

The Bible Jesus Used

A Gospel-Centered Glance at
the Old Testament

Bethlehem Baptist Church, fall 2013–spring 2014
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Song of Songs

❖ Different Interpretations:

- ❖ **Allegorical:** The intimate love relationship between God and Israel or Christ and his church.

Prov 5:15–20. Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.
¹⁶ Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷ Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. ¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹ a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. ²⁰ Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

1 Tim 4:1–5. Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ **For everything created by God is good**, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Song of Songs

❖ Different Interpretations:

- ❖ **Allegorical:** The intimate love relationship between God and Israel or Christ and his church.
- ❖ **Lyrical:** A series of independent love songs that celebrate the love between a man and a woman under God.

❖ **Dramatic:** A developing love story between a man and a woman; a collection of lyrical pictures that trace the growth of relationship.

❖ *The baritone:* Solomon, “my beloved” (1:1; 3:6; 8:11–12)

❖ *The soprano:* the “Shulammite” (6:13), “my love”

❖ *The chorus girls:* “we,” “friends,” “daughters of Jerusalem”

Song of Songs at a Glance

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| Superscription | 1:1 |
| <i>Love Awakened:</i> Progressing Toward Marriage | 1:2–2:7 (E, 2:6; R, 2:7) |
| The Bride's Desire, Invitation, and Dream of Loss | 2:8–3:5 (R, 3:5) |
| <i>Love Enjoyed:</i> Wedding Celebration | 3:6–5:8 (R, 5:8) |
| The Couple's Delights of Love: Growing Intimacy | 5:9–8:4 (E, 8:3; R, 8:4) |
| <i>Love Affirmed:</i> Reflections on Love | 8:5–14 |

❖ **A Song of Love and the Place of Solomon**

- ❖ The title “Song of Songs” places this expression of love above all others, suggesting this depiction is ideal and does not necessarily depict anything Solomon enjoyed with one of his 700 princesses or 300 concubines.
- ❖ The song provides commentary on the innocence and beauty of Gen 2, highlights the royal nature of weddings, and encourages every “king” and his “queen” to enjoy pure love in marriage.

❖ The Contribution of the Song to Scripture

❖ Elsewhere:

- ❖ Descriptions of physical beauty are normally restrained (e.g., Gen 29:17; 1 Sam 16:12; 25:3).
- ❖ Physical beauty is fleeting (Prov 31:30).
- ❖ A woman's greatest focus should be inward beauty (1 Tim 2:9–10; 1 Pet 3:3–4).
- ❖ Improper sexual relations are condemned (e.g., Exod 20:14; Lev 18, 21; Deut 5:18; Prov 2:16–19; 5:1–6; Matt 5:27–30).

❖ **The Song:** Works with a handful of other texts:

- ❖ To highlight how desire for the opposite sex and sexual arousal are some God's good gifts (Gen 1:26–28; 2:20–25; Matt 19:1–12; 1 Tim 4:3);
- ❖ To guide the enjoyment of healthy, physical love God's way (Ps 45; Prov 5:15–23; 1 Cor 7:1–5, 36–37; 1 Tim 4:1–5; Heb 13:4).

1 Cor 7:2–5. Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Heb 13:4. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

- ❖ **Use of Evocative Language:** The Song uses evocative language to celebrate the beauty and gift of sexuality and desire within marriage; the expression of “one flesh” (Gen 2:23–24).
- ❖ Kisses are with the mouth and erotic (1:2).
- ❖ Refers to sexual intimacy as “love” (1:2), the climax of sexual union is described by the metaphor of eating fruit from a luscious, God-given garden (4:16–5:1). This is God’s right order. “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me” (7:10).
- ❖ The Song draws on a range of human activity to describe the beauty of love in tasteful ways—nature, architecture, clothing/jewelry, warfare (2:8–9, 14; 4:1, 5; 5:12; 7:4).

❖ The girl:

- ❖ Celebrates her man's protection (2:3) and embrace (2:6; 8:3);
- ❖ More than the man, she longs for deep companionship and intimacy, aching at his absence;
- ❖ Depicts to the daughters of Jerusalem both Solomon's wealth and extravagance (3:6–11) his body (5:10–16). This highlights deep respect and honor and aligns with the calls for wives to respect their husbands (Eph 5:33; 1 Pet 3:2, 5–6).

❖ The man:

- ❖ Describes the woman's body 3x (4:1–15; 6:4–7; 7:1–9), using the images of a garden and vineyard full of precious spices and wine for his pleasure.

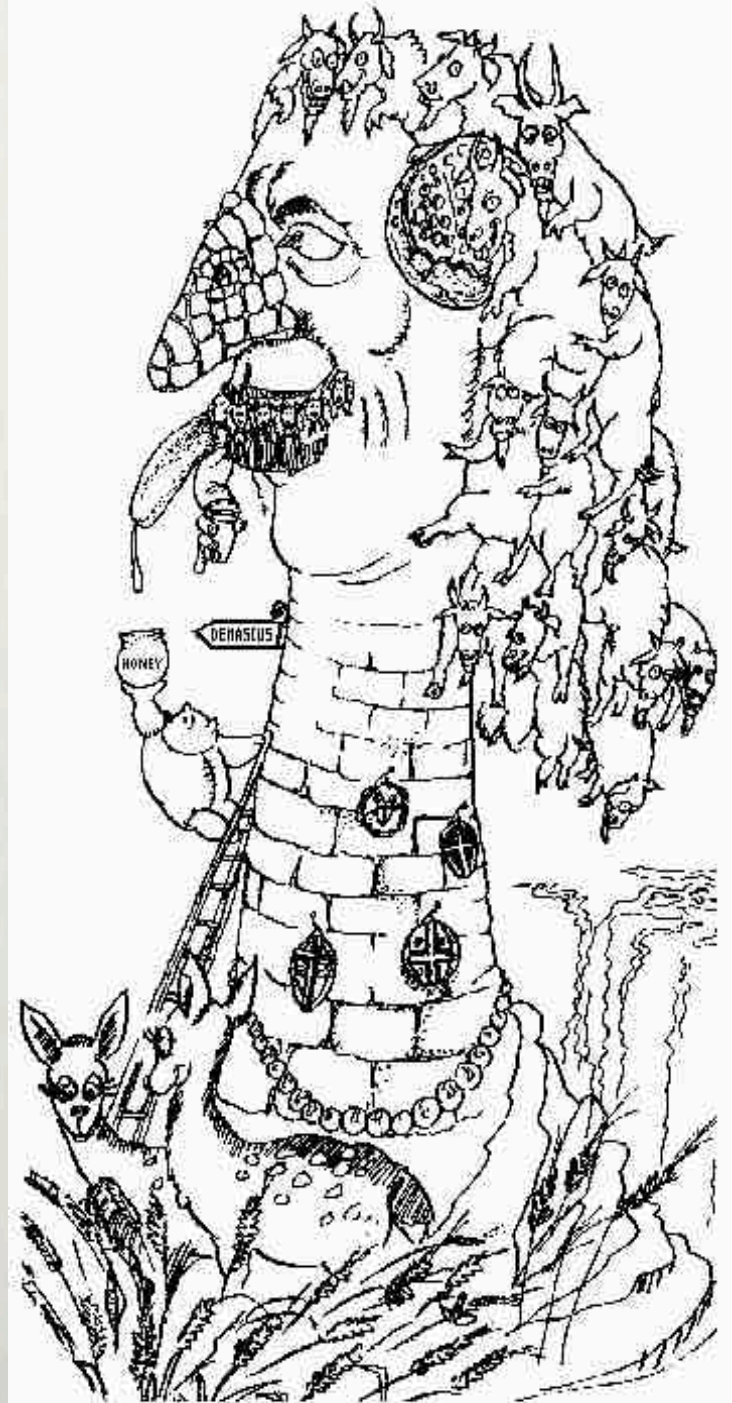
From chs. 4 and 7:

“How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil..... Your hair is like a flock of goats.... Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes.... Your lips are like a scarlet thread, Your temples are like a slice of pomegranate....

Your neck is like the tower of David built with rows of stones on which are hung a thousand shields.... Your two breasts are like fawns, twins of a gazelle which feed among the lilies....

Your lips, my bride, drip honey, Honey and milk are under your tongue.... And the fragrance of your garments Is like the fragrance of Lebanon. Your belly is like a heap of wheat....

Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which faces toward Damascus.”



- ❖ The text at times presupposes she is naked, for he describes her graceful legs (7:1), her waist and navel (7:2), and her breasts (7:3). Such depictions are much more developed than the girl's, perhaps highlighting the visual appetite of the man.
- ❖ Significantly, his words are given to the girl in affirmation and love. There is *no* allowance in the song for men to exploit their wives in the presence of others or to objectify their wives as a city conquered rather than a jewel treasured (Eph 5:2, 28, 33; Col 3:19; 1 Pet 3:7).

❖ **The Message**

❖ **The Background of Gen 1–3 and the Hope of New Creation**

❖ We should read the Song in light of Gen 1–2:

❖ Garden imagery

❖ “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28).

❖ “A man shall . . . Hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (1:24).

- ❖ While read in light of Gen 1–2, the Song is birthed in the context of Gen 3 and beyond, testifying to the honest challenges and temptations of relationship.
- ❖ The girl is terrified of losing her man (3:1).
- ❖ She longs to be able to publicly demonstrate her love, but social convention does not allow for this (8:1).
- ❖ Her world is one in which love can be sought too quickly and in the wrong places (2:7; 3:5; 8:4).

- ❖ **Thesis:** Song 8:6–7. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. ⁷ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.

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- ❖ True love is not a commodity to be purchased or traded.
- ❖ True love is God-wrought.

❖ **Human marriage as a parable designed to heighten messianic hope.**

- ❖ When read within its canonical context of kingdom hope, the Song reminds the reader that the enjoyment of the ultimate marriage between the messianic son of God and his bride will only be for those who celebrate human sexuality God's way.
- ❖ From the earliest stages, Scripture portrays Israel as God's beloved upon whom he has set his affection (Deut 7:6–8). Yet Israel has consistently gone after other lovers (Exod 34:11–16; Lev 20:4–6; Num 15:38–40; Jer 2:2, 20–25, 31–32; 3:1–3; Ezek 16:22, 43; Isa 1:21; 57:3; Hos 2:14, 16–20).

- ❖ Ps 45, tagged “a love song,” portrays the Messiah being joined with his bride as a royal wedding between the king and his princes.
- ❖ Ps 45:6–7, 13–17. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; ⁷ you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. There God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions. . . . ¹³ All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold. ¹⁴In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her. ¹⁵With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king. ¹⁶In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. ¹⁷I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.
- ❖ See Heb 1:8–9 applies vv. 6–7 to Jesus as the royal Son.

❖ **Synthesis:**

- ❖ The Song recaptures sexuality as a gift of God within marriage.
- ❖ The Song cautions the awakening of love too early (2:7; 3:5; 8:4); this love is powerful, unquestionable, unpurchaseable, and the fire of Yahweh (8:6–7)!
- ❖ The Song heightens kingdom hope by reminding the reader of the ultimate relationship: “I will be your God, and you will be my people.”