vi. Christ, our beloved Bridegroom, sees us as pure and spotless. The bride is addressed as “the fairest among women” in Vs. 8. In Vs. 7 of chapter 4 He says, *“Thou art all fair, my love; there is **no spot** in thee.”*

II. A Fervent Desire (Vs. 7)

- A. Her expression of love – *“O thou whom my soul loveth”*
- B. Her expression of need
 1. She is hungry and weary.
 2. She seeks shade from the sun that has burnt her (Vs. 6). She seeks rest from her fruitless labours.
 3. The answer to our failures as believers is to seek out fellowship with our Shepherd.

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4. She seeks nourishment (feeds) and comfort (rest)

III. A Guiding Answer (Vs. 8)

* The first time the bridegroom speaks.

- A. Follow the Flock – Christ is found in the company of His sheep.
- B. Feed the Kids – ‘feed’ = shepherd. ‘kids’ = lambs. She is viewed as a shepherdess. She is not only to be concerned about her own desire for feeding and rest but to be careful to guide and help the young immature ones. In so doing, she will find herself in the company of the Shepherd. Illustration: Christ’s words of commission to Peter. Love for Christ will be expressed in love for His flock. She is commissioned to service that is close to the Shepherd’s heart in contrast with the empty works enforced upon her in Vs. 6 (keeping the vineyards).
- C. Shepherds Tents
 1. Refers to the Shepherd’s under-shepherds.
 2. “While sharing with the other under-shepherds in caring for His flock she will find the Chief Shepherd at her side, and enjoy the tokens of His approval.” Hudson Taylor Pg. 18
 3. “The Lord’s intention, then, is for her to be alongside His true under-shepherds, those who shepherd under the Lord’s direction.” Nee Pg. 37

Conclusion

Let him embrace my soul, and prove
Mine interest in his heav'nly love;
The voice that tells me, "Thou art mine,"
Exceeds the blessings of the vine.

On thee th' anointing Spirit came,
And spreads the savor of thy name;
That oil of gladness and of grace
Draws virgin souls to meet thy face.

Jesus, allure me by thy charms,
My soul shall fly into thine arms!
Our wand'ring feet thy favors bring
To the fair chambers of the King.

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Wonder and pleasure tune our voice
To speak thy praises and our joys;
Our memory keeps this love of thine
Beyond the taste of richest wine.

Though in ourselves deformed we are,
And black as Kedar's tents appear,
Yet, when we put thy beauties on,
Fair as the courts of Solomon.

While at his table sits the King,
He loves to see us smile and sing;
Our graces are our best perfume,
And breathe like spikenard round the room.

As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me
And while he makes my soul his guest,
My bosom, Lord, shall be thy rest.

No beams of cedar or of fir
Can with thy courts on earth compare;
And here we wait, until thy love
Raise us to nobler seats above.