

## Studies In Song of Solomon

### INTRODUCTION TO SONG OF SOLOMON

**TITLE:** Based on its first verse, this book is known by two titles: “Song of Songs” and “Song of Solomon.” The genitive phrase “song of songs” is the Hebrew way of expressing the superlative, *i.e.*, “the greatest, best, or most beautiful of songs.” In Latin the book is called Canticles, which means “songs.” In the Hebrew Bible it is one of the five *megillot* or *scrolls*, which were read to the Jewish people on feast days (the others being Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations). Redford (Pulpit Commentary) says the “title is not decisive...It may be later in date than the book itself, and added by another hand; but the fact that Solomon is not described by any royal title is in favor of the antiquity of the words” (page ii, Introduction). The Vulgate has the title, “Canticum Canticorum,” Latin meaning “The Song of Songs.”

**AUTHOR:** This book is attributed to King Solomon by its own testimony (1:1), as well as by rabbinic tradition. Though some reject Solomonic authorship and consider the phrase “which is Solomon’s” a dedication rather than an autograph, evangelical scholars are generally in agreement concerning the text’s affirmation of authorship. Historical and linguistic arguments against Solomonic authorship have been shown to be inconclusive. In support of Solomonic authorship are these additional internal evidences: (1) the name of the Hebrew king appears seven times in the book (1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12); (2) these allusions to Solomon are closely tied to references to kingship and royal luxury (1:4, 12, 13; 3:6, 9; 7:5); and (3) geographical references seem to indicate an undivided kingdom, with indiscriminate mention of localities found in both kingdoms as if they were one political realm (6:4). (4) The book claims to have been written by Solomon; (5) The book was written in a time of peace, which certainly fit Solomon’s reign.

**DATE:** Solomonic authorship demands a tenth-century B.C. date. Jewish tradition considers the book a product of Solomon’s early years (cf. 6:8), before his excessive multiplying of wives and concubines due to political expediency and sensual indulgence (cf. 1 Kin. 11:1-8). Coffman has also noted that “the fact of Solomon’s having only sixty queens and eighty concubines points to a relatively early period in his reign” (page 145). Since Solomon ascended the throne in approximately 974 B.C., if we add to that ten or fifteen years, that would bring the date to somewhere in the vicinity of 960 B.C.

**LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS:** This poem or song, which is never quoted directly in either the Old or New Testaments, is a unique literary masterpiece which is full of figures of speech and descriptive imagery. In the Hebrew Bible it is located in the third section known as the Writings (kethuvim, Heb.). Its abrupt changes of speaker and setting sometimes make the dialogue and plot difficult to follow. The song is a type of Semitic wisdom literature, and parallels the Book of Proverbs in many ways. As is true of much Hebrew poetry, the book is characterized by parallelism, the stating and restating of an idea in close context. Key images in the book include wine, the garden, the kiss, various spices and fruits, and countryside or pastoral metaphors. Of special note is the fact that the name of God does not appear directly in the book (but see note at 5:1).

**THEME:** Some of the suggested themes include (1) to honor the divine institution of marriage, thereby uniting one man and one woman, and to portray within that marriage conjugal love, especially in its romantic expression; (2) to show God’s love for Israel; and (3) to illustrate the

love of Christ for the church, i.e., that scarlet thread of redemption which runs through Scripture and which is illustrated most perfectly in the relationship between husband and wife (cf. Eph. 5:25-33).

If the book is an extended dramatic poem on human love, then its purpose is to indicate the rightness and value of true love in all its aspects between man and woman. God, in his infinite wisdom, has included in the Canon of Holy Scripture this book on this important matter, which in every generation has suffered tragic abuse. Thus, in its teaching, the Bible seeks to redeem a situation which has become woefully degraded (Coffman quoting *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, page 150, 151).

While I would not deny this aspect of marital love being present in the book, I am prone to see in this beautiful song something more. This will become clear as we proceed through the book.

Coffman has concluded that “the most amazing thing about this book is the sheer volume of comments and books that have been written on it” (page 150). He then provided this interesting tid bit: “Pope, writing in *Anchor Bible*, declare that, ‘A thorough survey of the interpretations of Song of Solomon would require the lifelong labors of a whole team of scholars; and all that can be offered here is a brief sketch” (Coffman, 150).

**INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES:** The literary form and original context of the Song have been understood in various ways. The Song has been seen as a drama, a collection of Syrian wedding songs, a collection of pagan fertility cult liturgies, or an anthology of unrelated love songs. Basically, all approaches can be seen to utilize generally one of three methods:

(1) **The allegorical view** understands the book as a poem describing the relationship between God and Israel or between Christ and the church. Each detail is interpreted in a symbolic manner. This approach often finds as many interpretations as interpreters. Genuine allegory will usually yield basically the same interpretation to its varied interpreters. Coffman has provided a number of allegorical interpretations of this book, including the following: (a) Ambrose applied it to the Virgin Mary; (b) Bernard adopted a mystical view of the “soul seeking her heavenly Bridegroom”; (c) Thomas Aquinas interpreted the Song as “the soul’s intercourse with the Savior”; (d) Martin Luther saw God as the bridegroom and His people as the bride. (e) Nicolas de Lyra regarded the song as ‘The history of Israel from Moses to Christ.’ The list continues, but we get the gist of the various allegories that might exist.

(2) **The typological view** differs from the allegorical by keeping a historical foundation and by finding analogy not in all subordinate details, but only in the main outlines. The proponents of this view acknowledge the mutual love between Solomon and the Shulamite but go beyond that to consider the divine analogy with its more elevated and spiritual meaning as being the more important. Most commentators see two main characters in the book, namely Solomon and the Shulamite woman. Our conclusion, however, is that there are three characters in this little book, and the lessons run much deeper than a simple look at the love between a man and a woman.

(3) The literal or lyrical view is one which takes the poem at face value, assigning the simplest and most natural interpretation to the text. Some who hold this position maintain that the poem is therefore merely a secular love song expressing human romantic love at its best without spiritual lesson or theological content. They value the Song only as a divine sanction upon

marital love and a timely warning against perversions of marriage popular in Solomon's time. However, there is also the option that the poem is a vital expression in frank but pure language of the divine theology of marriage as expressed in the love between husband and wife in the physical area, setting forth the ideal love relationship in monogamous marriage. Even the most intimate and personal human love is according to divine plan and as such is bestowed by God Himself (cf. Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-6). The richest and best of human love is only a foretaste of the matchless, greater love of God. In this book, the scarlet thread of redemption is revealed, as man, through seeing and experiencing the purity and holiness of earthly love in marriage, gains a better and clearer understanding of the eternal, heavenly love of Christ for His church.

So which approach shall we take to this marvelous little book? I will follow Coffman's interpretation on this:

There are two lovers in the Song of Solomon, namely: (1) Solomon standing for Satan and all the temptations of the world, and (2) The Shepherd who stands for Christ in his perfect love of all mankind. The Shulamite maiden stands for God's Israel of both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. She rejected the overtures of Solomon standing for all the allurements of earthly life and remained true to the Good Shepherd (Christ Himself) (Coffman, 151).

**KEY VERSES:** Regardless of which position you take, the climax of the book, and therefore the key to the Song, is found in 8:6-7, where the incredible power and value of love is described. If one takes the position that the book is a description of marriage and conjugal love contained therein, then all events, discourses, and images in the book find their importance and worth summarized in these two verses. The Song closes as a beautiful affirmation of God's pleasure in physical love between a man and a woman. Their relationship is to be unique and cherished. They are to value monogamy, permanence, understanding, and self-giving. Mutual satisfaction is their goal as they cleave to one another. Sexual intimacy is to be an anticipated time of union, joy, and pleasure. It is to be enjoyed often and with God's blessing. Seeing one's spouse as beautiful in appearance and character will enhance the marriage and foster its growth into old age. Such a description of marriage certainly provides a beautiful analogy of the relationship which should be nurtured between (1) God and His church, and (2) God and the individual believer.

The following outline is suggested [developed at 2:30 AM on January 14, 1995]:

### OUTLINE

Introduction: "The Song of Songs," 1:1

1. The Shulamite, 1:2-7;
  - A. She describes her lover, 1:2-4;
  - B. She responds to criticism about her "swarthy" appearance, 1:5-7;
2. The "Daughters Of Jerusalem" harass the Shulamite, 1:8;
3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7;
  - A. King Solomon woos the young maiden, 1:9-11;
  - B. The Shulamite reflects upon her lover, 1:12-14;
  - C. King Solomon continues to woo the Shulamite, 1:15-2:2;
  - D. The Shulamite Continues Her Reflection Upon Her Lover, 2:3-6;
4. Refrain, 2:7;

5. The Shepherd 'Lover' and the Shulamite, 2:8-3:4;
  - A. The Shepherd comes to take the Shulamite away from Solomon's "harem," 2:8-14;
  - B. The marital "bliss" of the Shepherd and the Shulamite, 2:15-17;
  - C. The Shulamite's dream, 3:1-4;
6. Refrain, 3:5;
7. Solomon continues to pursue the Shulamite, 3:6-4:8;
  - A. The grand "parade" in pursuit of the Shulamite, 3:6-11;
  - B. The King's love song to the Shulamite, 4:1-8;
8. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 4:9-5:8;
  - A. The Shepherd's appeal to and description of, the Shulamite, 4:9-15;
  - B. The Shulamite invites her lover to come to his "garden," 4:16;
  - C. The marriage of the Shepherd and the Maiden, 5:1;
  - D. The Maiden's second dream, 5:2-8;
9. The "daughters of Jerusalem," and the Shulamite, 5:9-6:3;
  - A. The question from the "daughters of Jerusalem," 5:9;
  - B. The answer from the Shulamite as she describes her lover, 5:10-16;
  - C. Another question from the "daughters of Jerusalem," 6:1;
  - D. The Shulamite answers, 6:2-3;
10. The King's final attempt to woo the Shulamite, 6:4-7:13;
  - A. Solomon's flattery of the Shulamite, 6:4-12;
  - B. A question from the "daughters of Jerusalem," likely to Solomon, 6:13;
  - C. The King renews his flattering appeals, 7:1-9;
  - D. The Shulamite's final rejection of the King, 7:10-13;
11. The Shulamite's affectionate soliloquy, 8:1-3;
12. Refrain, 8:4;
13. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 8:5-14;
  - A. The Shepherd now woos the Shulamite, 8:5-7;
  - B. The "song of the little sister," 8:8-9;
  - C. The Shulamite maintains her integrity, 8:10-12;
  - D. The Shulamite pleads for her lover's return, 8:13-14;

An alternate outline for those wishing to study the book from the viewpoint that there are only two major characters, Solomon and the Shulamite:

- I. 1:1-21
  - The Bride's Love Expressed
  - The Bridegroom's Response.
  - Wooing Each Other.
- II. 2:2-7
  - Mutual Expressions of Love.
  - Groom's Desire to be with the Bride.
- III. 3:1-11
  - Bride Seeks Groom's Companionship.
- IV. 4:1-5:1
  - The Wedding Feast.
  - Honeymoon.
  - Groom's Praise.
  - Her Response.
- V. 5:2-6:3

The Marriage in Difficulty.  
Groom Rejected.  
Then Sought.

VI. 6:4-8:5

Groom's Undiminished Love.  
Her Response, Mutual Growing Love.

VII. 8:6-11

True Married Love  
Her Preparation for Marriage.  
Their Communication.

As noted earlier, we will study the Song from the viewpoint that there are three characters. We will seek to point out the allegorical lessons, while maintaining the historical line that runs through the study.

## SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: "The Song of Songs," 1:1

1. The Shulamite, 1:2-7;
  - A. She describes her lover, 1:2-4;
  - B. She responds to criticism about her "swarthy" appearance, 1:5-7;
2. The "Daughters Of Jerusalem" harass the Shulamite, 1:8;
3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7;
  - A. King Solomon woos the young maiden, 1:9-11;
  - B. The Shulamite reflects upon her lover, 1:12-14;
  - C. King Solomon continues to woo the Shulamite, 1:15-2:2;

Coffman's interpretation of the book, and specifically this chapter, is most interesting.

The maiden here stands for all mankind before the coming of Christ. Her longing for her true love to come and take her away from that evil, hopeless place stands for the longing of all righteous people for the coming of the Messiah. The criticism of the harem women stands for the hatred of the world for those who desire to serve God. The maiden's unhappiness in the harem shows the inability of the secular world to satisfy our souls (Coffman, 153).

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**1:1** - *The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.*

This verse serves as the title of the book, and indicates that this is the greatest of the 1,005 songs Solomon wrote (cf. 1 Kin. 4:32). It should be noted that the word "song" does not necessarily mean that it was set to music as we know it, or as we might define the word. The absence of any description of Solomon as "King of Israel," or any reference to the author being the "son of David" suggests that this Solomon was so well known that it would not have been necessary to allude to either of those designations.

- 1. The Shulamite, 1:2-7**
  - A. She describes her lover, 1:2-4;**

In these verses the Shulamite:

- 1) Sets forth her desire;
- 2) Confesses her feelings about the “love” from her beloved;
- 3) Expresses joy in the very “name” of her beloved;
- 4) Points out that the “virgins” love him as well.
- 5) Points out that the “king” had in some way “brought me into his chambers.”
- 6) Sets forth her intentions to be glad and rejoice in “thee.”

**1:2** - *“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; For thy love is better than wine.”*

The Hebrew idiom calls every banquet of pleasure and joy by the name of “wine” (cf. Esth. 7:2). When the Shulamite uses the analogy of “wine,” which denotes sweetness, intoxication, and exhilaration, she means that her beloved’s love gives her more joy and pleasure than the richest earthly joy and celebration (cf. 4:10). “Love” (dodim, Heb.) is a plural form indicating more accurately the manifestation of love through caresses and kisses.

It is obvious from the beginning of the book that the language is, in many places, erotic. This is due to the intention on the part of the Holy Spirit to help us see the intent love that God has for Israel, and Christ has for spiritual Israel, the church His holy bride.

Redford points out that “the change from the third person to the second is common in poetry” (Pulpit Commentary, page 2). We happen to think there is a reason for this, namely that the Shulamite woman speaks of Solomon AND her true lover, the Shepherd whose “love is better than wine.” The switch between her discussion of the two is reflected in the change of pronouns.

If we interpret this an allegorical look at Christ and the church, Gregory may have been correct in seeing in this that “Every precept of Christ is as one of his kisses” (Coffman, page 156).

**1:3-4** - *Thine oils have a goodly fragrance;  
Thy name is as oil poured forth;  
Therefore do the virgins love thee.  
Draw me; we will run after thee:  
The king hath brought me into his chambers;  
We will be glad and rejoice in thee;  
We will make mention of thy love more than of wine:  
Rightly do they love thee.*

One of the difficulties in studying the Song is its frequent switch from one speaker to another. The Believer’s Study Bible suggests a division after the words “Draw me,” at which point the “daughters of Jerusalem” respond stating, “we will run after thee.”

The NASV reads,

Draw me after you and let us run together!  
The king has brought me into his chambers.  
We will rejoice in you and be glad;  
We will extol your love more than wine.

Rightly do they love you.

We should note that the ‘us’ in this place (NASV) “refers to the Shulamites’s true lover; and the third person reference to the king in the same breath means that the king is not her beloved” (Coffman, page 156). This we believe is the proper understanding of the verse.

One interesting thing about this verse are the words, “the virgins love thee” (ASV). This would indicate the pure and chaste behavior of the *true* lover, *i.e.*, the Shulamite. Also note the very “name” of her lover is precious, even as “ointment poured forth.” Allegorically the very name of Christ is above every name. See Acts 4:12, and Philippians 2:10.

“*We will be glad and rejoice....*” - These are the words of the women in Solomon’s harem. Consequently, the Shulamite’s plea for her true love to come in a hurry and take her away is a reflection of her loyalty to her true love in the midst of a lustful harem.

Redford had this note: “Before going further in the song, it is well to observe how chaste, pure, and delicate is the language of love; and yet, as Delitzsch has pointed out, there is a mystical, cloudy brightness. We seem to be in the region of the ideal” (Pulpit Commentary, page 3).

### **1. The Shulamite, 1:2-7**

#### **B. She responds to criticism about her “swarthy” appearance, 1:5-7;**

**1:5:** - *“I am black, but comely,  
Oh ye daughters of Jerusalem,  
As the tents of Kedar,  
As the curtains of Solomon.”*

The outdoor life of the Shulamite has darkened her complexion, making her tanned skin different from that of the ladies of the king’s court. However, the outward appearance does not keep her from being as beautiful as any of them. Her’s is a natural rather than an artificial beauty.

The “*daughters of Jerusalem*” are the women of Solomon’s court who become the chorus throughout the Song (cf. 2:7; 3:5, 10; 5:8; 8:4).

“*Kedar*” (which means “powerful” in Arabic, or “black” in Hebrew) designates the descendants of Ishmael in North Arabia (Gen. 25:13). The metaphor “*tents of Kedar*” obviously points to the Shulamite’s darkened complexion.

**1:6** - *“Look not upon me, because I am swarthy,  
Because the sun hath scorched me.  
My mother’s sons were incensed against me;  
They made me keeper of the vineyards;  
But mine own vineyard have I not kept.”*

Her dark complexion is the result of exposure to the sun during the days in which she worked in her family vineyard under the supervision of her brothers, or as the caretaker of her vineyard. (cf. 2:15; 5:1; 8:11, 12).

**1:7** - *“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,  
Where thou feedest thy flock,  
Where thou makest it to rest at noon:  
For why should I be as one that is veiled  
Beside the flocks of thy companions?”*

*“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth”* – The one whom she truly loves is a shepherd, not a king, as with the case of Solomon. There is nothing in the Bible that suggests that Solomon was ever a shepherd.

It would appear that the Shulamite now addresses her beloved. She is in mourning as one who is missing her man.

*“Why should I be as one that is veiled”* - Likely this has reference to the veil of modesty which was worn by the women of that era. We take this to be statement of desire on the part of the Shulamite woman to enjoy the most intimate relationship with her Shepherd lover, rather than someone who walks beside the flock of his companions with her face veiled.

## **2. The “Daughters Of Jerusalem” harass the Shulamite, 1:8;**

**1:8** - *“If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,  
Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,  
And feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”*

At this point we have the response of the women in the harem. Coffman suggests that they had

overheard her [the Shulamite] soliloquy and their ironic and contemptuous answer is in this verse. ‘Let her go and find him for herself.’ One can almost hear their sadistic laughter. ‘If you are such an ignoramus as to prefer life with a shepherd to what you will get here, go ahead. Go back to your lover’ (Coffman, 159-60).

## **3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7**

### **A. King Solomon woos the young maiden, 1:9-11**

**1:9** - *“I have compared thee, O my love,  
To a steed in Pharaoh’s chariots.”*

Here Solomon woos the Shulamite without any response on her part. In comparing the beauty of the Shulamite to a “filly,” Solomon was being very gracious, because the horse in the Orient was a cherished companion and not a beast of burden. Solomon was praising the Shulamite for her beauty and graceful movements. In addition, stallions and not fillies or mares would pull a chariot of Pharaoh. Solomon’s point is to build up her self-esteem by saying she is as valuable and unique as the only woman in a world of men.

Solomon’s comparison of the Shulamite with a “steed in Pharaoh’s chariots” is an indication of the “sensual nature of Solomon. Every woman, in his sight, was merely an animal, a real slick, beautifully groomed animal, of course” (Coffman, 160).

**1:10-11** - *“Thy cheeks are comely with plaits of hair,  
Thy neck with strings of jewels.  
We will make thee plaits of gold  
With studs of silver.”*

Such vivid descriptions of the physical beauty of the Shulamite will appear often in the Song. These two verses refer to the exquisite trappings of a horse decked out for show. Redford had this note:

It may be that the reference is to the splendid decoration of the trappings. The horses from Egypt were famed at that time as those of Arabia became afterwards. The names both of horses and chariots in the Egyptian language were borrowed from the Semitic, as they were probably first imported into Egypt by the Hyksos, or shepherd kings. Other examples of the same comparison are found in poetry, as in Horace, Anacreon, and Theocritus (Pulpit Commentary, page 6).

Verse 11 is a promise from Solomon that should she become a part of his harem she would enjoy the finest of silver and gold to enhance her beauty.

### **3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7; B. The Shulamite reflects upon her lover, 1:12-14**

**1:12** - *“While the king sat at his table,  
My spikenard sent forth its fragrance.”*

*“While the king sat at his table”* – This suggests that the king was absent during her reflection upon her true love, the Shepherd.

*“My spikenard sent forth its fragrance”* - The Hebrew women commonly carried little bags or bottles of myrrh suspended from their necks and hanging down between the breasts, thus emitting an attractive fragrance about them. Some things never change.

**1:13** - *“My beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh,  
That lieth betwixt my breasts.”*

One should notice the contrast here between the expensive ornamentation that Solomon sends to the Shulamite, and the simple things that remind this young maiden of her true lover. It would appear that the Shulamite maiden “possessed a small box of a very precious ointment which she carried between her breasts, reminding her continually of her real lover” (Coffman, 161).

**1:14** - *“My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna-flowers  
In the vineyards of En-gedi.”*

*“Henna blooms”* is a reference to a cluster of yellow-white blossoms, which because of their beautiful appearance and delightful odor were often used for their fragrance or even as an ornament. *“En Gedi”* was a lovely oasis district of gardens and vineyards located west of the Dead Sea.

### **3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7**

### C. Solomon continues to woo the Shulamite, 1:15-2:2

**1:15** - *“Behold, thou art fair, my love;  
Behold thou art fair;  
Thine eyes are as doves.”*

Solomon resumes his flattery of the Shulamite woman in an attempt to get her to join his harem. Notice that the language is purely physical.

**1:16** - *“Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:  
Also our couch is green.”*

Redford sees verses 1:16 thru 2:1 as being the words of the bride to Solomon. This was the view taken by the Masoretic editors. Coffman points out:

The adjectives in this verse are feminine, therefore they cannot apply to Solomon, who must be understood as the speaker here, not the one spoken to. He is thus continuing his flattery of the Shulamite maiden (Coffman, Electronic Notes).

**1:17** - *“The beams of our house are cedars,  
And our rafters are firs.”*

The king continues to flatter the Shulamite maiden. This verse and the first two verses of the next chapter are nothing more than Solomon’s attempt to draw attention to himself as he continues to woo the Shulamite. It is as if Solomon were saying, “He woman, look at *me!* Look at what I have to offer you!”

I am prone to think that these words were designed to get the Shulamite to look at what he has to offer her if she will but come with him into his house. “Look at the beams; look at the rafters. Wouldn’t you prefer this to some tent in the wilderness with a shepherd?”

### SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER TWO

3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7;
  - A. King Solomon woos the young maiden, 1:9-11;
  - B. The Shulamite reflects upon her lover, 1:12-14;
  - C. King Solomon continues to woo the Shulamite, 1:15-2:2;
  - D. The Shulamite Continues Her Reflection Upon Her Lover, 2:3-6;
4. Refrain, 2:7;
5. The Shepherd ‘Lover’ and the Shulamite, 2:8-3:4;
  - A. The Shepherd comes to take the Shulamite away from Solomon’s “harem,” 2:8-14;
  - B. The marital “bliss” of the Shepherd and the Shulamite, 2:15-17;

There is an unfortunate division in the chapters at this point, as reflected in the above outline. The first verse in this chapter continues from the close of chapter one.

Here is Coffman’s interpretation of this chapter:

In this chapter, the Shepherd Lover, standing for Jesus Christ, appears to his love trapped in an evil world (Solomon's harem), takes her unto himself and bestows upon her citizenship in the heavenly kingdom. This all stands for the incarnation of Christ, the establishment of his Church, the rescue of his love (all mankind who believe in Him and obey Him), and his ascension to heaven, leaving the bride separated from Himself until the Second Advent. This separation is found in the allegory of the Bether mountains, 'the mountains of separation.' Note that the Shepherd is absent from his lover in v. 16. His Church feels the absence of Christ in heaven (Coffman, 172).

### **3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7;**

#### **C. King Solomon continues to woo the Shulamite, 1:15-2:2;**

**2:1** - *"I am a rose of Sharon,  
A lily of the valleys."*

Sharon is a region in Northern Galilee near Nazareth between Tabor and the Sea of Galilee. The "rose of Sharon" is a leafless meadow flower. The "lily of the valleys" is another common Palestinian field flower, red in color.

One view of this verse is that it is the Shulamite's statement regarding herself, and that it reflects significant improvement in her self-image (cf. 1:5, 6), and is probably a result of the praise of her beloved in 1:9, 10, 15. Staying with the position that there is a distinction between Solomon and the Shulamite's beloved, at least the first two verses of this chapter are simply a continuation of Solomon's flattery of himself in an effort to persuade the Shulamite woman to follow him.

It should be observed that *someone* is flattering *himself or herself* here, and the position that it is Solomon and not the Shulamite who is drawing attention to himself.

**2:2** - *"As a lily among thorns,  
So is my love among the daughters."*

I have included this verse as an extension of verse 1. Solomon is still praising himself. The next verse will pick up the Shulamite's rejection of Solomon's invitation to come into his harem. One should notice the use of the words "love" and "beloved" in verses 2 and 3. In this verse she speaks of the king; in the next verse she speaks of her truly "beloved," *i.e.*, the shepherd. I like Coffman's observation on this verse: "What Solomon is saying here is that his style of loving affection shines like a lily among the thorns, a self-compliment that Solomon supposed that all 'the daughters' agreed with" (Coffman, 163).

### **3. King Solomon and the Shulamite, 1:9-2:7**

#### **D. The Shulamite Continues Her Reflection Upon Her Lover, 2:3-6;**

**2:3** - *"As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood,  
So is my beloved among the sons.  
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,  
And his fruit was sweet to my taste."*

The key to understanding this verse is in the word “beloved” that appears in the second line of this verse: “So in my beloved!” Also, this young maiden’s lover is said to be “among the sons,” something that would not fit were her lover and the King one and the same. Notice also the past tense in the words “I sat down,” “his fruit was sweet,” and “he brought me...” etc. Though Solomon was wooing the Shulamite woman throughout the book, here the woman mentions her loving experiences with her true lover that occurred *in the past*. She is rejecting the King!

**2:4** - *“He brought me to the banqueting-house,  
And his banner over me was love.”*

*“He brought me to the banqueting house”* - Solomon’s house was never called a “banqueting house.” The *place* to which the Shulamite refers may not be a literal place at all; it may be poetic language to refer to the abundant blessings she enjoys with her “beloved.”

The “*banner*” was a pole with a flag-like cloth attached. It symbolized protective care. The Shulamite enjoys the “*banner*” of love which her beloved provided for her security and protection.

**2:5-6** - *“Stay ye me with raisins, refresh me with apples;  
For I am sick from love.  
His left hand is under my head,  
And his right hand doth embrace me.”*

*“stay ye me...refresh me”* – Her ‘*beloved*’ has temporarily departed from her. She grows weak from his absence. The Pulpit Commentary points out that “the intensive form of the verb is chosen; she is almost sinking; she cries out for comfort” (Pulpit Commentary, electronic).

*“For I am sick from love”* – The Believers Study Bible points out that the phrase refers to the physical exhaustion that results from sexual fulfillment. This was a common theme in ancient Eastern love poetry. The Shulamite is reflecting upon the enjoyment of the physical relationship she had with her beloved; something she misses now that he has departed from her for a brief period of time.

*“His left hand is under my head, And his right hand doth embrace me”* - The Shulamite woman continues to reflect upon the intimate relationship she enjoys[d] with her beloved.

#### **4. Refrain, 2:7**

**2:7** - *“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the roes, or by the hinds of the field,  
That ye stir not up, nor awake my love,  
Until he please.”*

This verse is a recurring refrain in the Song (cf. 3:5; 8:4), serving to indicate the close of one section and the beginning of the next. Physical intimacy is always in the background of the statement as well.

*“I adjure you”* - The Israelites were permitted to swear by that which is not God, but they would only take a solemn oath by witness of God Himself.

The phrase “*that ye stir not up, nor awake my love*” has been interpreted several different ways: (1) as a warning against forcing the development of love prematurely; (2) as a plea to the court women not to interrupt the embrace of the lovers; or (3) as a warning against the arousal of sexual passion before “it pleases.” The latter interpretation seems more natural since the verb is accurately translated “awaken” instead of “disturb.” Also, premarital chastity is elsewhere extolled in the Song (4:12; 8:8-12), as the Shulamite pleads with the daughters of Jerusalem not to become involved sexually with any man before marriage (3:5; 8:4).

Coffman had this note:

This writer believes that the Shulamite’s plea here is that the women she addresses may not awaken her desire for love in the continued absence of her lover. This would make the words, ‘*until he please,*’ carry the message, ‘*Until he comes and rescues me.*’ The use of the abstract word ‘love’ rather than the concrete word ‘lover,’ ...supports this view (Coffman, 166).

The whole of the refrain seems to be a rejection of the suggestions that might have been coming from the women in Solomon’s harem.

## **5. The Shepherd ‘Lover’ and the Shulamite, 2:8-3:4;**

### **A. The Shepherd comes to take the Shulamite away from Solomon’s “harem,” 2:8-14;**

In these verses....

- (1) The Shulamite hears her “beloved” coming into the city from the hills;
- (2) She describes here “beloved” as he enters even into the walls of the city;
- (3) Her “beloved” calls for her to “come away” with him;
- (4) Her “beloved” emphasizes the opportune moment to escape with him;
- (5) Her “beloved” describes the beauty of the Shulamite.

**2:8** - “*The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh,  
Leaping upon the mountains,  
Skipping upon the hills.*”

Verses are echoed in 8:13-14. What we have in this verse and the next is a picture of the Shulamite’s beloved coming into the city of Jerusalem, perhaps even into the palace of Solomon, in order to rescue the Shulamite and take her away. He scaled the walls, and even “looketh in at the windows” in search for the young maiden.

**2:9** - “*My beloved is like a roe or a young hart:  
Behold, he standeth behind our wall;  
He looketh in at the windows;  
He glanceth through the lattice.*”

It would appear that her “beloved,” like a roe or a young hart, has bounded the walls of the palace, and is now, within the city; he is looking in the windows in search for the Shulamite woman. If Solomon were the Shulamite’s lover, why would he be standing OUTSIDE the window looking in. Why would he not already be within the room?

To be “in front of a wall would be to stand on the outside of it, approaching it. The shepherd lover of the Shulamite found his way inside the wall that guarded the harem, found his lover’s window, and was looking in at it” (Coffman, 167).

**2:10** - *“My beloved spake, and said unto me,  
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”*

Verses 10-14 contain some of the most beautiful of poetic language, as the Shepherd pleads with the Shulamite to come with him.

**2:11-14** - *“For, lo, the winter is past  
The rain is over and gone  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
The time of the singing of birds is come,  
And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land;  
The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs,  
And the vines are in blossom;  
They give forth their fragrance.  
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock,  
In the covert of the steep place,  
Let me see thy countenance,  
Let me hear thy voice;  
For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”*

The language indicates that her “beloved” is seeking to take her into the country where he, as a shepherd, dwells and where both will ultimately live. There is nothing in these verses indicative of a life in the kingly palace in Jerusalem. This view fits nicely with the allegorical position that the Shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ, calling his bride out of the “city” and into the land where He dwells.

## **5. The Shepherd ‘Lover’ and the Shulamite, 2:8-3:4**

### **B. The marital “bliss” of the Shepherd and the Shulamite, 2:15-17**

**2:15** - *“Take us the foxes, the little foxes,  
That spoil the vineyards;  
For our vineyards are in blossom.”*

The “foxes” represent the problems which would beset and the destroyers who would attack the “vines,” i.e., the covenant of love between the Shepherd and the Shulamite. In Palestine the keepers of the vineyards continually sought to withstand the destruction of the foxes. Likewise, the task of working through problems and differences within a marriage requires determination and responsibility.

The Shulamite requests that anything that would spoil the vineyard of their lives must be caught and eradicated. Let love be pure and undisturbed (Coffman, 170).

The application of the truth taught here can be expanded to develop a lesson having to do with “little foxes” that would enter in and spoil (1) a marriage, (2) a family, (3) brotherly love one for another; (4) the unity and harmony in the church, and (5) one’s relationship with God.

**2:16** - *“My beloved is mine, and I am his:  
He feedeth his flock among the lilies.”*

This expression of mutual possession occurs again at 6:3 and 7:10. The lilies are referred to again at 4:5 and 6:3. Observe once again the use of the word “beloved” here. It should also be observed that her “beloved...feedeth his flock among the lilies.” So far as I know nothing is ever said about Solomon being a shepherd, much less working with “his flock among the lilies.”

**2:17** - *“Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away,  
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart  
Upon the mountains of Bether.”*

“Bether” is from a Hebrew root meaning “to divide,” or “to cut,” and thus “the mountains of Bether” are the mountains divided by ravines, the rugged mountains. Since there is no such known geographical location, the term may be interpreted “the mountains of separation.” Some interpreters see the phrase as a subtle reference to the breasts of the Shulamite (cf. 4:6). There is no doubt that “the picture here is one of marital happiness” (Coffman, page 171).

The Pulpit Commentary comments on this verse indicate that the author came very close to admitting the position I have taken in this commentary:

This is generally supposed to be the voice of the maiden addressing her suitor, and bidding him return in the evening, when the day cools, and when the lengthening shadows fall into night. Some have seen in such words a clear indication of a clandestine interview, and would find in them a confirmation of their hypothesis that the poem is founded on a romantic story of Solomon’s attempt to draw a shepherdess from her shepherd (Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Notes).

### SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER THREE

There are three movements in this chapter. The first part contains the dream of the Shulamite. In his absence, the Shulamite dreams of her beloved, who at this point was not to be found in the “streets, and in the broad ways...” This is followed by the “refrain” which appeared in 2:7, suggesting the next division in the overall outline. Finally, the chapter closes with yet another effort on the part of Solomon to pursue the Shulamite and bring her into his harem. Let’s take a closer look.

#### **5. The Shepherd ‘Lover’ and the Shulamite, 2:8-3:4** **C. The Shulamite’s dream, 3:1-4**

We happen to agree with Coffman that “this dream substantiates the statement that prevails in the whole book that the love-struck maiden’s lover is a shepherd, not king Solomon, [and] that by no stretch of the imagination could it be supposed that the maiden would have taken the king of Israel into her mother’s bedroom, not even in a dream” (Coffman, 174). This dream also shows that the Shepherd Lover was absent at the moment.

**3:1** - *“By night on my bed  
I sought him whom my soul loveth:  
I sought him, but I found him not.”*

I will be the first to admit that this verse is, without doubt, one of the most difficult in the book to interpret. That it is certainly a “dream” seems clear from this first verse. All the difficulties aside, I think the general thrust of the first view of these verses shows us that the Shulamite’s “beloved” has gone to some distance country to do business, increasing the intensity of her dream as it expresses the depths of her heart.

Clearly, a new movement in the song begins here. In this dream the Shulamite experiences anxiety and insecurity due to the absence of her Lover (cf. 5:6, 7). Only his presence and a secure place of dwelling would satisfy the heart of his lover (cf. 3:4). One thing is certain here, namely that this dream supports our position that the maiden’s lover is the shepherd, not king Solomon!

**3:2** - *“I said, I will rise now, and go about the city;  
In the streets and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth:  
I sought him, but I found him not.”*

Her intention to “go about the city...and seek him whom” she loved is, of course, what she does in her dream. She sought for him, but could not find him. Redford’s argument (Pulpit Commentary) that the fact that she goes about in the city in search for her lover proves that this could not be some “shepherd.” But what he seems to forget is the fact that her lover had come to the city in search of her (2:9-10). And besides, this is a dream, and dreams have a way of being out of sync with reality.

**3:3** - *“The watchmen that go about the city found me;  
To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?”*

It is significant that the “watchmen that go about the city” did not know where her “beloved” might be found. This could not be said of Solomon, for the watchmen of the city would have been fully aware of Solomon’s whereabouts. It is also interesting that the watchmen found her, suggesting that they were searching for the Shulamite, very possibly dispatched by Solomon himself.

**3:4** - *“It was but a little that I passed from them,  
When I found him whom my soul loveth:  
I held him, and would not let him go,  
Until I had brought him into my mother’s house,  
And into the chamber of her that conceived me.”*

The Shulamite brings her lover into her “mother’s house,” and even into the “chamber of her that conceived me.” Such is appropriate, and suggests a chaste action on the part of the Shulamite in that she desired to introduce her lover to her mother at this time. There may also be an allusion here to the physical intimacy between the Shulamite woman and her “beloved.”

Here are some observations and important lessons that we can draw from the intimate relationship of the Shepherd and Shulamite. I think I obtained these thoughts from some other source, but not certain where. Any failure to give credit where credit is due is solely my fault.

Sex as God designed in proper place and time is good, powerful, living, unifying. Outside of God's design it becomes evil, cruel, perverted, and divisive. Whereas humanism overemphasizes the flesh and denies the spiritual, asceticism overemphasizes the spirit and tends to ignore the importance of the physical. God, however, in His plan for Christian marriage unites both spirit and flesh in the "one-flesh" intimacy to unite two people totally (cf. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).

Though the Bible is not a book on sex, it does contain a complete theology of sexuality, *i.e.*, purposes for sex, warnings against its misuse, and a beautiful picture of the ideal physical intimacy as set forth in the beautiful and holy Song. The "one-flesh" relationship (cf. Gen. 2:24) is a reference to the most intense physical intimacy and the deepest spiritual unity between husband and wife. God is always approving this relationship (cf. Prov. 5:21) in which husband and wife meet their physical needs in sexual intercourse (cf. Prov. 5:15, 18, 19).

The author of Hebrews adds his sanction to the marriage bed (cf. Heb. 13:4). In fact, Paul indicates that sexual adjustment in marriage affects the Christian life, especially prayer (cf. 1 Cor. 7:5). Both husband and wife have definite and equal sexual needs which are to be met in marriage (1 Cor. 7:3), and each is to meet the needs of the other and not his own. The sexual instinct is given to man as a means of communication. To satisfy that instinct selfishly by oneself is to abuse the gift because it is the seeking of a satisfaction that is to be received in fellowship between the husband and wife.

These purposes are assigned to physical intimacy: (1) knowledge (cf. Gen. 4:1), (2) unity (Gen. 2:24), (3) comfort (Gen. 24:67), (4) procreation (Gen. 1:28), (5) relaxation and play (2:8-17; 4:1-16), and (6) avoiding temptation (1 Cor. 7:2-5). A husband is commanded to find satisfaction (Prov. 5:19) and joy (Eccl. 9:9) in his wife, and to concern himself with meeting her unique needs (Deut. 24:5; 1 Pet. 3:7). A wife also has responsibilities: (1) availability (1 Cor. 7:3-5), (2) preparation and planning (4:9ff.), (3) interest (4:16; 5:2), (4) sensitivity to unique masculine needs (Gen. 24:67). The feeling of oneness experienced by husband and wife in the physical union should remind both partners of the even more remarkable oneness which the spirit of a man experiences with God in regeneration.

## **6. Refrain, 3:5**

**3:5** - *"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the roes, or by the hinds of the field,  
That ye stir not up, nor awake my love,  
Until he please."*

This verse is one of four, designed to give some sense of division to the Song. See notes above on 1:7.

## **7. Solomon continues to pursue the Shulamite, 3:6-4:8**

### **A. The grand "parade" in pursuit of the Shulamite, 3:6-11**

**3:6** - *"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness*

*Like pillars of smoke, Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all powders of the merchant?"*

A surprising number of commentators see in these verses the bridal procession of Solomon, leading the Shulamite back to Jerusalem as his bride. It should be remembered, however, that the woman was in Jerusalem, in the palace, or the harem, when this book started (chapter 1). It would seem more likely (and certainly in keeping with our view of this entire book) that what is pictured here is Solomon's journey to the wilderness in search of the Shulamite who had departed the city with her true lover. Coffman quoted from the New Bible Commentary Revised: "If it is northern Israel, it means that Solomon with great and pompous splendor is on the way to impress the maiden with his wealth and magnificence in an effort to overawe her and win her love" (Coffman, 175). Notice also that there is no woman mentioned in this magnificent parade. She is conspicuously absent. Why? Could it be that she is not IN this parade?

So, who is the speaker here? Redford (in the Pulpit Commentary) properly suggests that it is the "whole population going out to see the splendid sight." But he fails to see that it is the population in NORTHERN ISRAEL, and not the population of Jerusalem. As Coffman points out, "the citizen's of Jerusalem had probably witnessed such Solomonic parades so often that they would hardly have turned a head in order to see it again" (Coffman, 176).

This paragraph "represents the glittering blandishments of Solomon as a type of worldly temptations to the Church. The wealth, extravagance, ostentation and pride in this was an eloquent type of such allurements" (Coffman, 174).

**3:7-8** - *"Behold, it is the litter of Solomon;  
Threescore mighty men are about it,  
Of the mighty men of Israel.  
They all handle the sword, and are expert in war:  
Every man hath his sword upon his thigh,  
Because of fear in the night"*

What a marvelous display of pomp and circumstance. The language is without doubt hyperbolic, but true nonetheless. Arrayed in splendid apparel, "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant," riding in his "bed," and surrounded by sixty soldiers for protection, he ventures out of the palace in Jerusalem to make his way into the Northern territory in search of the Shulamite, no doubt to impress and woo her back to the palace and his harem.

**3:9** - *"King Solomon made himself a palanquin  
Of the wood of Lebanon."*

This verse identifies exactly where this parade takes place. Solomon had pursued this maiden into the wilderness in an effort to impress her with his wealth. The "palanquin" refers to a carriage of some kind.

**3:10-11** - *"He made the pillars thereof of silver,  
The bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple,  
The midst thereof being paved with love,  
From the daughters of Jerusalem."*

*Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon,  
With the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him  
In the day of his espousals,  
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.”*

Yes, go forth and look at the King. Why not go forth and look at the “bride,” if in fact that is what we have in this chapter? Take any ordinary wedding in our society. When it comes time for the bride to come down the aisle, where do the eyes turn? To the Groom? No, they turn toward the bride, with all her beauty. Here the author calls for them to look at Solomon, because he is the only one in the procession.

Quite obviously, it is the wealth and splendor of the King that was being displayed. “Solomon in all his pompous glory appears in these verses as an effective type of the devil himself and the temptations by which the evil one seeks to destroy souls” (Coffman, 179).

The historical allusion here is to the joy and pride of Bathsheba in her son’s gladness. The crown was a fresh wreath of flowers worn on festive occasions, especially weddings, symbolizing joy and happiness, instead of the crown of royalty, and it was fashioned for the occasion by the royal mother.

Here is the population going out to see Solomon. Is this Jerusalem, or Northern Israel? Northern Israel seems to fit the story, and the context.

#### SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER FOUR

- 7. Solomon continues to pursue the Shulamite, 3:6-4:8;**
  - A. The grand “parade” in pursuit of the Shulamite, 3:6-11;**
  - B. The King’s love song to the Shulamite, 4:1-8;**
- 8. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 4:9-5:8;**
  - A. The Shepherd’s appeal to and description of, the Shulamite, 4:9-15;**
  - B. The Shulamite invites her lover to come to his “garden,” 4:16;**

Most commentators see in this chapter Solomon’s love song to the Shulamite maiden. But such an interpretation would suggest that the maiden had accepted the King’s offer, and they were then married.

Ask yourself a couple of questions. First, what is Solomon doing in Lebanon, i.e., the wilderness? He is wooing the Shulamite. Second, notice the marked distinction between the first eight verses of this chapter and the remainder of the chapter. The first eight verses contain a description of Solomon, and the last eight verses refer to Shulamite and the Shepherd. In the first we are provided with Solomon’s view of the Shulamite. The maiden is compared to animals. In the last eight verses the woman is described in such terms as sweet smelling spices, gardens, honey, and orchards.

- 7. Solomon continues to pursue the Shulamite, 3:6-4:8**
  - A. The King’s love song to the Shulamite, 4:1-8**

**4:1** - *“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;*

*Thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil.  
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,  
That lie along the side of mount Gilead."*

We respectfully disagree with the majority of the commentators that see this section as some sort of conversation between the bridegroom and bride as they travel back to Jerusalem. How explain the fact that they were in Lebanon (vs 8)? Is it not possible that Solomon had actually chased this woman into a foreign land, and hence an explanation for the turn out of the folks in that country who had never, in fact, seen anything quite like this parade?

*"thy eyes....thy hair....thy teeth...they lips....thy temples...they neck...they two breasts..."* - This is what Solomon saw! The physical beauty of the Shulamite must have been quite exquisite. The Shulamite must have been a very beautiful woman physically. It is tragic that Solomon could only see her physical attractiveness, having only a desire to make her a part of his "harem," along with so many other women. An unrecorded author noted:

Eight parts of the Shulamite's body are praised. Three times she is told that she is fair or beautiful (cf. 1:15). The dove is a traditional symbol of purity and innocence. The goats in Syria are mostly black with long, silky hair, and thus the metaphor creates a beautiful scene. In v. 2, her teeth are likened to sheep, emphasizing their smooth ("shorn") and white ("sheep") appearance, glistening with saliva ("washing") and evenly matched ("twins") without any missing ("none is barren among them"; cf. 6:5-7). The simile likening her neck to "the tower of David" is a reference to her erect and queenly bearing, and the shields probably describe the jewelry which adorns her neck (v. 4). The description of her "breasts" speaks of their softness and attractiveness for gentle caresses (cf. 7:3).

Oh yes! All that Solomon could see was her physical beauty.

**4:2** - *"Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes that are newly shorn,  
Which are come up from the washing,  
Whereof every one hath twins,  
And none is bereaved among them."*

The whole of this description is "very striking and suggestive of the pleasant country life to which the bride was accustomed" (Redford, page 92). No, there is more here than a simple description of the "farm life" to which the Shulamite was accustomed. This is more of the physical, beyond which Solomon could not see.

**4:3-6** - *"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,  
And thy mouth is comely.  
Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate  
Behind thy veil.  
Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory,  
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,  
All the shields of the mighty men.  
Thy two breasts are like two fawns  
That are twins of a roe,  
Which feed among the lilies.  
Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away,*

*I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,  
And to the hill of frankincense.”*

“If this be the language of the bride the meaning is to check the ardor of her lover, in the modesty of her fresh and maidenly feeling - Let me retire from such praises” (Pulpit Commentary, page 93). But how can this be the language of the bride as she looks upon the king? This is still the language of the king as he drinks in the physical beauty of the Shulamite.

**4:7-8** - *“Thou art all fair, my love;  
And there is no spot in thee.  
Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,  
With me from Lebanon:  
Look from the top of Amana,  
From the top of Senir and Hermon,  
From the lions’ dens,  
From the mountains of the leopards.”*

This verse identifies the extent to which Solomon had gone in pursuit of the Shulamite. Solomon was actually chasing this woman into a foreign country. Indeed, Solomon was attempting to get this Shulamite woman to come out of her new found country, and return with him to Jerusalem.

The plea for the woman to come with him “from the lion’s den” is equivalent to saying, “leave this dangerous country, and come with me to safety.” Yes, the devil would have us believe that safety lies in the “far country,” Jerusalem being the “far country” to one dwelling in Lebanon. It is also significant that, if our interpretation be correct, that one of the big lies of our generation, and any generation, is that there is danger in religion and that the only true place for safety is to be found in the worldly palace of worldly minded “Solomon.”

## **8. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 4:9-5:8;**

### **A. The Shepherd’s appeal to and description of, the Shulamite, 4:9-15;**

This chapter is extremely important because it presents to us the proper interpretation of the entire book. The vivid contrast between the first half of the chapter and the second half speak loud and clear to the undeniable truth that the king is not the Shulamite’s beloved. In addition the chapter shows us that the Song of Solomon must be interpreted as an allegory of Christ and the Church. A number of commentators have picked up on this, but most have failed to see the distinction between the king and the Shepherd. Coffman’s allegorical interpretation is as good as we have found, and I have taken the liberty to quote it here:

#### **THE TRUE ALLEGORY**

*SOLOMON IS SATAN.*

This truth is so big and overwhelming that the scholars of many ages have simply overlooked it. How could any mortal, much less a Christian, see in Solomon a type of God, or of Christ?

Solomon: that old slave-driver was the leading debauchee of a thousand years, a builder of pagan temples, a strutting old peacock who probably thought of himself as the greatest stud in human history, who saw every beautiful woman on earth as merely an animal. He

desecrated the very Temple that he erected with twelve images of the pagan bulls of the god Baal in the twelve "oxen" (as he called them) that supported the laver, and the images of lions that decorated the steps of his throne, every one of them a violation of the Decalogue, Commandment II. He even erected two pagan phallic symbols, Jachin and Boaz, in front of the Temple itself -- could such a man as this have been a valid representative of Christ? A million times NO!

What fruit did he have of all those women, how many sons? The Bible mentions only one, Rehoboam the fool. He lost most of Solomon's empire in a week's time, and later surrendered Jerusalem to Shishak king of Egypt who plundered it, and looted the Temple.

The very Temple he erected was contrary to God's will as was also the Jewish monarchy, of whom Solomon was the most conspicuous specimen. His oppressive taxation ruined Israel and eventually destroyed the kingdom. He was even an adulterer (with the Queen of Sheba); can anyone imagine a thing like that on the part of a man who already had a thousand women at his disposal? This man a symbol? He certainly was. HE WAS A SYMBOL OF THE DEVIL! Once this fact is understood, this whole Song of Solomon is clear.

Solomon represents worldly power, fame, and glory. He represents pride, ostentation, wealth, physical splendor, the pomp and glitter of the world and all of its allurements. He represents the persuasion and allurements of sensual indulgence, lasciviousness and fleshly gratification -- in short, he represents in this allegory all of the temptations that assail the child of God.

#### *THE SHULAMITE MAIDEN*

She is the bride, not of Solomon, but of the Shepherd. She is the true Israel of both the Old and the New Covenants. Note, that her lover is never present with his bride, except in the Incarnation, when he rescued her from Satan (Solomon) and conferred upon her a marvelous citizenship in another kingdom (Phil. 3:20). That is the reason that the bride in this chapter is represented as living beyond the domain of Solomon.

Both the dreams in this Song stress the absence of the Shepherd. And in Cant. 4:9-15, the Shepherd's love song is not delivered by the Shepherd in person. She receives it in his absence; just as the Church today has her message from The Good Shepherd as it has been delivered to us by his holy apostles. That is why the Shepherd does not appear in person in these verses. Nevertheless, the validity of the message is just as genuine as the sacred words of the New Testament.

#### *THE SHEPHERD WHO LOVED THE MAIDEN*

The Shepherd can be none other than Almighty God in his own person or in that of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. "The Lord is my Shepherd" (Ps. 23:1; John 10:11. etc.). The notion that the Wolf Solomon was the shepherd of Israel is repugnant. But neither God nor his Son Jesus Christ is personally present on earth with their servants and followers. That is why the maiden's lover in this Song is always absent (except in the rescue scene standing for the Incarnation). Where is the Shepherd? He is in "the far country" (Matt. 21:33; 25:14; Mark 12:1 and Luke 20:9).

In this understanding, the item by item discussion of the spices, the orchards, the fountains, the gardens, the honeycomb, the sweetness, beauty, purity and holiness of the Shepherd's love song (Cant. 4:9-15) becomes totally unnecessary, in fact, irrelevant. All of

them stand for the precious revelation of the Good Shepherd's matchless love and concern for his holy bride the Church of Jesus Christ, as found in the sacred New Testament.

The item by item interpretations of Cant. 4:9-15 are, for the most part, too fanciful to have any value. The locked garden and the sealed fountain appear in the eyes of Jewish interpreters as, "The modesty of Jewish women, whether married or unmarried; and the Christian scholars related them to the Bride of Christ, or to the Virgin Mary." <16>

**4:9-10** - *"Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my bride;  
Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,  
With one chain of thy neck.  
How fair is thy love, my sister, my bride!  
How much better is thy love than wine!  
And the fragrance of thine oils than all manner of spices!"*

*"Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my bride"* - The Pulpit Commentary noted that the language in this last half of the chapter becomes more "sober in tone." Indeed! It is the language of the Shulamite's "beloved" as he speaks of her charm and beauty.

*"Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes"* - The idea may be that "one look" from the eyes of the Shulamite ravished the heart of the Shepherd. We might say, "She captured his heart with a simple glance in his direction."

*"With one chain of thy neck"* - If a single portion of the chain about her neck captured the admiration of her "beloved," what might be said about the entire chain? Even the smallest portion of her beauty was beyond description.

*"How fair is thy love, my sister, my bride!"* - There is not one single speck of corruption; her love is "fair" even beyond description.

*"How much better is thy love than wine!"* - This is common language, especially in Eastern love poetry.

*"And the fragrance of thine oils than all manner of spices!"* - The Shepherd simply mounts up phrases and words that seek to capture the beauty of the Shulamite.

**4:11** - *"Thy lips, O my bride, drop as the honeycomb:  
Honey and milk are under thy tongue;  
And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.  
A garden shut up is my sister, my bride;  
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed."*

The later part of this verse speaks of the purity of the Shulamite. She is a virgin, as expressed in the poetic language of being "a garden shut up...a fountain sealed." The Believer's Study Bible had this note regarding this word "garden":

"Garden" (gan, Heb.) means "a covered or hidden place." In biblical times a garden was a walled enclosure, a place of shade and refreshment. The Shulamite's garden, a reference to her intimate sexual organs, is the absolute and sole possession of the bridegroom (cf.

vv. 15, 16; 6:2). The phrase “a spring shut up” refers to the sealed fountain protected from all impurity in a country in which water was scarce. No one could approach the “fountain” except its owner. Their physical relationship was to be exclusive (Quick Verse Software, Believers Study Bible).

**4:13-15** - *“Thy shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with precious fruits;  
Henna with spikenard plants, Spikenard and saffron,  
Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;  
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.  
Thou art a fountain of gardens,  
A well of living waters,  
And flowing streams from Lebanon.”*

There are seven spices mentioned: “spikenard” or nard, a fragrance-giving plant; “saffron,” a yellow plant; “calamus,” a reedlike plant or crocus; “cinnamon,” an East African product made from bark; “frankincense” and “myrrh,” perfumed oils used for scenting; and “aloes,” from Indian aromatic wood. All of this is additional language designed to help us see the beauty of the Shulamite, a perfect illustration of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **8. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 4:9-5:8;**

**A. The Shepherd’s appeal to and description of, the Shulamite, 4:9-15;**

**B. The Shulamite invites her lover to come to his “garden,” 4:16;**

**4:16** - *“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 precious fruits.”*

The Shulamite tastefully, poetically, and directly invites her lover to come into “his garden.” We take this to be her invitation for the Shepherd to return to her and enjoy the “fruit” of marital love, *i.e.* the intimacy of lovemaking. She is available and willing for him to enjoy her as one would enjoy the choice fruits of a garden. This could not be Solomon since the language suggests the absence of her lover. Solomon was standing before her pleading for her to return with him to Jerusalem.

### SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER FIVE

#### **8. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 4:9-5:8;**

**A. The Shepherd’s appeal to and description of, the Shulamite, 4:9-15;**

**B. The Shulamite invites her lover to come to his “garden,” 4:16;**

**C. The marriage of the Shepherd and the Maiden, 5:1;**

**D. The Maiden’s second dream, 5:2-8;**

#### **9. The “daughters of Jerusalem,” and the Shulamite, 5:9-6:3;**

**A. The question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 5:9;**

**B. The answer from the Shulamite as she describes her lover, 5:10-16;**

**C. Another question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 6:1;**

**D. The Shulamite answers, 6:2-3;**

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**8. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 4:9-5:8;**  
**C. The marriage of the Shepherd and the Maiden, 5:1;**

**5:1** - *"I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride:  
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;  
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;  
I have drunk my wine with my milk.  
Eat, O friends; Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."*

This verse speaks beautifully of the consummation of the marriage, and the mutual satisfaction enjoyed by the Shepherd and the Maiden. The Shepherd had found his bride delightful, sweet, and enjoyable when she invited him unto herself in 4:16.

Note also that this celebration is not taking place in Jerusalem, but in Lebanon. In this writer's allegorical understanding of the Song, this little paragraph corresponds exactly with Christ's statement: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me' (Rev. 3:20). This is continually fulfilled in the Church's observance of the Lord's Supper (Coffman, 193).

This may be a celebration of a marriage, but not that of the Shulamite and Solomon. There is nothing in the text that says she went with Solomon to Jerusalem.

"The wine and the milk are what God offers to his people (Isa 55:1) without money and without price" (Redford, Pulpit Commentary).

**8. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 4:9-5:8**  
**D. The Maiden's second dream, 5:2-8**

**5:2** - *"I was asleep, but my heart waked:  
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,  
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled;  
For my head is filled with dew,  
My locks with the drops of the night."*

"I was asleep, but my heart waked..." - The Shulamite was dreaming again.

"my head is filled with dew" and "my locks with the drops of the night" suggest that this was indeed the Shepherd. It does not seem likely that Solomon, a man accustomed to living within comfortable quarters as opposed to sleeping under the stars, would make a comment that his head "is filled with dew."

"The terms with which he appeals to his beloved are significant, denoting (1) equal rank - my sister, (2) free choice - my love, (3) purity, simplicity, and loveliness -my dove, (4) entire devotion, undoubting trust - my undefiled" (Redford, Pulpit Commentary, page 120).

**5:3-5** - *"I have put off my garment;  
How shall I put it on?  
I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"*

*My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,  
And my heart was moved for him.  
I rose up to open to my beloved;  
And my hands droppeth with myrrh,  
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,  
Upon the handles of the bolt.”*

“The description is, of course, inapplicable to the shepherd theory. It would not be a rough country swain that came thus perfumed: but Solomon is thought of as at once king and lover” (Redford). We would ask, “Why not?” Why could the maiden not describe her beloved in terms that were rich with the fragrance of sweet perfume? Even some of the most *country folks* I have known over the years were not so *unsophisticated* that they did not, or would not, wear perfume.

**5:6** - *“I opened to my beloved;  
But my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.  
My soul had failed me when he spake:  
I sought him, but I could not find him;  
I called him, but he gave me no answer.”*

In her dream she longs for the return of her lover, and is greatly disappointed when he does not return.

**5:7** - *“The watchmen that go about the city found me,  
They smote me, they wounded me;  
The keepers of the walls took away my mantle from me.”*

“The mistreatment of the maiden stands for the persecutions, hatred, and bitterness of the world against the Bride of Christ (His Church). Her being wounded speaks of the martyrdoms of the faithful. The maiden’s crying after her beloved speaks of the fidelity of the Church to the Christ in his absence” (Coffman, 197).

**5:8** - *“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
If ye find my beloved,  
That ye tell him, that I am sick from love.”*

Here the maiden awakes and pleads with the “daughters of Jerusalem” to help her find her beloved.

**9. The “daughters of Jerusalem,” and the Shulamite, 5:9-6:3;  
A. The question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 5:9;**

**5:9** - *“What is thy beloved more than another beloved,  
O thou fairest among women?  
What is thy beloved more than another beloved,  
That thou dost so adjure us?”*

A good paraphrase of this verse might be, “Why don’t you tell us what is so special about your lover?” This is another one of those little hints that her beloved was NOT Solomon.

- 9. The “daughters of Jerusalem,” and the Shulamite, 5:9-6:3;**  
**A. The question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 5:9;**  
**B. The answer from the Shulamite as she describes her lover, 5:10-16;**

**5:10** - *“My beloved is white and ruddy,  
The chiefest among ten thousand.”  
The chiefest among ten thousand.  
His head is as the most fine gold;  
His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.  
His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks,  
Washed with milk, and fitly set.  
His cheeks are as a bed of spices,  
As banks of sweet herbs:  
His lips are as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh.  
His hands are as rings of gold set with beryl:  
His body is as ivory work overlaid with sapphires.  
His legs are as pillars of marble, set with sockets of fine gold:  
His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.  
His mouth is most sweet;  
Yea, he is altogether lovely.  
This is my beloved, and this is my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem.”*

This is the only occasion in which the Shulamite praises the physical appearance of her lover. She delights in his appearance, moving downward in her description from the top of his head to his legs. Overall he is handsome in both appearance and character, outwardly and inwardly. It is especially wonderful that she can call him her lover and her friend (5:16). Such a valuable lesson should not go unnoticed if we would cultivate a marriage that is fulfilling and joyous.

#### SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER SIX

9. The “daughters of Jerusalem,” and the Shulamite, 5:9-6:3;  
A. The question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 5:9;  
B. The answer from the Shulamite as she describes her lover, 5:10-16;  
C. Another question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 6:1;  
D. The Shulamite answers, 6:2-3;  
10. The King’s final attempt to woo the Shulamite, 6:4-7:13;  
A. Solomon’s flattery of the Shulamite, 6:4-12;  
B. A question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” likely to Solomon, 6:13;

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- 9. The “daughters of Jerusalem,” and the Shulamite, 5:9-6:3;**  
**C. Another question from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 6:1;**

**6:1** - *“Whither is thy beloved gone,  
O thou fairest among women?  
Whither hath thy beloved turned him,  
That we may seek him with thee?”*

The question which is asked by the “daughters of Jerusalem” is, “Where is your beloved, that we may also seek him?” Coffman has pointed out that this question “clearly denies any possibility that ‘the beloved’ was Solomon” (Coffman, 201).

**9. The “daughters of Jerusalem,” and the Shulamite, 5:9-6:3;  
D. The Shulamite answers, 6:2-3;**

**6:2** - *“My beloved is gone down to his garden,  
To the beds of spices,  
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.”*

The answer is now given by the Shulamite: “My beloved has gone to his garden....”

**6:3** - *“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine;  
He feedeth his flock among the lilies,”*

The affirmation of mutual possession reveals that the couple has worked at solving their difficulties, and the security of their relationship is once again an experiential reality (Believer’s Study Bible).

**10. The King’s final attempt to woo the Shulamite, 6:4-7:13;  
A. Solomon’s flattery of the Shulamite, 6:4-12;**

**6:4** - *“Thou art fair, O my love, as Tirzah,  
Comely as Jerusalem,  
Terrible as an army with banners.”*

“Tirzah” and “Jerusalem” were two of the most beautiful cities in the land of Palestine, and are used to measure the beauty of the Shulamite.

**6:8** - *“There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,  
And virgins without number.”*

The king is saying that no one in the royal court can compare to the Shulamite. I have no doubt that the Shulamite was physically attractive, but this seemed to be all that king Solomon could see in this woman.

Another descriptive account of Solomon’s harem (cf. 1 Kings 11:3) gives a far larger number (700 wives and 300 concubines). This difference in numbering is easily explained by dating the Song early in Solomon’s reign. The harem may have been an inheritance from his father David. Since the text does not claim the king’s possession of the queens and concubines, they could be foreign royalty in the marriage procession.

**10. The King’s final attempt to woo the Shulamite, 6:4-7:13;  
B. Two questions from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” 6:13;**

**6:13** - *“Return, return, O Shulammite;  
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.”*

*Why will ye look upon the Shulammitte,  
As upon the dance of Mahanaim?"*

The phrase “as upon the dance of Mahanaim,” is literally “as at the dance of two companies.”

“Two camps” (*mahanayim*, Heb.) is generally thought to be the name of a dance, perhaps one made famous by the inhabitants of Mahanaim. This was a small town, located north of the Jabbok and not far from the Jordan Valley, to which David fled as a fugitive from Absalom (cf. 2 Sam. 17:24). The town of Mahanaim evidently derives its name from the vision of Jacob (Gen. 32:2). In postbiblical days, *mahanayim* became a name for “angels.”

**10. The King’s final attempt to woo the Shulamite, 6:4-7:13;**

**C. The King renews his flattering appeals, 7:1-9;**

**7:1-5** - *“Thy body is like a round goblet,  
Wherein no mingled wine is wanting:  
Thy waist is like a heap of wheat  
Set about with lilies.  
Thy two breasts are like two fawns  
That are twins of a roe.  
Thy neck is like the tower of ivory;  
Thine eyes as the pools in Heshbon,  
By the gate of Bath-rabbim;  
Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon  
Which looketh toward Damascus.  
Thy head upon thee is like Carmel,  
And the hair of thy head like purple;  
The king is held captive in the tresses thereof.”*

Carmel is a fertile and majestic range of mountains on the coast near Haifa. Beautifully wooded and covered with flowers in their season, it was a symbol of beauty in ancient Israel (Isa. 35:2; Jer. 50:19).

The important thing to notice in these verses (and continuing through verse 9) is the emphasis that the king puts upon the physical features of the Shulamite. It is more of the same from the heart of a man who saw nothing more in his women that which was purely physical; and the more the merrier!

**7:6-9** - *“How fair and how pleasant art thou,  
O love, for delights!  
This thy stature is like to a palm-tree,  
And thy breasts to its clusters.  
I said, I will climb up into the palm-tree,  
I will take hold of the branches thereof:  
Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine,  
And the smell of thy breath like apples,  
And thy mouth like the best wine,  
That goeth down smoothly for my beloved,  
Gliding through the lips of those that are asleep.”*

Of particular notice is the repeated and worn out expressions of a king who wanted to get this woman into his harem for his own selfish desires. Again from Coffman:

Once more we have Solomon's flattery, but there can be little wonder why the maiden rejected it. As plainly evident in what he said, he looked upon her, as he looked upon every woman, as something to be eaten or consumed, simply a means of satisfying his appetite (lust). He saw her body as a goblet of mixed wine (Cant. 7:2), her breasts as clusters of dates in the palm tree (Cant. 7:7), like clusters of grapes (Cant. 7:7). Her breath smelled like apples (Cant. 7:7), and her kisses were like wine. All of this says in tones of thunder: "You look delicious, and I'm ready to eat you!"

These last few verses were the king's final attempt to win over the Shulamite, but to no avail. If the king represents Satan and/or the allurements of the world, then we learn two important lessons: (1) The devil never gives up, and he will continue to seek to woo the church (collectively and individually) into its fold. (2) The woman (representing the church) is to be commended when she refuses to be "conformed" to the ways of the world (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17).

**10. The King's final attempt to woo the Shulamite, 6:4-7:13;  
D. The Shulamite's final rejection of the King, 7:10-13;**

**7:10-13** - *"I am my beloved's;  
And his desire is toward me.  
Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;  
Let us lodge in the villages.  
Let us get up early to the vineyards;  
Let us see whether the vine hath budded,  
And its blossom is open,  
And the pomegranates are in flower:  
There will I give thee my love.  
The mandrakes give forth fragrance;  
And at our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old,  
Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved."*

The key to a proper understanding of the closing portion of chapter seven is to be found in verse 10. The pronoun "his" stands at the head of this little paragraph: "I am my beloved's, and his [emphasis mine, TW] desire is toward me." There is also the noun "beloved," a word that has been used repeatedly throughout the Song to refer to her Shepherd lover rather than king Solomon. I sometime wonder how commentators can miss the obvious! No doubt the king is standing right there in front of the Shulamite woman, flattering her with the phrases in the previous nine verses. In response she not refer to "you," but instead talks of her "beloved" as "his." This, in my estimation, is significant.

Now take a look at some of the words in this section. In verse 11 the Shulamite woman beseeches her "beloved" to go into the "field," not the palace!

*"let us get up early to the vineyards"* – (verse 12). Shepherds and farmers rise early in the morning in order to tend to their business.

*“whether the vine hath budded”* - Is this language of a “city dweller” or the language of someone who lives off the land, tilling the ground and caring for the sheep?

Some commentators are honest with the evidence pointing to the three-character approach to this Song. Delitzsch was honest enough to conclude: “Advocates of the shepherd-hypothesis believe that the faithful Shulamite, after hearing Solomon’s panegyric, shakes her head (negatively), saying, ‘I am my beloved’s.’ (as quoted by Coffman).

## SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER EIGHT

### **11. The Shulamite’s affectionate soliloquy, 8:1-3;**

**8:1-3** - *“Oh that thou wert as my brother,  
That sucked the breasts of my mother!  
When I should find thee without,  
I would kiss thee;  
Yea, and none would despise me.  
I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother’s house,  
Who would instruct me;  
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine,  
Of the juice of my pomegranate.  
His left hand should be under my head,  
And his right hand should embrace me.”*

This passionate, almost erotic closing scene reminds us that the marriage relationship is something pure and holy in the sight of God. The Shulamite was pleading that her relationship with the Shepherd be at the highest and purest level.

### **12. Refrain, 8:4;**

**8:4** - *“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
That ye stir not up, nor awake my love,  
Until he please.”*

This ‘refrain’ appeared in 2:7 and 3:5. Its precise purpose for appearing here is not certain.

### **13. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 8:5-14;**

#### **A. The Shepherd now woos the Shulamite, 8:5-7;**

**8:5** - *“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,  
Leaning upon her beloved?  
Under the apple-tree I awakened thee:  
There thy mother was in travail with thee,  
There was she in travail that brought thee forth.”*

The language is very similar to what appeared in 3:6. There is a stark contrast, however, which even the novice can discern. In the former passage there is depiction of Solomon on parade in all of his glory. Throughout the book Solomon stands for the world and its allurements, along with its “wealth, power, fame, glitter, pomp and circumstance, ease luxury, ostentation, feasting,

sensuality, lust and gratification” (Coffman, Theophilus Software). What we have here in 8:5 is the language of a country girl. As Coffman noted:

The Shulamite stands for simple beauty, purity, wholesomeness, fidelity, patience, true love, morality, truth, honor and holiness, representing the Church in the days of her probation, sorely tempted, wooed, solicited and flattered by the evil world, but clinging, nevertheless, to the Shepherd above who is her true love, and to whom the Church is faithful even in his absence "in the far country." This answers the question of, "WHO IS THIS"? as it appears in Cant. 8:5 (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

In verses 5-7 the *Shepherd* is wooing the Shulamite. Solomon is not even in the picture. In fact he has faded out of view, and the closing verses of this beautiful book provide us a beautiful portrait of the Shepherd and the Shulamite as he woos her, marries her, and enjoys with her the bliss of love. The greatest difficulty in the closing part of this chapter is determining exactly who is speaking. The conversation switches back and forth between the Shepherd and the Shulamite. With regard to verses 5-7, Coffman commented:

The most acceptable interpretation which we have encountered for this short section is that, it has in it the deepest and most comprehensive statements concerning true love that are found in the whole Song (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

I completely agree with Coffman.

*“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness”* – It seems to me that this is the language of the citizens of the area where the Shulamite lived. As they see the Shepherd joined now with the Shulamite, they ask who this is that now embraces the Shulamite, and who it is that is leaning upon her “beloved.”

*“Under the apple-tree I awakened thee; There thy mother was in travail with thee, There was she in travail that brought thee forth”* – This is the language of the Shepherd as he makes reference to the very place where the Shulamite was born. The “apple-tree” is figurative, *i.e.* a poetic reference to her birth place.

**8:6-7** - *“Set me as a seal upon thy heart,  
As a seal upon thine arm:  
For love is strong as death;  
Jealousy is cruel as Sheol;  
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,  
A very flame of Jehovah.  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can floods drown it:  
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,  
He would utterly be contemned.”*

Now the Shulamite speaks. She appeals for the Shepherd to take her as a “seal upon thy heart.” The seal was commonly a sign of ownership and an indication of great value. The Shulamite asks to be a seal on her husband’s heart because in being near his heart (the source of his affection) she felt secure in his love. She asked to be a seal upon his arm because here lay his strength to encircle and protect her. Here, at the climax of the book, is found one of the most beautiful and heavenly tributes to love. She describes his love as final and irreversible like “death,” for who can

loosen the hold of death, and what hero is more victorious in conquering all than death. His love is exclusive and intense like “jealousy,” just as the grave refuses to yield the dead. Never is concern and care prompted as by jealousy. Godly jealousy is a burning attitude of love. Finally, love is as unquenchable as “fire.” Fire cannot easily be extinguished. In fact, this love is a waterproof torch (v. 7). It is precisely this degree of love that the Shulamite has found in the Shepherd’s love for her!

Coffman’s summary of this great love of the Shepherd and the Shulamite is in keeping with the view that the book has three main characters:

These marvelous words about genuine love could not possibly have been uttered by a man like Solomon. These wonderful words about love would fit Solomon exactly like a diamond ring in a swine's snout. The divine jealousy concerning his Church's constancy ("Jehovah is a jealous God") appears here. The Divine love for the Church is beyond comparison. No human power can overcome it. The flood waters of death, Sheol, Satan, and all the allurements of the world and the flesh cannot dissipate the love of Christ for his Church. "And true love is not only unquenchable; it is also unpurchasable. Solomon had made every effort to buy the Shulamite's love with all the glittering luxuries of his court, but to no avail (Coffman, Theophilus).

13. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 8:5-14;  
**B. The “song of the little sister,” 8:8-9;**

**8:8-9** - *“We have a little sister,  
And she hath no breasts:  
What shall we do for our sister  
In the day when she shall be spoken for?  
If she be a wall,  
We will build upon her a turret of silver:  
And if she be a door,  
We will inclose her with boards of cedar”*

I will confess my inability to understand the reason for these two verses. I am prone to agree with the Pulpit Commentary:

It must necessarily be difficult to find satisfactory interpretations for every detail in such a poem of human love as this. It might be sufficient to see in this reference to the younger sister the general idea of love’s expansion. Those who are themselves the objects of it, being full of exquisite happiness, desire to call others into the same joy. This is true both of the individual and of the Church. *What shall be done for others?* That is the question which is awakened in every heart where true love is at work. There is no need to explain the language further (Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Notes).

One element that is obvious in the two verses is the thought of protection for the innocent and helpless. Beyond that, I cannot comment.

**13. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 8:5-14;**  
**C. The Shulamite maintains her integrity, 8:10-12;**

**8:10-12** - *“I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof*

*Then was I in his eyes as one that found peace.  
Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;  
He let out the vineyard unto keepers;  
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.  
My vineyard, which is mine, is before me:  
Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand,  
And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.”*

In these verses the Shulamite is obviously the one who is speaking. It seems to me that she is drawing a strong contrast between what Solomon had to offer, and what her “beloved” had to offer.

Bunn’s interpretation is eloquent and convincing: “Solomon’s vineyard is that immense harem with a thousand women in it; the ‘keepers’ are the eunuchs in charge of it. Solomon can have his godless harem and all its profits. The Shulamite’s ‘vineyard’ is her own chaste and virtuous person, reserved for her lover alone” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

These verses indicate that Solomon was not successful in bringing this woman into his harem.

**13. The Shepherd and the Shulamite, 8:5-14;  
D. The Shulamite pleas for her lover’s return, 8:13-14;**

**8:13-14** - *“Thou that dwellest in the gardens,  
The companions hearken for thy voice:  
Cause me to hear it.  
Make haste, my beloved,  
And be thou like to a roe or to a young hart  
Upon the mountains of spices.”*

These two verses seem to contain a plea on the part of the Shulamite for her “beloved” to return to her. Her beloved had gone away, but she was confident he would return.

In this, the bride’s final recorded response, she earnestly requests that her husband come to her with the speed and agility of a gazelle or a young stag. This anticipates the Bride of the Apocalypse and her cry, ‘Yea, come quickly. Amen; Come, Lord Jesus!’ (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

Thus the Song of Solomon comes to a close in a most fitting way. Seeing it is an allegory, we cannot help but see in the entirety of this Song a portrait of our Lord’s love for the church. As the Shepherd, our Lord seeks to draw the church away from the enticements of the world and to enjoy the wonderful bliss of heavenly love for God’s redeemed, the church of Jesus Christ our Lord.