

**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES**

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# **ECCLESIASTES**

*by*

**R. J. Kidwell**

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# **SONG OF SOLOMON**

*by*

**Don DeWelt**

**PARAPHRASE AND ANALYTICAL OUTLINE**

*by* **Arthur G. Clarke**

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**College Press, Joplin, Missouri**

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON



## PREFACE

This book is unique in the Old Testament canon. There is no book in the whole Bible on which more commentaries have been written or more opinions advanced. This is a strange record of the past as compared to its general neglect in the present day. We are glad to observe a few writers discovering its value (See our bibliography for recent works). There is much to learn from these eight short chapters.

We have thought much about our approach to the text. How shall we interpret? There are four approaches made by men in their attempt to understand this book. (1) *Allegorical*—The literal meaning is almost ignored. In the Jewish use of this method of interpretation it becomes the song of God's love for His people. Christians, beginning with Origen in the Third Century saw in this book the love of Christ for the Christian and the love of the believer for His Lord. (2) *Literal*—If we accept the words at their face value they express a song of human love of a man and woman. (3) *Lyrical*—Some have tried unsuccessfully, we believe, to see in the record love lyrics sung at Syrian weddings. (4) *Cultic*—Was this once a pagan ritual accommodated to the worship of Jehovah? This interpretation hardly merits mention.

We ask the serious student to read at least an introduction to this book in addition to the one we give in our text.

We have chosen to use a literal interpretation of this book. However, we are also persuaded it has the potential of wonderful analogous comparisons. We do not want to ignore the emphasis of love and communion with our Lord. We shall follow the format of the BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOKS as found in Ecclesiastes.

Readers unfamiliar with the BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOKS will wonder what to do with the "Thought Questions" or the "Paraphrase" or even the "Fact Questions." There is a very definite reason, and we believe a very practical value for this five-fold format:

(1) TEXT: This is the AMERICAN STANDARD TRANSLATION of 1901. We have found this to be a very accurate rendering of the Greek and Hebrew text. Among the many translations,

we prefer this one for its faithful adherence to the original. We ask all readers to contemplate these words as the words of God. Nothing could be more important than a thorough assimilation of every word given us by God through the Holy Spirit! Read it and re-read it—then read it again. It is God speaking to you!

(2) **THOUGHT QUESTIONS:** We have prepared these from our reading and understanding of the text. Answer every question with your present understanding of the text. *It is not important that you give the same answer to these questions that we do. It is very, very important that you attempt some answer.* We are attempting to motivate you into a personal involvement in the meaning of God's Word. We would suggest your answers be kept in a notebook. If you do not know—or you must guess—*record your response.* If after you have read the **PARAPHRASE** or the **COMMENT** you wish to change your answer you may do so, but it is vitally important that you express your response to what God has said to you and that you do it in written form.

(3) **PARAPHRASE:** This is the work of Arthur G. Clarke from his book *The Song of Songs* published by Walterick Publishers, Kansas City, Kansas. The reader will note that our interpretation is clearly spelled out in identifying the speakers of this book of dialogue. Please, please, read the paraphrase at least twice. Now refer back to the **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**—do you wish to change an answer, add an answer, or add to an answer—Do it!

(4) **COMMENT:** We want to offer our present understanding of each word in the divine **TEXT**. We wish to be very careful and thorough. For this reason we have read and reread all we could find on the book of Song of Solomon (see our Bibliography). Our **COMMENTS** shall be: (a) *Critical* in the sense that we wish to understand the meaning of each Hebrew word, both in the **TEXT** and in the **CONTEXT**. (b) *Devotional* in the sense that we want to point up the obvious, and oft times the often overlooked application of the **TEXT** to our lives. We make no apology for attempting to reach the conscience

## P R E F A C E

in our COMMENTS. (c) *Expository*: We mean that the TEXT shall be analytically considered in such a way that the present day Biblical expositor could use it in his teaching. (d) *Homiletical*: We believe many sermons could be preached from Song of Solomon in which the fulness of the union and communion of our Lord could be held up as in no other way. We attempt to offer help in this grand pursuit!

(5) **FACT QUESTIONS**: The basic purpose of these questions is reading comprehension. They are based upon all you have read from the TEXT through the COMMENT. At times we have posed in this section a question or two for discussion where the point of view is open to opinion. In this section is the largest possibility for personal fulfillment. A full honest attempt on the part of the reader to answer these questions could actually form a commentary of his own on the sacred TEXT. No higher accomplishment of personal Bible study could be contemplated than a verse-by-verse personal explanation of God's Word on the part of the reader. If the reader will do this he will have a track record of his spiritual growth to which he can refer in times of discouragement or even in times of joy. Your answers to the **THOUGHT QUESTIONS** can be a preparation and research for your much more complete answers to the **FACT QUESTIONS**.



## INTRODUCTION

\* *By W. G. Moorehead*

Angus assigns this book of Scripture to B.C. 1001. The universal voice of antiquity ascribes it to Solomon, and internal evidence confirms this testimony. His songs were a thousand and five, I Kings iv, 32; and this is called the "song of songs," because it is the best of them all.

Key-word, "Beloved"; key verse, vi, 3.

Origen and Jerome tell us that the Jews forbade it to be read by any until he was thirty years old. It certainly needs a degree of spiritual maturity to enter aright into the holy mystery of love which it celebrates. It is possible to read the song amiss; but to such as have attained spiritual maturity, of what age soever, it is one of the most edifying of the sacred writings.

Love to Jesus Christ becomes, through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, the strongest passion which can sway the human heart. Avarice, ambition, love of power may have more of the unnatural vigor attending fever; this carries with it the quiet, enduring energy of health that brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Those alone who have experienced the power of this love in its intensity are competent judges whether any language used in expressing it may be exaggerated. If the love of God to us is as incomprehensible as is His eternity and omnipresence, it is not surprising that the love of a grateful heart should struggle and strive to declare itself by appealing to the tenderest ties, by using the boldest imagery; for the love of a believer is but a dim reflection of the measureless love of God.

1. The form of the song is somewhat difficult to determine. A drama it certainly is not, although it has been thus described. It presents little or nothing of the features belonging to the drama. While dialogue is found in it, still it is not of a very sustained kind, nor is it very marked. The feature chiefly lacking is a climax, the culminating *finis* with which the drama

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\* W. G. Moorehead, *Outline Studies in the Books of the Old Testament*, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, 1893. Pg. 197.



is expected to close. Its form seems to be that of a pastoral poem, with characters presenting quasi-dramatic action. The personages introduced into it are the bridegroom and king; the bride, or spouse; the daughters of Jerusalem, or the court ladies of Solomon's palace. There is scarcely traceable any plot, nor dramatic unity, although the poem is one. Most of the addresses, instead of being dialogues, are soliloquies, apostrophes, or monologues. It has changing scenes. Sometimes the scene is laid in a garden; at others in the palace; then in the country amid pastoral quiet and beauty; and in Jerusalem amidst the noise of a great city.

This much may be confidently asserted, that it is a song of love in Oriental language and imagery, with rests and pauses and varying scenery and conversation.

2. The design of the song. There are three interpretations of the poem advanced by as many schools of expositors. Each of these may be briefly mentioned.

The first is that of the merely literal and erotic. That is, it is held that the poem celebrates the love of Solomon for a young shepherdess who was a member of an agricultural family consisting of a widowed mother and several sons, who lived at Shulem. (The name of the place is derived from the spouse, viz., Shulemite.) The young woman, in the course of her pastoral duties, met with a shepherd to whom, in due time, she became espoused. Her brothers violently opposed the union. She was invited by her lover to accompany him to the fields; but her brothers, to prevent the meeting, sent her to take care of the vineyards. Here, she one day encountered King Solomon, who assisted by his court ladies, endeavored to win her love. But she remained steadfast to her affianced. The king carried her to the city, made her large promises and sought to overcome her scruples by princely presents; but without avail; and her fidelity was finally rewarded by her marriage with the shepherd and gifts from her reconciled brothers.

According to this theory, the scope of the book is to give us an "example of virtue in a young woman who encountered

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and conquered great temptations, and was eventually rewarded." If this is all, belief in its inspiration must be dismissed; and it has no better right to a place in the Bible than a tale from the Arabian Nights, or the sonnets from Shakespeare. Against this theory there are strong objections: (1) It has been doubted whether there was such a place as Shulem whence the spouse derived her name of the Shulemite. (2) It seems obvious that if we accept this view of the book as true, then we must renounce the belief in Solomon's being the author, for it is altogether unlikely that he could have written so manifest an account of his own defeat. (3) The vast majority of Bible students see no ground or foundation for the story detailed above. They find no shepherd in it; no bethrothal of the Shulemite with a shepherd; no effort on the part of the king to supplant another in her affections and steal her from him. In short, the story on which the view rests is pure fiction. (4) If it be no more than a love-poem celebrating one of Solomon's amours it is incredible that it should have been incorporated with the other books of the Bible, and for so many centuries held its place with the other inspired books as one of them. It was in the Old Testament canon when the Septuagint version was made, two hundred and fifty years before the advent of the Saviour; it has kept its place there ever since. If it is only a "dissolute love song" God would have found a way to cast it out of His Book ages ago, like the Apocraphal books. (5) The strange and strong hold it has had upon some of the most spiritually minded men the world has ever seen—men like Rutherford, McChene, Gill, Stuart, John Trapp, and Thomas Goodwin—is inexplicable if the song be nothing more than this hypothesis offers. We must reject this theory.

The second view we mention which has been put forward as an explanation of the design of the book is called the moral. The song is regarded as a description of wedded love in the exercise of its highest and purest affections. In this interpretation no spiritual sense is attached to the poem. The great moral sentiments relating to the holy estate of marriage alone

are intended to be inculcated. The foundation for this opinion rests on the union of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh. It is held that the poem sings the praises of that princess, and celebrates the happiness the king enjoyed in union with her.

There are very grave objections which may be urged against this theory. We may safely assert that the Egyptian princess is not meant at all nor can be meant by the Shulemite. Some of the difficulties that lie against it may be stated. The delicate daughter of the haughty Pharaoh could not in any supposable manner have ever been the sunburnt keeper of the vineyards, as the spouse is described to have been, ch. i, 6. She could not have been unveiled and beaten by the watchman of Jerusalem, v, 7. She could not have come from the snowy heights of Lebanon when she had no occasion to be within one hundred and twenty miles of its base, iv, 8. And it is very unlikely that she conducted Solomon into her mother's house, which was in Egypt, iii, 4.

Moreover, on this theory it is impossible to account for the remarkable situation of the spouse. She is found wandering through the streets of the great city by night; is smitten by watchmen; her veil is torn rudely from her face, the gravest insult that could be offered an Eastern woman. In fact, her whole conduct is utterly irreconcilable with the Oriental ideas of womanly seclusion and modesty. If this spouse is a veritable woman, having the experience here ascribed to her, then her character is altogether incompatible with Eastern habits of decorum, and is questionable.

The third view is, that the song is an allegory, that under the guise of human love, the love which passes between two loyal and faithful hearts, is set forth the intimate, tender relationship existing between Christ and His people. The frame, we may reverently say, is human conjugal affection. But through this thin, skillfully carved lattice-work there glance out upon us the joy and bliss, the rapture and ecstasy, the strange, tender wondrous play of the deep abiding love of Jesus for His own, and reciprocally, theirs for Him. The Chaldee Targum, the oldest Jewish commentary on the book, entitles

it, "The Songs and Hymns which Solomon the Prophet, King of Israel, Delivered by the Spirit of Prophecy, before Jehovah, the Lord of the Whole Earth." The great body of Christians have always regarded it as a symbolical exhibition of the relations subsisting between the Lord and His people. From first to last, orthodox believers hold it bears the stamp of the allegory. In support of this view the following arguments may be urged: (1) It best accounts for the position of the book in the canon of Scripture. (2) It accords with the instincts of the spiritually-minded. (3) The names of its principal characters indicate that it is an allegory—*Shalomoh*, Solomon, the peaceful one, the prince of peace, and *Shulamith*, also the peaceful one, but feminine—the daughter of peace. These names are believed to be as suggestive, as significant, as Bunyan's "Christian" and "Christiana," or "Faithful" and "Hopeful." Read in this light, we perceive how appropriately the book represents Jesus as the peaceful one, the peace-bringer, and His people as the sharers of His peace, those to whom He gives peace. (4) The fancifulness of some of the scenes and situations render a literal interpretation absurd and impossible. See, for example, ii, 14-17; iii, 1-4; vi, 4-7; iv, 8. The Shulemite is in the clefts of the rock, in the concealments of the precipices; the bridegroom is in the garden, beyond the mountains, in the distant fields. The bride sleeps, the lover knocks at her door in the stillness of the night—withdraws when he receives no answer to his call. She in her remorse arises and wanders about the streets of the city. The rapid transitions, the remarkable situations indicate that the poem is an allegory. (5) This interpretation harmonizes best with the Old Testament representations of the relation between God and His people. This relation is often set forth as one of wedlock. The prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, in particular, make the marriage covenant existing between the Lord and Israel the ground of their passionate appeals. Nor is the New Testament silent as to the relation. The union and reciprocal love of Christ and the church are described in language closely akin to that of the song, "He is the Bridegroom who hath the

Bride." They rejoice in each other. Their delights are mutual, identical, Matt. ix, 15; John iii, 29; 2 Cor. xi, 2; Eph. v, 25-32; Rev. xix, 7-9; xxi, 7-27.

The sudden pronominal changes indicate that the song is an allegory. "Draw *me*, we will run after thee." "The King hath brought *me* into His chambers; *we* will be glad and rejoice in thee," i, 4. The bride's name is not that of a single individual, but is collective. She is the "daughter of Zion."

3. The teaching of the Song we hold is the following:

(1) The bridegroom is the Messiah, the Redeemer.

(2) The bride, His people.

(3) The daughters of Jerusalem, are the friends of both, Jno. iii, 29.

(4) The Song describes the love which exists between them. The fountain of all love for Christ is His love to us. To know His love is to love Him in return, I Jno. iv, 19.

(5) The time when the Song has its fulfillment is always. But it is believed that it will have a peculiar accomplishment in that day when the Jews are again restored to God's favor and fellowship—and for the second time the marriage bond is ratified and sealed, never again to be violated, Hos. i, ii; Rom. xi, 26-29.

(6) Traits of Christ's love. It is *unconditional*, chap. i, 2-6; comp. Rom. v, 8. *Irresistible*, ii, 8; comp. 1 John iv, 10. *Intense*, ii, 9, 10; comp. John xiv, 1-3. *Sheltering and protective*, ii, 14, 15; comp. Ps. xci, 1-6. *Exacting*, v, 2; comp. Eph. 4, i, 2. *Jealous*, v, 6; comp. Rev. iii, 20.

(7) Traits of a believer's love. It is *self-depreciating*, i, 5. *Eager for communion*, ii, 1-7. *Sometimes interrupted*, iii, 1. *Sorrowful*, v, 6, 7. *Intermittent*, v, 1, 2. *Self-sacrificing*, iii, 2, 3.

4. Structure and summary of contents: (Moody Stewart)  
Canto One.—Subject, the bride seeking and finding the king.

1. The king sought, chap. i, 2-8.

2. The king found, i, 9; ii, 7.

Canto Two.—Subject, the sleeping bride awakened.

1. Call to meet the bridegroom, ii, 8-15.

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2. Response of the bride, 16; iii, ii, 5.

Canto Three.—Subject, the bridegroom with the bride.

1. The king in his bridal chariot, iii, 6-11.

2. The beauty of the bride, iv, 1-7.

3. The garden of spices, iv, 8; v, 2.

Canto Four.—Subject, bridegroom's withdrawal and re-appearance.

1. Sleep and sorrow, v, 3; vi, 3.

2. Bridegroom's return, vi, 4-10.

3. Glory of the bride, vi, 11; vii, 10.

4. Garden in the fields, vii, 11; viii, 4.

Canto Five.—Subject, the little sister, viii, 5-14.

## THE STORY IN OUTLINE

We quote again from Arthur G. Clarke. Details of the beautiful story here unfolded can be gathered only from the Song itself. It is mainly from the standpoint of the Shulammite maiden herself and runs something like this. There lived at Shunem (also known as Shulem) a humble family consisting of a widowed mother with two or more sons and a younger virtuous daughter, the maiden of the Song. The family seems to have had a double occupation. Besides shepherding flocks they had the care of certain vineyards, which they may have owned or held simply as tenants.

During the course of her duties in caring for the young of the flock the maiden became acquainted with a shepherd youth. They met one day about noon while resting their flocks at a woodland spot near the girl's home. It was here under the shade of a certain tree, which became a trysting place, that the shepherd first declared his love and found to his joy a response in the maiden's heart. Mutual vows of fidelity appear to have been exchanged.

According to Eastern custom, upon the death of their father the maiden's brothers, who were older, had assumed responsibility with the mother for arranging in due course their sister's

marriage. The brothers did not look with favor upon the growing intimacy of the young couple and made efforts to hinder their communion. The purpose, no doubt, was to protect their sister's reputation and that of the family. The mother seems to have taken a more lenient view, not only encouraging the young people but later on at the same hallowed spot confirming the lovers' vows by a more formal pledge of betrothal.

One lovely spring day the maiden sets out to visit a nut garden in a favorite valley. She desires to enjoy the sight of the fresh verdure of her beautiful countryside. Suddenly and quite unexpectedly she comes upon King Solomon with his retinue returning from an excursion to his northern territories where he possessed gardens and vineyards. The king's observant eye lights upon the damsel and, struck by her unusual beauty, his too-susceptible heart immediately determines to make her a member of his already large harem. It is probable that she turned to flee, but by royal command is seized and committed to the care of the court ladies, then conveyed to a royal residence or, as some think, to the king's pavilion at a nearby encampment.

(At some point in the story the scene changes from the country to Jerusalem but just where cannot be positively stated. Much depends upon the true interpretation of 4:8. A solution could be more readily found if it were known for certain whether or not the maiden was in the procession described at 3:6-11.)

It is not at all unlikely that it is then that Solomon has her taken to Jerusalem where she is handed over to the care of the women. Amid the splendors of the royal palace the king renews his attentions. The Shulammite is first promised gifts of jewelry, and when this offer fails in its purpose she is later offered advancement in station among the ladies of the court circle. Her resolve, however, is unshaken. She preserves her maidenly dignity and remains loyal to her betrothed shepherd-lover from whom she has been unwillingly separated. All the king's blandishments, offered inducements, and all the luxuries of court life mean nothing to the pure soul of this country maid.

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Her thoughts constantly dwell upon her absent beloved. Her heart is full of him and him only.

Solomon comes at last to realize the utter failure of his importunate advances. It is something new in his experiences with the fair sex. Impressed by such virtue and constancy he grants permission to the Shulammite to return home. Joyfully she sends word to her beloved to come and escort her there. To this invitation the shepherd eagerly responds.

The story ends with a touching description of the homeward journey. Readers are permitted to overhear, so to speak, snatches of the lovers' conversation as they near home. They pass familiar spots and recall past experiences. Throughout the Song the formal marriage is seen only in prospect unless the passage 4:8 to 5:1 does indeed belong chronologically to the end of the book. Regarding this point see comments *in loco*.





## THE SONG OF SONGS TITLE 1:1

### TEXT 1:1

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

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:1

1. Do you imagine Solomon wrote this song right after he wrote Ecclesiastes? Discuss.
2. Is this song from Solomon or about him?
3. Why call this the best of all his many songs?

### PARAPHRASE 1:1

- 1 The Song of Songs—Solomon's.

### COMMENT 1:1

This is a form of expressing the superlative. Like holy of holies or Lord of Lords or King of Kings. Of the many songs that Solomon wrote (one thousand and five, I Kings 4:32) this is the best. We are eager to learn of its superlative value.

### FACT QUESTIONS 1:1

1. In what area would you call this the best of all songs? i.e., as compared with what?
2. Was this song to be sung to music?
3. In what sense is it a poem?

## TEXT 1:2-4

*FIRST SCENE—The King's Palace*

## SHULAMMITE: SOLILOQUY

- 2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine.
- 3 Thine oils leave a goodly fragrance; thy name is as oil poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee.
- 4 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 wine.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:2-4

4. For whom does the Shulammite maid long in these verses? Is it Solomon or the shepherd?
5. In what way is love better than wine?
6. Why not just ask for kisses? Why mention "the kisses of his mouth"?
7. The fragrance of the oils of the man involved compares to what in the personal grooming of men today?
8. What name would be appropriate as suggested in verse three?
9. Who are "the virgins" of verse three? Where are they?
10. What is meant by "draw me"? (verse four)
11. Why use the pronoun "we" in verse four?
12. Why mention the fact that she is in the King's chambers?
13. Is there a contrast between the King's chambers and the rejoicing and love mentioned in verse four?
14. Twice love is compared with wine—show at least two parallels.

## PARAPHRASE 1:2-4

## SHULAMMITE'S SILILOQUY

- 2 Oh, that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!  
For thy endearments are better than wine.
- 3 Thy perfumes have a delightful fragrance;  
Thy name is as perfume poured out;  
No wonder the damsels adore thee.
- 4 Draw me after thee; let us hasten away!  
(For the king has brought me into his inner apartments).  
We will be glad and rejoice only in thee;  
We will praise thy endearments more than wine.  
Deservedly do the damsels adore thee.

## COMMENT 1:2-4

Our comments throughout this book will be threefold: (1) To give as careful an exegesis of the text as possible. We are concerned about every word in the Song of Solomon and its meaning! (2) The application of the text to the husband-wife relationship. We believe this book can become a veritable marriage manual in the area of love that should and can exist between those who are married. (3) As much as we need help in our day for our shakey marriages, we need more help in establishing a deep union and communion with our Lord. We shall relate the text to the mutual love between the believer and his Lord.

*Exegesis*

By reading 6:12, 13 we conclude the Shulammite maid was kidnapped—perhaps willingly, by the servants of Solomon. She was taken to the palace of King Solomon. Perhaps this palace was one of his northern summer houses—or was it at

Jerusalem? At least there is a garden present with a lattice-work trellis. It is springtime. She is confined to the King's inner chambers. The women of the court or "daughters of Jerusalem" surround her. When the impact of what has happened hits her she cries out in deep longing for her betrothed—"Let him kiss me with his mouth; for his love is better than wine." Even the wines of Solomon cannot make her forget her beloved. In memory and imagination she can remember the fragrance of his presence. We would compare such fragrance to cologne used by both men and women of our day. The thought of his familiar fragrance prompts her to epitomize the total personality of her betrothed with the symbolism of the fragrance of his oil poured forth—"Thy name is as oil poured forth." In her soliloquy she is saying—"You are as attractive to me in your personality as the cologne is to my sense of smell."

What is meant by the phrase, "therefore do the virgins love thee"? We see the Shulammitte dreaming of her wedding day. All her girlfriends who share with her in the wedding party also share her estimate of the groom. These virgins love the shepherd, not, of course, in the same relationship as the bride—but they understand the beauty of his character and appearance and therefore admire him greatly.

The girl from Shunem asks the groom to indicate by some word or gesture that he wants her with him (i.e., "draw me out")—only a slight indication and "we shall come running." We can see the girls and the bride of the wedding party frolicking on the green meadows of northern Galilee. All of this is fancied in the mind of the maiden as she waits in the King's chambers. She is waiting for a wedding—but not with Solomon. The king wants her to rejoice and be glad in him and all the things he can give her. The Shulammitte assures her far off lover that her heart is with him—her joy is in him—she will tell the daughters of Jerusalem of her true lover—she will speak of him to them of his endearing charms.

*Marriage*

All husbands would be delighted to have a wife who loved them as this maiden loved her betrothed. And perhaps at one time such love existed as a mutual deep affection. What happened? Well, no perfume lasts forever—or very long at all. If we refer to only a surface put-on physical attraction we are sure this is true. But if it is true hidden fragrance of the man of the heart we are just as sure that such fragrance will not leave or change. Your wife has always wanted you with your kisses. Yes, she wants your kisses but not without you. The sense of smell has more power in it for recall than any of the other senses. We all associate some pleasant experience or the opposite with some fragrance. Today, we with tears remember, as we catch again the fragrance of yesterday—how poignant and sad. What has changed? Not the perfume—but what it represented. There is only One who can give any of us a lasting fragrant personality. Please notice that the words concerning other women and their admiration of the husband are in the mouth of his wife—not in his. She knows her husband is attractive to other women and she is ready to admit it—not out of fear, but admiration. She is confident and secure in his love for her. She does suggest to her husband-to-be that she has an interest in expressing her love—but it is the shepherd who draws her out. The expression of not only physical love but all love in the husband-wife relationship is reciprocal. Many husbands would be pleasantly surprised to know how very often their name is mentioned in conversation shared by their wife among other women. Your wife wants to rejoice and be glad not only in your presence but in her constant pleasant memory of your presence. There is a lovely intoxicating quality in a true love affair—and it does not last for only a brief day, it is the continuing of the love of marriage where giving and not getting is the center.

*Communion*

Is it difficult for you to relate these words to yourself as the bride of Christ and to Him also as the groom? Or more to the point—can you relate them to yourself as the betrothed and our Lord as the One to whom you are promised? We are not suggesting that everyone will emotionally respond to what they can remember of their Beloved. Many believers have not spent time enough in the gospel accounts to get personally acquainted with the beautiful One there revealed. Is it at all possible to fall passionately in love with Jesus of Nazareth who is the God of love in human form? Perhaps we should ask—if we do not love Him deeply from the heart what has prevented it? Do we expect from Him a relationship in which our senses will respond to His near, dear presence? The words from His lips are found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These words are expressions of love to us—when we read them as such we cannot prevent emotional response—when we “abide” in His words we are moved emotionally. We are NOT saying this is our *only* response to His words—but we *are* saying this is *one* of our responses!

“The Lord Jesus excels in all the fragrant graces of a perfect character.” (Clarke) To become so intimately involved with Him in an appreciation of His character and His sacrifice on our behalf is better than wine. Can we say the joys we experience in our knowledge of Him creates a sensation (based on our knowledge) better than the physical inebriating capacity of wine? These are mere poetic words without meaning to those who have never hungered and thirsted after Him (who is our righteousness).

Jesus was “the anointed of God”—He was thus anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism. (Acts 10:38) The Holy anointing oil of the Old Testament was a combination of lovely fragrances (Cf. Exodus 30:22-25). The name of a person stands for or represents the person himself—His name is “The Anointed One”—He is even as His name—fragrant in beauty beyond human description.

We are glad to affirm that our Lord has many, many times drawn us out in our love for Him. If we *want* His love He will provide the circumstance in which we can find it. You will find His love revealed in His word and in your meditation and prayer before Him. Do you want to spend time with your beloved? Ask Him—he will draw you out by arranging your schedule in such a manner that whereas you had no time or place—then suddenly there it is!—When He has shown us the way, are we ready to run in it? Taking delight in the Lord is a cultivated capacity. Wine and its enjoyments is here contrasted with our Lord and His enjoyments. Which will it be? We cannot kiss two people at the same time.

## FACT QUESTIONS 1:2-4

4. Why do we believe the Shulammitte maiden was kidnapped?
5. Where is the maiden when she gives her soliloquy? To whom does she address these words?
6. Why mention wine and perfume?
7. What is meant by saying "Thy name is oil poured forth"?
8. What is meant by the phrase, "therefore do the virgins love thee"?
9. Explain the phrase "draw me."
10. The Shulammitte is waiting for a wedding but it is not as Solomon planned. Explain.
11. What is shared with the daughters of Jerusalem?
12. The Shulammitte surely offers all wives a grand example. How so?
13. What do we mean by saying "no perfume lasts forever"?
14. Explain the thought that your wife has always wanted you with your kisses.
15. Discuss the powerful recall capacities of the olfactory sense.
16. There is a way to always be fragrant. How?
17. Who said the groom was attractive to other women than his bride? Why?
18. There must be a mutual expression of love but someone



must lead. Discuss.

19. What is the large topic of conversation among women? How does this relate to the conduct of the husband?
20. Discuss the lovely intoxicating quality of a true love affair.
21. Why would it be difficult for some persons to relate the words of 1:2-4 to our Lord and His bride, the church?
22. Many people never emotionally respond to their heavenly groom. Why?
23. We are not saying emotional response is all important, nor our only response. What are we saying? Discuss its importance?
24. In our relationship with our Lord what is better than wine?
25. Jesus is "The Anointed One." What does this mean to us?
26. Explain how our groom has often "drawn us."
27. Taking delight in our Lord is a cultivated capacity. Explain.
28. What is meant by saying "We cannot kiss two people at the same time"?

### TEXT 1:5, 6

### APPEAL

- 5 Black am I, yet comely, ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the hangings of Solomon. Look not on me because I am black, because the sun has scorched me.
- 6 My mother's sons were angry with me, appointed me as keeper of the vineyards—mine own vineyard have I not kept.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:5, 6

15. Isn't "black" too strong a word as used in these verses? What is meant?
16. Does the girl know she is attractive? Is this an advantage or disadvantage? Discuss.

17. How does she compare with both the tents of Kedar and the hangings of Solomon?
18. What made this maiden conscious of the color of her skin?
19. Is there some reason for saying "my mother's sons" instead of "my brothers"?
20. What are the responsibilities of a keeper of a vineyard?
21. What is meant by a reference to her own vineyard?

## PARAPHRASE 1:5, 6—APPEAL

## SHULAMMITE TO COURT LADIES

- 5 I am black but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem!  
(Black) as the tents of Kedar,  
(Comely) as the tapestries of Solomon.
- 6 Do not disdain me because I am so dark,  
Because the sun has deeply tanned me.  
My brothers were angry with me;  
They made me keeper of their vineyards;  
My own vineyard I could not keep.

## COMMENT 1:5, 6

*Exegesis*

We much prefer the translations which suggest the maid to be "dark" or "sunburnt." Perhaps she becomes somewhat self-conscious of her darker complexion as she mingles among the secluded bleached out women of Solomon's harem. "The tents of Kedar" refers to dwelling places of the descendants of Ishmael who roamed the deserts of northwestern Arabia. Their tents were made of black goats' hair. Such tents are still in use today in several parts of Israel and Arabia. The cloth is a close-weave and waterproof.

The tapestries of Solomon were those beautiful hangings

used in the temple and many of the royal buildings. The rich colors and embroidery work made them a topic of conversation throughout the land.

This maiden offers to all maidens after her a grand example of proper self-image. She quite candidly recognizes both her limitations and potential. She is less than perfect but she is valuable and comely. She offers this evaluation of herself before she hears from "the daughters of Jerusalem."

Peer group pressure has not been suddenly discovered by our generation. If we do not dress alike or comb our hair alike we are scrutinized with a critical eye. The Shulammite was different. She explains her appearance. We do not feel there is veiled criticism in the phrase "my mother's sons," it is but another way of identifying her brothers. Why did they send her out into the hot sun to work the vineyard? They were upset with her for some reason. Perhaps it was her shepherd lover. Maybe they felt she was too young. It would seem they wished to remove her from the family home. She was busy all day in the vineyard and perhaps stayed in a near shelter at night. Such is only conjecture and we must leave it there. The reference to "mine own vineyard" refers to her complexion and grooming, which was in strong contrast to what she saw in the pavillion of Solomon.

### *Marriage 1:5, 6*

As we have observed above: the woman who knows her limitations and does not feel inferior, the one who recognizes her comeliness and is yet not proud will make an ideal wife and mother. It is so important that such an attitude be expressed and maintained among other women. This will not be an easy task. Perhaps we should be reminded that family influence will carry over into marriage relationships. How the wife treated her brothers might be similar to her treatment of her husband. We detect no resentment in the explanation of the treatment she received from her brothers.

*Communion 1:5, 6*

The Christian is indeed "black but comely." We do not refer to an inward blackness of sin from Adam's transgression, but of the effects of external influences upon him. Because he has responded to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life" (I John 2:15-17) he has entered the blackness of death in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1ff). But he is also very comely—he is created in the image of God and has all the potential of a child of heaven. He can be made whiter than snow; he can be raised out of his death into new life (Colossians 3:1ff). Among the "daughters of Jerusalem" the Christian must maintain his integrity. He is a sinner like those about him, but God so loved him that he is now the comely child of God. We all have a strong tendency to either think too much of ourselves and emphasize our comeliness or deprecate ourselves unnecessarily and remember how black we are. We can say in genuine humility—"I am a black sinner made comely by grace." We could see a comparison in the action of the brothers of this text to our fellow sinners. They have had an influence upon us and we could blame our sinning upon them. A little thought will let us both know that we were the ones outwardly responsible. In this same context we can say we were so busy in the affairs of this world we never even considered what tragic influence it was having upon our standing before God.

## FACT QUESTIONS 1:5, 6

29. Why not use the term "black"?
30. What probably produces the awareness that she was "sun-burnt"?
31. What were "the tents of Kedar"?
32. Why refer to "the hangings of Solomon"?
33. This maiden offers a grand example of proper self-image. How?

34. How does "peer-pressure" relate to the circumstances described here?
35. Why was she a keeper of vineyards?
36. In what way does this Shulammite become a pattern for a good wife and mother?
37. What was the attitude of this sister toward her brothers?
38. Explain how the Christian is "black but comely."
39. We have a strong tendency to emphasize either our blackness or our comeliness. Explain.

## TEXT 1:7

## SOLILOQUY 1:7

- 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?

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:7

22. To whom are these words addressed?
23. Why does she want to know where the flocks are fed?
24. What is meant by "one that is veiled"?
25. What danger seems to be present in the circumstances described?

## PARAPHRASE 1:7

## SHULAMMITE'S SOLILOQUY (aloud)

- 7 Tell me O thou whom I dearly love, where thou doest pasture thy flock, where thou doest make it rest at noon; for why should I wander about like a wanton among the flocks of thy companions?

## COMMENT 1:7

*Exegesis 1:7*

In her imagination the maiden has left the chambers of the King. She is out again in the open fields of her home in northern Canaan. She can see her beloved shepherd with his flock. She wants to sit down with him at the same oasis at noon. She longs for his personal interest and concern for her, so she simulates a situation where he can express his concern and show personal interest. "Suppose I cannot find his flock, and I must wander across the fields from flock to flock? What will the companion shepherds of my beloved think of me? The obvious conclusion would be that I am a prostitute in search of business. Do not let me be thus misrepresented—it is the anthesis of my true self. Help me!"

*Marriage 1:7*

There is much to learn in this one verse. Women are given to day-dreaming—witness the immense popularity of the afternoon soap operas on TV. But contrary to what men believe they are not dreaming about men as such—but about the love and concern men should have for women. Yes, the maiden wanted to be with the shepherd—longed earnestly to see him. But for what reason? So he might take an interest and show personal concern for her. This is not primarily an erotic interest but a total-person interest. It is the nature of your wife to seek protection and help.

*Communion 1:7*

Surely we can address our Lord with the words of this verse: "O thou whom my soul loveth." Far more than a mere academic relationship exists between the bride and the eternal

shepherd. The two works of the shepherd are the two needs of our soul: food and rest. We can observe other sheep who are fed and rested. We long for this same relationship. Our request will not go unanswered. There is food and rest for anyone who will come unto Him—take upon him His yoke—he shall find rest and will be led into the green pastures.

Other shepherds have flocks—we have often wandered among these flocks and found neither food nor rest.

### FACT QUESTIONS 1:7

40. In her imagination she has left the chambers of Solomon—Where is she?
41. She wants personal attention and interest from her shepherd lover. What does she do to get it?
42. Do you feel we have fairly represented women in their day-dreaming? Discuss.
43. Show how the two works of the shepherd are the two needs of our soul. Discuss.

### TEXT 1:8

### COURT LADIES RESPONSE 1:8 (ironical)

- 8 If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the shepherd's tents.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:8

26. Evidently the musings of the maid of Shunem was expressed out loud. Why the sharp retort?
27. Did anyone say the heroine of this story was the "fairest among women"? Why used here?

28. The humble beginnings of the Shulammite are here emphasized. Why?  
29. Are we to identify the maid as a shepherdess?

## PARAPHRASE 1:8

8 If thou know not, O fairest among women! Go, follow the tracks of the flock, and pasture thy kids by the shepherds' booths.

## COMMENT 1:8

*Exegesis 1:8*

It would seem the ladies of the court would be glad to be rid of their rival. "If you want your shepherd lover—go find him," they seem to say. It is impossible to shine as light and not reflect upon the darkness. The simple expression "I am comely" is here exaggerated to mean "the fairest of women." Perhaps the women of the harem would reflect Solomon's attitude. They are expressing in jealousy his estimate of the newest arrival. What a humble task is suggested to the potential bride of King Solomon. Women were given the task of caring for the newborn of the flock. We see in the sarcastic words of these women a humble peasant girl leading a little flock of young sheep or goats across the far reaches of the hills of Galilee. With difficulty she directs them to the protection of the shepherds' booths.

*Marriage 1:8*

"All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" II Timothy. Girls who accept our Lord as their life-style will without question stand out among women without Christ



as the Shulammite in the court of Solomon. They can expect the same treatment. A Christian true to her Lord is looked upon by many as being both weak and ignorant. Many times your presence will be an embarrassment to others and they will wish you were gone. Please notice that there is no response from the maid. Light, truth and love need no defense, they will speak for themselves by their nature. At the same time, we need to remind husbands that all battles for our Lord are not fought nor won in the environment of their jobs and friends.

### *Communion 1:8*

A happy relationship with your wife or husband is the very best protection against illicit sex. It is only where we are vulnerable that words of criticism touch us. When our Lord is as real to us in our imagination as the shepherd was to this shepherdess we will be able to turn a deaf ear to reproach—yea, more, we can rejoice in it for we are sharing the proper response to His likeness in us. Our job is humble compared to some. Our work is always humble as compared with anyone. Humility is our garment. Are we to resist likeness to our Lord? The Great Shepherd's task was the lead and feed sheep—young and old. We hear Him say to us as He did to Peter—"feed my sheep—feed my lambs." (John 21:15ff)

### FACT QUESTIONS 1:8

45. What would indicate the women of the harem want the Shulammite to leave? Why?
46. Who said she was the fairest of women?
47. What task did women have in the care of sheep?
48. We have many women today like the Shulammite. Who are they?
49. Show how the response of the maid is a good example for us.

50. Some are immune to and some are very vulnerable to temptation. What is the difference?

## TEXT 1:9-11

SOLOMON: FIRST ADVANCES TO THE SHULAMMITE  
1:9-11

- 9 To me, my darling, you are like My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.  
10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with strings of beads.  
11 We will make for you ornaments of gold with beads of silver.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:9-11

30. It seems strange to compare a beautiful woman to horses in Pharaoh's chariot. What possible parallel is present?  
31. How could jewels make cheeks comely?  
32. Just what picture do we get from these descriptions?  
33. We can appreciate a beautiful necklace. Is this the point here?  
34. What is the purpose of Solomon in his reference to so much gold and jewels?  
35. There is a promise in verse eleven. What is it?  
36. What conditions are assumed?

## COMMENT 1:9-11

*Exegesis 1:9-11*

The comparison here made by Solomon was a very acceptable compliment or it would have not been given. To horse-lovers today it is not difficult to see comparable qualities. The

effortless grace of an Arabian horse could be very much like similar movements on the part of a beautiful maid. Solomon and many men since have been connouseirs of the movements of both horses and women. The perfect symmetry of both is another obvious likeness. The word "horses" used here suggest a mare horse which makes the comparison even closer. We must not overlook the tremendous value placed on horses from Egypt. (Cf. I Kings 4:26, 10:28). It is of some interest to point out that the expression "my love" used by Solomon means literally "companion" or "female friend"—it is used twice by Solomon—here and in 6:4. He is not necessarily deprecating her and refusing to marry her, for the shepherd uses the same word seven times (Cf. 1:15; 2:2; 10:13; 4:1; 7; 5:2). We know Solomon's intentions were to add her to his already large harem. This was not the purpose of the Shepherd.

Solomon is now using his imagination—he sees the charming maid with a headdress holding two rows of jewels which decorate either side of her face. How beautifully do those dangling rows of jewels set off your cheeks. Perhaps this rustic country maid has around her neck a simple inexpensive necklace—it will be replaced with a brilliant expensive gold one. Solomon wants to overwhelm and impress her with his promises. There is nothing personal in what he says—any beautiful girl would fit the description given here—it probably is not the first time he used it. The phrase "ornaments of gold with beads of silver," is difficult to visualize. Moffett translated it "We will have golden beads strung around you, studded with silver." These were not idle promises—they were backed by all the wealth of a billionaire—but how empty of personal interest! Solomon is due for a shock.

### *Marriage 1:9-11*

How would your wife respond to such flattery? We would all like to believe they would be as impervious as the maid from Shunem. We want to assume our wife would not be

interested in gold and silver. Her head would not be turned by extravagant words of praise. But if we have long ago left her for other interests she has since felt bereft of personal concern and appreciation. She has built up a deep hunger for appreciation—if such appreciation (however false) is tied into a solid financial gain who is to say what would happen? Please do not say “this cannot happen to me,” it *is* happening today in a thousand homes. And with offers far less attractive than the one offered by Solomon. Our wives must feel that we believe they are both beautiful and valuable. If they are not, why did we marry them?

*Communion 1:9-11*

Put these words in the mouth of Satan as he makes his offers to each of the members of the bride of Christ. These words all have a physical, sensual association. We want to appear acceptable if not beautiful in the eyes of men. For someone to tell us we appear to them as graceful and strong as some beautiful woman or handsome man could indeed get our attention. If while holding our attention an offer of a large sum of money is tied to the compliment we might give more than attention. Why? Because our image of grace and beauty is found in the person of man. The heroine of this love song was not at the least interested. Why? Because the beauty she saw in her shepherd and the value she found in his presence was far more than all Solomon (Satan) could offer her. Until our relationship with our Lord becomes far more personal and real than it usually is we *will be* tempted to join the harem.

FACT QUESTIONS 1:9-11

51. Show how the comparison made here of the maid to the horses of Solomon was a very acceptable compliment.
52. Give two or three parallels in the above compliment.

53. What is meant by the term "my love"?
54. How were the maid's cheeks made comely?
55. What is meant by saying the compliments given by Solomon were not personal?
56. Explain "borders of gold with studs of silver."
57. Did Solomon really plan on keeping these promises?
58. Does this episode have any real relation to present-day marriages? Discuss.
59. Show how the words of Solomon when placed in the mouth of Satan have application to us. Discuss.

## TEXT 1:12—2:7

## SHULAMMITE: NARRATION TO COURT LADIES

1:12—2:7

## a. Explanation of her Situation 1:12

- 12 While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:12

37. Why is the King at his table?
38. Why is it the maiden is perfumed with spikenard?

## PARAPHRASE 1:12

- 12 While the King reclines in the circle of his friends, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance.

## COMMENT 1:12

*Exegesis 1:12*

The King has made all the provisions necessary for the contemplated wedding—or entrance into his harem. The prospective bride (or mistress) is bathed and perfumed with the rare and expensive fragrance of spikenard such as those used in Oriental courts. Such perfume was made from a plant grown in India and was imported for this purpose. Even as she speaks she can catch the impact of her wedding preparations through her olfactory sense.

If Solomon set his table for this maid as he did at other occasions this must have been an impressive feast. Read I Kings 4:22-27 and 10:21 to visualize Solomon's menu. Read also Mark 14:3 for a reference to the same perfume lavished upon our Lord by a woman in Bethany whose name was Mary. Cf. John 12:3. The fragrance filled the room—at Bethany as it did at the table of Solomon.

*Marriage 1:12*

At least Solomon was aware of the need to pay attention to the person of his prospective bride. It was much more important to her than to him. He could love one more wife without perfume—but she would not be as responsive to him. We must first of all make it very clear that we love the person of our wife before we make any identity with her body. But it *is* important that she know we want her total self. The atmosphere is almost as important as the action to our wife.

*Communion 1:12*

I have thought a number of times that the perfume of the scripture could accompany our reading and meditation on

His word and could of themselves contribute an atmosphere of peace and relaxation necessary to total concentration. We are not suggesting such is essential but we are saying the environment of meditation and memorization is important. While the prince of this earth reclines with his friends shall we enjoy the fragrance of His presence?

### FACT QUESTIONS 1:12

60. What is meant by the phrase—"While the King reclineth at his table"?
61. Why was the Shulammite wearing perfume? Tell what you know of the "spikenard" here mentioned.
62. Solomon did know something of the needs of women. Discuss.
63. How can we apply this verse to marriage today? What is so important about atmosphere? Discuss.
64. Do you accept the suggestion that place and circumstances are important to our study of His word? Discuss.

### TEXT 1:13, 14

#### b. Estimation of her Beloved 1:13, 14

- 13 A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts.
- 14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyards of En-gedi.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:13, 14

39. Is there a comparison made here with the spikenard of verse 12? i.e., is myrrh compared with spikenard?
40. In what sense was the shepherd a bundle of myrrh to the maid?

41. Why mention the bundle of myrrh between her breasts all night?
42. Are we to consider the myrrh and the henna flowers a keepsake from the shepherd to his shepherdess?

## PARAPHRASE 1:13, 14

- 13 A sachet of myrrh is my beloved to me; It shall lie all night in my bosom.
- 14 My beloved is to me a posy of henna flowers culled in the vineyards of En-gedi.

## COMMENT 1:13, 14

*Exegesis 1:13, 14*

The term "my beloved" here used twice by the bride-to-be is used by her twenty-five times—each time in reference to her shepherd-lover (Clarke). This is a beautiful metaphor—but what does it mean? Are we to believe she is treasuring the bundle of myrrh left with her by her beloved? To keep his presence near, does she often lift his sachet of fragrance from her bosom to overpower the scent of the spikenard? It is interesting to contemplate—especially when we know that myrrh carries a bitter-sweet association. It is sweet in fragrance but bitter to the taste. We do associate certain persons with certain fragrances. She can turn in her sleep and catch a breath of myrrh and smile as she thinks not of Solomon, but of her shepherd.

Henna flowers were sometimes white and sometimes of pastel color of very light brown to beige. They were fragrant and most popular as flowers for the hair. In the far-off oasis of En-gedi in the desert by the Dead Sea has my love gathered the most beautiful and fragrant of these lovely blooms—he left a cluster of them with me just before I was stolen away by Solomon. More precious to me are his flowers than all the riches of Solomon.



*Marriage 1:13, 14*

If we have not fairly represented the captive of Solomon's chambers we do hope there *is* somewhere a girl like this—what a wife she would make! If we have given the girl we married the same care and devotion as the shepherd-lover we could expect the same response—but not until, and only when we do. What keepsakes have we left with our wives? Something distinctively personal and full of fragrant beauty. In the midst of the multiplied tasks of the day and the sometimes overpowering pressures of life this dear girl we married wants, needs and deserves an oft given remembrance or two from you and me.

*Communion 1:13, 14*

Has our Lord left us anything by which we can remember Him? To ask is to answer. We could easily suggest His bread and His cup—or His external words of love recorded in the gospels, or the Other Comforter. But we pause to contemplate how very lightly such dear sweet remembrances can be treated. It is our love, yea our deep, personal love *for the One who gave them* that impregnates His gifts with beauty and fragrance for us.

Would we overtax the figure to suggest that we could once again enter into a courtship with our Lord? Would you read again His love letters to you—sometimes called the Gospels?

## FACT QUESTIONS 1:13, 14

65. How is the expression “my beloved” here used? What is meant by the metaphor of “my beloved is a sachet of myrrh”?
66. Explain the figure of the henna flower.
67. These verses have a most poignant application to marriage. Explain.

68. There is in these verses a beautiful analogy as we relate them to our communion with our Lord. Discuss.

## TEXT 1:15—2:6

- c. Description of a conversation between the Shepherd and the Shepherdess, 1:15—2:6.

*Dialogue: Shepherd, 1:15*

“15. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves.”

*Shulammite, 1:16—2:1*

“16. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea pleasant: also, our couch is green. 17. The beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are firs.” “2:1. I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.”

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:15—2:6

43. Are we to conclude that the shepherd has made an actual appearance? Discuss.
44. The words of the shepherd are so important to the shepherdess that she has remembered them verbatim—is this the thought?
45. In what particular manner were the eyes of the Shulammite like doves?
46. How is the term “pleasant” used in verse 16?
47. Where was the green couch?
48. The description of beams and rafters is poetic—what is actually involved?
49. In the context the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley is in reference to the maiden. Why is it so often applied to our Lord? Discuss.

## PARAPHRASE 1:15—2:1

*Dialogue: Shepherd, 1:15*

15. Lo, thou art fair, O my companion!  
 Lo, thou art fair, thine eyes are dove-like!

*Shulammite, 1:16—2:1*

16. No, thou art the fair and pleasing one, my beloved,  
 See, our couch is green;  
 17. The beams of our apartments are of cedar,  
 and our rafters of cypress.  
 2:1 I am but a wild flower of the Sharon plain, a common  
 anemone of the valleys.

## COMMENT 1:15—2:1

*Exegesis 1:15—2:1*

The shepherd speaks again of his rapture in the presence of his bride. Actually all of this dialogue is but a soliloquy on the part of the bride. She in imagination hears him say these words to her. Perhaps she had heard them often before so it was easy to repeat them. Constant companionship is a large part of courting. As he once again looked into the eyes of his beloved he sees in their open, transparent, soft expression something similar to what he often observed in the eyes of a dove. The total impression of the dove is included in the comparison. The alertness, the quick perception, the softness are all involved in what he sees. "Doves are thought of as emblematic of gentleness and guilelessness (Matt. 10:16). They are noted also for constancy, having but one mate for life, and are said to mourn when the mate is absent." (Clarke)

The bride reciprocates, she says in effect, you are the fair one. The term "fair" refers to physical appearance, she adds a word—"not only are you acceptable to the eyes—your personality is most pleasing." Both the outward and the

inward view are a source of happiness. In her heart, the green couch of the woodland is much to be desired over the luxuriant divans in Solomon's palace. In but recent days they had sat together and shared the communion of lovers.

"To the Shulammite's poetic fancy the interlacing boughs of cedar and cypress trees formed overhead the ceiling of 'their' house." It is no uncommon thing for lovers to dream of their future house. She may be intentionally suggesting a contrast with the splendors of Solomon's grand house (I Kings 7:1ff). "*House* ('houses' the Hebrew plural of excellence). The thrice repeated 'ours' shows a sweet consciousness of a shared possession." (Clarke)

We should ignore the chapter divisions. The bride is still speaking—she considers herself as but a wild flower. She identifies herself with one of the two most common flower varieties. The "rose" of the plain of Sharon was most probably a narcissus or meadow saffron.

The term "lily" is used six times in this book—2:1, 2; 2:16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2, 3; 7:2. It most likely refers to the scarlet anemone which grows in such profusion in several places in Samaria and Galilee. Matthew 6:28 seems to be a reference to such a lily.

A not too covert comparison is being made in such a reference. She is saying—"How could you find me among the many maidens of the village?—I am so small and ordinary."

### *Marriage 1:15—2:1*

Our wife will never know how she appears in our eyes unless we tell her! Our compliments must not only be sincere but distinctively individual. If your wife's eyes do not look like those of a dove do not use this as a compliment. There is indeed a metaphor or simile especially applicable to her. You can be sure your wife will respond very much like the Shulamite—she hardly knows how to handle it, except that she is pleased and returns the compliment. Once again, we must

be reminded that environment is so important to our wife. She does not remember your kisses only, but also the green couch and the beautiful ceiling where they were given. As much as at all possible we should prepare the place for her. Comfort, and natural beauty are a much more meaningful gift than a multitude of "things" which many times have no personal meaning.

So many wives have a very low self-image—they want to believe they are indeed "the fair one" in the eyes of their husbands, but many times they feel much more like a very ordinary rose among ten thousand more on the wide plain of Sharon; or like a humble lily hidden away in a valley. How fondly do they hope someone will notice them and lift them out of obscurity and anonymity. Each person has an important identity of themselves but your wife to a large extent has her identity with you and of you. The person who cannot appreciate another will themselves fail to be appreciated.

### *Communion 1:15—2:1*

We believe the words of these verses can have a wonderful meaning for the believer and his Lord. Can we imagine our Lord speaking of us in the words of verse 15?—"Lo, thou art fair, O my companion"! Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, when our Lord considers us as justified, sanctified, redeemed, adopted, saved, are indeed "fair." It is an imputed beauty—but a beauty none-the-less.

That He would condescend to be "our companion" is a wonder of all wonders. As we abide in Him and with Him does He see in our eyes the dove-like quality of trust and purity and fidelity? The eyes are the windows of the soul—what would it be to have Him look fully into our eyes? He does, He is! Companionship with Him can allow the dove within us i.e., the Other Comforter to develop His life within us—some-day it will be no longer self who looks out of this house but heaven's dove.

It is easy for us to lavish praise upon Him—we are quick to return the compliment and at the same time we are humbled by His attention to us. Our beloved is indeed “fair and pleasant.” We read of His beauty in the gospel accounts and find it true in our experience. He is not only fair to observe but pleasant to live with. We offer no sensual association in our communion with our Lord, for He is Spirit and not flesh and bones. We feel none-the-less a strong attachment to Him and count the times and places of deep communion and meditation as a trysting place of love. As the maiden remembers her “house” which became “our” house, we can remember many occasions and places we could call “Bethel” i.e., the house of God and the gate of heaven.

All of this for one who is but a poor rose and unnoticed lily!

#### FACT QUESTIONS 1:15—2:1

69. Did the shepherd ever actually say what is attributed to him in verse 15?
70. In what way were the eyes of the maid “dove-like”?
71. Doves are emblematic of what?
72. What is meant by the term “fair” as used here?
73. Why add the term “pleasant” to the description of the shepherd?
74. Where and what was the “green couch”?
75. To what does she refer in reference to the cedar and cypress?
76. How is the terms “rose of Sharon” and “lily of the valley” used?
77. Should we “make up” compliments for our wives? Discuss.
78. In our attendance to our wife what is she the most likely to remember?
79. Do some wives have the wrong self-image? What should we do to help? Discuss.
80. Can we really imagine our Lord describing us as in verse 15? Discuss.
81. What happens when we are willing to have our Lord as our

constant companion?

82. How is our beloved both fair and pleasant? Discuss.

83. Have we exaggerated the comparison in our discussion of verses 16 and 17 as related to the communion of the Holy Spirit? Discuss.

### TEXT 2:2—2:7

#### *Dialogue: Shepherd 2:2*

"2. Like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the maidens."

#### *Shulammite, 2:3a*

"3a. Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men."

#### *Aside to Court Ladies, 2:3b-4*

"3b. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. 4. He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love."

#### *Appeal to Court Ladies, 2:5, 6*

"5. Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am lovesick. 6. Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me."

#### *Adjuration to Court Ladies, 2:7 (first)*

"7. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you will not arouse or awaken my love, until she pleases."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 2:2-7

50. The shepherd accepts his bride's estimate of herself but turns it to her advantage. Why? Was it true?

51. The shepherd is compared to an apple tree—do apples grow in the Holy Land? What is meant by the comparison to the other trees?

52. Two thoughts seem prominent in 3b. What are they?

53. What type of banquet house could a humble shepherd afford? What kind of meal would be served?
54. How is the term "banner" used? (What was the purpose of the banner? This is the crucial question).
55. The maiden is in distress as stated in verse five. What is her problem and what assistance does she suggest?
56. How does verse six relate to verse five?—i.e., does verse six offer a solution to the maid's problem as stated in verse five?
57. Verse seven is repeated twice more in the text (cf. 3:5 and 8:4). Please attempt an interpretation of your own. Is there any application in this for us? Discuss.

## PARAPHRASE 2:2-7

*Dialogue: Shepherd 2:2*

2. As an anemone growing among brambles  
so is my companions among the maidens.

*Shulammitte 2:3a*

- 3(a) As a citron tree among the trees of the forest,  
So is my beloved among the young men.

*Shulammitte to Court Ladies 2:3b-4*

- 3(b) In his shade I delight to sit down,  
And his fruit is sweet to my taste.
4. He has brought me into his banqueting house,  
And his banner waving over me is inscribed, "love."
5. Sustain me with raisin-cakes,  
Refresh me with citrons,  
For I am lovesick.
6. Oh, that his left hand were under my head,  
And his right hand supporting me!

*Adjuration to Court Ladies 2:7 (first)*

7. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles and the hinds of the field  
That ye arouse not nor stir up love  
Until itself is pleased to awaken.



## COMMENT 2:2-7

*Exegesis 2:2-7*

The shepherd picks up the figure used by the Shulammite and once again turns it to her advantage. He says in essence: "You are indeed a lily or flower but compared to those among whom you live you are like a lovely bloom among brambles." He could be emphasizing the jealousy engendered by her beauty in his reference to thorns or brambles.

The word translated "apple" in the American Standard version is much better thought of as "a citron tree." Apples do not grow well in the Holy Land. An orange tree seems to fit the description perfectly. Such a tree with its evergreen heavy foliage and golden fruit would indeed stand out amid the cypress, fir or cedar trees. Among the other young men so did her beloved stand out. It might be of import to notice the contrast: she is a flower, he is a tree. This is a subtle compliment on her part.

It is so refreshing to contemplate the transparent sincerity of this country lass in the affluence of Solomon's palace. She turns to the women of the harem, and with the direct simplicity of youth she describes her relationship to the shepherd. "In contrast to the trees with no fruit is my beloved who offers fruit and shade." The orange tree blossoms and bears fruit at the same time. "Refreshment and rest amid lovely fragrance are both offered by my beloved." She takes great delight in his presence and is satisfied with what he offers her of himself.

The maiden is in the banquet room of Solomon—but she much prefers the banquet hall of her beloved. And just what would that be? A humble, but beautiful vine arbor in the midst of the vineyards. Read I Kings 4:7, 22, 23; 10:21, for a description of the gold vessels Solomon used in his feasts. "A canopy was often spread above the host and principle guests at a feast and richly decorated according to the means of the former." (Clarke) Perhaps this is "the banner" referred to by the maid. It could be that "banner" is to be thought of as a

standard of protection such as those used in battle. Cf. Numbers 1:52; 5:10; 6:4, 10; 10:14, 18, 23, 25. It was a rallying-point and guide to give encouragement and confidence to those on a weary march or those amid extreme conflict. "So the bride, transplanted from her lowly station to new scenes of unwanted splendor, finds support and safety in the known attachment she has with her beloved." (Cook)

Are we to imagine that this bride-to-be is actually physically ill from her loss of her loved one? It is possible—she has lost her appetite and has not eaten—she is weak and in need of refreshment. "Sustain me with raisin-cakes, refresh me with citrons, for I am lovesick." There was someone else who was sustained by raisin-cakes—read I Samuel 30:12 to find out who it was. Orange blossoms were once used in the East to revive the bride—much like we would use smelling salts. It is from this custom that orange blossoms have been associated with marriage. It would seem that Solomon and his court and courting made her weak and sick but not of love.

As we attempt an understanding of verse six it would seem difficult to imagine a posture for the maiden and her lover in which his left hand could be under her head and his right hand supporting her unless they were lying down. This is an obvious reference to the intimate embrace of the marriage bed, it is repeated in 8:3. With this kind of total involvement in the mind of the maid, Solomon has but a superficial interest for her.

The seventh verse is most interesting inasmuch as it is repeated in 3:5 and 8:4. It seems to be a faithful axiom to which we should give heed. What does it say? "It is an adjuration that no attempt to kindle love by unworthy means should be made, for true love awakens spontaneously. It should owe nothing to improper stimulation by others, but be as free and unfettered as the life of the gentle creatures here mentioned." (Clarke) It would seem the ladies of the court were attempting to get her to accept the affections of the King much as they had. No doubt those members of the harem were quite proficient in the art of sex stimulation. Where such desires are

aroused apart from the person for whom they are reserved disappointment and frustration is the inevitable result. "Genuine love is a shy and gentle affection which dreads intrusion and scrutiny (here the reference to the gazelles and hinds, shy and timid creatures) but dangerous in its strength and vehemence, if heedlessly awakened—"as strong as death and as cruel as the grave" (8:4, 5). "Be shy of love, lest, like the silly fawn that runs to look the lion in the face, one heedless gaze betray thee to thy death." (Cook)

### *Marriage 2:2-7*

How could we possibly find a more practical passage for present day marriage relationship? Believe it or not you could never, never tell your wife often enough that she is the fairest of women to you. (Of course, she must have been or you would not have made her your choice.) If we look closely she will become more fair each passing day. But she will never know it until we express it—and with evident feeling! Once we convince our wife that she is indeed in our eyes all we say she is we shall not wait long for a reciprocal response from her. We can easily be a "stand out" winner with our wife—who else has access to her heart like her husband? Do we offer protection and refreshment? We are thinking of much more than physical protection and refreshment. A constant consistent solicitous attitude about every relationship along with planned times of mental and physical refreshment will create a genuine appetite for a repeated visit to the shade of your tree and refreshment from your hand. How easy it would be to expand on this section until we had a sizeable marriage manual. We cannot do this but we do want to say every husband (beginning with the writer) must have a banquet room for his wife—he must often lead her to it—over it all is the lovely canopy inscribed "Love." We are thinking of all that nourishes—your words—which is food for the mind and heart—food also for the body, a sense of abundance in more than sharing—a total

giving of self for the needs and enjoyment of your beloved.

Of all persons our wives know the meaning of verse seven. When artificial or crude means are used in a vain attempt to awaken love the results might be disastrous! If we are not willing to accept the nature of love as possessed by our wives we had best leave the lovely creature in the seclusion of her own forest. She is willing to come out, nay she *wants* to be found—but not with a bull horn! If courtship is not continued beyond marriage we are due to find out just how strong and cruel love can be—and we deserve it! I shall not leave here instructions on how to attract your gazelle or lure your deer. After all she belongs to you.

*Communion 2:2-7*

As much as we see in this text for help in a happy marriage we see even more in a happy relationship with our Lord. Project yourself into this dialogue:

*My Love to You:*

"As a lovely flower amid the brambles of the earth so art thou my companion to me. In the midst of the many, yea multitudes who are lost I see each and every one who is saved. I would love to transform every thorn into a flower—but I want you to know that I am looking intently, with great fond interest on you—I can also identify every bramble and its relation to you. How beautiful you appear to me. How deeply I want your constant companionship." We can hardly believe this. It is only true because in love He looks at us through grace.

*We Respond to His Love:*

"As an evergreen tree who constantly bears delicious fruit and delightful blossoms in the midst of a forest of trees with no foliage or fruit art thou to me. I have found much more than a refuge in your presence. In the contemplation of your beauty is the fullness of joy."

*We Advertise to Others:*

Relish these words—rethink each one lest they become commonplace. "In the calmness that is mine through my

awareness of your love and omnipotence I delight to sit down. When I eat the words you leave me in your book they are so nourishing and sweet to my taste. The more I am willing to sit in your heavenly places the more overwhelmed I am with your abundant provisions. I find in my contemplation of just the four accounts of your love through your Life a whole expansive banquet room. The table is laden with all my favorite food. Upon entering the room I saw emblazoned over the whole wall a banner and on it were these words—“*I love you.*”

*A Warning to Those Who Might Think to Presume Upon His Love:*

I adjure you by all the meekness and tenderness of the lovely One: do not push into His presence and demand He express His love for you. Foolish One! How could He more fully show you His heart?—it was pierced for you! Stay with Him until in your meditation and exchange of conversation, emotions are awakened. Praise Him and sing of Him—He is love and you shall know it.

### FACT QUESTIONS 2:2-7

82. What was intended as deprecation was turned to a compliment? How?
83. Show how the orange tree with its golden fruit perfectly fulfills the figure of speech here used.
84. There is a sharp contrast between the shepherd and other men—much like the contrast of trees—what is it?
85. What was the banquet room of her beloved?
86. What was the “banner” of the banquet room?
87. Are we to imagine the bride is actually physically ill with love? How was she to be helped?
88. To what act does verse six refer?
89. Give your own interpretation of verse seven.
90. Is it really necessary to tell our wives how attractive they are to us? Discuss.
91. We can easily be a “stand out” winner with our wife.

Explain. How? Why?

92. Every husband must have a banquet room for his wife. Explain and discuss.
93. Discuss the positive and negative qualities involved in discussing husband's among women.
94. Of all persons wives know the meaning of verse seven. Explain and discuss.
95. Love can be strong and cruel as well as soft and gentle. Explain.
96. Do you really believe our Lord looks upon us as we have described Him under *My Love To You*?
97. How can we compare our Lord to other persons?
98. Discuss the meaning and application of the thoughts expressed under "*We Advertize to Others.*"
99. Isn't the thought exaggerated beyond meaning under the heading *A Warning to Those Who Might Think to Presume Upon His Love*? Discuss.
100. What is the warning of verse seven—i.e., as it relates to our Lord?

### TEXT 2:8—3:5

#### SHULAMMITE: NARRATION TO COURT LADIES

(perhaps later)

##### a. Invitation from the beloved 2:8-14

"8. The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. 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. 10. My beloved spake, and said unto me, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. 11. For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; 12. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land; 13. 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.  
 14. O my dove, thou 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."

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 2:8-14

58. Are we to imagine the shepherd has truly come for a visit to Solomon's palace? Discuss.
59. What is suggested by "leaping upon the mountains," and "skipping upon the hills"?
60. In what way does she compare her beloved to a gazelle or roe?
61. Why stand outside and look in? Why not knock and come in? Discuss the figure and its meaning.
62. Is the maid full of desire to escape her confinement and is this the reason for the invitation of verse ten? Discuss.
63. Why describe the time of the year?
64. What a lovely description of spring! What is "the voice of the turtle-dove"?
65. What hint is found in reference to the ripened figs? "Come away" from what to where? Cf. verse 13.
66. The attitude and response of the maiden is found in verse fourteen. What is it?
67. The invitation of the shepherd is to much more than physical relationship as seen in verse fourteen. What is involved?

### PARAPHRASE 2:8-14

Shulammite to Court Ladies:

8. Hark, 'tis the sound of my beloved! He comes  
 Bounding over the mountains, skipping over the hills.
9. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young deer.  
 See! he stands at our wall,  
 He peers in at the windows,  
 Glancing through the lattice.

10. My beloved said to me,  
"Arise, O my companion, my fair one, and come away!
11. For, see! the winter is past;  
The season of rains is over;
12. The flowers appear in the fields;  
The time of singing is come.  
And the cooing of the turtledoves is heard in the land;
13. The fig tree ripens its green figs,  
The blossoming vines give forth their fragrance.  
Arise, O my companion, my fair one, and come away!
14. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the crannies of the precipice,  
Let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice;  
For sweet is thy voice and thy face comely."

## COMMENT 2:8-14

*Exegesis 2:8-14*

We like the expression of Moffat as found in verses eight and nine. He says:

"Listen, it is my darling,  
There he is, coming to me,  
leaping across the mountains,  
bounding over the hills!  
There he stands behind our wall,  
gazing through the window,  
glancing through the lattice!"

The word "voice" in verse eight is better understood as "sound"; so the thought is that the maiden hears the footsteps of her beloved. "In his eagerness of love the shepherd scorns all obstacles that would keep lovers apart, yet as he nears the maiden's home he appears somewhat shy, not knowing, perhaps, what kind of reception he will get from the rest of the family (1:6, 2:15)" (Clarke) He is compared to a gazelle



because of his beauty of form—but also because of his alertness and timidity. It would appear that the shepherd is not the only one who is unwilling to express himself—when he arrives at the house why isn't the lovely maiden there to greet him? The "lattice" window refers to the form of construction. Glaze or glass windows were not used. Evidently, the latticework was so built that a person on the outside could not see in but those on the inside could easily see out.

It would seem that beginning with verse ten through verse thirteen we have an eight line stanza of the beloved's entreaty to his love. Notice: he invites her to come with him into the open country, which is now a place of unsurpassing beauty. The winter is over and the spring has come. It is a time of "mirth and mutual affection." (Cook)

It must be either the last week in March or the first or second week in April. Six signs of the season are given in these verses:

- (1) The winter and its heavy rain is over—"For behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." (verse 11) For six months in the summer the rain rarely falls.
- (2) "Buds and flowers appear on the earth" (verse 12a). "When the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine after rain." (II Samuel 23:4)
- (3) "The time for singing has come "or" the time has arrived for pruning the vines." It would seem considering the the context of the first two signs that "time for singing" is much more parallel than pruning the vines. (verse 12b)
- (4) "The voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land." (verse 12c) "This is a migratory bird that appears in Palestine the second week in April" (Cf. Jeremiah 8:7). (A. F. Harper)
- (5) "The fig tree has ripened its figs." The figs remained embalmed during the winter months and come to life or ripen in the early spring.
- (6) "And the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance." The fragrance of the grape vine blossom is very sweet, but very brief. The inhabitants of grape country

need no proofs or descriptions to appreciate this fact.  
(Adapted from C. F. Cook)

We like the words of W. J. Cameron as found in the New Bible Commentary. "After the wintry months devoid of fresh life and growth, the stirring vigor of the Syrian spring follows of a sudden upon early rain. The earth rapidly assumes a mantle of bright green intermingled with the varied colors of innumerable flowers. The newly clad woodland comes alive with song amid which can be discerned the persistent mournful note of the turtledove. It is then that the voice of the beloved is heard." (quoted by Clarke)

"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along!" (verse 13b) Verse fourteen continues in four lines an entreaty to the bride to come out of her seclusion. The modesty and shyness of the maiden are the points here. Her home must have been inaccessible—note the description; "*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret place of the steep pathway, Let me see your form (appearance), Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, and your form is lovely.*" "Some render the phrase 'the secret place of the ascent,' pointing to crevices in a cliff approachable only by a steep ascent. The wild dove chooses high and inaccessible rocks for its resting place. In poetic language the shepherd seems to intimate that the maiden is not easily accessible to him because the attitude of her brothers as shown in the next verse." (Clarke)

### *Marriage 2:8-14*

"Oh that my wife would want me and love me as this maid did her shepherd." Such an expression could well be the lament of many a husband. No doubt there are some wives who think as fondly of their husbands as the Shulammite did of the shepherd. Every wife (as well as husband) have known what it is to wait for the familiar sounds of the approach of their spouse but are they persuaded he (or she) is as eager to see them as the hero of our text? Such persuasion must be planned and cultivated long before he arrives. Actions in little areas

of need met time after time will convince anyone that no hill or mountain will separate us from meeting a need when it is present. The largest need is one of companionship. It would be easy for me to change places with the maiden and imagine my wife as the eager, shy, beautiful gazelle anxiously-curiously-alertly looking through the almost impenetrable windows of my heart to see if she could discover a meaningful movement. Please exchange places husband—you are to be just that eager to know what goes on in the heart of your wife—never mind that you cannot see or know, the important thing is that you are there and that you want to know.

There are a thousand times a thousand wives who weep today for a husband who would dream a dream like the one described in verses eight through thirteen. Let's take our wife on a picnic in the country—or to a lovely secluded spot by the seashore. The important part of this is not the picnic but her person. The spring is only lovely because she is the center attraction. Have we forgotten how to be romantic? Perhaps it is because the beauty of God's creation and our willingness to give ourselves to our wife has ceased to be a reality.

### *Communion 2:8-14*

As the bride of our Lord we can soliloquize concerning His coming again—but I would rather relate this passage to His present interest in us. There is no barrier that can or will separate us —“not tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril, or sword” (Romans 8:35). In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. Behold! He stands at the door of our heart—He is beautiful in appearance—but He will not force entrance. He is more than curious—He wants very much to come in and share every activity of ours—He is standing behind our wall and looking in at the windows—see Him there as He glances through the lattice? He is calling me to leave the television set and meet Him for a walk together in seeking and

saving some poor lost person who lives but a few houses from me. One glad day He came and called me to put aside the winter of my backsliding and join Him in the springtime of my first love. There is so much beauty in holiness! The time of singing is come. The song of heaven's dove is with me. What was once only hard words I find to be delectable fruit. What fragrance I find in His presence! I seem to hear His voice again and again "Arise, O my companion, my fair one, and come away! Far too often I have been as inaccessible as the maiden in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the precipice—but no more—He shall hear my voice and see my face—I love Him.

## FACT QUESTIONS 2:8-14

101. What does Moffat's translation add to our understanding?
102. The word "voice" in verse eight is not the best translation. What is?
103. The shepherd is eager but shy. Why?
104. In what way is he like a gazelle?
105. The maiden is also reticent. Why?
106. What is the context of the eight-line stanza of verses ten through thirteen?
107. What time of the year is indicated?
108. List and discuss the six signs of the season.
109. Discuss the context of verse fourteen?
110. Just where did the bride live?
111. What can husbands do to receive the welcome given by the Shulammite?
112. There is something very basic in the happy relationship of husband and wife. Is there an answer in this text? Discuss.
113. It isn't necessary to understand our wives or for the wives to understand all about their husbands—one thing is needful—what is that? Discuss.
114. Do you think we have overstated the case of our communion with our Lord? Discuss.

115. Offer some personal practical manner of application for the thought of returning to our first love.

## TEXT 2:15-17

- b. Intervention of the Brothers 2:15-17  
 Their behest, 15; Her avowal, 16;  
 Her request to the shepherd, 17.

“15. Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom. 16. My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures his flock among the lilies. 17. Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.”

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 2:15-17

68. How do these verses relate to what has just preceded?  
 69. When did this incident take place? At what location?  
 70. Is verse sixteen an answer to verse fifteen? Discuss.  
 71. What request is being made in verse 17?

## PARAPHRASE 2:15-17

*The Brothers:*

15. Go, trap for us the foxes  
 The little foxes that ruin our vineyards;  
 For our vineyards are in bloom.

*Shulammite to the Brothers:*

16. My beloved is mine and I am his!  
 He (who) pastures his flock where the anemones grow.

*Shulammite to the Shepherd:*

17. When the day cools and the shadows lengthen,  
Return, my beloved, swift as a gazelle or a young deer.  
Over the mountains of Bether.

## COMMENT 2:15-17

*Exegesis 2:15-17*

Let's not forget that 2:8 to 3:5 is a narration given in the court of Solomon to the court ladies of an incident that occurred some time earlier in the experience of the Shulammite with the shepherd and her brothers. When the shepherd came to call he received something less than a welcome from the brothers. Perhaps their attitude would account for her unwillingness to appear at the door. The request of the shepherd was viewed as a total waste of time, if not a threat to the safety of their sister. She has a job to do. The traps must be set for the foxes. The vines are threatened by these rodents. There is no time for frolic—there is work to be done.

She will dress the vines and catch the foxes but this will not dissuade her from devotion to her lover. He is mine, and I am his. I know just where he pastures his flock, and when I am through with my work I will go to him.

Returning to her beloved she asks him to call again, when the day cools and the shadows lengthen—in the evening come again—come to me as swiftly as a gazelle or young deer. Perhaps they had both observed the fleet-footed deer on the mountains near their home and it is to this she refers in his swift return to her. "Bether" means separation or division. It was a definite locality near Bethbara (II Samuel 2:29, Bithron) and was separated from the rest of Israel by the river Jordan. The region was cut up by hills and valleys, rough, craggy, and difficult to cross, hence the allusion in a symbolic sense." (Clarke)

*Marriage 2:15-17*

Brother, sisters and mothers have all posed a threat to marriages. The demands by relatives are many times quite legitimate. This is what causes the rift. Such "little foxes" will cause all manner of havoc in married life. Yes, we must meet family responsibilities and catch a few foxes—but not to the extent of neglecting our love for the one to whom we have given our selves. "To despise little things in relationships of love is to show ourself utterly ignorant of important facts of life. It is little things that often account for happiness or for sorrow—a little remembrance, or a little forgetfulness." (A. F. Harper)

We could also observe that these verses also exemplify the attitude that keeps a marriage together and makes the two an inseparable "one." My beloved is mine and I am his. I know just where he (or she) is and what he (or she) is doing. My interest is his interest, where he goes there goes my heart. As soon as possible come to me as swiftly as at all possible. Such a constant mutual giving to each other insures happiness.

*Communion 2:15-17*

How often have we gone after the "little foxes" and lost our beloved? Just a little compromise with the world—just a little disobedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit through our conscience; just a little indulgence of the flesh; it is easy to rationalize and justify all such action. Or perhaps the demands have no question about them—they are "the affairs of this life" in which we can be entangled and because of them we fail to please Him. (Cf. II Timothy 2:6)

We have pledged ourselves to our Lord—He has never failed in his pledge to us. We know where we can find Him—He pastures His flock among the lilies—it is a pleasant beautiful place—let's go find Him and spend some time in His garden. When the rapid pace of the work-a-day world has

come to an end, let's find Him in the cool of the day. Or in the early morning before the shadows begin to form.

## FACT QUESTIONS 2:15-17

116. What response did the Shepherd receive from the brothers?
117. Did the maiden catch the foxes? How did she plan on expressing her love.
118. Interpret in your own words verse 17.
119. What are "the little foxes" of marriage?
120. There is in this section the attitude that will hold a marriage together. What is it?
121. In our communion with our Lord how can we go after the little foxes and lose our beloved?
122. Where can we find our Lord? Is this a practical application of this text?

## TEXT 3:1-5

- c. Relation of a Dream, 3:1-4
- d. Adjuration to Court Ladies, 3:5 (second)

- "1. On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves;  
I sought him but did not find him.
2. I must arise now and go about the city;  
In the streets and in the squares.  
I must seek him whom my soul loves.  
I sought him but did not find him.
3. The watchmen who makes the rounds in the city found me,  
And I said, 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'
4. Scarcely had I left them  
When I found him whom my soul loves;  
I held on to him and would not let him go,  
Until I had brought him to my mother's house,



And into the room of her who conceived me.”

5. “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you will not arouse or awaken my love,  
Until she pleases.”

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 3:1-5

72. Is there anything in the previous verses that might suggest the cause of this dream? (What about a promise unfulfilled?)
73. Why the oft-repeated phrase “whom my soul loves”?
74. In what city was her search?
75. What were the duties of the city watchmen?
76. Do you think the watchmen helped her in her search?
77. Why bring her beloved to her mother’s house?
78. What reason is there in mentioning her conception?
79. Who or what is not to be awakened until the proper time?
80. What is the meaning of this verse?

### PARAPHRASE 3:1-5

Shulammitte to Court Ladies:

1. By night on my bed I kept dreaming  
(That) I sought him whom I dearly love;  
I sought him but I found him not.
2. (Thought I) I will get up and go about the city,  
Into the streets and open spaces.  
I will seek him whom I love dearly.  
I sought him but I found him not.
3. The watchmen who patrol the city found me;  
(I asked), “Have you seen him whom I love dearly?”
4. Hardly had I passed on from them,  
When I found him whom I love dearly,  
I clung to him and would not let him go

Until I had brought him to my mother's house,  
Into the apartment of her that bore me.

5. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
That ye arouse not nor stir up love  
Until itself is pleased to awaken.

### COMMENT 3:1-5

#### *Exegesis 3:1-5*

The women of Solomon's harem are here told of a reoccurring dream. Perhaps it is occasioned by what is not shared with them—that her lover failed to return as promised (2:17). It is of some passing interest to observe that the term “bed” or “couch” of 1:16 is a “day couch.” Repetition in dreams is a common occurrence—In a time of anxiety frustration in dreams would reflect such a state of mind.

We are not told the name of the city but it would be natural to assume it was Shunem—it could have been Jerusalem. She is to make a thorough, if not frantic search. Up and down the streets and into the larger areas of the intersections and city gates she searches hither and thither. Anywhere where persons congregate she will go looking between and among all she meets. She will look at each one for the familiar dear form of her beloved. The night watchmen appear—surely they will know—they can help me—I will ask them—She describes her beloved to them (or perhaps they know him by name if it is in the town of Shunem) “Have you seen him?” We are not told of their response—we would assume they did not know from what follows. She had no sooner left them than she suddenly sees him and in an instant she is in his arms. She clings to him with the tenacity and joy of “the lost is found”!

Why did she bring him to her mother's house? Perhaps this represented the place of security—safety and permanence. The mention of her mother's house would seem to confirm the thought that her mother was a widow.

This might also support the thought of the concern of her brothers for her safety. Some commentators suggest that this is a description of the consummation of the marriage. We see no need for such a conclusion.

We ask the reader to please refer to our comments on 2:7 for the meaning of 3:5. This verse is again repeated in 8:4. In our day of the billion dollar sale of pornography we need to read and understand this verse more than thrice.

### *Marriage 3:1-5*

Does my wife dream of me? If she does what is the nature of such dreams? If her dreams are filled with anxiety it could be because we do not dream more often of her. We want our comments to be as practical as at all possible. We have found the following expression so very much to the point.

"Bill Lawrence is 38 years old. He has a pretty wife, two beautiful children, and is considered one of the outstanding preachers in his city. Bill and June were married while Bill was still in seminary. Their first child was born during his senior year. June never completed her college education but took a job to help Bill through seminary. Bill is an effective preacher and is greatly respected by both his assistant and the congregation. He works hard on his sermons. His church is growing.

Bill's wife will leave him next week.

Bob Ramsom is the executive director of Christian Commitment Abroad which he founded 22 years ago. He has traveled all over the world and is a much sought-after speaker. After a shaky start, CCA began to grow rapidly about ten years ago. Much of its growth is due to Bob's high level of commitment and his willingness to give himself unstintingly to the work of Christ.

Bob doesn't know it, but he left his wife eight years ago.  
**WHERE ARE YOU?**

Where are *you* as a Christian leader? Where does your

commitment lie? Could it be that you, too, are one of those, perhaps without even knowing it, who has left his wife?

How do you sort it all out? Where do your Christian priorities lie? How does one find a balance between commitment to the task and commitment to one's family?

### THREE PRIORITIES

In one of our earliest *Christian Leadership Letters*, (March 1973), we laid out what we consider to be three levels of Christian commitments, three levels of priority. Simply stated they are:

- First: Commitment to God and Christ
- Second: Commitment to the Body of Christ
- Third: Commitment to the work of Christ

We picture these as foundation stones, one built upon another. We begin with the initial commitment to God through His Son. But the visible evidence of this vertical relationship with God is found in this second priority of horizontal relationships with the sons and daughters of God. The Bible calls us away from a Western individualism back to a biblical corporate unity. It is on this foundation and within the framework of this body-like relationship that the work of Christ is to be carried out. "It was he who 'gave gifts to mankind' . . . He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11, 12, TEV).

These priorities cannot be exclusive of one another. All three are needed. One of the *conditions* for effectively carrying out the *work* of Christ is the relationship that exists within the body. "If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are My disciples" (John 13:35, TEV).

### WHERE IS YOUR WIFE?

We are addressing ourselves here as Christian leaders, and especially as married men. Where does your wife fit in these priorities? Certainly of all the relationships described in the Bible the highest and most mystical is the relationship found in marriage. Paul could only compare it to the relationship of

Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:21-33). The disruption of this relationship can have tremendous spiritual consequences. Peter tells us that interruption of the relationship can even interfere with our prayers (I Peter 3:7).

Is your ministry as a Christian Leader built upon a foundation of a strong marriage relationship, or does it move forward in spite of that relationship." (*Christian Leadership Letter*, March 1977).

Before our wife wakes up and finds her nightmare is true, let's change the cause.

### *Communion 3:1-5*

Communing with God on our bed is no new unusual thought. Daniel was given a vision upon his bed. Cf. Dan. 2:28, 29; 4:5, 10; 7:1. The Psalmist says, "Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds." Psalms 149:5. As we close our eyes for rest it should be a time when we take His yoke upon us that we might find rest for our souls as well as our bodies. A total yielding to the presence and interest of our wonderful Lord should precede our slumber. There are times of concern when sleep flees from us. It is at such times we need Him most of all. We are glad to affirm that He has not left us. Any feeling of desertion or separateness is not because He has left. There is no need to seek Him in the streets—nor to make inquiry of others as to His whereabouts. He is right where we left Him. Return to your place of disobedience and confess your sin and be cleansed. He will be found again just on the other side of genuine repentance.

### FACT QUESTIONS 3:1-5

123. To whom are these words addressed? Why?
124. Why this troubled dream?
125. There are two types of beds described in this book. What

are they? (Cf. 1:16 and 3:1)

126. In which city does she see her lover in her dream?
127. What was the task of the watchmen? Why ask them?
128. Why take him to her mother's house
129. What dreams could our wives have of us? Discuss.
130. Discuss the article *When Did You Leave Your Wife?*
131. Show how these verses can relate to our communing with our Lord upon our bed. Discuss.

### TEXT 3:6-11

#### *SECOND SCENE—The Royal Procession*

#### *REMARKS OF THE SPECTATORS*

*First Speaker:* v. 6

“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?”

*Second Speaker:* v. 7, 8

“7. Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; three score mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel.

8. They all handle the sword, and are expert in war;

Every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.

*Third Speaker:* v. 9, 10

9. King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon.

10. He made the pillars thereof of silver, and the bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem.

*Fourth Speaker:* v. 11

11. 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.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 3:6-11

81. An entirely new scene is now presented. What is its basic content?
82. Who is asking the question in verse six?
83. What caused the pillars of smoke?
84. Who is involved that so much perfume is used?
85. What is meant by the term "litter" as used here?
86. Why such a large body guard?
87. The word "palanquin" is only found here in the scripture. What is its meaning?
88. What is the difference between "the palanquin" and "the litter"? Discuss.
89. Please identify the parts of the palanquin and attempt a drawing of this structure.
90. Who are the "daughters of Zion"? Are they the same as the "daughters of Jerusalem"?
91. The King had on an unusual "crown." What was it?

### PARAPHRASE 3:6-11

#### *First Bystander:*

6. What is this coming up from the open country  
Looking like palm trees of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense  
And all kinds of aromatic powders of the merchants?

#### *Second Bystander:*

7. Look! It is Solomon's litter  
Surrounded by sixty of his bodyguard;

- All are heroes in Israel.  
8. All have drawn swords flashing,  
The hilts upon their thighs.  
Ready against sudden night attacks.

*Third Bystander:*

9. King Solomon prepared for himself a palanquin  
Of finest timbers from Lebanon,  
10. The supports of its canopy were of silver;  
Its backrest of gold;  
Its seat was of purple;  
Its interior upholstery a love gift  
From the daughters of Jerusalem.

*Fourth Bystander:*

11. Go forth, O daughters of Zion!  
Look upon King Solomon  
Wearing the nuptial chaplet  
Wherewith his mother adorned him  
On the day of his marriage celebrations,  
Even the day of his heart's gladness.

COMMENT 3:6-11

*Exegesis 3:6-11*

We have before us an entirely new scene. We are back in northern Canaan amid the wilderness of this north country. We are witness to a royal procession of Solomon. Perhaps this is the description of what the Shulammitte saw when she was taken captive by Solomon and was brought back to his royal palace (either at Jerusalem or some other nearer city). Compare 6:11, 12 for a brief description of the possible circumstances of her capture.

Let's not forget that Solomon is the writer of this book. Perhaps this paragraph is here because he wants all to know of



his magnificence.

Walter F. Adeney in *An Exposition of the Bible* gives a vivid description of this section:

“It is by one of the gates of Jerusalem, where the country maiden has been brought in order that she may be impressed by the gorgeous spectacle of Solomon returning from a royal progress. The king comes up from the wilderness in clouds of perfume, guarded by sixty men-at-arms, and borne in a magnificent palanquin of cedar-wood, with silver posts, a floor of gold, and purple cushions, wearing on his head the crown with which his mother had crowned him. Is the mention of the mother of Solomon intended to be specially significant? Remember—she was Bathsheba! The allusion to such a woman would not be likely to conciliate the pure young girl, who was not in the least degree moved by this attempt to charm her with a scene of exceptional magnificence.”

If the above description is accurate then the Shulammitte is the first bystander and the words of verses seven and eight are addressed to her.

Perhaps the dialogue in verses nine and ten as well as eleven are spoken by a third and fourth bystander. The “palanquin” of verse nine deserves comment. We quote from Arthur G. Clarke: “This Hebrew word is found only here in Scripture and is not the same as that translated *litter* in verse seven, which was simply a couch for reclining. This word indicates a state conveyance of elaborate construction, a kind of portable house. The speaker may have been comparing unfavorably the litter the King was then using with the gorgeous palanquin used on state occasions. Here is another hint that the cortege was not a marriage procession. *made himself*—(i.e., by his direction and perhaps according to his own design; *wood of Lebanon*—(i.e., the famous timber of that region such as cedar or cypress, fir or pine); *wood*—(lit., woods). Probably more than one kind of timber had been used.

Verse ten—*pillars*—(i.e., light columns to support the canopy or roof); *bottom*—the Hebrew is used here only in the Old Testament and with a meaning not clear. It probably

refers to the back rest against which the occupant leaned. *Seat*—(i.e., riding seat), the same Hebrew word is translated “saddle” (Leviticus 15:9). “Purple”—this and crimson were royal colors. The last two lines present difficulties and are variously interpreted. The Hebrew for “paved” is found only here in the Old Testament. The lines are best understood as meaning that the vehicle was lined or upholstered as a love-gift from the ladies of the royal entourage, possibly their own handiwork (Cf. Dr. Robert Young’s literal translation) (*ibid*, p. 59).

### *Marriage 3:6-11*

Solomon hoped that the maiden would remember this procession as part of her marriage to Him. Some commentators see this as the wedding procession of the marriage of Solomon with an Egyptian princess. The eleventh verse does mention Solomon wearing the crown his mother gave him when he was married. Since no time element is mentioned it could easily be a reference to the past when he did wear such a crown or “nuptial chaplet.” Solomon is looking forward to such an occasion again. These words were probably sung or spoken to every one of the prospective brides of Solomon. At least the King was acquainted with what made the wedding meaningful to women. Ceremony and attendants along with the clothes are what is remembered by the bride. The finest of clothes, the best of food and a beautiful place is associated in memory with the wedding. Love and marriage should produce the finest qualities in both the bride and the groom regardless of the physical circumstances or the economic limitations at the time of marriage. Love and marriage does indeed at times transform a careless young man into a responsible adult. But at other times the very opposite seems to happen. Why? Marriage always completely alters the life-style of the young women—some for better and some for worse—why? The commitment of our total selves to another is the answer. The example of

the Shulammitte should be a real help to us. If riches or convenience or escape is at the foundation of our decision for marriage we can expect nothing but unhappiness. When we are truly given to each other, the ceremony will be remembered with joy.

*Communion 3:6-11*

Do these verses in any way describe our marriage to our Lord? It comes as a shock to some that the scriptures teach that we are "joined to the Lord." Please read I Corinthians 6:17. We wish to quote from Boyce Mouton, Minister at Carthage, Missouri—He says: The miracle of conversion is like a marriage. When God and man are committed to one another in this type of covenant, our thoughts and intents are so intertwined it is difficult to determine who does what.

Take for example, the flight of Paul from Jerusalem in Acts 9:28-30. This passage indicates that the brethren heard of a plot against Paul's life and took it upon themselves to send him away to safety. In Acts 22:17-18 Paul ascribes this same event to a revelation which he received directly from God while in a trance in the temple. Instead of a contradiction it is a confirmation. Instead of arousing our suspicions it enhances our wonder. The church is a body directed by Jesus in mysterious ways. The rapport between Deity and man is sometimes so subtle that we respond to the impulse of His Spirit without even being aware of it.

Or consider the selection of Timothy as Paul's traveling companion. Acts 16:3 ascribes the choice to Paul; I Timothy 1:18 indicates that Timothy was pointed out to Paul by prophetic utterance. Acts 15:2 seems to indicate that the journey of Paul to the Jerusalem Council came as a result of a decision made by the brethren at Antioch; Galatians 2:2 relates that Paul went up by revelation from God. Philippians 2:12 commands us to "work out your own salvation . . ." and the very next verse reminds us, "For it is God that worketh in you both to

will and to do of His good pleasure." To "will" and to "do" seems to teach that both the desire and the ability to live the Christian life are somehow associated with God. How beautiful!

When we are crucified with Christ, our egotistical personality is replaced by a new creation. Old things are passed away and all things become new. When our spirit becomes one with Deity, nothing is viewed from a human point of view and the life we live is a direct result of the Spirit of God married to our human spirit by the process of conversion.

Our text in I Corinthians 6 is strategically placed between a section dealing with human behavior and a section dealing with the subject of marriage. Paul's censure of their conduct in Christ is tempered by a reminder that they were "washed . . . sanctified . . . and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." An animal may be controlled by his physical appetites, but the Christian is motivated by desires in harmony with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are members of Christ. God forbid that we abandon our marriage vows and grieve His blessed Spirit by conduct out of character with our Christian commitment. "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." Fleshly appetites will pass away, but the hunger of the Spirit is of eternal significance. It is in this context that the Corinthians are reminded: "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."

The age in which we live knows nothing of holy places or holy things, only holy people. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit which we have of God, and we are not our own. We have been bought with a price and are thus to glorify God in our body and also in our spirit which are the Lord's.

The marriage of our spirits has obliterated our identity so that it is no longer we that live but Christ who lives in us. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. The old man of sin was put to death, and the new man was raised up from the grave of baptism through faith in the operation of God. But we were raised up "with Him." Our plans are "in Him." Our hopes are "in Him." Whatever we do in word or deed we do "in Him" so that nothing is secular to the person who has become a

temple of the Holy Spirit. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory! His power in us can accomplish exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We are laborers together with God. Our spirit is yoked together with His Spirit so that we function as one. We are in Christ, Christ is in us.

“He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.”

We can easily see a number of analogous comparisons in these verses. As example: (1) We, too, have “come up out of the wilderness.” The bride of our Lord has indeed been called forth out of the wilderness of this world. We are so glad to remember the day when we heard His words of love. (2) We have been perfumed by the fragrant presence of the blessed Holy Spirit—His presence is made known to others by the virtues of the Spirit. (3) We are on our way to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (4) This is a spectacle of great interest to angels—it should be of beauty to observers.

### FACT QUESTIONS 3:6-11

132. Just where does this scene take place—we have at least two views—what is your opinion? Why?
133. Show how 6:11, 12 could relate to this incident.
134. Why would Solomon wish to write this paragraph?
135. Who is the first bystander? Discuss his possible response.
136. What is the “palanquin”? Identify “the pillars”; the “bottom”; “seat”; “paved.”
137. What was Solomon’s purpose in the procession?
138. What is the significance of the reference to the “wedding crown”?
139. How much meaning could the Shulammitte attach to the words of Solomon? Why?
140. Solomon was doing the right thing as related to the memory of the bride. Discuss.
141. Why is it true that love and marriage can produce the best of qualities or the worst of qualities in both bride and groom? What makes the difference?

142. Discuss how the miracle of conversion is like a marriage.

143. Discuss, in context, I Corinthians 6:17.

### TEXT 4:1-7

#### THIRD SCENE—*The Lover's Interviews* 4:1 to 5:1

##### First Meeting (Jerusalem?): Shepherd's Monologue, 4:1-7

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.
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.
3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy mouth is  
comely. Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate be-  
hind thy veil.
4. 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.
5. Thy two breasts are like two fawns. That are twins of a  
roe, which feed among the lilies.
6. 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.
7. Thou art all fair, my love;  
And there is no spot in thee.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:1-7

92. How is the word "fair" used as in verse one? The terms "my love" are better translated with a less personal meaning. What is a better word?

93. The maiden looks out from behind her tresses or her veil. Which is it?
94. In what way would her hair be like a flock of goats on the mountains of Gilead?
95. What a strange comparison? Teeth like a flock of sheep? Show how this could be true?
96. Why compare her lips to a thread of scarlet?
97. Two things are said of her mouth. What is the second compliment? Which is the most important?
98. Back of the locks of her hair her cheeks are like the two halves of a pomegranate. What quality or compliment is intended here?
99. A neck like a tower? What is meant by way of a compliment? What is intended by mention of the shields of the mighty men of David?
100. What is the imagery of comparing her breasts to two young fawns?
101. The lover suggests he will leave and return—at what time will he return? Where is he going?
102. What is meant by “the mountain of myrrh” and “hill of frankincense”?
103. Who is speaking? For what purpose? At what place?

## PARAPHRASE 4:1-7

*Shepherd*

1. Lo, thou art fair, my companion, lo, thou art fair!  
Thine eyes are dove-like behind thy tresses.  
Thy hair resembles a flock of goats  
That browse along the slopes of Gilead.
2. Thy teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep  
Just come up from the dipping pool.  
Each one has its twin,  
And none among them is bereaved.
3. Thy lips are like a scarlet cord,

And thy speech well becomes them.  
Thy cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate  
Behind thy tresses.

4. Thy neck is like David's tower,  
Which he built for an armory.  
On it there hang a thousand shields—  
All shields of heroes.
5. Thy breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle feeding among anemones.  
Till the day cools and the shadows lengthen,  
I will make my way to the mountain of myrrh.  
And to the hill of frankincense.
7. Thou art altogether fair, O my companion!  
There is no blemish in thee.

#### COMMENT 4:1-7

##### *Exegesis 4:1-7*

The first line in verse one is a general evaluation of "my companion"; there follows seven particulars in which the beauty of the bride can be seen. We shall list these seven descriptive phrases and comment upon them. Before we proceed we must set the scene. We recognize that we are open to criticism—but since all opinions are of equal standing we yet believe this is the expression of the shepherd. We appreciate the words of Arthur G. Clarke just here. "The shepherd now appears upon the scene. Following the abduction of his loved one (6:11, 12), he seems to have discovered her whereabouts. Concerned for her welfare amid the temptations of the Royal Court, he wends his way to Jerusalem to secure an interview with her if at all possible. This he manages to do, but how we are not told. He encourages the maiden at this critical juncture with a fresh declaration of his loving regard."

There follows the seven-fold description of the maiden:  
(1) *Thine eyes are dove-like behind thy tresses.* There is much



discussion among commentators as to whether the maiden is looking out from behind a veil or the locks of her hair. We prefer the latter. We have commented earlier of the dove-like quality of her eyes. Such a poetic figure of speech is altogether appealing in its suggestion of the alert, shy, soft person behind the eyes and the lovely hair. (2) *Thy hair resembles a flock of goats that browse along the slopes of Gilead.* This is a compliment and it was given to elicit a positive response. If we knew what a flock of goats on the slopes of Gilead looked like we would immediately appreciate the comparison. The long silk-like hair of the angora goats of Syria—especially as they reflected the sun on their long tresses could make a beautiful poetic image. (3) *Thy teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep just come up from the dipping pool. Each one has its twin, and none among them is bereaved.* This is much easier to imagine. The sheep are white—but never whiter than when they have just been shorn and washed—there are two rows of teeth—the top has a twin on the bottom row, and there is not one out of order or missing. Her teeth are as white as wool and as uniform as perfect twins. (4) *Thy lips are like a scarlet cord, and thy speech well becomes them.* The delicate form of the girl's lips is here emphasized. The natural red color suggests good health. Not only does she have a lovely mouth in form—what comes out of it in thought and words is just as beautiful. "There is gold, and a multitude of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel." Proverbs 20:15 (Cf. Eccl. 10:12; Psa. 63:5; 119:13, 171). (5) *Thy cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind thy tresses.* No cosmetics are involved in the appearance here described. The glow of good health is here apparent. The almost translucent look of a perfect complexion colored with the blush of excitement and coyly hidden behind raven black hair makes a most appealing picture. (6) *Thy neck is like David's tower, which he built for an armory. On it there hang a thousand shields—all shields of heroes.* This is more descriptive of the character of the maid than any of the other qualities, pride and strength—dignity and beauty are all here inferred. The shepherd wants his bride-to-be to

remember who she is and whose she is. She did not hesitate to identify with the shepherd when her brothers opposed him. He can still see the tilt of her head and the beautiful total commitment of her demeanor when she answered her brothers concerning him. He is reminding her to be that same strong, beautiful person here in the Court of Solomon. A thousand shields of conquest decorated David's tower—perhaps he is saying—"You are as strong as a thousand strong women." (7) *Thy breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle feeding among anemones.* We could ignore this description as some have done—or say that the breasts of women do not have erotic suggestion to the Oriental. We do believe the shepherd is saying his bride has reached maturity and is therefore capable of motherhood. But most of all he is simply open in his admiration of her physical beauty. We would say that this lover has gathered a string of beautiful pearls to present to his beloved. He concludes by promising to return at nightfall; when he comes it will be with a mountain of myrrh and a hill of frankincense. During his absence he has been to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense—he now comes again with much more to offer than Solomon. His closing words should have indeed touched her deeply. He is saying—you are pure and whole and totally lovely—keep it that way till I come again.

### *Marriage 4:1-7*

If we were married to a girl whom we could describe in the same way the Shulammite is here described, we would have no problems in marriage. Is this true? It is both true *and* false. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If we look at our wife with grace, we will find grace. Let's check the list and see: (1) How easy it is for a mother to see alertness and intelligence in the eyes of her son or daughter when no one else can see anything unusual at all. Why? The mother *wants* to and besides that she is a part of that son or daughter and they a part

of her. Is this the kind of love we have for this one who has now become “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh”—that one we call “woman”—or wife? Look into her eyes again—there *is* a dove of softness and love behind those eyes isn’t there? (2) Why does your wife fix her hair or have it fixed? Isn’t it for you? She *does* hope you will see it and mention it—How does it look? It is her adornment from God—but if her beloved never notices—what’s the use? (3) She *does* have a sweet mouth, doesn’t she? She does if you believe she does. We cannot always agree with all she says—but then God can’t always agree with you—but His love is yet and always warm and tender and real. (4) What a dear face, it represents the one you chose among ten thousand. Can you close your eyes and see her face? You can if you have made her a part of your inner consciousness. She loves you much more deeply than you could ever know. (5) What is the general demeanor of your wife? i.e., how would you describe her bearing? You have seen her often under so many circumstances—how does she hold her head?—literally and figuratively. Do you respect her for her abilities in many areas where you really could not do nearly as well? If we will just think and add grace and love our wife will compare very well. (6) Only you can say if your wife is physically attractive to you. She must have been for this was one of the reasons you married her. Once again a large part or percent of this attraction is in the imagination. Not all of it—but much of it. (7) How would you grade your choice of women? What a change takes place when we put on the glasses of love and grace and look at everything about our wife in the same way our heavenly groom looks at us.

### *Communion 4:1-7*

If we were describing the groom (our Lord) instead of the bride (his church) these verses would be much easier to apply—at least we would feel nothing would be overstated or misrepresented—but as we look at ourselves in the mirror of His word

we grow less and less willing to think of ourselves as at all like the one here described. But wait!—He sees us through love and grace—This does not minimize our responsibility, but it does make possible a growth in grace unto the likeness of the bride of our Lord. How often it is true that we become what others believe we can. How does our Lord see us?

Notice: (1) He believes we can see all of life through the eyes of the Holy Dove. At the same time He has given us a covering to conceal our perception that it be not offensive—our veil or covering is humility. (2) Hair has always represented a special consecration and obedience to God—In the care of the Nazarites (Numbers 6) it is illustrated by Samson. This consecration and obedience can and should become our strength and beauty. But only as we are completely given to Him is it true. Hair with a woman was identical in meaning as with the Nazarite. It was a covering as a symbol of subjection and commitment. (I Corinthians 11:1ff) (3) Teeth are the equipment of God given us for eating. He has given us the means by which we can eat His word and be filled and strong. (4) Lips are for expression—as teeth masticate the food so lips express the strength received from it. (5) Our facial expression can present our Lord in a pleasant, beautiful manner. (6) The neck could well represent the will of man. May our total bearing be one of submission to His will in our lives. (7) The bosom is often represented as the seat of the affections. When the foregoing is true of us our emotions will be under His control. The above person is that new creation in Christ Jesus. Cf. Colossians 3:1-17; I Corinthians 5:17; It is only possible because of Him and through Him.

#### FACT QUESTIONS 4:1-7

144. List the seven particulars in which the beauty of the bride is considered.
145. Who is the speaker of verses one thru seven?
146. Why is this lovely description given? i.e., what does the

shepherd hope to accomplish?

147. What is attractive in being "dove-like"?
148. Show how the hair of the maiden can resemble goats on the slopes of Gilead?
149. "Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep just up from the dipping pool"—is this a compliment? How so?
150. How was the mouth or lips like a scarlet cord?
151. A most appealing figure of speech involves a pomegranate. What is it?
152. There is one quality or comparison that describes more of the total person than any of the others. Which one is it? Discuss.
153. Why mention the breasts of his bride-to-be?
154. What is meant by reference to a mountain of myrrh and a hill of frankincense?
155. The closing words of the shepherd were especially touching. What were they? Discuss their impact. Please discuss the application of this text to present day marriage.
156. How do you relate the application of these verses to our communion with our Lord? Discuss.

#### TEXT 4:8 to 5:1

#### *SECOND MEETING (Jerusalem); Prolepsis, 4:8 to 5:1*

(Chronologically coming between 8:4 and 8:5?)

Dialogue: Shepherd, 4:8-16a

Shulammite, 4:16b

Shepherd, 5:1a

Comment: Remarks of Wedding Guests or Shepherd's Companions, 5:1b

- " 8. 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 leopards.

9. Thou has ravished my heart, my sister, my bride;  
Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,  
With one chain of thy neck.
10. How fair is thy love, my sister, my bride!  
How much better is thy love than wine!  
And the fragrance of thine oils than all manner of  
spices!
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.
12. A garden shut up is my sister, my bride;  
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
13. Thy shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with  
precious fruits; Henna with spikenard plants,
14. Spikenard and saffron, Calamus and cinnamon,  
with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes,  
with all the chief spices.
15. Thou art a fountain of gardens,  
A well of living waters,  
And flowing streams from Lebanon.
- 16a Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;  
Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow  
out.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:8-16a

104. What is meant by suggesting in the above outline that  
this section of scripture is a prolepsis?
105. How did the bride get so far north as the Lebanon moun-  
tains?
106. What mountains are alluded to with the names of Amana,  
Senir and Hermon?
107. Is the shepherd describing the house of the bride with his  
reference to lions and leopards? Why go there? Or is he  
asking her to leave it?

108. The poor shepherd was overcome with one look of her lovely eyes—she has caught him and held him in a chain—is this the meaning of verse nine?
109. The shepherd returns the compliment of the Shulammitte (cf. 1:2), but he adds something. What is it?
110. Why refer to her as his “sister” as well as his “bride”?
111. Cf. 1:3 with 4:10b and show the likeness and difference.
112. Is the shepherd speaking of the kisses of his bride in verse 11? Cf. 5:1.
113. If speech is intended as what comes from the lips of the maid, how shall we describe what she says?
114. There is a beautiful figure of speech in verse twelve. Discuss its meaning and application.
115. The “shoots” of verse 13a are enumerated through the fourteenth verse. List them.
116. The maiden is a “paradise” to the shepherd. Explain.
117. Pomegranates were a very special fruit to the Hebrews. Why? (Cf. Deut. 8:8; Ex. 28:33, 34; I Kings 7:18-20)
118. Define each of these words: “henna”; “spikenard”; “saffron”; “Calamus”; “cinnamon”; “frankincense”; “myrrh”; “aloes.”
119. How was she compared to a flowing spring which formed a river from Mount Lebanon?
120. Why ask for the north and south wind? Why is the meaning of the figure used here?

### PARAPHRASE 4:8-16a

*Shepherd* (chronologically after 8:4?)

8. Come with me from Lebanon, O bride,  
With me from Lebanon come away!  
Depart from the top of Amana,  
From the top of Senir and Hermon;  
From the dens of lions,  
From the mountains of panthers.

9. Thou hast stolen my heart, O my sister-bride!  
With one glance of thine eyes, with one turn of thy neck  
Thou hast captured it.
10. How delightful are thy endearments, O my sister-bride!  
How much better than wine are thy endearments,  
And the fragrances of thy perfumes than all spices!
11. Thy lips, O bride, drip virgin honey;  
Honey and milk flow from under thy tongue.  
The odor of thy garments is like pine—scented air from  
Lebanon.
12. An enclosed garden is my sister-bride;  
A spring locked up, a fountain sealed.
13. Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates and other  
luscious fruits.  
With henna and spikenard plants,
14. Spikenard and saffron,  
Calamus and cinnamon with all incense woods;  
Myrrh and aloes with all the chief spices.
15. The garden fountain is a well of spring waters,  
And its streams flow down from Lebanon.
16. Awake, O north wind, and come thou south!  
Blow upon my garden that the sweet odors may be wafted  
abroad.

## COMMENT 4:8-16a

*Exegesis 4:8-16a*

If we consider carefully the content of these verses we will immediately recognize they are not in chronological order or time sequence. We must conclude this paragraph relates to the end of the story—i.e., between 7:11 and 8:14. There are examples of this literary device in several books of the Bible—particularly with Revelation and Ezekiel—but even in the gospels. If this interpretation is correct, this passage contains the response of the shepherd to the maiden's request that he



take her back to her country home. The writer of the Song is anticipating the closing scenes. The purpose would seem to be to build suspense. Because of the length of this section we will indicate the verses related to our comments:

*Verse 8.* We believe "Lebanon" is used in a figurative sense. The shepherd is asking his beloved to leave the giddy heights of the court of Solomon and share true love with him. It is an invitation to escape—but also it becomes an insistent claim of the shepherd for the person of Shulammite. Perhaps it would be better to translate the phrase *look from* to "depart from." The whole passage we believe is symbolic—but the mountains used in the symbolism are real mountains—i.e., they are peaks in the Lebanon chain which carry these names. He is saying in effect—"come with me from the dangerous position you are in—leave the high dignitaries and the ravenous wild beasts of Solomon's court."

*Verse 9.* Here begins a description of the attractive qualities of his beloved. He is wounded to the heart with one look and he is enchained by one turn of her head. "A physical feature, not an ornament, is intended. All figures used in verses nine thru eleven refer to graces of gesture and speech as indicative of inward character rather than to mere outward physical attractions." (Clarke)

*Verse 10.* Berkley has translated this verse as: "How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride; How much more delicious is your love than wine; and the fragrance of your ointments than all the spices." We like very much the expression of Walter F. Adeney in the *Exposition of the Bible* (p. 532):

"His language is entirely different from that of the magnificent monarch. He does not waste his breath in formal compliments, high-flown imagery, wearisome lists of the charms of the girl he loves. That was the clumsy method of the king; clumsy, though reflecting the finished manners of the court, in comparison with the genuine outpourings of the heart of a country lad. The shepherd is eloquent with the inspiration of true love; his words throb and glow with genuine emotion; love of his bride has ravished his heart. How beautiful is her

love! He is intoxicated with it more than with wine. How sweet are her words of tender affection, like milk and honey! She is so pure, there is something sisterly in her love that she is almost like a part of himself, as his own sister. This holy and close relationship is in startling contrast to the only thing known as love in the royal harem. It is as much more lofty and noble as it is more strong and deep than the jaded emotions of the court. The sweet, pure maiden is to the shepherd like a garden the gate of which is barred against trespassers, like a spring shut off from casual access, like a sealed fountain—sealed to all but one, and, happy man, he is that one. To him she belongs, to him alone. She is a garden, yes, a most fragrant garden, an orchard of pomegranates full of rich fruit, crowded with sweet-scented plants—henna and spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon and all kinds of frankincense, myrrh and aloes and the best of spices. She is a fountain in the garden, sealed to all others, but not stinted towards the one she loves. To him she is as a well of living waters, like the fullfed streams that flow from Lebanon.

The maiden is supposed to hear the song of love. She replies in fearless words of welcome, bidding the north wind awake, and the south wind too, that the fragrance of which her lover has spoken so enthusiastically may flow out more richly than ever. For his sake she would be more sweet and loving. All she possesses is for him. Let him come and take possession of his own."

Verses eleven through 16a are very well discussed in the above quotation.

### *Marriage 4:8-16a*

Surely this passage can be appreciated most by those who are married or who are engaged to be married. *Adeney* makes an interesting suggestion. He says:

"What lover could turn aside from such a rapturous invitation? The shepherd takes his bride; he enters his garden,

gathers his myrrh and spice, eats his honey and drinks his wine and milk, and calls on his friends to feast and drink with him. This seems to point to the marriage of the couple and their wedding feast; a view of the passage which interpreters who regard Solomon as the lover throughout for the most part take, but one which has this fatal objection, that it leaves the second half of the poem without a motive. On the hypothesis of the shepherd lover it is still more difficult to suppose the wedding to have occurred at the point we have now reached, for the distraction of the royal courtship still proceeds in subsequent passages of the poem. It would seem then, that we must regard this as quite an ideal scene. It may, however, be taken as a reminiscence of an earlier passage in the lives of the two lovers. It is not impossible that it refers to their wedding, and that they had been married before the action of the whole story began. In that case we should suppose that Solomon's officers had carried off a young bride to the royal harem. The intensity of the love and the bitterness of the separation apparent throughout the poem would be the more intelligible if this were the situation. It is to be remembered that Shakespeare ascribes the climax of the love and grief of Romeo and Juliet to a time after their marriage."

As interesting and instructive as is the above information we yet need application of the principles in the text to our marriages. We see two or three obvious lessons in the text; (1) The safety and comfort of our wife should be of very great concern to every husband. Surely this is how our Lord loved the church. It is not at all enough to issue verbal warnings as edicts from "the head of the house." Please note that the text suggests the groom is to accompany the wife and lead by example and companionship. It would suggest, of course, that he knows where he is going. The lover is very much aware of the dangers and also of the nature of the one in danger. This kind of solicitous attention is most welcome when the bride is in love with her spouse. (2) Communicated admiration and respect is such an important part of marriage. We might carry a deep love—admiration—respect for our wife—but if it is

not communicated to her she will not know it. If she does not know it—or is but vaguely aware of it, we are hurting her deeply. Self-image is so important—if she does not know and that real often—that we admire her greatly what difference will it make what others say about her? It could make a great deal of difference to us if we bottle-up our admiration and never verbalize it in appreciation. (3) Our wives are our gardens. These gardens or fountains are indeed closed to others—but what we want to say is that we can and should find our enjoyment in this our garden—We can and should find our refreshment from this our fountain. Gardens do respond to cultivation. Consider what a variety of good things can be continually grown here. Pomegranates and precious fruit—all manner of spice and fragrance; but only if we find ourselves often in the garden. Only if we give the careful thought and effort to develop this lovely harvest.

*Communion 4:8-16a*

The call of our Lord to His bride to leave the heights of this world is very real—but it comes from One who not only loves us but admires us. He sees in us all the beauty described and ascribed in verses nine through sixteen. It is the mercies of God that become the motive for presenting our bodies to the bridegroom. Of course, we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, but we must be moved to set our mind upon the things that are above by a knowledge that He believes we can and loves us in our attempts as much as in our accomplishments. We could delineate these verses one by one and point out each of the qualities our Lord sees in us—potential and actual; we will not develop these thoughts because of the lack of space—just a list of what He sees in me: (1) One look upward—one move of my heart toward Him is immediately met with an eager interest (verse nine). (2) My companionship and communion in prayer with Him is a high joy to Him—indeed He created me to walk and talk with Him (verse ten). (3) How

pleasing are my words to Him when I praise Him or speak of Him (verse 11). (4) I am His alone and He is mine—I want to be a garden in which He can walk with me in the cool of the day. I am a spring of living water not only because of Him but for Him (verse 12). (5) My prayers are a sweet smelling incense to Him—supplications—intercessions—thanksgivings—petitions—are all the varying fragrances of my praying (verses 13-15). (6) He bids me to spread His praises to the ends of the earth—may the wind of heaven blow to all His lovely fragrance through me (verse 16a).

## FACT QUESTIONS 4:8-16a

157. What is meant by saying that these verses are not in chronological order?
158. This passage contains a response of the shepherd to the maiden's request. What was that request?
159. How is the term "Lebanon" used? What does it mean?
160. What is meant by the reference to the three peaks mentioned in verse eight?
161. All figures used in verses nine through eleven refer to what?
162. Show how the language of the shepherd is different than that of the "magnificent monarch."
163. Describe the details of the "genuine emotion" and "fine wholesome passion" expressed by the shepherd.
164. There is a startling contrast here. What is it?
165. How does the maid reply to this song of love?
166. How does the lover respond to the "rapturous invitation"?
167. This section offers an argument in favor of the shepherd hypothesis. What is it?
168. Please discuss the three areas of application of this text to present day marriage.
169. Discuss three-at-a-time the six areas of application of this text to our communion with our Lord.

TEXT 4:16b—5:1

*Shulammite*, 4:16b

“Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his precious fruits.”

*Shepherd*, 5:1a

“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.”

*Comment: Remarks of wedding guests or shepherd's companions*, 5:1b

“Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 4:16b—5:1

121. It would seem the marriage is consummated and the story is over—but such is not true—what has happened?
122. What is the force of addressing her as both his sister and his bride?
123. This seems to be past tense—there are no regrets—nothing but very pleasant memories and present satisfaction. Why?
124. Is the shepherd recommending his action to all? What is the import of 5:1b?

PARAPHRASE 4:16b—5:1

*Shulammite*:

16b. “Let my beloved come into his garden, and partake of its pleasant fruits.”

*Shepherd*:

5:1 “I will come into my garden, my sister-bride;  
 I will gather my myrrh with my spice;  
 I will eat my honeycomb with my honey;  
 I will drink my wine with my milk.

*Wedding Guests:*

5:1b "Eat, O friends; Drink! Drink deeply of love's endearments.

(This closes the first half of the Song, the second part beginning retrospectively.)

## COMMENT 4:16b—5:1

*Exegesis 4:16b—5:1*

Previous comments have discussed these verses but a few more remarks are needed. Readers of our comments will perhaps be inclined to think that the identity of the speakers and the emphasis we have given their words is a very clear and easy matter. It is not. We have struggled with many conflicting interpretations. We only say of our efforts that we have tried to offer a consistent pattern of understanding throughout the text.

The last two lines of chapter four we attribute to the Shulammite, she uses the same figure of speech and invites her lover to "enjoy the luscious fruits that his own loving care had produced. "This is also a rebuff to Solomon. She opens the door of her heart to her lover and in the same gesture closes it on the King.

The comments of Arthur G. Clarke are very good on verse 5:1. (*Song of Songs*, p. 71).

"Chapter 5:1. Ignore the chapter division. Here is the shepherd's immediate and eager response. The verbs are in the perfect tense and best understood in the modified sense known to grammarians as the perfect of confidence or certainty, anticipating in time the fulfillment of some purpose or cherished hope. Many examples are to be found in the Old Testament, notably in Ps. 2:6. This device gives the future tense a more expressive form. Read, "I will come . . . will gather . . . will eat . . . will drink . . ." Dr. A Harper so understands the passage. Note the eight times "my" is repeated in this one

verse. Honey was once of far greater importance than it is today since the introduction of sugar. "with milk"—Milk is said to have been sometimes mingled with wine to "cool" its taste. "Eat, O friends . . ."—These words clearly break in upon the narrative following the conversation of the two lovers and were introduced by the poet probably as a fitting close to the first half of the Song. The conversation was not necessarily overheard. Among many opinions offered by expositors the most satisfactory, we believe, is the third one suggested in the paragraph heading, namely, that they are the words of encouragement uttered by guests at the wedding celebrations. The lines could be paraphrased, "You lovers! eat and drink (to the point of intoxication) of love's caresses." For similar language see Gen. 43:34, RSV rendering.

### *Marriage 4:16b—5:1*

It is true that women think more often about their relationship with men than men do with women—your wife is more anxious for you to share the joys of married life with her than you are. However, she must be assured with all the preparation and commitment of yourself that such a union is a continuing one. Such assurance we are glad to give. We want no other relationship. When this is true these verses can and do describe our marriage union.

### *Communion 4:16b—5:1*

Are we as anxious for our Lord to have access to our innermost thoughts and motivations as was the maiden in her marriage? It would be easy to give an easy agreement—but it could mean no more than many superficial marriages mean to those involved. We all have a tremendous capacity for ignoring what we do not like and of avoiding the unpleasant. Since our Lord lives in the same house with us (our bodies) I wonder if He shares this same capacity?



## FACT QUESTIONS 4:16b—5:1

170. In one gesture the maiden accomplishes two things. What are they?
171. What does the verb tense have to do with our understanding of the thought of 5:1?
172. Does this text suggest that someone should get drunk? Discuss.
173. These verses can or should refer to our marriage—but conditions must be met—what are they?
174. Discuss the meaning of these verses to our fellowship with our heavenly groom.

## TEXT 5:2—8:4

*FOURTH SCENE—The King's Palace 5:2—8:4*

## Retrospect

Shulammite: Narration to Court Ladies of another dream,  
5:2-7

## TEXT 5:2-7

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 un-  
defiled;  
For my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops  
of the night.
3. I have put off my garment; how shall I put it on?  
I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?
4. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,  
And my heart was moved for him.
5. I rose up to open to my beloved;  
And my hands dropped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,

Upon the handles of the bolt.

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.
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.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 5:2-7

125. What is meant by saying that she was asleep but her heart was awake?
126. How could his voice knock? ("it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh")
127. Define each of the four names given in verse two?
128. What is suggested by his reference to the excessive dew?
129. The maid seems more interested in her feet than she is her beloved. How shall we understand this expression in verse three?
130. If he unlocked the door why didn't he come in? Cf. verse four.
131. As she arose did she use perfume? Or what is meant by the reference to myrrh in verse five?
132. Why do you think her beloved left?
133. Where did she look as she searched for him? Cf. verse six.
134. She evidently ran out of the house. Why did the watchman hit her?
135. Are the keepers of the walls the same persons as the watchmen? Why take her mantle or veil?

### PARAPHRASE 5:2-7

*Shulammitte to Court Ladies:*

2. I was sleeping, and in dreaming (heard)

The sound of my beloved knocking (and saying),  
 "Open to me, my sister, my companion, my dove, my undefiled!

For my head is drenched with dew,  
 And my locks with moisture of the night."

3. (I thought) I have already taken off my gown,  
 How can I put it on again?  
 I have already bathed my feet,  
 How can I soil them?
4. My beloved put his hand through the grille,  
 And my heart yearned for him.
5. I rose up to open to my beloved,  
 My hands dripped with myrrh,  
 And my fingers with choice myrrh  
 Upon the handles of the lock.
6. I opened to my beloved,  
 But my beloved had withdrawn himself and passed on.  
 When he had spoken my wits seemed to leave me.  
 I sought him but I found him not;  
 I called after him but there was no answer.
7. The city watchmen found me;  
 They struck me; they wounded me.  
 Sentinels of the walls snatched away my veil.

### COMMENT 5:2-7

#### *Exegesis 5:2-7*

We are back in the palace of the king—either at Jerusalem or his residence in the north nearer to Shunem.

It is morning in the chambers of Solomon—the maid from Shunem is recounting to the ladies of the court a vivid dream of the night. It is all so real she almost becomes again a participator as she tells it. "I was asleep but I was constantly aware of my beloved from whom I am separated. All at once he was at the gate! I heard his voice—he knocked—He called to me:

"Open blood of my blood, love of my heart, my alert soft one, my purest one. I have been long in coming to you over many mountains. I have come—all through the night I have hastened to your side—my head is wet with dew. Let me in." I turned on my bed—I hardly knew what was happening. So very foolishly I thought only of myself—"I cannot go to him—I have undressed and bathed for bed—I cannot go out in the courtyard to the gate I will soil my feet." I looked toward the door—he had already entered the courtyard and was even now at the door of our house. His hand appeared through the hole near the door and attempted to unlock the door. When I saw his dear hand my heart almost stopped. I hardly knew what I was doing—I jumped out of bed and threw a mantle over myself—I thought "I must meet him with perfume"—I dipped my hands in myrrh—I hurried to the door, I could not move the lock or hold the handles of the door so full were my fingers with myrrh. When I did at least get the doors open, my beloved was gone! I was beside myself—Perhaps he came in another way—I looked in every room of these courts—he was nowhere to be found. I could yet hear his voice and his dear words of love—I called him, I called him again—there was no answer. I *must* find him. I *will* find him. I ran out the open door—across the courtyard and out into the streets of the city. I had no sooner entered the streets than the watchmen were all around me. One of them struck me. It was a heavy blow—I can yet feel the pain. One of the sentinels jerked my veil from me. I do not blame them, I must have appeared as a wanton woman wandering the streets at that hour. Was it only a dream—it was so real—was he really here?"

We have chosen this form of narrative to give a degree of the reality that must have been present when it was first told. In our narrative we have tried to include the meaning of the text.

### *Marriage 5:2-7*

These verses would make a fine section for an evaluation of the actions of the bride and groom—how did they respond

to this circumstance? What does it reveal of their character? In this evaluation we can see ourselves. First we shall consider *the groom*:

He has come a long way at great danger—He openly gives expression of his heart. He is willing to consider the maid as his sister—i.e., he will treat her in the responsible manner of a brother. At the same time the term “sister” suggests the strongest blood relationships. He believes the very best of his bride—she is dove-like and pure.—A virgin. Even when she does not answer his call or knock, he will yet try to enter. When he is unsuccessful he leaves. We do not know why he left. We could conjecture but it would be futile.

*the bride*:

Her consciousness and subconsciousness was always upon her love. Even when asleep she was yet with him. This being true, she yet responds subconsciously in a selfish manner. Perhaps we could excuse her on grounds of confusion or frustration. One often acts irrationally upon being suddenly awakened. But why should she care about her appearance?—or her feet?—isn't his presence more important than her comfort? Why the excessive myrrh? We do appreciate her concern—but why so concerned? for her lover or for herself? Perhaps we are too critical of the bride. If we are, please correct our evaluation in a discussion on this subject.

### *Communion 5:2-7*

We now take the maiden's place as we attempt to relate these verses to our Lord and His bride. Oh, that we were as constantly concerned about the presence of our Lord as was the maid in the text. Even when we sleep He is not out of our subconsciousness. How often do we dream of our Lord? We have heard so often Revelation 3:20 misapplied. *In the context this verse relates to lukewarm Christians*, it reads: “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: . . . Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. *Here I am!*”

*I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me*" (verses 14, 19, 20). He loves us and believes in us—we are His blood-relative. We are His brother, His sister—we *do* have the Holy Dove—by His blood and grace we *are* virgins—He has, at great danger and from a great distance, come to us. How do we react to His knock?—to His voice? We are about as mixed up as the maid. His call is never convenient—we are forever half asleep or busy with something or someone else. If He had just timed His coming on another day—or night or when I was better prepared—on and on we go—"I would get my feet dirty if I answered His knock"—we are sure you would! He got His feet dirty coming to call on you and me. But He is insistent—if we will not answer He will attempt to unlock the door—see His nail-pierced hand near the latch of your heart? We will get hurt looking for Him—the watchmen of the world will misunderstand our intentions and will tear aside all attempts of concealment—we will become totally vulnerable! They will wound us deeply! But unlike the dream of the maid—we *will* find Him—in the dark streets or deep needs of our world we shall find Him.

## FACT QUESTIONS 5:2-7

175. What are the circumstances of these verses:
176. We have used synonomous expressions in describing the maid. Reword them again.
177. She made a foolish mistake. Why?
178. There was a time when she was especially moved. When was it?
179. Why couldn't she get the door open?
180. Where did she make her search?
181. Why rush out into the streets? Why was she wounded?
182. Discuss our evaluation of the groom. Have we left something out?
183. Do we represent the bride accurately? Discuss.

184. Do you believe there is any practical value in our comments on communion? If so, discuss its meaning in our present day life.

## TEXT 5:8-16

*Adjuration to Court Ladies, 5:8 (third)*

*Court Ladies, Challenge, 5:9 (ironical)*

*Shulammite, Description of her beloved, 5:10-16*

8. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
If ye find my beloved,  
That ye tell him, that I am sick from love.
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?
10. My beloved is white and ruddy,  
The chiefest among ten thousand.
11. His head is as the most fine gold; His locks are bushy,  
and black as a raven.
12. His eyes are like doves beside the waterbrooks,  
Washed with milk, and fitly set.
13. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs;  
His lips are as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh.
14. His hands are as rings of gold set with beryl:  
His body is an ivory work overlaid with sapphires.
15. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold:  
His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.
16. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely.  
This is my beloved, and this is my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 5:8-16

135. The maiden seems to confuse her dream with reality. Has the shepherd ever truly been lost?
136. She was lovesick from two causes—read 2:5 and compare with 5:8—what were these causes?
137. The court ladies have not changed their attitude since 1:8. What was it?
138. What is meant by the expression “white and ruddy”?
139. The chief among ten thousand would stand out in some conspicuous manner. What was it with the shepherd?
140. What quality is suggested in describing his head as “most fine gold”?
141. What is the meaning of the compliment as related to having “bushy” hair?
142. His hair was black as compared to what other color?
143. There is a beautiful figure of speech in verse twelve. Read it carefully and express it in your own words.
144. Her beloved must have had a beard—read verse thirteen—his lips were red anemones—what is represented by the myrrh?
145. She describes his hands. What is the figure?
146. His body is as a work in ivory—but more—what is added?
147. What is suggested by saying his legs are as pillars?
148. His bearing is described in 15b. What was it?
149. Is the sweetness of his mouth a reference to his kisses—his voice or his speech?
150. She concludes by calling him more than her beloved—he is also “my friend.” What does this suggest?

## PARAPHRASE 5:8-16

8. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem!  
That if ye should find my beloved . . .  
What shall ye tell him?  
(Tell him) that I am lovesick.



*Court Ladies:*

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?

*Shulammite:*

10. My beloved is clear-skinned and ruddy,  
Outstanding as a standard-bearer in an army of ten  
thousand.
11. His head is as the purest gold;  
His locks are wavy and raven-black;
12. His eyes are like doves by the water brooks,  
Bathed in milk and fitly set like gems;
13. His (bearded) cheeks are like a raised bed of balsams,  
As clustered aromatic plants;  
His lips are red as anemones,  
And his words like flowing myrrh;
14. His fingers are cylinders of gold set with topaz;  
His body like polished marble veined with lapis lazuli;
15. His legs are like alabaster pillars  
Set upon bases of refined gold;  
His bearing is as Lebanon, majestic as its cedars,
16. His voice is melodious;  
Indeed, all of him is surpassingly lovely,  
This is my beloved, yes, this is my companion,  
O daughters of Jerusalem!

## COMMENT 5:8-16

Verse 8. "All this (5:1-7) Shulamith dreamed; but the painful feeling of repentance, of separation and misapprehension which the dream left behind, entered as deeply into her soul as if it had been an actual external experience. Therefore her words to the daughters of Jerusalem are not out of place." (Delitzsch)

In contrast with the watchmen—at least the daughters of Jerusalem will understand her need. They have had similar experiences. She carries a deep love-sorrow without him all of life is out of focus. I am love-sick.

*Verse 9.* Do these women ask because they want to know or only because they wish to needle their rival? We believe it is the latter reason.

*Verse 10.* If Solomon is the author of this song (and we believe he is) the words that follow would be the most exaggerated of self-praise if they referred to himself—however, put in the mouth of the Shulammite concerning her shepherd lover, they become far more believable. She calls into use the kingdom of nature and art in her praise of this one who is altogether lovely. "Whatever is precious, lovely, and grand, is all combined in the living beauty of his person." (Ibid) The rosy whiteness of his skin suggests perfect health. The term "chieftest among ten thousand" refers to the one who carries the banner in war. She is saying to the ladies of the court or harem "you could easily pick him out . . . It would be as easy as seeing the banner-bearer among ten thousand."

*Verse 11.* To say that his head is "precious fine gold" is to immediately associate it with beauty-value and honor—perhaps the imposing nobility of bearing is the point in comparison. The locks of his hair appear as a terraced hillside—or a series of hills seen at a distance, hill upon hill. "Seen from his neck upwards, his hair forms in undulating lines, hill upon hill. In color, these locks of hair are black as a raven . . . the raven-blackness of the hair contrasts with the whiteness and redness of the countenance, which shines forth as from a black ground, from a black border." (Delitzsch)

*Verse 12.* The eyes in their glancing moistness, and in the movement of their pupils, are like doves which sip at the water-brooks, and move to and fro beside them . . . That the eyes are like a precious stone in its casket, does not merely signify that they fill the sockets . . . but that they are not sunk like the eyes of one who is sick . . . they appear full and large as they pass forward from wide and open eyelids." (ibid)

*Verse 13.* His cheeks are like a soft, raised flower bed, the impression received upon seeing them is like the fragrance which flows from such a flower bed, planted as it is with sweet-scented flowers. This latter allusion is probably to the practice of perfuming the beard. (Cf. Ps. 133:2) His lips are as blood-red as the scarlet anemone. His speech is as fragrant and sweet as the smell of myrrh.

*Verse 14.* "His hands—golden cylinders, filled with stones of Tarshish. The fingers, full, round, fleshy in mould are compared to rods or bars of gold formed like rollers garnished with stones from Tarshish, to which the nails are likened. The transparent horn-plates of the nails, with the white segment of a circle at their roots, are certainly, when they are beautiful, an ornament to the hand, and without any need of being stained are worthy to be compared to the gold-yellow of topaz. His body is an ivory work of art, covered with sapphires. The term "covered over" perhaps should be "with sapphires." The well formed body over which are the branching blue veins under the white skin.

*Verse 15.* His legs are white marble columns, set on bases of fine gold. Strength and stability as well as beauty are here symbolized. His whole bearing is noble, the impression one gets upon looking at him is the same as when we stand at the base of a giant cedar tree and looks up.

*Verse 16.* His mouth (or speech) is most sweet, this is a reference to the manner by which he addresses others—with true sweetness. (Cf. Prov. 16:21)

To sum up her evaluation she can say "he is altogether lovely." The women of the court wanted to know—(or did they?) As she stands back before this full length portrait she can tell them—"This (emphatically) is my beloved, and *this* is my friend."! She evidently had spent enough time with him in various circumstances so she could say she was describing not only his physical appearance, but his personality and character.

*Marriage 5:8-16*

What a paragon of manhood! What hope is there for us poor, ordinary mortal husbands? Before we turn the page and look for more practical material—pause! Look again. The various parts of the body of the husband *all* relate to a quality of character we each can find in our lives as they relate to our wives—Consider: (1) *A pure mind*—(refined gold)—What a valuable, honorable, beautiful quality this is. A slavery to King Jesus by which He brings every thought into captivity is the answer here. Surely there is no greater gift we could offer our wives. (2) *A single eye*—i.e., a healthy eye—The eye is the window of the soul. A single resolute purpose in life is so important to marriage. If our Lord cannot supply such a purpose we shall never have it. (3) *A pleasant face*—it is possible to cultivate a happy cheerful expression on our face. An optimistic attitude in our general demeanor which is reflected on the face will be a very large help. Who can offer reason for such an expression? The fruit of His presence is joy. (4) *Words of fragrant sweetness can be said*. Many a bride wishes she were married to Barnabus—i.e., “the son of encouragement.” One of the gifts of His presence is encouragement or exhortation. (5) *Beautiful hands*—strong and helpful. There are so many little areas of need where we can help. Show me your love apart from your works and I by my works will show thee my love. (6) *A body like a work of art*—A work of art is only produced by the most careful cooperation and practice of the skills of an artist. Our whole person should be fashioned by the Master artist until we become like Him. Until we become in truth His own body, indwelt by His Spirit. (7) *Strong legs by which and on which we stand*.—Our foundation is solid gold. “Having done all to stand”—to do that requires strong legs. He who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation can cause us to stand today. We stand in a beautiful, valuable place every time we let Him direct our posture.

So we can see with Him and through Him and because of Him we are altogether lovely. What wife wouldn't be delighted to share life with such a man?

*Communion 5:8-16*

It is not at all difficult to see the application of this text to our heavenly husband—indeed, and in truth He is “altogether lovely”! We should like to attempt a paraphrase of the text as we relate it to our Lord: “My beloved is pure and strong. The leader among all men. He carries the banner of His own conquest. He is the head of His body, the church—such a head is of value beyond estimate. He is eternally youthful and strong. His beauty is such a contrast to the environment in which He lives. What a refreshment it is to look into His eyes! His eyes are full of love and alive with interest in my life in all of it, all the time. He looks at me tenderly—softly, ‘like doves beside the water brooks’—peaceful, restful, yet full of life. He always is able to see what no one else could. Everything moves into its proper place when I look long enough into His eyes. All the love and care of my Father is seen in the face of my Lord. To know that even now I have the fragrant words that came from His lips is startling! What beautiful strong hands does my Lord have. Today His hands are my hands. His help is my help in our world. The body of my Lord is indeed a work of art—not of men but of God. I stand in the strength of His might. His total bearing is one of the King of all Kings and the Lord of all Lords. This is my beloved and my nearest, dearest Friend.” How inadequately we have represented Him—He is more—much more than we were able to say.

## FACT QUESTIONS 5:8-16

185. There is a carryover of the dream of 5:1-7 into verse eight. What is it?
186. The daughters of Jerusalem are contrasted to the watchmen. How?
187. Why do the women of Solomon’s harem ask about the shepherd?

188. It really does not seem sensible to think of these verses applying to Solomon as the groom. Why?
189. What is meant by saying "my beloved is white and ruddy"?
190. Explain the phrase "the chiefest among ten thousand"?
191. Why say of his head: "his head is as the most fine gold"?
192. Describe the hair of her beloved.
193. His eyes are surely one of his most attractive features. Explain.
194. Show how his cheeks were like a flower bed.
195. What symbolism is used to describe his hands?
196. What is taught by saying "His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of gold"?
197. What does the bride say as she stands back to view the full length portrait she has just painted?
198. Group the seven qualities of the husband here described and discuss three in one session and four in another as they relate to your husband-wife relationship.
199. Please read over again our paraphrase in the description of our Lord—now make your own paraphrase by following the text and your own heart.

## TEXT 6:1—7:10

*Court Ladies:* Inquiry, 6:1

*Shulammitte:* Answer, 6:2—Avowal, 6:3

*Solomon:* Interview with the Shulammitte, 6:4—7:10

Dialogue: Solomon, 6:6-10

## TEXT 6:1-10

1. Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?  
Whither hath thy beloved turned,  
that we may seek him with thee?

2. My beloved is gone down to his garden,  
To the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens,  
And to gather lilies.
3. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;  
He feedeth his flock among the lilies.
4. Thou art fair, O my love, as Tinzah,  
Comely as Jerusalem,  
Terrible as an army with banners.
5. Turn away thine eyes from me,  
For they have overcome me.  
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,  
That lie along the side of Gilead.
6. Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes, which are come up  
from the washing;  
Where every one hath twins,  
And none is bereaved among them.
7. Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind  
thy veil.
8. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,  
and virgins without number.
9. My dove, my undefiled, is but one;  
She is the only one of her mother.  
She is the choice one of her that bear her.  
The daughters saw her, and called her blessed;  
Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.
10. Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,  
Fair as the moon,  
Clear as the sun,  
Terrible as an army with banners?

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 6:1-10

151. Why did the women ask the questions of the whereabouts of the beloved? Did they really want to seek him?
152. The maid knows immediately where he was. How was it she was so well informed?

153. As a shepherd wasn't gathering lilies a rather superficial job? Explain.
154. What is the strong avowal in verse three?
155. Solomon is again attempting to win the heart of the maid. Why bother if he has a harem full?
156. How does the maid compare with two cities? i.e., with Tirzah and Jerusalem?
157. The maiden had qualities other than physical beauty—she was as “terrible as an army with banners.” Explain.
158. The king was overcome with a look. What did he see in her eyes that so moved him?
159. The shepherd had used the same figure of speech in his description of the maid (cf. 4:1ff). Is there any difference between 4:1, 2 and 6:6?
160. The description in 6:7 is repeated in 4:3b. Why? Discuss.
161. Why mention the 60 queens and the 80 concubines?
162. What was the purpose in having “virgins” or “maidens”? in such large numbers?
163. There are four descriptions of the Shulammite in verse nine. Discuss their meaning.
164. The maiden must have made quite an impression upon everyone—or perhaps Solomon is only full of flattery. Discuss.
165. There is a beautiful expression in verse ten. Discuss the qualities here suggested.

## PARAPHRASE 6:1-10

*Court Ladies:*

- 6:1. Whither is thy beloved gone,  
O thou fairest among women?  
Whither is thy beloved turned aside?  
And we will seek him with thee.

*Shulammite:*

2. My beloved is gone down to his garden,



To the beds of balsam,

\*To delight himself in the gardens, (Dr. R. Young)

And to gather anemones.

3. (But) I am my beloved's and my beloved his mine!

He (who) pastures his flock where anemones grow.

*Solomon:*

4. Thou art fair as Tirzah, O my companion,

Comely as Jerusalem,

Imposing as troops marching with their banners!

5. Turn away thine eyes from me,

For they are taking me by storm.

Thy hair resembles a flock of goats

That browse along the slopes of Gilead.

6. Thy teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep

Just come up from the dipping pool.

Each has its twin,

And none among them is bereaved.

7. Thy cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate

Behind thy tresses.

8. There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,

Also virgin damsels without number.

9. My dove among all the rest is alone perfect;

She is her mother's only daughter,

The darling of her that bore her.

The damsels saw her and pronounced her happy,

Queens and concubines, too, praised her, saying,

10. "Who is this that appears like the early dawn,

Fair as the moon, clear as the sun,

Imposing as troops marching with their banners?"

### COMMENT 6:1-10

#### *Exegesis 6:1-10*

We have been impressed and greatly helped by the comments of Walter F. Adeney in *An Exposition of the Bible* (p. 533, 34):

"The mocking ladies ask their victim where then has this paragon gone? She would have them understand that he has not been so cruel as really to desert her. It was only in her dream that he treated her with such unaccountable fickleness. The plain fact is that he is away at his work on his far-off farm, feeding his flock, and perhaps gathering a posy of flowers for his bride. He is far away—that sad truth cannot be denied; and yet he is not really lost, for love laughs at time and distance; the poor lonely girl can say still that she is her beloved's and that he is hers. The reappearance of this phrase suggests that it is intended to serve as a sort of refrain.

In the first refrain the daughters of Jerusalem are besought not to attempt to awaken the Shulammite's love for Solomon; this is well balanced by the refrain in which she declares the constancy of the mutual love that exists between herself and the shepherd.

Now Solomon reappears on the scene, and resumes his laudation of the Shulammite's beauty. But there is a marked change in his manner. This most recent capture is quite unlike the sort of girls with whom his harem was stocked from time to time. He had no reverence for any of them; they all considered themselves to be highly honoured by his favour, all adored him with slavish admiration, like, that expressed by one of them in the first line of the poem. But he is positively afraid of the Shulammite. She is "terrible as an army with banners." He cannot bear to look at her eyes; he begs her to turn them away from him, for they have overcome him. What is the meaning of this new attitude on the part of the mighty monarch? There is something awful in the simple peasant girl. The purity, the constancy, the cold scorn with which she regards the king, are as humiliating as they are novel in his experience. Yet it is well for him that he is susceptible to their influence. He is greatly injured and corrupted by the manners of a luxurious Oriental court. But he is not a seared profligate. The vision of goodness startles him; but there is a better nature in him, and its slumbering powers are partly roused by this unexpected apparition.

We have now reached a very important point in the poem. It is almost impossible to reconcile this with the theory that Solomon is the one and only lover referred to throughout. But on the "shepherd hypothesis" the position is most significant. The value of constancy in love is not only seen in the steadfast character of one who is sorely tempted to yield to other influences; it is also apparent in the effects on a spectator of so uncongenial a nature as King Solomon. Thus the poet brings out the great idea of his work most vividly. He could not have done so more forcibly than by choosing the court of Solomon for the scene of the trial, and showing the startling effect of the noble virtue of constancy on the king himself.

Here we are face to face with one of the rescuing influences of life, which may be met in various forms. A true woman, an innocent child, a pure man, coming across the path of one who has permitted himself to slide down towards murky depths, arrests his attention with a painful shock of surprise. The result is a revelation to him, in the light of which he discovers, to his horror, how far he has fallen. It is a sort of incarnate conscience, warning him of the still lower degradation towards which he is sinking. Perhaps it strikes him as a beacon light, showing the path up to purity and peace; an angel from heaven sent to help him retrace his steps and return to his better self. Few men are so abandoned as never to be visited by some such gleam from higher regions. To many, alas, it comes but as the temporary rift in the clouds through which for one brief moment the blue sky becomes visible even on a wild and stormy day, soon to be lost in deeper darkness. Happy are they who obey its unexpected message.

The concluding words of the passage which opens with Solomon's praises of the Shulammite present another of the many difficulties with which the poem abounds. Mention is made of Solomon's sixty queens, his eighty concubines, his maidens without number; and then the Shulammite is contrasted with this vast seraglio as "My dove, my undefiled," who is "but one"—"the only one of her mother." Who is speaking here? If this is a continuation of Solomon's speech,

as the flow of the verses would suggest, it must mean that the king would set his newest acquisition quite apart from all the ladies of the harem, as his choices and treasured bride. Those who regard Solomon as the lover, think they see here what they call his conversion, that is to say his turning away from polygamy to monogamy. History knows of no such conversion; and it is hardly likely that a poet of the northern kingdom would go out of his way to whitewash the matrimonial reputation of a sovereign from whom the house of Judah was descended. Besides, the occurrence here represented bears a very dubious character when we consider that all the existing denizens of the harem were to be put aside in favour of a new beauty. It would have been more like a genuine conversion if Solomon had gone back to the love of his youth, and confined his affections to his neglected first wife." (*ibid.* pp. 533-34)

From a reading of several commentaries we are well aware that the above quotation will not be met with unanimous approval. We only offer what seems to us a consistent position. We believe the interpretation we have suggested compliments the teachings of the rest of the scriptures. We are asking this inspired poem which has in itself no certain interpretation to agree with the plain teaching of the rest of the word and not *visa versa*.

### *Marriage 6:1-10*

Dear God, I want to be that pure man! I trust your heart has responded to the concept presented here as has mine. There is a beauty, a wonder, something awesome, and genuine in holiness. There is a motivation for living, suffering, working, yea, and dying in keeping myself for one woman.

There is nothing weak or unworthy about this look at marriage. It will not do to apply this to our wife and ask her if she is like the Shulammite—of course, we hope she is. But she will respond far more readily to our example of purity. If we are so in love with her that the offers of Satan do not

tempt us then, purity and oneness becomes a possibility. Let's look very closely at Solomon's description—it will help us much. (1) He does not mention the lips or speech of the maiden. She had said nothing that pleased him, indeed, she could have spoken against him. It is more important that the conversation of our wife please us than her physical person. (2) Her penetrating gaze profoundly disturbed him—it was because her gaze was pure or unadulterated. Contrast the response of the shepherd to her look—it repulsed Solomon and encouraged the shepherd. (4:9) (3) Even Solomon hesitated in pressing his attention on one whose virtuous behavior gave him no encouragement. The demeanor of our wives speaks far more eloquently than their lips. We need to separate selfishness from virtue. There is nothing virtuous about refusing the attentions of our wife or husband because such attention (particularly in the sexual realm) is not convenient. (Cf. I Corinthians 7:1ff)

### *Communion 6:1-10*

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and *to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other such blemish, but holy and blameless*" Ephesians 6:25-27. We are so very delighted and humbled to consider the fact that this is how our bridegroom looks at us, His Bride. But in the text before us we want to know how the world—or Solomon looks at us. Is the world non-plused by our transparent sincerity? A genuine consistent life is as "imposing as troops marching with their banners." When Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying the result was as follows: "And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things . . . But of the rest durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified them; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of

men and women; (Acts 5:11, 13, 14).” It was the consistent lives of the Apostles and other Christians that led in this conquest. Have you ever been avoided because you were a Christian? Has someone refused to look you in the eye? We shouldn’t be surprised. If such persons could voice their reaction it could be in the words of our text—“Turn away thine eyes from me, for they are taking me by storm.” Paul obtained this response from the governor Felix and his female companion, Drusilla. “And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me” (Acts 24:25). The Christian should indeed be attractive as a person—but pure and undefiled in character and this is a shock to many people.

#### FACT QUESTIONS 6:1-10

200. The shepherd really never left the maid—how account for his apparent leaving?
201. The shepherd was not only feeding the flocks but also thinking of his beloved. How did he express his thoughts?
202. There are two refrains running through the Song. What are they?
203. There is a marked change in the manner of Solomon. What is it?
204. There is something awful in the simple peasant girl. What is it?
205. Solomon has not become a “seared profligate.” How do we know? Discuss.
206. This text seems to support the “shepherd hypothesis.” Explain.
207. Do you think Solomon underwent a conversion at this point and left all his other wives and became loyal to only the Shulammite? Discuss.
208. Discuss the three points of comparison under the section of *Marriage* as they relate to marriage today.

209. Discuss the possible influence a pure consistent life can have on our world.

## TEXT 6:11-13

*Shulammite, 6:11-13*

- “11. I went down into the garden of nuts,  
To see the green plants of the valley.  
To see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates  
were in flower.  
12. Before I was aware, my soul (desire) set me (made me)  
Among the chariots of my princely people.  
13. Return, return, O Shulammite;  
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.  
Why will ye look upon the Shulammite,  
As upon the dance of Mahanaim?

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 6:11-13

166. These three verses are very important to the understanding of the story of this Song. Explain why this is true.  
167. I thought this maiden was employed in the work of the vineyard. What is she doing in the garden of nuts?  
168. Her purpose seems pensive. Was she angry with her lover?  
169. This is a very difficult verse for interpretation. Paraphrase its meaning in your own words.  
170. If this is a description of her abduction by Solomon, she is surely playing down what happened. Why?  
171. Are we to understand the words of verse 13 are from the Shulammite? Perhaps only half of the verse are her words. Which half? Explain.

## PARAPHRASE 6:11-13

*Shulammitte:*

11. I had gone down to the walnut garden  
To see the fresh verdure of the valley,  
To see if the grapevines were in bud  
And the pomegranate trees were in bloom,
12. When quite unexpectedly this desire of mine led me  
Into the midst of the chariots of my noble people.
13. (They cried) "Return, return, O Shulammitte;  
Return, return, that we may look at thee!  
Why would we look upon the Shulammitte (said I)  
As if ye were watching the Mahanaim dance?"

## COMMENT 6:11-13

*Exegesis 6:11-13*

In the most charming manner possible, the maiden recounts the circumstances of her being kidnapped; "It was in the early spring of the year, I had gone to the garden where the walnut and pomegranate trees grow, it was also in the valley where the vineyard is planted. I had come for two reasons—I did want to check on the budding of the grapevines and to stand beneath the flaming bloom of the pomegranate trees. But I had also come out here in the beauty of the valley because I had quarreled with my beloved and I needed to think and pray. (We assume this latter purpose.) "When quite unexpectedly this quest of mine led me into the midst of the chariots of my noble people." (Clarke) "Or perhaps it was my confused state of mind, before I hardly knew what I was doing, my desire to visit the garden resulted in a place in one of the chariots of my Lord the king."

The thirteenth verse poses real problems for interpreters. Her identity as a maid of Shunem or Shulem is established—



this is the only place in the story where such designation is given. Cf. I Samuel 28:4; I Kings 1:3; II Kings 4:8. As to who is speaking in the first half and last half of the verses, we offer what appears to us as a reasonable explanation: "*They cried*" i.e., Solomon's body guard who were running after the maiden, cried, "Return, return, O Shulammite, return, return, that we may look at thee." She had been startled by the sudden appearance of this calvacade of chariots—she left the scene as rapidly as possible. Solomon, attracted by her beauty, commanded that she be brought to him. She remonstrates with her would-be captors. "Why would 'we' look upon the Shulammite, as if you were watching the Mahanaim dance?" Such a dance must have been well-known as a source of public amusement for Solomon. She is saying she does not want to become a play-thing for the King.

### *Marriage 6:11-13*

We have nothing but admiration for such a woman. She is willing to admit her own limitations. She placed herself in a dangerous position—perhaps it was her own petulance that led her there, or perhaps it wasn't, for whatever cause she freely admits she was responsible for being there. She does not say a word against the King—was it because of her position in the court of Solomon? She tried to remove herself from the presence of all that was a threat to her and her love. She was an unwilling captive of the king. She refused to be a mere trinket for the amusement of the monarch. She was captive to her beloved—he had won her devotion. Her convictions were stronger than the environment. We are reminded of such a woman described in I Peter 3:1-16.

### *Communion 6:11-13*

What an example of the kind of commitment we can make

to our Lord! We have indeed been taken captive while on our way to the garden of nuts! Before we hardly knew it our desire led us to a place in the chariot of Satan and we were whisked off to a place in his harem. We can be sure Satan has no personal interest beyond how he can use us. Are we ready to admit our need as the Shulammite? Flattery is a dangerous tool in the hand of Satan. It is possible that flattery was part of the reason the maiden was a captive. We, like the maiden, can recoup our losses—we can remain steadfast in our first love. We can return again to the One altogether lovely.

## FACT QUESTIONS 6:11-13

210. Why recount her capture with no blame for her captors?
211. How do you interpret the thirteenth verse?
212. Discuss the possible lessons for present day marriages in these verses.
213. Discuss the kind of commitment necessary to overcome captivity by Satan.

## TEXT 7:1-10

*Solomon*; 7:1-9 (verses 1-5 may be remarks of women attendants)

*Shulammite* (interrupting the King); 7:9b-10 (Her final avowal of fidelity to her beloved.)

1. How beautiful are thy feet in sandals,  
O prince's daughter!  
Thy rounded thighs are like jewels,  
The work of the hands of a skillful workman.
2. 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.
3. Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe.

4. Thy neck is like the tower of ivory;  
Thine eyes are the pools in Heshbon,  
By the gates of Bathrabbim;  
Thy nose is like the tower of Libanon which looketh  
toward Damascus.
5. Thy head upon thee is like carmel, and the hair of thy  
head like purple;  
The King is held captive in the tresses thereof.
6. How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!
7. This thy stature is like to a palm tree,  
And thy breasts to its clusters.
8. 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,
9. And thy mouth like the best wine,  
That goeth down smoothly for my beloved,  
Gliding through the lips of those that are asleep.
10. I am my beloved's; and his desire is toward me.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 7:1-10

172. If verses one through five are the words of women attendants to the maiden what could be their purpose?
173. Why use the term "prince's daughter"?
174. In what way can rounded thighs be compared to jewels and the work of skillful artists?
175. Her body is like a goblet full of unmixed wine. Is this the meaning of verse 2a?
176. It seems strange to compare her waist to a heap of wheat—set about with lilies—what can this mean?
177. Breasts are compared to fawns before (Cf. 4:5). This seems to be a favorite comparison. What is involved?
178. The neck like an ivory tower was also used in 4:4—or was it? Discuss.
179. Her head compared to Carmel—the city? the mountain?

or what? How?

180. Purple hair?? Explain.

181. What is meant by saying her eyes were like pools in Heshbon?

182. It would hardly be a compliment today to point out a very prominent nose. What is meant by 4b?

183. The king is held captive. How? for what?

184. This maid was fair and pleasant—but for what purpose? (Cf. verse six)

185. The king is surely getting bold in verse seven. It would seem that his figure of speech breaks down in 8a. Explain.

186. If her breasts were "fruit of the vine," what would be their purpose?

187. Solomon is about to act upon his words—then there seems to be a break in verse 9b. Explain.

188. The Shulammite surely endangers herself in putting off the passionate advances of the king. What prompted her remark of verse ten?

### PARAPHRASE 7:1-10

#### *Solomon or Women Attendants:*

1. How stately is thy walk in sandals, O noble lady!  
Thy rounded hips are like ornaments  
Fashioned by a skillful craftsman.
2. Thy bosom is as a well-shaped goblet  
That lacks not blended wine.  
Thy body is like a heap of wheat  
Set about with anemones.
3. Thy two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle.
4. Thy neck is like an ivory tower.  
Thine eyes as the clear pools at Heshbon.  
By the Bath-rabbin gate.  
Thy nose (face?) is like the tower of Lebanon.

- Which looks towards Damascus.
5. Thy head is set upon thee like Carmel,  
And thy tresses have a purple sheen.  
A king is enmeshed in their ringlets.
  6. How fair and how pleasing art thou, O Love,  
Among delightful things!

*Solomon:*

7. This form of thine is like a palm tree,  
And thy breasts like date clusters,
8. I said (to myself), I will climb the palm tree  
By taking hold of the frond stumps.  
Let thy breasts be like clusters of grapes,  
The fragrance of thy breath like citrons,
9. And thy palate (mouth?) like the best wine . . .

*Shulammite (interrupting):*

That rightly goes down only for my beloved.

*Solomon (concluding):*

- Causing slumbering lips to speak.
10. I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me myself.

### COMMENT 7:1-10

#### *Exegesis 7:1-10*

There is an interesting explanation of these verses in *An Exposition of the Bible* by Walter F. Adeney—He does not attribute these verses to Solomon but to the women of the court, he says:

"The Shulammite now seems to be attempting a retreat, and the ladies of the court bid her return; they would see the performance of a favourite dance, known as 'The Dance of Mahanaim.' Thereupon we have a description of the performer, as she was seen during the convolutions of the dance,

dressed in a transparent garment of red gauze—perhaps such as is represented in Pompeian frescoes,—so that her person could be compared to pale wheat surrounded by crimson anemones. It is quite against the tenor of her conduct to suppose that the modest country girl would degrade herself by ministering to the amusement of a corrupt court in this shameless manner. It is more reasonable to conclude that the entertainment was given by a professional dancer from among the women of the harem. We have a hint that this is the case in the title applied to the performer, in addressing whom Solomon exclaims, “O prince’s daughter,” an expression never used for the poor Shulammite, and one from which we should gather that she was a captive princess who had been trained as a court dancer. The glimpse of the manners of the palace helps to strengthen the contrast of the innocent, simple country life in which the Shulammite delights.

It has been suggested, with some degree of probability, that the Shulammite is supposed to make her escape while the attention of the king and his court is diverted by this entrancing spectacle. It is to be observed, at all events, that from this point onwards to the end of the poem, neither Solomon nor the daughters of Jerusalem take any part in the dialogue, while the scene appears to be shifted to the Shulammite’s home in the country, where she and the shepherd are now seen together in happy companionship.” (p. 534, 535.)

We much prefer this explanation to the labored efforts of the commentators to apply this to the Shulammite. No doubt the women of the harem could imagine (with Solomon) that if this maid were to dance she would meet the description here given.

*There are ten features of the female form:*

- (1) How beautiful are your feet—as you walk in your sandals, you have the grace of a princess.
- (2) Your thighs are a work of art—like the carved jewels of a master artist.
- (3) Your navel is like a lovely goblet in which the best of

wine can always be found.

- (4) Your waist is like a heap of wheat encircled with anemones.
- (5) Your two breasts are as soft as two fawns—perfect twins of a roe.
- (6) Your neck is like an ivory tower.
- (7) Your eyes have the depth of the pools of Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbin.
- (8) Your face (or nose) has the grandeur and serenity of the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.
- (9) Your head is like the beautiful Mount Carmel.
- (10) Your hair, as it shines in the sunlight, is the royal color of purple—a king would be held captive in its ringlets.

### *Marriage 7:1-10*

One's wife should be physically attractive to her husband. She should know it. It would not be at all offensive if you were to make your own personal paraphrase of these verses and give them to your wife as a love letter from her husband. Better yet, you could read them to her. Perhaps the metaphors and similes you use could have a more contemporary motif. Your wife would not be at all flattered if you told her that her nose was like the tower of Lebanon. If you do not tell your wife of her physical attraction to you she could be willing to listen to someone else who is ready to describe her charms.

### *Communion 7:1-10*

We believe most of this section is a flattering attempt on the part of Solomon or the women of his court to seduce the Shulammite. No doubt the description fits the maiden—but the purpose behind telling it is surely open to censure. Flattery is such a subtle tool of Satan. So many Christians are very susceptible to flattery. Why? Because no one has convinced them of their true worth. We are almost ready to believe anyone

who can see a value in us, even if it is only for their own advantage. We need to read again and again the love letters of our Father and His Son who tell us over and over again how valuable we are to them and the world in which we live.

## FACT QUESTIONS 7:1-10

214. When we attribute these verses to the women of the court of Solomon we are introduced to a dance routine. Explain and discuss.
215. What did the Shulammite do while the dance was in progress?
216. How does the description given here relate to the maiden?
217. Do the ten features of the female form describe the Shulammite or the dancer or both? Discuss.
218. Read verses six through ten and explain them in your own words.
219. Discuss the application of these verses to marriage.
220. What is the antidote for flattery? Discuss.

## TEXT 7:11—8:4

*Shulammite:* Invitation to the Shepherd, 7:11—8:2

Aside to Court Ladies, 8:3

Adjuration to Court Ladies, 8:4 (final)

- “11. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;  
Let us lodge in the villages.
12. 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.
13. 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.”
- “8:1 O 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.
2. 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.
3. His left hand should be under my head,  
 And his right hand should embrace me.
4. I adjure you O daughters of Jerusalem,  
 That ye stir up, nor awake my love,  
 Until he please.”

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 7:11—8:4

189. How is it now possible for the maiden to give such an invitation since she is confined to the palace of Solomon?
190. What time of the year is suggested by the reference to the vines and the pomegranate tree?
191. Why offer her love in the vineyard?
192. Mandrakes are a particular type of fruit—Cf. Gen. 30:14-18—what is intended by her reference to them here?
193. The last half of verse 13 is a poetic way of promising something. What was it?
194. Does the maid want her lover to become or pretend he is her brother? What is meant?
195. It would seem from 8:1b that no physical expression of love had passed between the maid and the shepherd. If this is true, how shall we understand some of the earlier expressions? Discuss.
196. Why take her beloved into her mother’s house? What

type of instruction would be given?

197. Was she promising a real drink of wine or was this a poetic expression?
198. Verse three was repeated earlier. What is meant?
199. Verse four is an oft-repeated refrain—it is given at very appropriate times. Show how this is true here.

### PARAPHRASE 7:11—8:4

#### *Shulammite's Soliloquy*

11. Come, my beloved, let us go into the open country;  
Let us lodge in the villages.
12. We will rise early and go into the vineyards.  
We will see if the vines have budded;  
Whether the blossom is opening,  
And the pomegranates are in flower . . .  
There will I give thee my caresses.
13. The mandrakes are giving forth their fragrance,  
At our doors are all kinds of luscious fruits,  
New and old, all reserved for thee, my beloved.
- 8:1 Oh, that thou hadst been as my brother,  
One nursed in the bosom of my own mother!  
Then had I met thee in the open, I would have kissed  
thee,  
And no one would have despised me.
2. I would have led thee to my mother's house;  
Where she would have instructed me.  
I would have made thee drink spiced wine  
Made from the juice of my own pomegranates.

#### *Aside to Court Ladies*

3. His left hand would have been under my head,  
And his right hand supporting me.
4. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
Why should ye arouse or stir up love  
Until itself is pleased to awaken?

## COMMENT 7:11—8:4

*Exegesis 7:11—8:4*

The bridegroom has come for his bride. Whether this is literal or figurative, we could not say. Does this only happen in the dreams of the maiden or has Solomon capitulated? If Solomon has given her leave to go back to her home in Shunem, then perhaps a message has been sent to her shepherd and he actually is present to respond to the words of his beloved. We shall comment separately upon each of these six verses.

*Verse 11.* It must have been with a good deal of poignancy that the maiden thought of the open fields of Galilee. She no doubt thought of friends or relatives in some of the villages who would welcome she and her new husband as overnight visitors. All the associations of many years back rushed in upon her and her heart is full of yearnings to be back again amid familiar faces and places. She is tired of the oppressive atmosphere of the king's harem.

*Verse 12.* It is still the spring of the year. It was spring when she was snatched away from her garden. Unless we conclude an entire year has gone by, her sojourn at court was only a few weeks. After a pleasant conversation with friends at the house in the village they would retire for the night. She is already anticipating their marriage and what is here proposed amounts in our terms to a honeymoon. How fresh and new is the atmosphere in the early morning! A stroll through the vineyard could be so beautiful! Holding hands, we could stoop down and check together the development of the blossoms. We could pause to drink deeply of the fragrance from the flowers of the pomegranate trees. "There in the seclusion and privacy of His handiwork I will give you my love." Away from the eyes of anyone but her beloved she would express her deep feelings for him.

*Verse 13.* We are back in the village of Shunem. In the garden near the house the fragrance of the mandrakes is filling the air. At the doors of our house we have kept from past

seasons dired fruit—we will also have fresh produce from our garden. Ever since I met you I have planned and laid up these gifts for the day when we could share them together. Besides the literal meaning we have given to her words, we seem to catch another meaning! Mandrakes had long been associated with love (Cf. Genesis 30:14-18). Perhaps these words are but a veiled promise of her expressions of love to be given to him in their house.

*Verse one of the eighth chapter.* The shepherd had addressed her as his sister, she now reciprocates with the thought that if he were her brother she would rush into his arms and kiss him at any time and any place. We like the words of Adeney here: "This singular mode of courtship between two lovers who are so passionately devoted to one another that we might call them the Hebrew Romeo and Juliet, is not without significance. Its recurrence, now on the lips of the bride, helps to sharpen still more the contrast between what passes for love in the royal harem, and the true emotion experienced by a pair of innocent young people, unsullied by the corruptions of the court—illustrating, as it does at once, its sweet intimacy and its perfect purity." (*ibid.*, p. 535.)

*Verse two.* Why go to her mother's house? This would be after their marriage for instruction from the mother in the art of lovemaking. No mention is made of her father—perhaps her mother is a widow. Such a simple home-like atmosphere is in strong contrast to the oppressive magnificence of Solomon's palace. She has some wonderful home-made country beverages for him—spiced wine and pomegranate juice. "Perhaps what is here called 'spiced wine' is especially prepared juice from the pomegranate."

*Verses three and four.* We have treated these verses earlier in our comments on 2:6, 7. The fourth verse is repeated twice: in 2:7 and 3:5. Please see our comments upon these verses. This would seem to be the final word to Solomon and the women of the court. She is saying in essence: "I am committed to the shepherd as my husband—I can already feel his strong arms around me. Do not, as I have said twice before, attempt

to arouse any love on my part for Solomon—love will take its spontaneous course—and in my case it is for my shepherd.”!

*Marriage 7:11—8:4*

If the Shulammitte represents the bride of Christ, then these words can become a pattern for the love the church should have for her Lord. This has always been a parallel for the love the husband should have for his wife and the wife for her husband. Where is the bride who will express her love with the same intensity and fidelity as the Shulammitte? We believe there are many who would if they were married to a man like the shepherd. But is this the criteria for such a response? Many a husband knows he is far from the ideal here described but his wife loves him none-the-less. This is surely the fulfillment (in reverse order) of how Christ loved the church. Even when this is true can we not read into these words the longing of the dear girl we married? She *does* want to find anew the fresh fields and the secluded spot—she still wants your exclusive interest in her—to share with her the little things—the beautiful things of very ordinary life. Just a cup of tea—a simple flower—even an orange eaten with love is worth more than the many expensive “things” for which we spend so much time away from her. If somehow her husband could be her brother she could then get on the inside of his thoughts and could establish a rapport shared in a happy family. Anything to be one with the one she loves more than life.

*Communion 7:11—8:4*

What a tremendous example this passage is of the kind of love we, as the bride, should give to our living Lord. “Christ is a living Person. He loves you with a personal love, and He looks everyday for your personal response to His love. Look into His face with trust till His love really shines into your

heart (Romans 5:5). Make his heart glad by telling Him you love Him." (*author unknown*) Converse with your heavenly Husband—say to Him, "Come, my beloved, let's go to work—" or "let's wash the dishes." He *is* alive—He *does* want to participate in all you are and do. He also sleeps with you at night. How delightful to begin the day with Him. We have found so much good in the little booklet *Manna In The Morning* published by Moody Press. We wish to say a word of recommendation here—if you are not meeting Him in the morning—or even if you are—get it and read it. Oh, how we need to plan ahead for a continual love affair with our Lord. There is all manner of precious fruit from our experiences and from His word—both new and old which we can share with Him. This will never happen if we do not plan it. Communion with our Lord through the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 13:14; Colossians 2:1ff) is a joint participation—a partnership that includes all of life. Do we take Him into "our mother's house"? i.e., into the relationship and fellowship of the family conversation? or of the TV programs and the exchange of the usual subjects? If we did, perhaps our family would be so impressed with His presence that instruction would have an entirely different meaning.

## FACT QUESTIONS 7:11—8:4

221. The bridegroom has come for the bride—is this to be understood as an actual visit from the shepherd? Discuss.
222. With whom would the newly-weds stay in the villages?
223. The maiden is homesick—she feels oppressed. Why?
224. We conclude the whole Song discusses a time of only a few weeks in May or late April. How is this conclusion reached?
225. It would seem the young couple are on their honeymoon. What gives us this thought?
226. Do you agree that there is a possible double-meaning in verse 13? Discuss.

227. How can we compare this couple to Romeo and Juliet?  
 228. Is there anyone anywhere in the United States like the two persons described here? Discuss.  
 229. Why go to her mother's house? Where is her father?  
 230. What were her final words for the women of the harem and Solomon?  
 231. Where is the wife like the Shulammite? Discuss.  
 232. Are there men like the shepherd? (What about the rest of us?)  
 233. What is really important with our wife?  
 234. Why would any wife want a brother-sister relationship with her husband? or is this what is meant? Discuss.  
 235. What a tremendous example this passage is of the kind of love we as the bride should give to our living Lord. Please discuss the very practical application of this text to your own personal relationship to your Lord.

## TEXT 8:5-14

*FIFTH SCENE — The Homeward Journey, 8:5-14*

*Villagers (or the Shepherd's Companions): Inquiry, 8:5a*

*The Lovers: Dialogue, 8:5b-14*

*Shepherd, 8:5b*

*Shulammite, 8:6-12*

Aspiration; 6, 7

Recollection; 8, 9

Declaration, 10

Information, 11

Repudiation, 12

*Shepherd, 8:13*

*Shulammite, 8:14*

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.
6. 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.
7. 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 condemned.
8. 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?
9. If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver;  
And if she be a door,  
We will enclose her with boards of cedar.
10. I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof.  
Then was I in his eyes as one that found peace.
11. Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon;  
He let out the vineyard unto keepers;  
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand  
pieces of silver.
12. My vineyard, which is mine is before me:  
Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand,  
And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.
13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens,  
The companions hearken for thy voice;  
Cause me to hear it.
14. Make haste, my beloved,  
And be thou like to a roe or to a young hart.  
Upon the mountains of spices.



## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 8:5-14

200. We are no longer in Jerusalem—how was it possible to return to the wilderness? Who is asking this question? Why lean on her beloved?
201. Under the apple tree seems to be a very special place for two reasons. What are they?
202. What is suggested in the use of a seal—a seal had two or three purposes. Show how they relate here. Why upon the heart and the arm?
203. In what way is love as strong as death?
204. In what way is jealousy as cruel as the grave? How does this relate?
205. Something was in danger of being burned up. What was it?
206. True love can be seen in this Song. Define it.
207. Love is impervious to water. Why?
208. True love cannot be bought. Why?
209. How then is this love obtained?
210. Who is the “little sister” of verse eight?
211. Who is speaking and who is addressed in verse eight?
212. The metaphor of “wall” in verse nine carries what meaning?
213. There seems to be opposites involved in reference to “a wall” and “a door.” Explain.
214. The maiden decides she shall be “a wall.” Why mention her breasts?
215. A decision seems to have been reached in verse 10b—a very important decision. What was it?
216. How shall we relate the information given in verse 11 to the story of this Song?
217. The Shulammite had a vineyard. What was it?
218. There seems to be a rejection in verse 12b—or is this the meaning? Discuss.
219. Who is speaking in verse 13? Who is addressed? For what purpose?
220. What is the emphasis in the closing verse? Who is involved?

## PARAPHRASE 8:5-14

*Shepherd's Companions*

5. Who is this coming up from the country  
Leaning on the arm of her beloved?

*Shepherd*

There under the citron tree I awakened thy love;  
There thy mother pledged thee to me;  
There she that bore thee took my pledge.

*Shulammite*

6. Set me as a seal upon thy heart,  
As a seal upon thine arm!

*Solomon (concluding comment)*

- For love is strong as death;  
Jealousy is as unyielding as Sheol;  
Its burnings are fiery darts,  
A most vehement flame. (lit., flame of JAH)  
7. Many waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can rivers drown it.  
If a man should give all his wealth for love,  
He (or, It) would be scornfully rejected.

*Shulammite (recalling her brothers' discussion in her girlhood days)*

8. "We have a little sister,  
She has still no breasts.  
What shall we do for our sister,  
When someone asks for her in marriage?  
9. If she be like a city wall,  
We will build her battlements of silver.  
But if she be like a door,  
We will make her secure with cedar boards."

*Shulammite*

10. I was a city wall,  
And my breasts like towers upon it.  
Then became I in his (Solomon's) eyes  
As one that finds peace.
11. Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon,  
He left his vineyard to tenant-keepers,  
Who gave for its fruit a thousand shekels.
12. My vineyard, my very own, lies before me.  
Thou, O Solomon, mayest have the thousand shekels  
And the tenant-keepers two hundred!

*Shepherd*

13. O thou that dwellest in the gardens,  
My companions wait to hear thy story;  
Let me, too, hear it!

*Shulammite*

14. Come, my beloved, swift as a fleeing gazelle  
Or a young deer upon the mountains of spices!

## COMMENT 8:5-14

*Exegesis 8:5-14*

The comments of Walter F. Adeney are unexcelled on this section of scripture.

"Now the bridegroom is seen coming up from the wilderness with his bride leaning upon him, and telling how he first made love to her when he found her asleep under an apple tree in the garden of the cottage where she was born. As they converse together we reach the richest gem of the poem, the Shulammite's impassioned eulogy of love. She bids her husband set her as a seal upon his heart in the inner sanctuary of his being, and as a seal upon his arm—always owning her, always

true to her in the outer world. She is to be his closely, his openly, his for ever. She has proved her constancy to him; now she claims his constancy to her. The foundation of this claim rests on the very nature of love. The one essential characteristic here dwelt upon is strength—'Love is strong as death.' Who can resist grim death? Who escape its iron clutches? Who can resist mighty love, or evade its power? The illustration is startling in the apparent incompatibility of the two things drawn together for comparison. But it is a stern and terrible aspect of love to which our attention is now directed. This is apparent as the Shulammitte proceeds to speak of jealousy which is 'hard as the grave.' If love is treated falsely, it can flash out in a flame of wrath ten times more furious than the raging of hatred—'a most vehement flame of the Lord.' This is the only place the name of God appears throughout the whole poem. It may be said that even here it only comes in according to a familiar Hebrew idiom, as metaphor for what is very great. But the Shulammitte has good reason for claiming God to be on her side in the protection of her love from cruel love and outrage. Love as she knows it is both unquenchable and unpurchasable. She has tested and proved these two attributes in her own experience. At the court of Solomon every effort was made to destroy her love for the shepherd, and all possible means were employed for buying her love for the king. Both utterly failed. All the floods of scorn which the harem ladies poured over her love for the country lad could not quench it; all the wealth of a kingdom could not buy it for Solomon. Where true love exists, no opposition can destroy it; where it is not, no money can purchase it. As for the second idea—the purchasing of love—the Shulammitte flings it away with the utmost contempt. Yet this was the too common means employed by a king such as Solomon for replenishing the stock of his harem. Then the monarch was only pursuing a shadow; he was but playing at love-making; he was absolutely ignorant of the reality.

The vigour, one might say the rigour, of this passage distinguishes it from nearly all other poetry devoted to the praises

of love. That poetry is usually soft and tender; sometimes it is feeble and sugary. And yet it must be remembered that even the classical Aphrodite could be terribly angry. There is nothing morbid or sentimental in the Shulammite's ideas. She has discovered and proved by experience that love is a mighty force, capable of heroic endurance, and able, when wronged, to avenge itself with serious effect.

Towards the conclusion of the poem fresh speakers appear in the persons of the Shulammite's brothers, who defend themselves from the charge of negligence in having permitted their little sister to be snatched away from their keeping, explaining how they have done their best to guard her. Or perhaps they mean that they will be more careful in protecting a younger sister. They will build battlements about her. The Shulammite takes up the metaphor. She is safe now, as a wall well embattled; at last she has found peace in the love of her husband. Solomon may have a vineyard in her neighborhood, and draw great wealth from it with which to buy the wares in which he delights. It is nothing to her. She has her own vineyard. This reference to the Shulammite's vineyard recalls the mention of it at the beginning of the poem, and suggests the idea that in both cases the image represents the shepherd lover. In the first instance she had not kept her vineyard, for she had lost her lover. Now she has him, and she is satisfied. He calls to her in the garden, longing to hear her voice there, and she replies, bidding him hasten and come to her as she has described him coming before,—'Like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.'

And so the poem sinks to rest in the happy picture of the union of the two young lovers." (*Exposition of the Bible*, pages 535-536.)

### *Marriage 8:5-14*

Every marriage should have a honeymoon more than once. Do these words of the text awaken fond memories of the day

when your beloved said, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth . . .?" Make them true again—only this time you can plan it well ahead. You have so much more experience. Your wife would be delighted to respond to such an invitation and these words really could be hers.

Do you remember the place where you asked her that great question? That place cannot be repeated—that question cannot again be asked, but the devotion and excitement and commitment can all be repeated a thousand times a thousand. We can be that seal upon her heart and upon her arm. What message is written upon the seal? It is surely obvious—it says: *I love you*. But what is meant? It means: "I give myself to you." The whole person of the husband is given to the wife—not some of the time, but all the time. Love is an act of the will as much as an expression of emotion. The seal is upon the arm as well as the heart. Our wife finds protection and very visible evidence in a multitude of little acts of love that we have given ourselves to her.

As the reader can observe from the *Paraphrase*, we believe 6b and verse 7 are the concluding observation of Solomon concerning the whole story of his *Song*. As he said in Ecclesiastes 12: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter"—so here we believe he is saying—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole subject of love—human and divine": *Love is strong as death*. Once the total self has been given, that commitment is just as irrevocable and immutable as death! It will not change—it will not yield. The possessiveness and protection of that decision is "as cruel as the grave." To challenge that decision is to expect a flame of fire! A fierce fire like the fire of God! Solomon is going on record for all time that there is nothing—absolutely nothing so indestructable as pure love. He could, and did command a flood of waters to overflow the Shulamite—; it was a flood of flattery and wealth. When the waters subsided, she was as immovable as she was before he started. If anything, she was more intractable. As she looked at him with the kind of cold indifference only scorn can give, he said—"Turn your gaze from me, I cannot look upon thee."

(6:5) Solomon of all men should know that love (not lust) cannot be bought. Are we to read into his words: "If a man would give all the substance of his house . . ." that he was willing to give a great sum of money—even "half his kingdom" for the love of the Shulammitte? If so, he found her love not for sale.

The above comments all apply to many wives—and they are married to some unworthy husbands—i.e., there are many of us who do not appreciate the dear girl our Lord has given us for a wife.

From the reading of our earlier comments you will notice we have applied verses eight through ten to the Shulammitte. These verses describe her in her childhood at home (a "little sister that hath no breasts"). These could be the words of her brothers as they expressed their concern over her as she approached the marriageable age. She is too young now but she will soon "be spoken for." When she arrives at that age will she be a wall or a door? i.e., will she refuse unworthy advances upon her? or will she welcome all who come to her? In either case her brothers wanted to help her. If she was a wall they would reinforce it with silver turrets—if she was a door they would enclose her with boards of cedar. After her experience with Solomon she can say that she was indeed a wall. In her maturity she proved herself to be a virtuous woman; very much like the one Solomon described in Proverbs 31:10-31. Because of her resistance and refusal, she was given release from his court and enjoyed peace.

Is your wife a wall or a door? So very much depends upon our total attitude toward her. Surely we can have at least as great a concern as the brothers here described. Most virtuous women become such because someone believed they could and wanted them to. In the case of our wives, it has been the example and words and love of our Lord who has created the resolve and surrender that gave them peace; but the constant concern and support of a husband who also loves her Lord would be a great help.

Verses eleven and twelve describe an offer made by Solomon to the maiden. Was this his last desperate attempt to win her?

She describes a vineyard Solomon offered to her—or to her family. It yielded a thousand pieces of silver every year and the clear profit on it was two hundred pieces of silver. She replies that she has her own vineyard—which in the poetic figure is herself and her beloved. Solomon can keep his vineyard and his servants can keep the profit, she much prefers her own vineyard.

Such loyalty can only arise out of genuine love. Our heavenly Father is mercifully kind to us in not only His gifts, but in what He withholds. How many wives would steadfastly refuse all the offers of Solomon? Would a large income for life be an attraction? We are glad most of us do not have to find out.

Verse thirteen probably contains the words of the friends of the bride. One of her friends refers to her as “Thou that dwellest in the gardens”—or “Thou that dwellest in paradises.” All her friends are eagerly waiting to hear of what happened in the paradise of the King.

We can imagine that every detail was told again and again. Yea, we are still telling the beautiful story of love strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave and a love that can neither be drowned nor bought.

So ends this song of songs. “No longer are there ‘mountains of separation’ between them (2:17), but ‘mountains of fragrant communion’ in their own waiting home. Solomon has chosen to conclude his inspired composition by recalling the Shulammite’s earlier invitation to her beloved but with an important change befitting the new circumstances. The Song began abruptly with the maiden’s musings (1:2ff). It ends abruptly with her loving entreaty. In each case the beloved shepherd is the focus of her thoughts.” (Clarke)

### *Communion 8:5-14*

Surely verse 5a has in it a description of every Christian—In answer to the query—“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” We could say that it



is every member of the bride of Christ. We have come up and out of the wilderness of this world and are leaning heavily upon our beloved Lord for support.

It was under a tree that He awakened within us a love for Him. "Beneath the Cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand." I can recall the love and wonder that filled my heart when I remember what happened when He died for me. It was at the same place my new birth took place. When I came to commit myself to Him and was buried in baptism unto His death—I was born of the water and the Spirit (Romans 6:1-4; John 3:3-5). We, like the maiden, ask Him to seal us. He has already done so with the blessed Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30; II Corinthians 1:21).

The conclusion of the whole *Song of Solomon* as well as the Christian experience, is that "His love is as strong as death, His jealousy is as cruel as Sheol." He will not let me go. We give up—but He does not. How many times has our Lord hindered Satan's efforts? How often has the flame of love stopped our adversary short of capturing us? We can identify many such times, and there are innumerable times when His jealous love protected us and we did not even know it. So many times we have indeed been overwhelmed and the flood of sorrow, or disappointment or discouragement have overflowed. But His love is unquenchable. We cannot buy it, we do not deserve it, but we are so glad that He will not sell it.

We are also that little immature sister. We need some older brothers who will take the kind of interest described in these verses. We have been "spoken for" by our beloved Lord. Will we be a "wall" to the allurements of Satan, or will we be a "door"? If we resist, we do need someone who will offer encouragement to keep up the fight. We want someone to come and help us erect our "battlements of silver." There are times when we have been a door and welcome the knock of the evil one. O, how we need someone to "enclose us with boards of cedar." "Ye who are spiritual"—help us—we need it! (Galatians 6:1, 2).

What a solid satisfaction must have filled the heart of the

Shulammitte maid as she declares her victory of maturity—"I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof." She was more than a conqueror because of her love. The victory and the strength and the growth are out of love and not stubborn resistance. Her peace was the gift of grace; so is ours.

Every Christian can remember a special offer of 'our enemy which had a personal appeal to us. It was much like the vineyard Solomon offered. We are asked to sell out for a very high price—"a thousand pieces of silver"—and the promise is that the benefits will continue at "two hundred" a month. Such an offer will be accepted if we do not have our own vineyard. We *are* branches in the great vine and my Father is the caretaker of this vineyard. My joy is to abide in the vine and bear much fruit. Therefore, I can have no interest in the vineyard of this world.

There are those who eagerly await our testimony. They want to hear all the ways God led us and delivered us from Satan's harem. Before we can tell them anything we must speak again to the one my soul loveth. "Make haste my beloved"—lead me to "the mountains of spices." When we have spent time in prayer and meditation we shall have something to say and not before.

### FACT QUESTIONS 8:5-14

236. According to Adeney where was the apple tree where the shepherd first made love to the maiden? What were the circumstances?
237. Adeney feels verses six and seven are not the eulogy of Solomon—but of whom? Discuss.
238. There is only one reference to God in this whole Song. Why? Discuss.
239. What were the "floods" that attempted to overcome her love?
240. This passage distinguishes it from nearly all other poetry devoted to the praises of love. How? Discuss.

241. Towards the conclusion of the poem fresh speakers appear. Who are they? What is their message?
242. Who is "the little sister"? Discuss.
243. What is "the vineyard" of the Shulammite?
244. "Every marriage should have a honeymoon more than once." What is meant?
245. Some things cannot be repeated in our marriage—and some things can. Discuss.
246. Discuss just how we shall set a seal upon the heart and arm of our wife.
247. We have suggested that Solomon is the speaker in the last half of verse six and verse seven. Discuss his meaning.
248. How do the words of Solomon apply to wives today?
249. Was there a younger sister at home—or does this refer to the Shulammite? Discuss.
250. How can we help to make our wives a wall instead of a door?
251. What was the last offer of Solomon?
252. Discuss the mercy of God as related to what He doesn't give us.
253. Does this Song speak to the needs of our generation? Discuss.
254. Show how these verses can have application to our relationship with our Lord. Discuss the following verse units: (1) Verse 5; (2) Verses 6, 7; (3) Verses 8-10; (4) Verses 11, 12; (5) Verse 13; (6) Verse 14.

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