

Song Of Solomon

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SONG OF SOLOMON

INTRODUCTION

Solomon had "a thousand and five" songs - I Kings 4:32. But this was his "song of songs," or his chief song. It may be correctly called a "love song." He enjoyed more than one recognized marriage, as indicated by the phrase: "In the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" - 3:11. The spiritual meaning and beauty of this fact become evident as we study the song.

When Solomon became king over Israel, he made affinity with the king of Egypt and took his daughter to be his wife and built a house for her - I Kings 3:1; 7:8. But the chief lady of this high song was not Pharaoh's daughter as some have supposed, because she is called a Shulamite and not an Egyptian - 6:13. The first seven chapters of our song describe the rapturous courtship between the king and the Shulamite; and the eighth chapter records the jealous entreaties of another woman. May we not discover who they were in both cases? And may we not know whom they each typify?

We believe that Abishag is the choice woman in our song - I Kings 1:3, 4. She was a Shunamite, a descendant of Issachar, whose lot bordered on Shunem - Joshua 19:18. The words "Shunamite" and "Shulamite" are from the same root. The former means "double rest"; the latter means "the perfect, the peaceful." Rest, peace, and perfection are an unbreakable triplet. Each implies the other. Note another identity mark. The Shunamite was a very "fair damsel," the fairest "throughout all the coasts of Israel." The Shulamite is pronounced "fair" in the song nine times, "all fair" once by her beloved, and "the fairest among women" once by him and twice by the daughters of Jerusalem. Adonijah, a type of the anti-Christ, wanted her for his wife. Why did Solomon put him to death for expressing that desire? Because he himself loved her more than he did any other, and had a Divine claim upon her. She was destined to be an essential figure with him in his dominion over Israel. Therefore, he said to his mother who interceded innocently for Adonijah - "And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also" - I Kings 2:22. To take the wife of a king was equivalent to taking his kingdom.

Oh, the beauty and sublimity of all those ancient happenings, when viewed under the typical lens. David's reign was one of conquest. He put down rule and authority and power, and thus prepared the kingdom for Solomon's peaceful reign. Likewise, Jesus must "put down all rule and all authority and power" during the first seven years of His dominion, in preparation for a Millennium of peace - I Corinthians 15:24. Abishag, the fair damsel, cherished King David "and ministered to him: but the king knew her not" - I Kings 1:4, 15. She was not known as his wife, but rather as a comforting servant in his old age. During the Lord's seven years of conquering the nations and of spuing out Laodiceanism and of judging Romanism the saints, who afterward constitute His Bride, will cherish Him and minister to Him from the glory.

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened" - Daniel 7:9, 10. They will have fellowship with

Him as the King, but not yet then as the Bridegroom. How wonderfully the union of Solomon and Abishag foreshadows the wedding in the air of Christ and His Bride.

Solomon's fellowship and marriage of Abishag, as the Shulamite, was apparently hidden. It is nowhere recorded in his biography in the Kings and Chronicles. We would never have learned of it, if the Holy Spirit had not preserved this "song of songs" for us. Likewise, the marriage of the Lamb to a choice company of believers is a deep secret. Did not Paul say, "This mystery is great: but I speak concerning Christ and concerning the assembly"? - Ephesians 5:32 Greek. Only those saints who have "doves' eyes" can see this precious truth. Hence, men teach that the whole Church will be the Bride of the Lamb, which is not only improbable but impossible. Just as truly as Solomon loved, chose, and wedded one whom he termed "A fair," and not all the daughters of Jerusalem; so, our blessed Lord Jesus will select for His Bride a company of saints whom He will know as "called, and chosen, and faithful" - a rib portion from out of the Body or Church of Christ - Revelation 17:14.

The name Solomon means "peaceable." True to that name, God had promised David, saying, "Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon (peaceable), and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days." The verse which immediately follows shows that Jesus Christ was the ultimate Solomon in the mind of God. "He shall build an house for My Name; and He shall be My Son, and I will be His Father; and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom over Israel forever" - I Chron 22:9, 10. Hence, we see how accurately the name Shulamite, "the perfect, the peaceful one," corresponds with Solomon's. It is the feminine of Solomon. How expressive this is of the likeness of the Bride of the Lamb to Himself. It is written, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" - I John 3:2. The Bride company indeed must possess "the wisdom that is from above," which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" - James 3:17. A King who shall be called "The Prince of Peace," with a "peaceful" company of saints as His Bride, will insure a reign of one thousand years of righteousness and peace - Isaiah 9:6.

Hallelujah!

Oft times the highest things we crave
Are gained in dreary obscure ways.
And greatest duties oft are found
Lying low upon the ground.
Tis what we do for God alone,
He with highest favor will own.

SONG OF SOLOMON
CHAPTER ONE
THE DESIRES OF LOVE

"The song of songs, which is Solomon's" - 1:1.

There was an actual courtship and marriage between Solomon and a Shulamite woman, as indicated by this song. It stands here in the middle of the Bible, as the Divine pattern of true affection between lover and love. It corresponds beautifully with Ephesians 5:25 - "Husbands,

love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." The spiritual and typical lessons, which the song contains, demand for it a prominent place in the Holy Writings. You will understand the song more readily if you bear in mind continually that the king is addressed as "beloved," and the woman as "love." There are four Hebrew words translated "love" in this poem. The first is "dod" which expresses the nature, attitude, and power of affection. It is used in 1:2, 4 and 4:10 and 7:12. The second is "aheb" the verb, or affection in action. It occurs seven times; for example, in 1:3, 4, 7. The third is "rayah." It is affection personified and means a lady friend. The king addresses his lady friend as "love" nine times in the song; for instance, in 1:9, 15 and 2:2. The Revised Version and the German render the word "friend" throughout. We prefer the Authorized rendering, because it is more in keeping with the deep devotion of the song. The fourth word for "love" is "ahabah," which is affection as an abstract quality; for example, in 2:4, 5, 7 and 3:9.

Let us appreciate the deep love that each of these friends had for the other. Then see in Solomon a type of Christ the coming Bridegroom, and in the fair woman a type of the full overcomers in the Church as His Bride; and we shall obtain rich nourishment for the new man.

THE FIRST STRAIN

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine" - 1:2.

This is the expression of affection that we all understand. The woman seems to be the aggressor in this courtship, but the king's previous attentions are implied. She seeks Him, because he had before sought her. Likewise, we should seek the Lord, that we may know Him and enjoy His fellowship. Indeed, the Bridal saints exclaim, "We love Him, because He first loved us." They run after Him. They do not hide their fervent desire. They say to others, "Let me love Him. He has brought me into His chambers. He entices my attention."

Then turning to Solomon, she says modestly, "Thy love is better than wine." The cup exhilarates, intoxicates, drives away sorrow, and drowns trouble; but real love does all that, and much more. It touches and warms the heart of the friend, satisfying her desires. Yes, the love of Christ, to those who really know Him, is better than the most intoxicating blessings. It is more than gifts, or answers to prayer, or works done, or miracles wrought. "The love of Christ constraineth us," the apostle declares. This is the "more excellent way" of I Corinthians thirteen. A true bride loves her bridegroom for himself, rather than for what he does in her behalf. "Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance" - 1:3 Revised Version.

The word for "ointment" is the same as for "oil" in Psalm 45:7 and Psalm 92:10. This refers primarily to Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit, because of which His Name is "as ointment poured forth." The fragrance, fullness, and power of His Name flow all around on account of His being filled with the Spirit. "There went out a fame of Him through all the region round about," when He came out of the wilderness into Galilee - Luke 4:14. The Shulamite partook of his goodly ointments, as indicated in 4:10. If we love and follow Jesus with all the heart, we, too, will receive the same anointing with "the oil of gladness" with which He is anointed. When we read the precious Word of the Lord, we feel His good ointments. The Name of Jesus becomes so precious, so sweet, that to bear it mentioned lovingly and tenderly is just like fresh oil poured over us. The heart warms toward Jesus and dances, the soul leaps, and the fire burns within us. The place and power of the Name of Jesus, as the Head of the Church, is very little understood. How much less

is the fragrance of His Name felt, as the Husband of the coming mystical Bride. "Therefore, do the virgins love thee." If the sweet aroma of Jesus' Name does not induce the love of other saints to Him, nothing else will.

HOW TO WIN OTHERS

"Draw me, we will run after thee" - 1:4.

We would have expected her to say, "Draw us." Believers usually pray, "Lord, draw them, make other saints follow Thee." But the effectual manner to get others enthused over our Lord is to be enthused ourselves. Like begets like. Love awakens love. If we run fervently after the Lord, some others will imitate us. Hence, this typical bride cries, "Draw me." Then "we," the virgins and I, "will run after thee."

Sometimes people are very much concerned about the salvation of souls. They say that men are dying without the Gospel and going to hell, which is very true; but they never once speak as if they had any pity for Jesus. They pity the sinner only. They talk of a passion for souls; but never have a passionate love for Christ, the sinner's Savior. Their sympathy all goes out for the people. The heart-felt condition of the Shulamite was not for the virgins or daughters, but for the king himself.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet to learn His Word and know and love Him for Himself. Hence, her most praiseworthy act was anointing her Lord's body for His burial while He was still alive. Our God wants a people whose first sympathy and whose deepest feelings are for Himself. When He can draw us to Himself, then others will follow in due time and in due measure and in the right way. God will draw them by the Spirit, and not we by the flesh. The cry of the fair maiden was heard, for she shouted immediately:

"The king hath brought me into his chambers." What is a chamber but a place of rest? Why did Solomon bring the Shulamite into his chambers? That he might talk to her, that he might perpetuate the courtship in view of a future life of happiness and union together. Why does Jesus bring us into His chambers? For the very same purpose - that He may speak to our hearts, that He may comfort and instruct us, that He may transform us by fellowship with Himself, that we may look like Him, that we may breathe in His very life, that we may be thrilled with His Spirit and nature, that we may shine with the Presence of God in our faces, like Moses did. God help us to yield to His bringing us in. Then when we go out, we will go effectually. Jesus is jealous for His people today. He wants to speak to them, He wants to reveal Himself, He wants to prepare us for the rapture and for the glory which shall follow. He does not want any of us to miss the greatest and best that Calvary has purchased for us as His people.

"We will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine" - 1:4.

All the daughters and virgins will be glad, because the king brings his dearest friend into closest fellowship with himself; for they shall reap benefits therefrom. How true that is. If we are drawn into "the secret place of the Most High," others will be drawn in also. If we learn to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," others will learn it too. If we put Christ first, ahead of our own interests, ahead of gifts and blessings and achievements, others will be induced to do the same. Younger and weaker saints will learn to give to Jesus Christ the place which the Father requires.

THE TWO CREATIONS FIGURED

"I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon" - 1:5.

Those tents and curtains were dark and dingy on the outside, because of exposure to the weather and storm and the scorching sun; but, on the inside, they were bright and beautiful. The fair lady attributes her swarthy appearance to the fact that her sisters made her keeper of the vineyards. There she became sunburnt. Yet, she knew that she was comely within, to her beloved.

We now tabernacle in "a body of humiliation." On the exterior, we are black, sunburnt, worn, and weary, because of service in behalf of others. We "die daily." We are in "jeopardy every hour." Sometimes, we feel good for nothing and talk like we feel, because we know how we appear to others. We are conscious of the old creation. A sense of unworthiness sweeps over us, and yet the Spirit reminds us that we are "comely" in the sight of our Lord. We are indeed a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Our undue sunburnt condition may be brought on by yielding to other believers, who lay burdens on us which God has not ordered. We neglect our own vineyard, the service which our Lord has given us, and attempt to look after the vineyards of others. Let us obey God rather than man. A slight stepping aside from the plain path of duty awakens a cry for fellowship with Jesus and rest at His feet, as the next verse shows.

REST FROM SERVICE SOUGHT

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest,
where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon" - 1:7.

Here the Shulamite is addressing the king. She wants to meet him. She has been so busy in another vineyard that she needs rest. She is longing to know where her friend feeds, not where he is feeding others. Do you know that the Lord feeds on our affections? There is such a thing as our satisfying the heart of Jesus. Our affections should reciprocate His affections, and thus He will feed on our love.

Yes, we have this illustrated in the Gospels. Jesus saw a fig tree one day. "He came and sought fruit thereon and found none" - Luke 13:6. He was hungry and wanted figs to eat. Now that fig tree represents the Jewish nation. He looked if, perhaps, He might find some fruit from that source; but there was none. There was no reciprocating of His love, no satisfying of His heart. We are to gladden His heart by our satisfying reciprocal love. Hence, we read that "He feedeth among the lilies" - 2:16.

"For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" - 1:7. Why should I be tending some other vineyard? I want your fellowship and your company. You see she had not continued long enough in the chambers of fellowship with the king. She had gone out before he sent her. Hence, her weariness with the vineyard service, and her cry for his fellowship. Of course, there waited for her the soothing answer.

"O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" - 1:8. Here the king indicates what her vineyard really was. He says: "Feed thy kids." Now, feeding kids may not be desirable service; but, if that is where your Lord bids you minister, there is where you will find Him. There is where you will have the deepest

fellowship with Christ and the heartiest cooperation from Him. "He does the very best for those who leave the choice with Him."

"I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots" - 1:9. Now think of a spiritual people, not one woman only, and you will see the beauty and grandeur of all this description. For strength, speed, stately carriage, safety, and steady on-going, the Lord compares us to the horses of Pharaoh.

"Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold" - 1:10. The cheeks maintain a healthy color, being full and plump; the lines of depression appear as rows of jewels. The shoulder speaks of strength; but the neck speaks of loving strength, or strength in tenderness. A man went into a home where there was domestic sorrow. The mother met him and fell on his neck and kissed his neck. Why did she do that? She wanted someone to lean on. Her heart was bruised and broken. The shoulder would have supported her, but she sought for tender support. These "chains of gold" suggest the tender loving strength that God only can give. Hence, the admonition - "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" - Galatians 6:2. Be a neck to the weak, sorrowing, tempted saint.

"We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver" - 1:11. The Shulamite desires to remunerate her lover for his tender words of comfort to her, on her return from the toil and heat. She purposes to adorn him, by beautifying his garments. She expects, also, that the virgins or other maidens will join her in this glad ministry.

We come to Jesus for rest from toil, for comfort from disappointment, opposition, and criticism, and for deeper communion. We get all we seek, and much more. Then, we long, not only to reciprocate His love; but we wish to remunerate Him. We learn that the best way to do so is by adorning Him. We magnify the Deity of Christ, and worship Him as the Holy Son of God. We glorify the Man Christ Jesus for redeeming us from an awful fall and providing so great a salvation for us. We place on His bosom studs of silver. The song of redemption is our never-forgotten paean of praise.

Up to this point, you will observe, she makes promises for her sisters and friends. She says, "We will run ... we will be glad ... we will remember" - 1:4. But this is the last time that she includes them. Her separation becomes marked hereafter. It is "I" and "he" only. Oh, the deep significance of these pen pictures.

This is a very valuable lesson. In our earlier Christian pilgrimage, we think that all believers see Christ and love Him with the same wholeheartedness as we do. When we seek Him and worship Him, we expect that all the saints will do the same. I thought the only way to be a Christian was to be one through and through. To me, there was only one grade - all fully surrendered to God, and out-and-out for Him. Just so with other saints. But we find, even like the Shulamite, that a sharp separation comes. We quit making promises to God for others. We tire of trying to pull them along. We learn that only some will run after Christ, "be glad and rejoice," and remember His "love more than wine." The majority will be indifferent; or will be occupied and satisfied with gifts, service, and results more than with Christ Himself. The few will seek Him to be their Bridegroom.

FELLOWSHIP GROWING DEEPER

"While the king sat at his table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance" - 1:12 Revised Version.

In the closing verses of this chapter, love begins her testimony of her beloved. He hears it, and answers in tender tones of appreciation. His table, of course, was in his chambers as shown by verse four. There she sat with him. There she fed upon his abundance, drank of his wine, and reveled in his love. From her warm heart flowed the sweet fragrance of her spikenard. We are reminded of Mary, who took "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" - John 12:3.

"There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him." But Mary brought the ointment, the fragrance of which filled the house.

At the great holy new-covenant banquet in the glory (Revelation 19), there will be those who serve, those who eat, and those whose very presence enveloped with ointment costly will grace those halls and fill them with an aroma of heavenly sweetness, purity, and serenity, transcending our highest hopes. They are the Shulamite, Mary, class who spend much time sitting at Jesus' feet, learning His Word, fellowshiping His deep love, entering into profound sympathy with Him in His present patience with His people, His present vital and lesser operations, and His future purposes and hopes of glory and rewards. They drink in Christ now. They cover Him now with their adoration and worship. They lavish upon Him now tears of joy and delightful appreciation. They wipe His wayworn feet with their hair (sign of weakness) which is their glory, by ministering to others. All this is sweet perfume to the Lord and to all in the house. I dare say, there are many Martha's and some Lazarus's, but comparatively few Mary's. Doubtless, the Bridegroom's delay is that the number of Mary's may be made full.

"My beloved is unto me as a bundle (or bag) of myrrh, that lieth betwixt my breasts" - 1:13 Revised Version. No one should shudder at the language of real affection again and again mentioned in this wonderful song. Love, mutual love, is the essence of the song. Take that away and you destroy the song and rob us of the sweet, rich, spiritual lessons which it contains. Husbands and wives may well read this Scripture for personal, mutual, and family profit. They should study alongside it, Proverbs 5:12-21 and Ephesians 5:25-31. There is a cold pharisaical religion abroad, which is the "doctrine of demons" - "forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats" - I Timothy 4:1-3. It forbids married people loving each other. And, of course, it breaks up homes, and breaks hearts, and brings reproach upon the cause of Christ. Did God make a mistake? And is His Word not to be believed and received? "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

The marriage relation is the sweetest, richest, closest, and most perfect expressive symbol of Christ and His Bride. Husband and wife cannot love each other too intensely if they put Christ first or set their affections upon Him. If they both walk in the Spirit, they will not know each other after the flesh; and yet their love will be unbounded each for the other. Thus, as a husband is to his wife, "a bundle of myrrh" and "a cluster of camphire" - expressions of sweetest fragrance and affection, for which she longs continually to caress him - so it is with those saints who have found that interior tender fellowship and sympathy with Jesus Christ. They would rather worship than work. They would rather adore Him than announce His power. They would rather read than run. They would rather sit at His feet than serve in His absence. But they do all of these.

They seek His face more than the face of men. They would rather know "the secret of the Lord" than the secret of power. They prefer the company of the "four" who "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8), rather than the "voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God" - Revelation 19:1. And there will be a due time for the latter also. "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi" - 1:14. This camphire is from a shrub, which has evergreen leaves and small white flowers. It is exceedingly fragrant, a fragrance that affords strength. The word "Engedi" means, "wild goat, or the climber." The presence of the king was to his dearest friend a bunch of ever living purity, fragrance, and vigor. It strengthened her for any necessary steep ascent in her arduous service in behalf of others. What a beautiful picture of Christ. His Presence envelopes us with the rare fragrance of resurrection life, and that life is everlasting. There is also an unsullied purity about His life, which cannot be tainted. It repels and casts off the make-believe sanctity of this religious age. We, who are running for the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, must do some ascending; for our toil is in the vineyards of Engedi. We have to overcome things in order to be overcomers. We need special invigorating at times. God be praised, our heavenly Lover is to us a cluster of reviving and strengthening camphire.

THE KING'S AFFECTIONATE ANSWER

"Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold,
thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes" - 1:15.

The king had before called her the "fairest among women," and now he emphasizes his estimation of her beauty. By doves' eyes, he means that she has a keen and farseeing vision. Carrier pigeons or pigeon messengers are used to carry letters across the land, because of their keen sight. They have been employed thus to bear messages from France to England. My father had secured a dove from my Uncle Emanuel, who lived ten miles away. He brought it home in a tin lantern. One day Miss Dove was missed. Later, we learned that she had returned to my uncle's home. That dove had ascended straight up into the heavens till she scented or saw the direction of her home and went thither speedily.

Jesus calls His Bride by many sweet and tender titles; but the Holy Spirit can address us by them only as far and as we are able to appreciate and understand them. Hitherto, the king addressed the Shulamite only as "my love," naming only two descriptive statements; namely, "fair" and "doves' eyes." She had called herself "black" or sunburnt, because of exposure in service. But he called her "fair."

Oh, how cheering - no matter what others think of us, or what we think of ourselves, or how we appear because of keeping vineyards - how cheering to have our loving Lord say to our bleeding hearts, "Thou art fair." Oh, if only we look fair to the searching eyes of our Lord, it does not matter how unfair we appear to on-lookers. They are only on-lookers, not through-lookers. God be praised! "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" - I Samuel 16:7. Hallelujah!

"Doves' eyes." What are they? The first symbol of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is that of a dove. In Genesis 1:2 we read that "the Spirit of God moved (brooded, as a dove) upon the face of the waters." In Genesis 8:8 we read that Noah "sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters

were abated from off the face of the ground." In Luke 3:22 we learn that, when Jesus came up from His baptism in Jordan, "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him." Now wondrously - when we receive the Holy Spirit, and become actually filled with Him, practically walk in Him, constantly yield to Him - we truly have dove or Holy Spirit eyes. Like the dove whose eyes are modest, tender, searching, farseeing and safe guiding, so with the Spirit-filled believer. He sees as God sees.

Oh, glorious truth! Our heavenly Bridegroom delights in us when we, by faith through the Spirit and the Word, ascend up into the Presence of the Father and get the direction of His wondrous movements and move rapidly on therewith. Mary had doves' eyes when she anointed her Master for His burying. She understood something of His sufferings to which others were strangers. Paul had doves' eyes in beholding "the revelation of the mystery hid from ages, but revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets." We must needs have doves' eyes today, if we would behold the wonders of grace and enjoy the riches thereof.

What impresses me here is this, that the king compliments his love with having doves' eyes. It charms our coming King to observe that we dare to take the Holy Spirit to be what He purports to be; namely, the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord - Isaiah 11:1, 2. Also, the seven eyes of the Lord - "the seven Spirits of God" - Revelation 4:5; 5:6. God delights greatly in those who really count on the Holy Spirit guiding them "into all truth," and who are not satisfied with what some one else has told them or discovered in the Book; but who have an insatiable hunger to know all that it is their privilege to know for their happiness and usefulness and for God's glory. Reader, do you seek to be one of them?

THE SHULAMITE'S LOVING RESPONSE

"Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir" - 1:16, 17.

Of course, she sees more in him than he does in her. He is not only "fair," but "pleasant." We see infinitely more in Christ than we think He can ever see in us. Yet, He declares, "As He is, so are we in this world" - I John 4:17. The time is coming when He shall be glorified in us and we shall be glorified in Him - II Thessalonians 1:12.

"Also, our bed is green." This speaks of resurrection fruitfulness. Look out upon a vast field of green in springtime. There has been a resurrection from the cold, bleak, freezing winter. Life has come out of death, and then growth, freshness, and fruitfulness. Our mutual devotion with our heavenly Bridegroom is not simply productive of pleasure, but of evergreen and ever-growing profit. Being risen "in the likeness of His resurrection, we walk in newness of life"; we bring forth "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" - Romans 6:4, 5, 22.

Finally, in Christ, "all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" - being constructed with strong "beams of ... cedar" and great "rafters of fir" or cypress. The Bride speaks of the Bridegroom's house as if it were hers as well as His; and so it is - "all are yours" in Christ - I Corinthians 3:22.

I heard the Voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one - Stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus and I drank

Of that life-giving stream.
My thirst was quenched,
My soul revived, And now I live in Him.

THE LONGINGS OF LOVE

CHAPTER TWO

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" - 2:1.

In chapter one, we saw that the essence of this song is love. We saw also the mutual fellowship of the king and his friend, and her cry for his companionship. In this chapter, we behold her love greatly increased for him, which is expressed in words of appreciation of what he is and what he has done and said. Let us ever bear in mind that the king addresses the woman as "love" and she addresses him as "beloved." This will avoid confusion in the interpretation and application of the song, and in arriving at the deep spiritual teaching which it contains.

It is quite common for people to call our Lord the "Rose of Sharon" and the "Lily of the valley." It is very illogical and unnatural to speak of a man as a rose or a toy. How strange that these figures should ever have been used of Christ. The rose and lily are the most beautiful, most fragrant, and most attractive flowers of the Judean plains and valleys. They figure the beauty and tender glory of the Bride of Christ, whether in the place of honor and prominence or in the lowly places of isolation and pain for the sake of Jesus. The rose speaks especially of the former, because it grows on the plains or somewhat elevated lands, while the lily speaks of the latter, because it grows in the lowlands. Saints are trained in both localities for the Bridal throne. Then because the fair lady did not yield to false modesty, but took the place accorded to her by her lover, he publicly announced her to be even more, saying -

"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" - 2:2.

What a lesson this should be for us. It is hypocrisy to say more of ourselves than the Lord says; but it is most unworthy of Him for us to say less of ourselves than He says, or to accept a lower place than He gives us. Has He not redeemed and saved us? Are we not a new creation, when born again? Does Christ call us "sons" and "free"? Then we should accept the title and state, and praise Him for them. Does He mark the Bride as distinct from other believers, even as He does the lilies among thorns? Then let us not refuse a separation because it brings pain; but let us rather take grace to bear it. The king's deep compliment of his friend called forth from her a full and rich.

TESTIMONY OF HER LOVER

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons" - 2:3.

All believers are born the children of God through faith in Jesus, His Son. Though they thus become sons provisionally, they do not all grow up into sonship in actual experience. Therefore, they do not all afford shade for the weary sun-scorched daughter. Their fruit, if they bear any, has not always the best taste. At the feet of Jesus Christ, the Son and the well-beloved of the Father, we find delightful rest and shade and sweet and luscious fruit. Yes, He is more than simply shade and fruit to us. Observe what she said further - "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" - 2:4. The Name of the Lord is a shelter from the storm. He is a house

of wine to the one who takes His shade and fruit and rest. We become intoxicated with His very Presence. His banner over us, spangled with grace, peace, and kindness, is love. A fear may arise that we must leave this place of holy revelry; hence, the cry: "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love" - 2:5. This is the true Bridal spirit - "sick of love." How few saints are really love-sick for Jesus Christ? How few seek Him and Him only for Himself alone, or for what He is in Himself! How few are experiencing the deep, loving, holy, hilarity - that sweet, tender, mellow, soothing, satisfying fellowship with the Lord! When we become thus really sick at heart for the love of Jesus, He quickly responds; so that we can say as did the Shulamite, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me" - 2:6. Praise God for this sweet fellowship! He soothes the feverish brow and puzzled brain. He stills the throbbing heart, and lavishly fills the bosom with His love, and covers us with His most affectionate caresses. It is God's mysterious appointment that lover and love should be lost in each other's devotion, fervently cherishing each other. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled" - Hebrews 13:4. But such Divinely ordained devotion most expressly symbolizes that profounder union and affection which Christ and His Bride sustain to each other.

The solemn adjuration of verse seven is the natural outgrowth of intimate companionship with the king. We learn not to push things. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake love, till it please" - 2:7 Revised Version. These words are also found in chapters three and eight.

The Hebrew word for "love" in this charge is not "dod," as in 1:2, nor rayah," the lady friend, as in 2:10", but it is "ahaba," as in verse four above. It is love as an abstract quality. Study it in 3:10. The meaning is evidently that the lady does not want the daughters to interfere with her love, nor with the love of her friend. Love should be allowed to be spontaneous in both parties. "Stir not up, nor awake love, till it please." His banner over her was love, and she was responding to it fervently. Let the daughters keep their ladle out. Observe that the charge is "by the roes, and by the hinds of the field." She means for them not to disturb love any more than they would the animals when they rest. Love should not be feverish or go beyond all reason, so as to rob its channels of needed rest and quiet. No doubt, this refers to her rather than to him. What is the spiritual lesson? The attitude of some believers never gives the Lord any time of rest. They would stir up His love for the lost in a spirit of unbelief. They pray for their friends in a manner that seems to criticize the Lord. "Why does He not bring my people in?" They are not yielded to the tender dying love of Christ; but seek to arouse it selfishly. Such saints treat other saints the same way. They have "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" - Romans 10:2. It appears that they love Jesus more than real spiritual believers, and speak to them and of them as if they were indifferent.

True love for Christ cannot be awakened by any carnal ladle. Love begets love. His love to us, made known through His Word, stirs up our love to Him. Our love flows out to Jesus with a warm and buoyant spontaneity when we read or hear of His fervent love to us. Some people would stir us up, but let the religious gazelles and Gospel hinds take it easy. Oh, let us learn the deep sweet truth of a fervent love that abides and glides on unruffled and needs no daughters to arouse it to action. There is no reason why the ladylove should be awakened by others. The progress of her affection forbids it. In chapter one, she spoke of her lover as "king" and twice as "my beloved." In this second chapter, she no longer calls him by the distant though honored title of "king"; but, five times, she bravely speaks of him by the endearing title "my beloved." She

concludes her warm testimony by exclaiming, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies" - 2:16. Never again does she call him the king.

"THE VOICE OF MY BELOVED!"

"The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice" - 2:8, 9.

How expressive are these words concerning our heavenly Bridegroom. His Voice is heard in the distance. His real activities are beheld in the heavenlies or holy heights. His real activities are youthful and bounding. This is manifest in the renewal of the youth of those who drink His resurrection life into their bodies. His approaches to men are modest and retiring, even standing "behind our wall," and looking "forth at the windows, shewing Himself through the lattice." Once "He made as though He would have gone further" - Luke 24:28. He does not crowd Himself upon our affections and attentions. He standeth, looketh, showeth Himself; but hiddenly, modestly. Who will recognize and welcome Him?

Ah, there is one, the choice one of her mother. She especially hears His Voice. On this mountain-leaping, hill-skipping, window-staring, lattice-showing visit, He is especially seeking an interview with His Bride; for she declares, "My Beloved spake, and said unto me" - 2:10. Happy and fortunate the saints who appreciate this "me," and who have the faith to take their place as a part of this wondrous "me" - the Bride of Christ. Oh, who dares to say with the Shulamite, "My Beloved spake, and said unto me"? Notice what the Beloved said, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." Aye, this is the latter-day summons for the Bride to rise in faith and spirit to meet her approaching Bridegroom. She is His "love," His "fair one." He longs for her. He cries, "Come away from all your toil, and trial, and pain."

"For, lo, the winter is past" - the cold bleak winter of the past centuries of the Church's barrenness, through her departure from the faith of the Gospel, is past. "The rain is over and gone": that is, the great outpouring in the early years of this century. The rain is truly over. We have no warrant to look for another or greater outpouring of the Spirit. There is no Scripture for it. The Holy Spirit is here, giving moisture, life, beauty, growth, and fruit- age, wherever He is accorded His place and prerogatives. Hence, in our parable, we read further. "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land" - 2:12. This is being literally fulfilled in Israel today, the "our land" to which the verse especially refers. But this also is most gloriously true spiritually. The flowers of the land of Beulah, God's rose and lily saints, are manifest. The time of singing is come; for when was the Lord praised more since apostolic days than now? There was "the voice of the turtle" or turtledove, as this particular bird is everywhere else called in Scripture. For example, see Leviticus 12:6, 8 where the two words "turtledove" and "turtle" are used interchangeably.

There is a contrast here between singing birds and cooing birds. The turtle coos. How expressive of the sweetest, tenderest, mellowest Voice of the Holy Spirit in the Bride. Only those who yield to the finer touches of the Spirit can know this by hallowed experience. Evidently, the Bride is called Christ's "turtledove" in Psalm 74:19, because she is so subdued by and imbued with the dove-like Holy Spirit who is figured by the turtle. It is evident that only those saints who are

actually and practically filled with the Holy Spirit will constitute the Bride of Christ. They are turtledove saints and have doves' eyes.

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs" - 2:13. The fig tree typifies the Jewish nation, on which Jesus looked for fruit and found none. But they are returning to their native land in expectation of their Messiah. "And the vines with the tender grape give a good smell" - 2:13. The vine symbolizes the ten tribes. "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant" (the fig tree) - Isaiah 5:7. This is the way the Lord sees the Church - "The Israel of God" - Galatians 6:16; and His future earthly Israel of whom it is written, "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land" - Isaiah 14:1.

Hence, again He calls to His Bride, "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away" - 2:13. But the Bride is not yet ready. She is not yet wholly possessed with the Bridal spirit and ravished with rapture glory. Listen to the Bridegroom's plaintive words - "O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs" - 2:14. Her appreciation of her security and of the intimacy of the secret stairs is not fully worthy of the "Rock of Ages" and of Him whose Name is "Secret" or "Wonderful" - Judges 13:18. Hence, He calls for a deeper closer communion. "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Oh, how He looks for her constant companionship! How He looks for the upturned face and the open mouth toward Him!

This is why the Lord cannot come for His own. His Bride is not yet fully prepared. She is still occupied with her blessings, her faithfulness, and her labors. She is not wholly occupied with her Bridegroom Himself. She is still saying, "My Beloved is mine," putting herself first; "and I am His," putting Him last. She declares also His interest in others rather than in her, saying, "He feedeth among the lilies" - 2:16. But we find in chapter six a great progress. The Bride there puts the Bridgroom first, saying, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." Yet she is still not lost to Him and in Him, for she adds again, "He feedeth among the lilies." But, finally and gloriously, she sees only Him and she exclaims in translation rapture - "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me" 7:10.

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards: for our vineyards are in blossom" - 2:15. The enemies of Israel are likened to wild beasts that destroy the vineyards. See Psalm 80:8-15. Foolish prophets, who follow their own spirits and have seen nothing, are compared to "foxes in the deserts" - Ezekiel 13:4.

While the Bridal company is being perfected and the Body of Christ is being prepared for translation, Israel is blossoming in view of the Millennium. But, some self-appointed prophets are misguiding and beclouding the people, that they may not be prepared for the revelation of Christ. The above is the cry of the Shulamite and typifies the Bride praying for Israel and also for herself. She desires that every hindrance to her growth and perfection be removed, and that she may be ready for the rapture.

"My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies" - 2:16. This is the attitude of the fair woman toward her beloved. As noted previously, she does not yet give him the highest place. She expresses a claim on him. She does not allow herself to fill his heart; hence, he still feeds among the lilies. Do not some saints pray and talk as if they owned the Lord? Do they not try to use Him? We have not bought Him; but He has bought us with a dear price. Let us not only call Christ our Beloved, when speaking to others; but let us actually lean on His arm, cling to His

heart, lavish our love upon Him, and worship Him in spirit and truth as indeed our Beloved. Let us fill up His bosom with real affection, that He will have no need of feeding among other lilies. The one lily, the choice one, should satisfy His heart even as afterward the Shulamite did Solomon - 4:9.

A FOOLISH ENTREATY

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether" - 2:17.

The fair one expresses her feeling of ownership. The virgins and daughters are not running after her beloved as speedily as she had hoped. They are lagging behind. "Bether" means "depth, division, separation." Her depth of love for him has caused a breach between her and all others. It is very painful to her. Knowing his wisdom and influence she still hopes that he may be able by a fleet visit among the inhabitants to quell all friction, and bring about full fellowship among all and induce them to love and fellowship him even as she does.

Is this not our photograph? Have we not cried to the Lord against separation? Have we not done our best to prevent it, by even compromising in a way? Have we not sought "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? - Ephesians 4:3. How many of us have almost ordered the Lord to put an end to divisions? We well-nigh felt cross at Him for blessing those who were not going on with Him with all their heart. But, beloved, we cannot right the wrongs in Christendom. We cannot put down strife among God's people, nor hinder divisions, no matter how nimbly we leap upon the mountains of Bether. The deeper we delve into the Truth and become rooted in Divine love, the wider the breach becomes between us and other saints; and the more manifest to us become the subtlety and power and shame of sectarianism. These conditions are here and will be here until our Beloved comes in Person and puts "down all rule and all authority and power" - both national and religious - I Corinthians 15:24. We must learn to be content to say and mean it with all the heart - "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me" - 7:10.

THE INSISTENCE OF LOVE

Chapter Three

Weaker but Wiser

"By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" - 3:1-3.

Do you wonder why the Shulamite sought the king? The reason is plain. We saw in 2:17 that she advised him to - "Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether" (division). He took her advice, not willingly; but because she thought she could get along without him in a measure.

This is just the way we treat the Lord. He can but let us have it so. For only by being separated from Him will we learn our deepest need of His abiding Presence and fellowship. He lets us have our way, that we may learn by bitter experience not to want our way. He lets us be

alone, that we may learn painfully that we cannot be alone. We learn that our deepest concern is to be always in His Presence, to have our Bridegroom's constant fellowship, and choose constantly to sit "down under His shadow with great delight" and be brought "to the banqueting house" - 2:3, 4.

Any degree of the absence of Jesus brings a sense of night. How truly, when we feel such a sense of the Divine absence, we seek Him in service somewhere. We will hold a street meeting. We will foolishly give ourselves away by mentioning our loneliness to others. What a shameful admission. We must hunt for our heavenly Lover. Oh! Let us never again tell the Lord to "turn" and look after the divisions. Let us never again hint to Him that He should be busy bringing about harmony among His people. Fox-chasing and schisms should never again so engage us as to cause the absence of our heavenly Lover.

HER QUEST AWARDED

"It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth" - 3:4.

How our Lord longs for the company and fellowship of His people. As soon as He beholds our regret, even before we have time to ask His pardon for entertaining a little feeling of independence, He appears on the scene. How He covets to be with us. So we find Jesus again and again saying, "Come ye yourselves apart ... and rest a while" - Mark 6:31. "Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart" - Matthew 17:1. He frequented the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. And, in His last hours, our blessed Lord pitifully exclaimed, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" - Matthew 26:40.

Do you see the further lesson here? It was when the Shulamite had passed from the watchmen that she found her lover. It is when we are alone that we meet the Lord. People think that, if they can only get to a camp meeting or a convention where there are a great lot of great people, they will surely see God and receive a blessing. Well, that may be true. But, it is only when we lose sight of the convention and the conventioners and are shut up alone with God, that we receive the fullness of His blessing. We get occupied with Him even if there were no crowd. She said, "It was but a little that I passed from them"; that is, the watchmen in the street. Yes, but a little separation from others, then we begin to meet our heavenly Guest. Glory! Someone has truly said that people are afraid to be alone. But not so when we are in vital fellowship with Christ Jesus. For then we are in very deed not alone.

"I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me" - 3:4. Yes, the Shulamite is learning her lesson. She is becoming tenacious in her desire for the presence and fellowship of Solomon. Still her tenacity is not for himself alone, for his own intrinsic merit, and for what he is to her. She is still too much occupied with herself and her activities. Observe that in the first five verses of this chapter the pronoun "I" occurs twelve times, all referring to herself: "I sought him," "I found him," "I will rise," "I will seek him," "I sought him," "I found him," "I said," "I passed from them," "I found him," "I held him," "I had brought him," "I charge you." She insists on his activities running in her set groove. Her own people must meet him and hear his voice.

Surely, we see here the picture of most of God's dear people. They are so occupied with themselves, with their activities, with their grave responsibilities, with their arduous duties presumably for the good of others. They have so much to say about their praying and travail for

others. Before they are aware of it, there comes a distance between them and the Lord. They wonder why. Then, when they do meet the Lord again in deep fellowship, they insist that He shall engage with them in their arduous tasks. They already have a plan mapped out for Him. "You must come and see my mother. You must save my family." How many times we have gone at some one's beck to pray for a friend or a neighbor, only to find them not only not ready for prayer, but not even willing to listen to the Word of God. Human sympathy and fleshly zeal are too often the call to service. We need to hear the Voice of our Beloved.

THE ENTHRONEMENT OF SOLOMON

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" - 3:6.

The six closing verses of this chapter are an abrupt change in the sublime anthem. A strong bass voice apparently interrupts the melodious soprano of the Shulamite and the seraphic tenor of Solomon. It is a bold blast, at first like a surprise, then a sudden proclamation of the crowning of Solomon as king over Israel. Compare I Kings one and two. Solomon, whose name means "peaceable," was apparently hidden in the wilderness. He was kept little and unknown in quiet and modest preparation for the throne of his father David. Adonijah, an older brother, claimed heirship to the throne and tried to usurp it; but, he could not get it, because it was Solomon's from the Lord - I Kings 2:15. The typical teaching is wonderful. For nineteen hundred years, Jesus Christ has been hidden as it were, being in Heaven. He has been insignificant to the Jews as the coming King, and little known to the Church. He has been thought of as a Savior only. Now, in later years especially, His return is being announced. A company of saints is being awakened to be ready for His coming, and they are seeking to be His Bride. Suddenly, the nations will declare "peace and safety," thereby announcing a counterfeit millennium. Adonijah is a figure of this usurpation. At that very moment, our blessed Lord Jesus will be crowned King on His own throne in the air - Revelation 4 He will burst forth unexpectedly as from long retirement, in majesty and might, as a lion roars for his prey.

Pillars speak of strength and greatness, and smoke speaks of glory and majesty. Imagine huge pillars of perfumed fiery smoke, the sweet fragrance of myrrh and frankincense, pervading and scenting the atmosphere; as if all the druggists had hurled the contents of their perfumery boxes into the sky. That pictured the honor and glory of Solomon's crowning day. That is a faint forecast of the intertwining pillars and billows of glory and dazzling splendor, which will envelop our King when He shall be crowned in Heaven. "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices" - Revelation 4:5. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" - 8: 3, 4.

"Behold his bed, which is Solomon's" - 3:7. This is the answer to the exclamatory question above. The Hebrew word "mittah" is here rendered "bed" or "litter." It means anything spread out, a place of reclining or comfort. In verse nine, the same object is called a "chariot" or "palanquin" or "car of state," from the Hebrew word "appiryon." In eastern countries, such a vehicle was four feet wide and four feet high and eight feet long and borne by four men. "The

wood of Lebanon," of which Solomon's chariot was built, was fir and cedar or of evergreen and strength. "The fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon" - Isaiah 14:8. "The Voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon" - Psalm 29:5.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARIOT

"He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem" - 3:10.

This is a graphic foregleam of the throne of Christ in the air:

First: Our eyes behold the massive pillars which proclaim redemption, for silver figures redemption which is the foundation of Jesus' throne on high. He would never have a throne of His own if He had not redeemed the world through His death. He would have remained with the Father, as the eternal Word - John 1:1. No man would ever have the high honor of sitting as Jehovah on a throne in Heaven if Jesus had not died to save men. Oh, what Christ's redemption has brought to Himself as well as to humanity.

Second: The gold bottom of Solomon's palanquin suggests that Deity is beneath and back of redemption. The God-Man wrought redemption. In the tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness, most everything was overlaid with gold, and some things were beaten out of gold. The holy city and its streets in Heaven will be pure gold. Gold speaks of God, who is the Creator of all things.

There is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" - Ephesians 4:6. Finally, the Son shall be subject to the Father, "that God may be all in all" - I Corinthians 15:28.

Third: The seat of the chariot he made of purple, which color always figures royalty. That was a kingly seat, and proves that his litter was a car of state. Of course, it typifies the royal seat of our glorious King of peace.

Fourth: In the middle of the floor was a paved or inlaid work, as an expression of the love of the daughters of Jerusalem. Just so, other saints besides the Bride company will contribute their portion to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ and help crown Him Lord of all.

"Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel" - 3:7. Those sixty expert warriors were Solomon's bodyguard as he was enjoying the days of coronation. While Adonijah was still alive, there was some possibility that he might rise up against Solomon. Therefore, everyone of his sixty mighty men had "his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night" - 3:8.

The first years of Christ's reign will be a period of "night" and "darkness," because of the rebellion of church and state. But, there will be with Him in glory some valiant warriors, who will judge the world together with Him. As they are now "set for the defence of the Gospel," so will they then be firm in the defence of their Lord. At His Word, they will pour out bowls of judgment upon their foes - Revelation 15 and 16. Jesus also will have a Zadok, a Nathan, a Benaiah, and Cherethites and Pelethites, who will execute His will upon His enemies. Amen!

"Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" - 3:11. Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, informed David that Adonijah was taking the throne; but insisted that her son should be the king. Therefore, she is counted as having crowned him - I Kings 1. "The day of his espousals, and ... gladness of his heart" was the time of the beginning of his

reign and when, some years later, his marriage took place. Solomon typifies Christ. Bathsheba typifies the true Israel, who will crown Christ by refusing to yield to anti-Christ. Abishag, who afterward became Solomon's choice bride, typifies the Bride of the Lamb. He will reign in Heaven for about six years. After His wedding takes place in the air, which will consummate "the day of His espousals" and "the gladness of His heart," He will execute judgment on the usurpers. Glory to God! Then a voice out of the throne will exclaim, "Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great" - Revelation 19:5.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BRIDE

"Behold, thou art fair, my love, Behold thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks." 4:1.

We marvel at the tender grace of God as set forth in this type. Solomon does not chide the Shulamite. Instead, he heaps upon her the most flattering blandishments, as expressed in this chapter. In the first five verses of this chapter, there is a remarkable and beautiful correspondence between Solomon's heart view of the Shulamite and the Divine description of the Spirit-moved members of the Body or Church of Christ -- I Cor. 12, wherein we see gifts of the Spirit.

"Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks." The dove always refers to the Holy Spirit. To have doves' eyes is to see as the Spirit sees. These typify those members of the Body of Christ who have the gift of discernment. They see as God sees, because He makes them to see thus. They readily discern the spiritual state of other people and the condition of a meeting. Often they see exactly what is lacking and what is the cause of that lack; and, hence, know the remedy. So they know how to pray.

The dove sees a great way off; also those saints, who are the Divinely appointed eyes to the assembly, are made to see far in the distance. Therefore, other saints often think that they are wild or fanatical or claiming too much. God has chosen some for eyes to the Church.

"Thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead." Her hair is full and long. In the natural, "if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering," in deference to her husband who is her head. "The head of the woman is the man." Woman acknowledges the headship of man and her subjection to him by wearing her hair long. This is her glory, her strength. What a crown of beauty to a woman is her long hair. The hair symbolizes those in the Church who most lovingly and emphatically and constantly acknowledge the Headship of Christ, and maintain most fervently the attitude of absolute dependence upon Him. This is their strength, their beauty, and their glory. These are the "goats' hair" of the assembly. "Gilead" means "heap of witness, rolling forever." Therefore, the testimony of such entire subjection to Christ, figured by the waving hair, rolls on forever. It acknowledges Christ to have been the sin offering, by whose death their intimate place as His Bride was purchased. They hold that they are not their own, "but are bought with a price."

"Thy teeth are like a flock shorn, which come up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them." Such teeth are clean, white, even, and fully developed. Every tooth is in its proper place in the mouth and fully serviceable. The teeth represent those saints who receive the Word of God as it reads, "rightly divide it," or "straightly cut it," for the whole Body. The front teeth bite off the food. The larger teeth, the molars, which are more hidden, grind the food for mastication. Thus, some preachers give out chunks of the Truth to the audience. Others, less prominent but necessarily stronger, so divide and subdivide

and arrange and compare truth with truth as to make it most palatable and nourishing to the whole assembly. Wondrous ways of wisdom, words of weight and wealth! "God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him." I Corinthians 12:18.

"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet." A woman's lips indicate the depth of her affection. The Shulamite appears to be very affectionate. Some saints are lips to the assembly. They love Jesus with a depth and intensity indescribable. They are carried away with the love of God that provided such a wondrous redemption. They are melted and subdued with the love of Jesus, who died such a shameful and painful death for them. So, they exclaim, "We love Him, because He first loved us." These are the blazing index of the love that flames in the assembly. In close conjunction with this is the next portion.

"Thy speech is comely." In the antitype, we read, "For to one is given by the Spirit a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another prophecy." Such speech is, of course, comely. It comforts, it instructs, it builds up, it establishes. But note that the comeliness is apparent to the Bridegroom. He beholds the fervent love indicated by the scarlet lips, and appreciates the comely words as the glowing outflow of a heart of love -- the wholesome praiseful "fruit of our lips." "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Who would not covet the loving approbation of the heavenly Solomon?

"Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks." The temples here include the cheeks, happy, blooming flush of health. These pinkish temples symbolize those members of the assembly who especially index the happy healthiness of the mind of Christ. It is significant that this state is seen between the locks. That is, the strong saints are a backbone and strength to the happy and healthy ones; and the healthy ones grace and adorn the strong ones, even as doves' eyes are sight to the strong.

"Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers; all shields of mighty men." The neck speaks of tender support. Here it prefigures the "helps" of the Body of Christ -- I Cor. 12:28. There are those believers who are a neck, or a kind and pitying support to weaker saints. They are always seen running lovingly to grab and hold up the structure of the meeting when it would seem to topple over. Tempted discouraged believers are constantly running to them and seeking comfort and encouragement. They have unbounded charity for and patience with others. They are a place of refuge for the storm-driven. They furnish armor for the warriors.

"Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies." Here is suggested the possibility of fruitfulness and the necessary ability to give nourishment. The saints, who are developed in faith and love and Truth, furnish "the sincere milk of the Word" for babes in Christ. The roes feeding among the lilies indicate the growing condition of such believers; that is, they themselves are nourished by the living Word whereby they are enabled to minister to others. But what pity that, to so many, God must say, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Hebrews 5:12.

Glancing back over this eightfold eulogy of the Shulamite, what a perfect picture we have of the pure virgin which the Holy Spirit espoused to Christ. This is God's view of what Christ's Body the Church should be, because we are "in Christ" provisionally "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (I Cor. 4:2), and "in Him we are complete" or "made full" (Col. 2:10); though in actual experience we

may not be so. The Bridehood is no doubt, the "prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:14. Is not this what Paul means in saying, "I count all things loss ... that I may win Christ and be found in Him"? For this we are "apprehended of Christ." But who of us will "lay hold on the hope set before us"-- this particular hope? All we enjoy from God is by His grace. Who of us will be imitators of Paul and he thus minded to "follow after" if that we "may apprehend" that for which we are "apprehended of Christ"? Who will fully abandon all and so run in the victory, joy, and strength of the Lord as to ravish Him with the eyes and with one chain of the neck? Especially Comforting "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense" -- 4:6.

Christ encourages His Bride to make her calling and election sure, for He is praying for her on the mount of myrrh and frankincense. Until the shadows of unbelief flee away and the day of glory breaks, our heavenly Lover is in the secret place of intercession. While we are here in the world, yielding to God and walking in the light and helping others, Jesus is praying for us that we may overcome every obstacle. The mountain of myrrh speaks of Christ's suffering, which is the basis of the fragrance and effectiveness of every petition of His, as well as ours.

"Thou art all fair, my Love; there is no spot in thee. Come with me from Lebanon, my Spouse" - 4:7, 8. This entire chapter is a deep appreciative description of the Shulamite by Solomon. The former lesson closed with verse five. He addressed her as "my fair One," "my dove," and repeatedly as "my love." But in our present study, he speaks of her six times as "spouse." This indicates a much deeper mutual attachment and suggests betrothal. Therefore, the king invites the Shulamite to look at all things from his point of view. Lebanon means "very white," because its eastern ridge is covered with perpetual snow. "Amana" means "integrity and truth." Shenir signifies "coat of mail, or armor." Hermon means "destruction" or "let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8). Now that she is to be his bride, he wants her no longer to be concerned chiefly about her complexion and service (ch. 1:5, 6), nor about his activities (ch. 2:9-17). He wants her to view every thing and everybody from the standpoint of whiteness or purity, integrity and truth; and herself as being armored or equipped and as freed from every curse.

Just so our heavenly Lover deals with us. He shows His deep love, and seeks our close fellowship; but we act a little indifferent to it. We are too busy quelling quarrels, or writing articles. We are occupied with others, while He is wanting our worship. So He tries us. Jesus makes as if He would leave us. He does not answer prayer. Heaven's door seems closed. Then we realize the reason, and begin to worship Him and magnify His grace; and presently we feel His nearness and love again.

CONQUERING DEVOTION

"Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck" - 4:9.

What a forceful and true picture this is of the love Christ has for His people! He is ever calling them apart from their own feelings of unworthiness to behold their worthiness in Him. He invites them from their activities, even tho they are for Him, to be alone with Him. We have our view of people, of events, of movements, of times, because we look from too low a standpoint. Christ wants us to see as He sees. He wants us to see ourselves as He sees us, even in Himself. Hence, He exclaims, "Thou art all fair, my Love; there is no spot in thee." As His fair, lovely, spotless

one, He invites us to behold all things from the Divine viewpoint of heavenly purity and revealed truth, counting ourselves equipped with heavenly armor and free forever from every "curse of the law", namely, from sin, sickness, and death.

Then, as we yield to and believe Him, we hear His more lavish words of endearment. If we gaze upon Him steadfastly, He answers back, "Thou hast ravished or taken away, my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck", of loving strength. It seems hard for saints to believe that Jesus so deeply loves His people. They cannot comprehend such lavish personal affection from the Son of God. They seem to forget that He is also "the Son of Man," with a human heart and affections and desires. He is a real Man, though now a glorified Man.

If we will believe that Jesus loves us so deeply and wishes to draw us to Himself for fellowship and companionship and personal enjoyment, and begin, like John, to lean on His bosom, we shall soon experience His profound love for us. Many, very many, of God's dear children are frettedly occupied with service, unscripturally burdened with work for Him; and know little, or nothing about the real personal love of the Lord for them. The growing sense of His love for me creates in me an increasing longing for my brethren also to experience this love. "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse. How much better is thy love than wine, and the smell of thine ointments than all spices"- 4:10. The beloved continues his blandishments. He has not yet fled to the mountains of myrrh. He never will as long as his friend responds to his devotions. In 1:3, she eulogized his name, comparing it to "good ointments poured forth." By being with him, she became like him and partook of those good ointments. Her love to him was the root of the fragrance which was far more to him than all manner of spices.

In the antitype this love is, of course, the love of the new creation. We count our own life dead. "Christ liveth in me." Wine exhilarates but love satiates. Wine is only for the moment, but love abides. There is much religious exhilaration that does not satisfy the heart of God. There is the deep hidden, quiet affection of the yielded heart that charms the heart of the heavenly Bridegroom. "Thine ointments" here suggest the anointing with the Spirit as do the spices of verses 13 and 14. When saints are filled and clothed with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, they emit a pleasing odor to the Lord -- "for of Christ a sweet perfume we are to God in those being saved and in those perishing"-- II Corinthians 2:15.

"Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under thy tongue" - 4:11. Nothing is sweeter than honey. No food is purer than milk and honey. The words of the Shulamite were sweet and pure beyond all comparison. Is it possible that the words of our mouths can be sweet to Jesus? David said to the Lord, "Thy words are sweeter than honey, or the drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19). But oh, how wonderful that we may be so given up to the Lord and so walk in the Spirit that our language will be sweetness and comfort to Him. Yes, He can behold a deeper devotion than we can express, even that which is under the tongue.

"And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." The bride expressed her warm affection for her beloved by her attire. She dressed to please him. Pine, oak, and cedar trees grew on mount Lebanon. It also abounded in figs, olives, vines, mulberries, and flowers. The sweet odor of the attire of the fair one was like the incomparable fragrance from that mountain. The righteousness of faith is the raiment of saints, which is the imputed righteousness of Christ Himself. Bridal saints repudiate all self-righteousness or that of the law, but insist on being clothed with "the righteousness, which is of God by faith" -- Phil. 3:9. We find the Bridal wardrobe in Col. 3:12-14 -- "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness,

humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above (over) all these things, put on love (charity), which is the bond of perfectness." This kind of clothing attracts the heavenly Bridegroom.

GARDEN OF THE LORD

"A garden enclosed is my Sister, my Spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." 4:12.

This verse with the three following are a marvelous description of the Shulamite as she appears to the king in her entire separation from all others and her devotion to him. It was written to convey to us deep and precious typical teaching. It is evident that the garden of the Lord speaks of a choice company of believers.

The Bridal saints are a "garden" of beauty, of aroma, and fruitfulness; but she is "enclosed," that is, she is for Christ alone. She is as "a spring" which brings to Him continual refreshing by satisfying His deep thirst for love. She is "shut up;" that is, Christ is her only Lover. All her stream of affection is poured out on Him. If she loves others, it is only an expression of her deep love for Him.

Oh, what a deep heart estimate Christ holds of His Bride. As she beholds Him and becomes changed from glory to glory and more and more partakes of His nature and takes Him as her life, she becomes "a fountain," abundantly satisfying the profoundest longings of His tender Bridegroom heart. Who of us is so appropriating Christ and so utterly depending upon Him and so wholly occupied with Him that we thus satisfy His loving heart? The Bride company will be a rare company indeed. How can anyone expect to be a part of it without a thorough and suitable preparation?

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits; camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, etc." - 4:13, 14. These verses explain the character, fullness, and richness of the garden. It seems to enlarge into an orchard of paradise. Solomon saw in his choice one, all the noblest traits and qualities which a woman can possess. There was no lack in her whatever. What a picture of the perfection of the Bride of Christ. There is also a strong implication of the anointing with the Holy Spirit. In Ex. 30:22-32, we find the ingredients of the holy anointing oil with which Moses anointed Aaron and his sons and the tabernacle and its furniture. Three principle spices - "pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, and sweet calamus," which are mentioned in our present study are named there; and together with "cassia" and "oil olive", constituted that which God said should be a holy anointing oil unto Him throughout their generations. That was not to be counterfeited nor its effects imitated; and it could be poured on the new creation only. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured; neither shall ye make any like it," not even to smell thereto - Ex. 30:32, 38. The lesson is this:

We cannot possess the sweet, aromatic, soothing, gentle, healing qualities which these spices indicate except we be anointed with the Holy Spirit and constantly drink in Christ by His gentle and mighty enablings. How can we exhibit "the fruit of the Spirit -- love, joy, peace, and the rest of the fruit of the Spirit, except we are filled with the Holy Spirit? We never can! Our own natural sweetness, gentleness, patience, and goodness, however amiable we may be, are of no avail to God. Flesh is flesh, and "all flesh is grass," whether it be good or bad. Only the aromatics diffused into us by the Presence and power of the heavenly Apothecary (Ex. 30:25) can adorn the

Bride and make her acceptable to the Bridegroom. The Divine standard is "the righteousness which is of God by faith" and "the fruit of the Spirit," also by faith. Philippians 3:9; Galatians 6:22, 23.

USEFULNESS OF THE GARDEN

"A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" - 4:15.

Verse 12 expressed Solomon's view of his fair one as separated from all others and devoted to him and living for him alone - "enclosed, shut up, and sealed." In this verse, he beholds her in relation to others by being united to him. She was destined to be a great channel of special blessing and comfort to the people of his realm. Jesus said, "Behold the lilies, how they grow." Saints who keep yielding to the Lord and fill up on His Word develop from "a garden enclosed" for Him to enjoy, into "a fountain of gardens" to feed others for His glory. They swell from a "spring shut up" for Christ's refreshing, into "a well of living waters" to quench the burning thirst of other saints to His praise. They, as "a fountain sealed," become gushing "streams from Lebanon" - pure, cool, refreshing, invigorating to all the land. Spiritfilled, full overcomers, or growing saints are identified with the "rivers of living water," or the Holy Spirit, with which they are anointed. Oh, how wonderful is the Word of God!

"Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south. Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" - 4:16. This verse agrees with the preceeding one. The king desires that the aroma and charm of his dearest friend may become manifest throughout his kingdom. He challenges the envy and criticism from the daughters and virgins against his spouse, as well as invites the compliments of her friends. These two opposing conditions would give notoriety to what he saw in her, as pictured by the fountain of gardens.

Our heavenly Bridegroom uses similar providence to make halfhearted believers know the real worth of His choice saints. In the natural, the hot south winds would burn up the garden, and the cold north winds would freeze it out. Both are needed to complement each other. Likewise, the warm winds of commendation, compensation and comfort would ruin us by themselves. No one can stand flattery nor unbroken prosperity. On the other hand, unlesened trial and persecution would destroy us. Who can endure unceasing hardship, or defeat, or discouragement? Yet, all these vicissitudes are necessary to our symmetrical growth in the things of God.

"Tribulation worketh patience," which is the way to the throne. As Jesus did, so we learn obedience by the things which we suffer. The north winds of adversity prepare us for the warm south breath of our Father's care and comfort, which we would never learn otherwise.

Paul said, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." By these varying experiences, the fruit of the Spirit in its ninefold beauty and fullness is exemplified in us and flows out from us like "all chief spices" from a perfectly planned and cultivated garden. Then our heavenly Gardener comes into His garden and eats of His "pleasant fruits" and is satisfied.

As we yield to the inward wooing's, promptings, and workings of the Holy Spirit - as we hearken diligently to God's Voice in the written Word and take every providence as from His tender hand for us - we become increasingly pleasing to Him and make His heart rejoice to the uttermost. Thus, we are being prepared for the glorious wedding in the air; and, at the same time are bearing the fullest witness of Christ to mankind.

CHRIST'S FIRST ADVENT

Not to condemn the sons of men
Did Christ, the Son of God, appear.
No weapons in His hands are seen,
No flaming sword nor thunder there.
Such was the pity of our God,
He loved the race of man so well,
He sent His Son to bear our load
Of sin and save our souls from hell.
Sinners, believe the Saviour's Word;
Trust in His mighty Name and live.
A thousand joys His lips afford,
His hands a thousand blessings give.

THE LAST TEST OF LOVE

Chapter Five

Satisfied With Affection

"I am come into my garden, my Sister, my Spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk" - 5:1.

These words are Solomon's reply to the request of his friend to "come into his garden," as expressed in chapter 4:16. They show the continuation of two facts; namely, that she has a warm admiration for him, but he has the profoundest love for her. She speaks many words of approbation and admiration to others about him; but he addresses to her the sweetest and most endearing words of loving appreciation and satisfaction. He wants her, but she does not yet wholly want him. His desire for her is unchanging; her desire for him is somewhat intermittent. She has had much to say about her suffering and toil, and about his activities; but he has spoken only of what she is herself, not a word about her toil.

How this should speak to us that our Lord's desire is for us rather than for our labors! Jesus wants us. He seeks constantly our companionship. Why did Enoch walk with God? Because God wanted his companionship, and he was pleased to have fellowship with God. There is nothing said about his service for God. Abraham believed God's promises to him. Several times he is called "the friend of God." He is the "father of us all, " a "father of many nations." Several chapters in Genesis and elsewhere are devoted to his biography, but where do we read of him serving God? We do read of him that he spent many hours of communication and fellowship with God. And, of course, he served God with his whole being. All we who are "the children of Abraham" by faith in Jesus, should walk in his footsteps, seeking first of all friendship and fellowship with the Lord.

Solomon's enjoyment of his friend seemed perfect. He gathered and ate and drank of her affection to his utter satisfaction. Oh, how the Lord must enjoy our worship of Him, our adoration of His Name, and our praises of His grace! The pain of persecution and the bitterness of His death (spice and myrrh) are more than offset by the sweetness of our joyous fellowship and the intoxication of the fullness of Pentecost and our feeding on His Word. He loves to be intoxicated

with "the sacrifice of praise," even "the fruit of our lips." O, let us "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"!

"Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O Beloved." His spouse calls upon others to enjoy her fellowship. That seems like a little interference in her fellowship with her beloved. She is not quite entirely taken up with him. Why should she be concerned with friends? Is not her beloved everything to her? Then she quickly sees her mistake; hence, in the same breath, she turns to him and with double emphasis exclaims, "Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." A look of surprise and slight disappointment checked her invitation to the friends. Oh, how jealous is our heavenly Bridegroom. It hurts His heart when He shows us such profound love and intricate concern, and assures us of His enjoyment of our worship, and then we suddenly become occupied with other friends.

AFFECTION SLUMBERING

"I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh" - 5:2.

The aforementioned jangle in their courtship seemed to send Solomon away. She became weary and sought rest. However, he desired her company so greatly that he returned quickly and sought entrance into their courtship parlor. His rap at the door and his pleading voice aroused her sufficiently to make her dream of him - "my heart waketh." And marvel at the tender titles of endearment - "Open to me, my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my Undefined; for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night." The king did not go home that night. He wandered around, sad and sick at heart. He seems to have forgotten his hat, because he left her so suddenly. Certainly this is a photograph of some believers' frequent treatment of the Lord. They yield to indifference even to sleepiness; though His wooing's awaken them to daydream about Him. We should be so wide awake to the love of Jesus, and so sensitive to His whisperings, that He need never call loudly and knock at our hearts. Indeed, we should dwell constantly in His presence, counting by faith that "the Lord is at hand." We should blush with shame that we ever make our heavenly Lover feel any measure of coldness or distance, or the absence of love from us - even by being occupied with our work for Him.

But it seems difficult to believe that He calls us by such endearing titles as those above. We will not believe that we are indeed Christ's "Sister," though we know that we are begotten of the same Father; nor that we are truly His "Love," though we have the "love of the Father in us." We cannot grasp it that we are Christ's Dove, though we have been anointed with the Holy Spirit who is symbolized by the dove. Who dare believe that we are the Lord's "Undefined," and actually "sanctified in Christ Jesus"? Why not?

Listen to the thrilling words of the New Covenant prophet, Paul - "I am ,jealous over you with the jealousy of God; for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ" - II Cor. 11:2. Some are beguiled by the subtilty of Satan, even as was Eve, and become "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." That is, they draw away from dependence upon His strong and loving arm. They become independent toward our new Head, Christ. They do not feel deserving of such sweet names as sister and love and dove and undefined. These are the saints who will miss the Bridehood of Christ. Oh, let us fervently receive the above comfort and caution of the apostle, and profit by the Shulamite's drowsiness toward Solomon.

"I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" - 5:3. This is no doubt the king speaking. The word "coat" is a man's outer garment. It is from the Hebrew word "kethoneth," a tunic, or a long coat. Joseph's "coat of many colors" is from the same Hebrew word. The priests' coats in Moses' time were also the same -- Exodus 28. It is employed twenty times as a man's garment. Only once is it said to be worn by a woman - II Samuel 13:18, 19. In this place, it is also translated "robe" and the same also in Isaiah 22:21. The word "garments" in 4:11, is "salmah" in Hebrew.

Solomon expected an immediate entrance to his friend's quarters. He was worthy of it. If she loved him as he did her, she would be awake and looking for him. Hence, he had put off his robe or outer garment, and had washed his dusty feet. He had even put his hand through the opening in the door; but he received no response. Again his tender heart was pained. She was too slow. Her love for him did not yet find him absolutely necessary to her. Therefore, when he was absent, she became a little indifferent. She was half asleep when he knocked. She hesitated to answer when he spoke. He supposed he was not wanted; so he quickly withdrew. She afterward confessed, "My soul failed when he spake."

This is the attitude of Jesus toward His people always. He constantly expects from us the warmest welcome to His deepest heart of love. And though we let Him depart temporarily, yet He supposes that we are waiting and watching for His return. And He hopes that there will be no hesitancy to grant Him entrance when He does come. His temporary withdrawal does sometimes cause indifference. We should long for His continued presence, and covet His companionship. Let us follow the example of Mary, who "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word." You need not fear that her crowd will be too great. Mary does not have many rivals. She is not very well known. There is room for you and me. Peter is far better known than Mary. Nevertheless, she was the one who anointed the Lord for His burial. Later, she filled the banquet hall with the odor of her precious ointment, which typifies the Bride at the wedding in the air. John 12:3. Personal attention to the Lord greatly delights His heart. Let us delight Him more. Let us not disappoint Him. Let neither labor in His vineyard, nor laziness of affection hinder our relationship with Him. Let us seek to please Him by our love rather than by our labor. Let us seek to "win Christ," rather than, to win some laurels here. It is far better to be indifferent to everything and everybody than to be indifferent in any measure to Christ. It is better to seem cool to people than cold to the love of Jesus.

A TARDY RESPONSE

"I rose up to open to my Beloved; and my hands dropped myrrh,
and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock" - 5:5.

The fair lady had no doubt been preparing for bed and had finished her manicuring before retiring. On waking out of her daydreams at the sound of her friend's voice, she was still admiring her beautiful hands and her dainty fingers, thinking how attractive they would be to her friend. Instead of hastening to answer the call, she gazed into the mirror and was stroking her hands, while moving indifferently with complacent delight toward the bolted door. When she reached the door, he had gone.

Self-occupation grieves the Lord. He does not want us to ever be condemning ourselves. If we have failed, let us confess it to Him, and pass right on in victory, believing that He does

forgive us and forgets our mistake. We also need to forgive ourselves and forget. Neither does He want us to sit in admiration of our gifts or our service for Him. We may have natural gifts and acquired abilities with which to toil and glorify our dear Lord. For these we are to be always grateful to God; but we must keep our eyes on the Giver instead of the gift, and on the Blessor instead of the blessing.

We dare not even become occupied with our future place and rewards, at the expense of our devotion to Jesus Christ. It is not what we are in Him, nor what He has made us, that should absorb our attention, but Christ Himself. If we become fascinated with our own beauty instead of His, He will seem to be absent. We wonder what has caused a sense of distance between us and Him. It is all because we were taken up with something about ourselves, instead of looking steadfastly unto Jesus and keeping in communion with Him.

"I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone: my soul failed when he spake; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer" - 5:6. The withdrawal of Solomon was because his lady was more concerned about herself than about him. He had stood outside the door quite long enough for her to arise and dress to receive him. He did not care for the myrrh falling on the doorknob. He wanted her to open the door and shower him with the perfume of her fervent love. Disheartened with her self-occupation, he fled. His heart was hurt.

This is sad enough. And what wound is deeper than wounded love? What grief is greater than disappointed affection? What sadness is heavier than that caused by indifference to expected attention and devotion? Physical pain and mental agony are not to be compared with the pangs of a heart of lacerated love. And this is the way some of us are treating the Lord Jesus Christ. We may shout His praises, tell of His mighty power, relate some wonderful thrilling events, but we find little time to wait with Him and really listen to Him and pour our heart's love upon him. We do not find time to ponder over His precious Word until we become saturated with His very Spirit, and filled with a deep, sweet, subduing, melting, unspeakable sense of His loving presence. We do not wait on Him until we experience a profound inexplicable assurance of His love and concern for us. Perhaps some of us have even become cold towards His mighty works and the progress of His purposes in the earth.

I tell you, my friend, when you are finding it difficult to get the ear of God, it may be because you have deeply grieved the Spirit. Your carnal zeal or your lethargy has cut a deep gash in the heart of the Lord Jesus. He will let you alone until you simply cannot get along without Him. You may have dozed while He sought you in the dark, damp night of the world and soiled His hallowed feet passing through its filthy streets.

"The watchmen that went about the city found me; they smote me; they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" - 5:7. The Shulamite ran out into the night after her Lover. She forgot about her beautiful hands and delicate fingers; but it was not time for her to be going about the city. She had been out one other night - 3:3. The watchmen had warned her that time to stay indoors at night. Now that she was out again, they chastised her. The keepers of the walls took away her veil of modesty and purity, which left her apparently like a "street walker." She should have stayed at home until her Beloved called again.

Whenever saints become preoccupied with their gifts, or toil, or sufferings, they are apt to mingle with others who are not spiritual. Sometimes they tell their feelings to those who are considered spiritual watchmen and ask counsel of them. Being slightly out of fellowship with the

Lord, they hope to find their way back through the supposed spiritual advisors. But, instead of being comforted by the religious watchmen, they are smitten by them. Instead of being healed of their troubles, they are wounded more deeply. They are criticized for taking up with the deeper things of God. They are accused of being overmuch righteous and told that it is not necessary to live such a separated, self-denying, self-sacrificing life. Or they take away their veil of chastity.

The veil speaks of complete separation from the world. It also speaks of the betrothal to Christ as the One Head, or Husband. Rebekah put a veil over herself when she saw Isaac approaching. She outwardly acknowledged by this sign that she was willing to become his wife. See Gen. 24:65. We also read that the woman praying or prophesying with her head covered (I Cor. 11) has the same deep meaning.

The Church was espoused by Paul to one Husband, even Christ - II Cor. 11:2. Jesus wants our closest fellowship, our warmest devotion, even bridal affection. Now, if we lose the sense of His presence, through occupation with our service, or our sufferings, and seek counsel from unspiritual guides, they will take away our veils, because we treat them as heads. We give to them the place that belongs to our Beloved Lord. We act as if we were seeking the fellowship of another man. We become guilty of spiritual adultery. What a sorry plight. If we feel a sense of distance from the Lord, let us wait for Him at home.

"I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of, (or from) love." - 5:8. At night, the Shulamite went in search of her friend, but was buffeted by city officials. By day, she inquired after him among her lady friends. One would think that she would not humiliate herself so, but her deep love when awakened to its folly and neglect, overrode all thoughts and reflections of others. People who are seriously ill want the doctor immediately. Only her Beloved could heal her torn heart.

Is it possible that a believer can be so carried away with personal attainments, ministries, or grievances, as to slight the worship of God? Is it possible that such a one will run to those less spiritual for help? Yes, that actually happens. How unwise is such a course. How unworthy of our Beloved Lord. The Shulamite should have stayed indoors and waited for the return of her friend. Likewise, when saints become fretted with a feeling of separation from Jesus, they should give themselves to prayer and reading of the Word. He is not as far away as He may seem to be. Hunting for Him in meetings, other than your home meeting (if your assembly is Scriptural), only widens the breach. Christ is not here and there, on the street, or among the daughters. He is at home. He is not lost. You need not hunt for Him. "Wait on the Lord" are the prophet's words to us. Also, wait for the Lord. Give Him time to reappear.

AFFECTION QUESTIONED

"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?" - 5:9, R. V.

This question was put to the Shulamite by the daughters of Jerusalem, because she was in search of her Friend. She had given them a charge twice before, but of a different character. See chapters 2:7 and 3:5. In the former charges, she cautioned them not to disturb either her love, nor the love of the King. In this one, she begs them to inform the King of her breaking heart for him. Now the daughters inquire as to what she sees in Solomon more than in other men, or other rulers. Observe a remarkable admission -- they regard her the "fairest among women." They

are impressed by her beauty, as being super-excellent. They wonder that such a woman as she would be sick from love for Solomon.

Our first lesson is this: the Holy Spirit overrules any indifference in us toward the Lord, or any neglect of devotion. He convicts us and awakens in our hearts a deeper longing for Him than before. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," David wrote - Psalm 84:2. And He answers that cry. If we profit by our mistakes, they become stepping stones to progress. If we learn our lesson from bitter experience, our Beloved comforts us and presses us closer than ever to His bosom. However, He expects that we will sometime, and that soon, become steadfast in our devotion to Him without any measure of indifference, or preoccupation with other things. Christ must become first in all things in our lives.

Note the second lesson. As this lady in our story stands paramount in beauty, so there is a company of saints, who are paramount in piety. Other saints admit that they are more spiritual, more advanced in Divine things, and know the Scriptures better than they do.

This company is known to believe God in simplicity and to be in full sympathy with all His will and workings. They live unselfishly for the good of others; and what is especially marked about them is that they are devoted to Christ Himself. Their devotion to Him is not chiefly for service, but for their love for what He is Himself and for His tender and deep attention to them personally. Out of the depths of their hearts, they exclaim, "We love Him because He first loved us." They do not speak or sing this way by habit nor because others do, but it is a profound reality to them. Their yieldedness to God and their fellowship with Christ may not be perfect in His sight; yet they are so far beyond other believers, that they are counted "the fairest among women." Dear Reader, are you in this class? If not, why not?

The Shulamite's charge aroused the curiosity of the daughters. Hence, their question, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" What do you see in Solomon that we do not see? If we run after Christ, lured by His love, captured by His care, enamored by His endearments; others will also be stirred to run after Him. Some will accuse such believers as being overly righteous, or fanatical. Others, out of envy, will seek a blemish in us. But God be thanked! others will be drawn Christward by an irresistible, unseen cord until they, too, are swallowed up with Him. The effectual way to win others to Christ is to keep occupied with Him and strive to win Him as the "Prize of the high calling" at the end of the race.

The third lesson is that the question of the daughters sound like a slam at Solomon. Was he indeed different from other men? Was he a better man, a wiser king? Or was the Shulamite so charmed by him that her love blinded her to the real man? Perhaps there was a little envy back of the question. The fact is, the daughters did not know Solomon as she did. God had chosen him to be king over Israel and had bestowed upon him special wisdom for the office.

The Shulamite woman became acquainted with him quite intimately by being in his company often. She learned to appreciate him deeply, and she loved him dearly. Likewise, some saints wonder why others make so much ado about our Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot understand the heart melting, will-subduing, all-absorbing devotion manifested in some believers. "Come down out of the clouds," they exclaim. "You talk like you were one of the Lord's pets." Mary of Bethany was one of those "pets", and her sister upbraided her for seeking the Master's presence continually.

Why is it? It is because some believers really learn the super excellencies of Christ by being much in His presence through prayer and study of His Word. They believe what He has to say to

them and of them. Salvation from sin is all that the majority of saints experience. Others go a step further and experience an anointing with the Spirit and perhaps a touch of healing. They know Him as the Savior and look upon Him as the mighty miracle Worker; but they have not learned Him as a warm and devoted Friend, a bosom companion, a tender, loving, ever-present Arm of comfort and strength. And the idea of Him as Bridegroom is far from their thoughts.

And why? Because they do not seek Him with all their heart, and because, when He seeks them to bring them close to Himself to reveal His innermost self to them and His will and purpose for them, they draw back. They fear it will cost them too much. They begin to smell the fire of hot persecution. The flesh shrinks from sharp separation. They do not abide long enough in His presence and fellowship to be overwhelmed with His super excellencies. They do not experience His ardent love for them. It seems that they have never heard Christ say, "My Darling," to them, "My only one." Psalm 22:20 and 35:17. Beloved Reader, how is it with you?

PORTRAIT OF HER BELOVED

"My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. 5:10.

The slight indifference, or preoccupation of the fair lady worked good for her. She learned to appreciate her Friend so much more. Therefore, when interrogated by the daughters about her love for him, she was moved to give a ninefold heart-description of her Beloved. This is found in the remaining verses of chapter five.

First, the Shulamite described the beautiful complexion of Solomon. He is "white." Then she spoke of his health and vigor. He is "ruddy," of red, vibrant health. We may thus know the Lord. White speaks of holiness, which is Christ's beauty. David longed to dwell in God's house and "behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." He prayed also, saying, "Let the beauty (or pleasantness) of the Lord our God be upon us" -- Psalm 27:4; 90:17. He declared the Lord to be "the health of his countenance" (Psalm 42:11) and "the saving strength of His anointed" - Psalm 28:8. How precious to know Christ as indeed the Holy and Strong One. Holiness is His chief charm. It radiates from Him and captures bridal saints. Then the Shulamite compared her Friend with others. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." The R.V. says "Marked out by a banner." The number "ten thousand" was a common number of great comparison or of contrast. Thus David exceeded Saul in war- fare - I Samuel 21:11. Paul thus magnified his fatherly care and the value of God's Word - I Cor. 4:15; 14:19. Hence, in the Shulamite's eye, there was none to compare with her Beloved. None could carry the nation's banner like Solomon. What an imposing picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved Reader, is Jesus the Chiefest One to you? Has He the warmest place in your affections? Does He occupy the throne room of your counsels? Is He all in all to you?

THE PORTRAIT DETAILED

"His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy and black as a raven " - 5:11.

The head speaks of intelligence, nobility, lore, position, and authority. Being of gold it indicates the deity of our Lord. It suggests His holy intelligence and wisdom and is prophetic of His reign over the nations. The reign of Nebuchadnezzar was only transient. The glitter of his reign was brief and perished shortly. But the golden rod of the Son of Man will never lose its luster, nor

pass away. The bushy black hair speaks of beautiful, vigorous manhood. Jesus was all this when He laid down His life for the redemption of the human race. It was not while He was of yet a tender age; nor did He wait until He became wearied with years of toil. In the bloom of His vigorous manhood, Jesus put away our sins and brought forth a new creation from the grave. He will never change from that vigorous, healthy, splendid state. He will bear the matured bloom of manhood and never grow old.

"His eyes are as of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set" - 5:12. The doves' eyes are very keen and far-seeing. If she is away from home and in a strange place, she ascends and gazes until she locates the direction of her home, and then swiftly flies in that direction. Solomon's sight was keen. He could see his foes afar off. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. "Dove's eyes" indicate that Jesus searched and saw by the enabling's of the Spirit. His discoveries were from above. He read nothing, probed nothing, saw nothing with a fleshly eye. He beheld as His Father did. He looked at every object and providence in the light of the Scripture. They were "washed with milk," the pure milk of the Word. They were clean and clear and sparkling. Yes, His eyes were fitly set, or "set in fulness." He possessed a full vision of every object and a full understanding of all things. Jesus' eyes were in the right place in His head, fitly set. That speaks of His rightly dividing the Word of truth. He also discerned His friends and foes, reading the love of the one and the treachery of the other.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers ..." 5:13. They stand out full and flush. This implies life and health. Their appearance is beautiful. They emit a fragrance, or perfume. In the margin they are regarded as "towers of perfume," or "banks of sweet herbs." R.V. It was said of Jesus in the natural, "He hath no form, nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Isaiah 53:2. But, to faith, in the Spirit, He is most attractive. The perfume of His face makes one feel as though he were in the presence of flowers of the sweetest odors. Let us stay in His presence until we become so saturated with this Divine aroma that we shall subconsciously cast it upon others. The flowers suggest the fragrance of Christ's holiness, which appeals to the scent of spiritual people.

"His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh" - 5:13. She had kissed her Beloved. That is how she knew about his lips. (chapter 1:2). There is a peculiar richness, softness and sweetness to a lily. This makes it charmingly beautiful. The myrrh-like odor of a lily is exquisitely sweet. The very appearance of lily-like lips must therefore be exceedingly attractive and expressive. They are the outward expression of inward affection. They are also the communicative members of such affection, as it is written, "So will we render the calves of our lips." Hosea 14:2. We will offer to the Lord fervent praise and adoration for graciously pardoning our sins and receiving us to Himself. How much sweeter to us are the words of Christ, when we know Him as our Bridegroom!

"His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl. . . ." 5:14. The Shulamite has forgotten about her own myrrh-dropping hands. The Revised Version says, "cylinders of gold," or wide bands of gold. The Hebrew word "galil" is translated "ring" in only one other place - Esther 1:6. The hangings in the Shushan palace were fastened to "silver rings and pillars of marble." This use of the word and the fact that the word also means "cylinder" indicate that they speak of strength. The hand figures power, either to work, or to war. It is also the instrument of authority and also of comfort. The beryl or topaz is the arrow stone, the hardest substance for cutting that was known to the ancients. Solomon's hands appeared to his fair lady like strong, wide golden bands,

beautified with a setting of sparkling beryl, topaz, or chrysolite. In chapter 2:6, we heard her say, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." She is held by the strength of his mighty hand. She is eternally secure.

What pen pictures these are of our heavenly Bridegroom! In His Head, we behold holy, divine wisdom, verse 11. In His eyes, we see divine discernment, verse 12. By His cheeks, we are awed with the fragrance and sweetness of His holy character, verse 13. Then from His lips of love, drop words of myrrh-like tenderness. Now our eyes fall upon His hands, the instruments of never-failing comfort, strength, ministry, and defense. The gold speaks to us of Christ's unchangeable deity and glory. The cylinders speak of His all-sufficient power. Its ring-like appearance declares the eternity of that power; for a ring has no ending. Then the beryl announces the flinty endurance of Christ's service and the unwearying care and comfort for His own. Symmetrical, beautiful, powerful, wonderful, and glorious are His hands. So many precious things are said of the Lord's hands in the Bible. For example: "Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand." Psalm 89:13. "For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." Psalm 95:7. "His body is as bright ivory work, overlaid (or encrusted) with sapphires" - 5:14, R.V. Certainly the lady of our song has lost sight of her own attractiveness, being charmed by the grandeur of her Beloved. Ivory is a hard, white, bony substance. Sapphire is a very beautiful stone, sky blue, or red and blue and yellow mixed; and exquisite blend. It is incomparably precious. Job 28:16. What a beautiful description the Shulamite gave of the king's body!

This is a marvelous picture of the body of our glorified Lord. Paul calls it "His glorious body," or "the body of His glory" - Philippians 3:21. How wonderfully glorious He will be. His entire body will appear like the brightest ivory, polished and firm, encrusted, not simply set with one sapphire stone, but overlaid with variegated sapphires of the most charming beauty. It will seem like a huge form of exquisite beauty and dazzling light. People think that it is wonderful to receive a small diamond; but our heavenly Bridegroom will be covered with gems, sparkling bright and glorious. This all speaks of the unchangeableness of the character and glory of our Lord and of the fixedness of His eternal purposes. His grandeur will abide.

"His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold" 5:15, R.V. We can hardly understand how a woman could give such a graphic description of her friend. It shows that the writing of this song was Divinely inspired. The spiritual lessons are the important features. The pillars of marble speak of our Lord's firm standing. The sockets of gold suggest His holy, Divine life. He is the holy Son of God. His Divine life is the basis of His standing. His eternal Deity is the absolute foundation for His eternal humanity. All that He is now stands on the basis of what He was. His perfection is His standing. Strong, firm, immoveable, grand and glorious will be our heavenly Bridegroom, and the Bride will be safe and glorious with Him.

"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars" - 5:15. Solomon's charming, broad Jewish face shone with love for his fair one. She had entreated him, saying, "Let me see thy countenance." 2:14. Now her desire is granted, and she cannot find adequate words to describe him. She calls on nature to help her. The mountains of Lebanon were the most picturesque and sublime, the highest and grandest of any in Palestine. They always speak of the majesty, greatness and unchangeableness of Jehovah. Their perpetual snow-covered crowns speak of His eternal existence, and purity and incomparable glory. Hence, we read that "His head and hairs are white like wool, as white as snow, and His countenance as the sun that shineth in his strength; and the

earth was lightened with His glory." Rev. 1:14, 16; 18:1. The tall cedars which graced the mountains of Lebanon, declare the superexcellence of the effulgent face of our Lord as the Son of Man, our coming Bridegroom. Lebanon speaks especially of Christ's Deity; but the cedars speak of His vigorous humanity. Those towering trees with their waving branches are the monarchs of the Judean forests. Likewise, Jesus Christ is destined to be the rightful Monarch of the heavens and the earth.

"His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely" - 5:16. This is the last stroke of the artist's brush of this wonderful ninefold picture of King Solomon. The Shulamite began with his head, compassed his whole body with its different members and returned whence she started. As the lips are the expression of affection and the confirmation thereof by its utterances, so she was not content with only the touch of love. She must hear him speak.

Just so it is with us and the Lord. We first admire His spiritual understanding. We are stilled by the discernment of His lovely, but piercing eyes. Then we are carried away with His kind comfort and strong ministries, the greatness and sublimity of His Person and the steadiness and fixedness of His eternal standing. We are awed by His countenance of glory and splendor. Finally, His mouth conquers us completely. He speaks tenderly, deeply, gently, soothing words of warmest comfort. It is enough. Like the Shulamite said of her Lover - "He is altogether lovely." There is no imperfection in Christ. He is perfect from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet. The old creation is full of blemishes; but there are none in our Beloved. There is not one unattractive or ugly thing in Him.

"This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." The Shulamite's answer to the question of the daughters was full and complete. They learned more than they expected. She showed them how her beloved was more than any other beloved. Then she sealed her witness of him by exclaiming enthusiastically, "This man is my beloved; this man is my friend. He satisfies me to the uttermost." Yes, at last she became wholly taken up with the King himself. She was no longer occupied with what he did, or where he went. She sang about Him.

That is what Christ yearns after in His people. Our heavenly Bridegroom longs for us to behold His excellencies and be swallowed up with His perfection and beauty. He wants our love, undivided and unchanging. Our fervent love for Him is far more to Him than our most strenuous labor. Our worship of Him is much more to Him than our warring for Him. A longing for the personal presence of Christ is far sweeter to His heart than a longing for His power. To sit at the Master's feet and learn the Word is better than to sit as chairman of a convention, or commander of a camp meeting. Indeed he that does not do the former is not qualified to do the latter. "He that winneth souls is wise," but he that winneth Christ is wiser. He who aims to gain Christ is sure to win souls. Such a one will receive the greatest reward, even "the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:14. Beloved Reader, what is your testimony today? Is it about your toil, or sacrifice, or holiness, or walk? Are you taken up in any measure with your beautiful myrrh-dropping fingers? Or are you all absorbed with Christ's personal character and loveliness? Is your testimony wholly of Him?

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth

his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cheriseth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His

THE PORTRAIT OF LOVE

CHAPTER SIX

Another Query Awakened

"Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?

Whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?" - 6:1.

In the preceding chapter, we saw that the daughters wondered what the fair maiden found so attractive in Solomon. Her rich, descriptive answer was effectual. It aroused in them a second question, even as to his whereabouts. They desired to become better acquainted with him.

It is always so. When we wholeheartedly describe our Beloved Lord, and tell what He is to us, others are attracted to Him. Others will seek after Him. It is noticeable that when people tell what they have done and suffered for the Lord, how far and with what difficulties they have traveled, and how coldly they have been received, and what wise things they have said to others; a heaviness and dryness comes over the meeting. All that may entertain the fleshly; but it never edifies the spiritual ones. It may superficially interest some and attract them to the speaker, but it is edifying to no one, and draws no one to Christ. How very different when one arises full of love for Jesus, and speaks only of Him. Immediately there comes a lifting, a refreshing, a happy delight, a wave of glory. Christ seems to stand in the midst. The power of the Spirit is manifest. Saints are helped. The lukewarm are awakened. Sinners are convicted. God is glorified. Every heart says, "Brother, come back and speak again." It reminds us of the words of John, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

That is just what we find here. The daughters have the utmost confidence in the Shulamite, calling her "the fairest among women;" and because of her devotion to her friend, and her warm, frank and full expressions of praise of him, they seek his company also. Furthermore, she is able to tell them where he is. Then immediately, her testimony about her Friend brings him to her side, with the deepest and most tender words of love. Your warm testimony of Jesus brings Him to your side at once with a warmer sense of His good pleasure. You will see Him.

"My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies" - 6:2. Solomon termed his fair one his garden, even a fountain of gardens - Chapter 3:14. Observe three things which the Shulamite states about the king in her answer to the daughters: Where he went, What he was doing, and his Relation to her. Study these points. They are for our practical good. You will not find our heavenly Bridegroom roving with the world's crowd. He is not present at the religious throng as many think Him to be. He could not be there and be consistent with His own character and teaching. Nay! You will find Him in His garden, by the beds of spices. He hungers, and can only find satisfaction in the garden. He feeds on the fruit of the Spirit in His people - "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" - Gal. 5:22, 23.

Reader, are you satisfying the hunger of the Lord, and quenching His thirst? Do you really love Jesus and express that love to Him? Do you really gladden His heart by your fervent praises

to Him? Does your heart "make melody unto the Lord?" Do you really patiently suffer with Christ and let no one know about it? May it be so with us more and more.

And you will still find Christ in the garden. He is there to gather lilies. And what are the lilies? They are the richest, softest, deeply white flowers of Palestine. Jesus said of them: "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Will you let Him gather you as a lily, without your toiling and spinning? Will you trust Him and love and worship Him? Where was the Shulamite? Why was she not gathering lilies? Ah, that is the work of the King. Here we are to love Him and wait on Him and make His character known to others. He does the gathering. So it should always be with us and our Bridegroom. We should witness of Him, and He gathers. He is pleased to use us in gathering the lilies, when we are pleased to abide with Him as faithful, fervent gathered ones. He desires to say of His people, "Behold the lilies, how they grow." They can grow, however, only in His presence and by His care and fellowship.

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feedeth among the lilies" - 6:3. These words indicate a marked degree of the increase of the love of the fair lady. Formerly she said, "My beloved is mine, and I am his" - 2:16. Her possession of him was paramount. His claim on her secondary. She loved him; but her love was not perfect, not unselfish, not without reservation then. Now, she puts him first - "I am my beloved's." But there is still some self-recognition, if not reservation. She adds, "And my beloved is mine." We shall see another and final step of full devotedness in the next chapter. Though she has lost sight of her own activities, yet she is still exercised about his activities - "He feedeth among the lilies." She wanted the daughters to know, not only the beautiful, attractive features and handsomeness of the person of her friend; but also that he was satisfied. He was living on love. The beauty of the lilies filled his vision. He would be a pattern husband. Any wonder after such an all-around eulogy, that the daughters desired to meet king Solomon?

Dear Reader, we begin to see who will make up the Bride Company of the Lamb. First, they who know Christ as "The Beloved One," even as the Father said, "This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him." That is far beyond knowing Jesus as Savior, or Healer, or Baptizer with the Spirit. The Bride Company are not admirers only of His gifts and achievements. Neither is He only one of many beloveds, as the daughters seem to think. He is Chief. And that is not all. Each of us must regard Him as "My Beloved," as if no one else called Him that. It is not enough to call Christ "the King," and say to Him, "the upright love thee" - Ch. 1:4. The Shulamite soon advanced from that distant attitude; and so must we. Three times she pronounced Solomon her beloved in the first part of the song. Otherwise this would not have been a love song, and it would not have typified Christ and His Bride. "My Beloved" is the keynote of the bridal anthem to be sung in glory. Another step, and the espoused one shouts, "I am My Beloved's!" In essence, she is saying, "I belong to no other. No man, however handsome and promising, shares my affection. I love only ONE, the only One. For His return I wait, and for the wedding in the air I am longing."

THE BELOVED'S PENCILING'S

"Thou art beautiful, O my Love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem,
terrible as an army with banners" - 6:4.

The profuse eulogy of the Shulamite concerning Solomon called forth from him a profuse eulogy of her. He would not be outdone. It is even so with our Lord. Our high praises and lofty terms of heart adoration concerning Him bring Him on the scene with the warmest and sweetest sense of appreciation. "They that honor me, I will honor," saith the Lord.

Tirzah was the fifth daughter of a great grandson of Joseph. Tirzah was also an ancient city in Canaan, which later became the residence of Jeroboam and his successors. I Kings 14:17, 18.

The word means "delight," or "she will delight." Those two cities, Tirzah and Jerusalem, were famous for their beauty and grandeur. It is said of Jerusalem, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Psalm 48:2. The King likened his fair lady to those cities. She would delight him to the uttermost; for no one could be compared to her. The word "terrible" means awe-inspiring. It is used frequently in speaking of Jehovah and rendered "reverend" - "holy and reverend is His name." Psalm 111:9.

Again, we are overwhelmed with the wonder of God's Word. Our heavenly Bridegroom calls the full-overcoming saints His "LOVE". He compares them to royal cities for beauty and grandeur. Kings dwelt and reigned in those renowned places. So Christ reigns in the lives of the overcomers. They are lovely and beautiful to Him, and He makes them to know it. They are also inspiring, because they partake of His Kingly spirit in view of their future queenhood. In Christ, such saints may truly be called "holy and reverend," because they possess His holy and sacred nature. They are indeed holy to God and "a terror to evil doers." But the modern use of the word "reverend" as a ministerial title, is an abomination to God. Solomon's address to the Shulamite was personal and private. It was not an official title that He gave to her. It was his heart estimation of her as his dearest friend. Likewise, as we wholly love and trust the Lord, He too speaks many comforting, precious and deep things to our hearts, which we cannot make public. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

THE IRONY OF LOVE

"Turn away thine eyes from me; for they have overcome me -- ." 6:5.

At a former visit, the King said to his Friend, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." 4:9. She took away his heart, as if to say, "What would happen to me if you fixed both eyes upon me?" Now his ironical question is answered. She no longer looked askance at him, but gazed upon him with both her "dove's eyes." Now her gaze rendered him powerless. But he did not really mean that, He was glad to be overcome with those lovely eyes. Yes, as the margin reads, "they puffed him up," not with Vanity, but with ecstasy. He would have been grieved deeply if she had turned her sweet face away, as he requested. Indeed, he was overjoyed with love's conquest. She delighted his heart exceedingly. A real lover desires to be overcome with the loving, sparkling look of the one he loves.

What a picture of Christ and His Bride! This figures the profound devotion which Jesus longs for from His people. "Mary sat at His feet and heard His word," and thus overcome Him with her attention. In turn, He appeared to her joy and in her defense against her critics. Paul fled into Arabia to be alone with the Lord, and was there for over three years. In that dry desert place, Paul, filled with the Spirit, gazed steadfastly into the face of the Son of God, until his own heart glowed with the fire of Divine grace. His face no doubt shone with the flame of Divine love and his anointed lips and pen boldly proclaimed the riches of grace and glory. The climax of this glory

will be, Christ, "the Prize of the high calling" - Phil. 3:14. As a result, we have before us the complete unfolding of the truth of the new creation, of which Christ is the Head, the Center and the Circumference. This all came to Paul because he held "a single eye to the glory of God." He fixed both his eyes on Him, and sought His love and fellowship. He "overcame" his Lord by his untiring devotion to Him everywhere. Of course Christ appeared to the apostle with the profoundest revelation of Himself and with the sweetest words of comfort. He gave to him the "full assurance of faith" as to his present standing and state, and the "full assurance of hope" as to his future place and reward. Hence, he declared at the last, "There is laid up for me a crown." O, my Fellow Believer, shall we let Mary and Paul only lavish unmixed and unmeasured love upon the Lord? Shall they only overcome Him? Why not we too fix our dove-lit eyes steadfastly upon our heavenly Solomon and compel Him by our very flaming affection and extravagant adoration to warmly commend us and reveal hidden secrets to us? Are you willing for the consequent "thorn in the flesh?" We hear of many organizations of various kinds; but no one seems to be ambitious to head an organization to ravish the Son of God with personal love. There is nothing showy in this. It is internal, profoundly hidden, supernaturally real, intensely spiritual, wholly Divine. Love cannot be organized. Love is free. Devotion cannot be controlled. Worship and fellowship cannot be circumscribed. Praise sings and swings, rises, rolls, and swells like the mighty ocean whose bosom seems to be ambitious to rise and meet the sun from whence it came. Oh, how our hearts surge with fervent emotion, flutter with longings to see our Lord, and would break the cage-wires of this earthly house and fly away to be forever with Him. (For the commentary on the remainder of verses 5, 6, and 7, see the notes on chapter 4:1-3).

THE BRIDEGROOM'S PUBLIC PLAUDIT

"There are threescore queens and fourscore concubines and virgins without number" - 6:8.

The Singer suddenly turns from addressing his special Friend and speaks to the audience in the highest terms concerning her. This is the first time he sang about her to others. Heretofore, all his song had words of appreciation directly to her alone. He had to have, first of all, her undivided attention, love and devotion. He must be assured that she gave him the first and only place in her heart, before he could give her the highest place before others. She must say to the inquisitive daughters, "I am my beloved's," and must capture him with both her entrancing eyes, before he can begin to commend her to the public.

How wonderful this is! How rich and marvelous is the Word of God! "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out." But for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, and hearts to receive, the blessed Holy Spirit searches and traces, "even the deep things of God" - I Cor. 2:10. Many children have been ruined by their parents' unwise and undue eulogies of them before strangers. Many beginners in grace have been Spoiled by other saints making too much of their gifts and service. They became lifted up with pride; then when God, by His providence, humbled them, they backslid and became bitter, or discouraged.

Beloved Reader, no doubt you have wondered why you have not been more appreciated, why you have not received more words of praise. If you receive genuine praise, then it is God's Public expression of His approbation and esteem. Ah, my bruised, rejected brother, your heavenly Bridegroom has something far better for you than human praise or acceptance. And you could not rightly appreciate the far better without His jealous, though severe training for it. The Lord

wants you first of all, and He wants you altogether and all the time. He wants you apart from others. Do you see it? Do You believe it? Which do you prefer, the present mixed emoluments of men with the lesser future reward, or the present rejection of men with future's eternal best? Which? The Lord will give us the prestige with men when we really deserve it and can bear it for His glory. We are now sharing His rejection. Someday, we will share His renown. Observe too that Solomon's public praise of his friend was shortly before their marriage. Likewise, we need not expect any banquet receptions, or palace car excursions on earth.

The Apostle Paul espoused us to Christ and set the pace for running to gain the Prize - Christ as Bridegroom. But he walked on land, or rode on freight ships, always imperiled. He was imprisoned three times and went to glory from the executioner's block. When His Lord declared Paul's character and worth, men refused to hear. They trembled at his words, but said that he was beside himself, and mad. Our grand excursion will be unseen and land us in the banquet room in glory.

THE BRIDAL ATTENDANTS

Observe that there were sixty queens, which implies a vast dominion under Solomon. However, none of them sat on his throne. They were subject to his rulership, associated with him, but under him. Sixty is man's governmental number: six, man's number, multiplied by ten. The sixty queens figure a rank of believers who will have a sphere of rulership under Christ's dominion. They will not reign as sitting on His immediate throne. They will be associated with Him, ruling as servants of His on individual thrones. They will be fully qualified and be able to fill their respective offices. There were eighty concubines. Let no one wonder at this; for those things "happened unto them for figures, and they are written for our admonition," I Cor. 10:11. It behooves us, then, to discover their figurative meaning. Eighty is the new creation number: eight, multiplied by ten, the number of ability. Now the concubines speak of fellowship. They suggest a rank of believers who have a certain measure of fellowship with Jesus Christ, but not the closest and deepest fellowship. They are born again; they are new creatures; for such only can know the Lord and be followers of Him. The old creation can never understand Divine and spiritual things in any sense. They are not even in the Kingdom of God. The saints, represented by the concubines, will have Divine enabling to render to the Lord the fellowship due to Him in their particular sphere; but it will not be the most intimate. Some believers will enjoy the fellowship of Christ, as dutiful servants of a kind Master; others as fellow-rulers.

The number of virgins is not given. There were many more of them than of the queens and concubines. The virgins are the "companions" of the bride at an eastern wedding (Psalm 45:14) and they are said to follow the Bridegroom - Rev. 14:4. But, the virgins are not the bride, as some try to teach. The typical meaning here is indeed precious. Certain saints are very friendly to bridal saints and enjoy a measure of fellowship with them. No doubt John and Peter had much fellowship with Paul. Their writings are companions to the unspeakably unique writings of Paul. Such saints also follow Jesus whithersoever He may lead them. Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me." He never spoke that way to Mary, who sat at His feet. Believers, figured by the virgins, will not constitute the Bride of Christ. The five wise virgins of Matthew 25 are five virgins, not one. "The King's daughter is all glorious within. Her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto

thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought. They shall enter into the King's palace."
Psalm 45:13-15.

THE CHOICE ONE

"My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her ..." 6:9.

The number of queens and concubines and virgins were mentioned as being many in the preceding verse; but the King's Friend is only one. His true Love could be but one. A bride cannot be divided in her love and attention. If this were so, she would not be a bride. In Solomon's eyes, the Shulamite was so pure and perfect, that her sisters did not compare at all with her. "She is the only one." She satisfied him beyond all utterance. He addressed her always as "My Dove, my Love, my Fair One, my Undefiled, my Spouse."

What a beautiful picture we have here of the Bride of Christ. And, do not verses eight and nine teach ranks of believers in the Church! Here are four distinct groups named. However, only one of them was destined to be the Bride of Solomon. He married only "the choice One." It is true, that "in one Spirit we all were baptized into one body, whether Jews, or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all given to drink of the one Spirit." I Cor. 12:13. But, in fact and experience, the Body, or Church of Christ is not one, in the sense of bridal oneness. Paul said, "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I might present a chaste virgin to Christ." The whole Church was thus espoused; but as the apostle feared, so it came to pass. The minds of the majority of believers are corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is towards Christ. II Cor. 11:2, 3. They turn away from Him as the one Head of the Body, and thus disqualify for the bridehood. They fail to lay hold of the Provision made for us.

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for (her) that He might sanctify (her), having cleansed (her) by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present (her) to Himself the assembly glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that (she) should be holy and without blemish. " Eph. 5:24-27. But most saints do not yield to the necessary sanctifying process. First, they do not drink of the fulness of the Spirit, which was given; hence, cannot come into the full joy and power and wealth made over to us in the "one baptism," accomplished at Pentecost. The thirsty believers drink, and experience the refreshing and anointing with the spirit. They become Christians, or anointed ones, in actual experience, and not in name only. Certainly, only Biblical Christians can ever hope to be in the number called the Bride of Christ. Likewise, only those who actually, practically, receive Christ as the one, all-sufficient Head can come into blessed oneness with Christ. They alone constitute "the assembly glorious, without spot or wrinkle." Of such, the Holy Spirit says, "The mystery, this one, is great; but I speak concerning Christ and concerning the assembly."

Therefore, this strong exhortation is given - "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the assembly and gave Himself for it; and let the wives be subject to their own husbands, EVEN AS the assembly is unto Christ." Then the apostle concludes this comprehensive study of the Church and her Head by saying, "Let everyone in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Similar unselfish love for one another is also required of the unmarried. It is not supposable that saints of any less mutual devotion should be in the bridehood. Impossible! Only such can be considered ONE. Only such deep, mutual

yieldedness and devotion can be termed "without spot or wrinkle." Only such Scriptural, unselfish attention can be pronounced "glorious."

Believers who only want what they want, who go only where they desire to go, seek their own ease and comfort, who are not yielding to others for Jesus' sake, or are not willing to be led by others; can such be in this wonderful company, the Bride of Christ? Can they be called "the choice One"? Those who are sectarian in spirit - "we are the people; wisdom will die with us" - those who hold to other names than the Name of Christ, surely cannot be called, "My Dove, my only One." Those who compromise with their own flesh; those who yield to human sympathy, or human operations; those who follow the spirit of this age; cannot be members of the Bride of Christ. Nay, nay! Impossible! Only a Divinely tried and approved company out of the Church will constitute the Bride. Solomon made it clear who should be his bride. There could be no mistake about it. Our Lord also declares who should be His choice one. As the wedding day draws near, we hear Him saying, even as Solomon, "My Dove, my undefiled is but one."

LOVE COMPLIMENTED BY HER FRIENDS

"The daughters saw her and called her blessed.

Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her." 6:9.

At first, the Shulamite's sisters were angry with her, possibly from envy that the king should have fallen in love with her - 1:6. The watchmen, when meeting her in the city at night, upbraided her - 3:3, 5:7. The daughters later on acknowledged her to be "the fairest among women," but they questioned her concerning the object of her love, wondering what superexcellence she could see in him - 3:7. While the fair One was coming up to the highest expectations of her lover, she was also rising in the esteem of her acquaintances. She proved herself worthy of being Solomon's wife. When he gave her such a full, bold, public compliment, her friends acclaimed it by similar notes of praise. That was a very interesting act of the drama. May we look for the antitype? May we expect that other saints will recognize and acknowledge a certain choice company of believers, who will have qualified to be the Bride of Christ? Why not? Of course, not all believers will do so. Some will insist up to the coming of Jesus, that all the Church will be in that select company. Others, however, figured by "the daughters and concubines," will doubtless have sufficient spirituality to discern the excellencies of the Bride company, while not being able, seemingly to prepare for it. They count themselves unworthy, because they do not fully grasp the meaning of Divine Grace.

Such, however, have a measure of fellowship with full overcomers, who are agencies of blessing to them. They receive spiritual instruction and food from those who are qualifying for the Bride company. Of course they rejoice in what God does for and through them, and for the faith and love which they manifest. A false humility hinders some saints from speaking commendably of other saints, lest the latter should become conceited. The Bridegroom sees to it that His choice One will not receive more eulogy than she can bear. They who entertain such thoughts, especially about those who have gone on with the Lord and have proved their devotion to Him, do not know what pain, anguish and grief they have borne. They would not believe it if one told them. They cannot conceive how anyone could come through such furnaces of affliction and persecution without the smell of fire upon them. Some times they blame the sufferers for

their persecutions, not believing that they were suffering with Christ. All that most of us know is only what we know by actual experience.

It is a vital fact that during the courtship of Solomon and the Shulamite, she received very little encouragement and few compliments from others, until just before the marriage. The Beloved was profuse and unchanging in his expressions of deep appreciation of his Love. If it had not been for the many fervent expressions of love and devotion to his Friend, she would not have gone on with the courtship because of the criticisms and hindrances that beset her.

The same things are more emphatically true of the experiences of full overcomers. They receive little encouragement from other saints at the beginning of their running for the Prize. Everything and everybody are against them. Full surrender is laughed at. Wholeheartedness is mocked. The seekers after full victory are accused of being over-much righteous. "Ah, you take yourself too seriously. The world will continue without your zeal. You are not so important to the Lord. Are you one of His pets? There are no full overcomers." Such are some of the taunts of critics. Some believers are so impudently unbelieving as to dare to declare that Joshua and Paul were not victorious in their lives. They claim that Jesus was the only full overcomer.

Indeed, they who will constitute "the Lamb's wife", will suffer in their preparation to fill that place with Christ. They become "partakers of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death. Oh, if it were not for the assurance of His Word, and of being in His will, these people could not stem the tide of opposition. If it were not for Christ's comforting voice, heard again and again, the runners in the race to win the Prize, would cease running. The Holy Spirit, as the brooding Dove, hovers over those who are tried beyond measure, soothes, quiets and rests their hearts. He binds up the unhealable wounds. He strengthens those who are ready to die with disappointments and grief.

Beloved, have you ever read Psalm 22:20 and 35:17? Read it now with me -- "Deliver my soul from the sword; My Darling from the power of the dog. Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, My Darling from the lions." The word "darling" is translated "only one," which is the meaning of the Hebrew word "yachid." It is used in Gen. 22:2, 16, where Isaac is called Abraham's "only" son, or "darling." The enemies of Christ during His life and when He was on the cross, are termed "dogs" and "lions," because they bark, growl, roar, bite and devour. They are also enemies of the Bride of Christ. It is a very sad fact, that sometimes God's children yield to the flesh and Satan, and thus act the part of dogs and lions, as if to devour true saints of God. One more item. Is it not wonderful, that when Jesus prayed for His own deliverance, He prayed for His "darling" also? Why? Because He counted her as one with Himself, even a part of Himself. He was made to know by the Spirit, that she would suffer even as He suffered, which would be equivalent to suffering with Him. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." Seeing these and many other comforting truths in the Word, enables the overcoming ones to run without stopping. They press toward the mark, or goal, for the Prize of the high, or upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3. These saints so run that they may attain to this calling. Love's Promenade

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning; fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" - 6:10. The king likens his friend in the song to various imposing objects. First, he said, "I have compared thee, O my Love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots" -- 1:9.

She was no doubt cheerful in spirit, and he saw her as a mighty company. Then, because of her gentle tender disposition, he likens her to "the lily among thorns" -- 2:2, 14. In Solomon's next picture of his fair one, she has grown into unspeakable greatness and splendor - 4:1-11. She has doves' eyes. Her hair resembles goats' hair. Her teeth look like sheep newly washed and shorn. He is carried away with her beauty and perfection, and exclaims, "Thou art all fair, my Love; there is no spot in thee. Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." Then suddenly, his musical description shows her to be "a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, an orchard, a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon."

He compares her beauty to the city of Tirzah and her comeliness to Jerusalem and her awe-inspiring womanliness to a victorious army. Then he challenges all spectators, as it were, to produce her equal, loudly shouting: "My Dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one, the choice one of her mother." Finally, and as if unexpectedly, Solomon beholds his bride, beaming with the glow of a radiant morning in an unclouded eastern sky. Note the following four facts:

1. "She looketh forth as the morning." She wears a youthful, hopeful countenance. She is brimming with bright expectations of her soon-coming wedded life with the greatest man on earth. Freshness and vigor stream from her face.

This is indeed a pen picture of the Bride of Christ. She wears the life and vigor of the resurrection morning. She has learned something of "the power of His resurrection," and exemplifies the youthfulness of it in her believing, unclouded countenance. "She looketh forth." Yes, this is the all-absorbing spirit of the Bride. At the Lord's Supper, she eats the bread and drinks the cup in memory of His death, "till He come." She yearns to "come behind in no gift waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ -- I Corinthians 1:7. She groans to be unburdened of this present mortal tenement and "clothed upon with our house from heaven," or with the "body of His glory" -- Phil. 3:21. The glorious hope of being with Christ and like Him is her great comfort and impetus to press on. Her constant gaze is into the heavens.

She "looketh forth as the morning." Her heart is light and her face is bright with the thrilling expectation of reigning with the greatest Man in the universe. She is filled with the spirit of the millennial morning. By faith she beholds a bright, glorious, victorious fruitful, unhampered day before her -- a thousand years of unbounded, unparalleled, unrestrained love and fellowship with her King and Bridegroom. There is a boldness and intoxication in this gaze upwards for Christ's coming that bewilders those who do not possess it. It is fixed, firm and flaming. Oh, how small the world grows! How its attractions fade away! How fleshly ambitions retire! How repulsive becomes their fellowship! "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." I John 3:3.

2. "Fair as the moon." Six times before, the king had pronounced his friend "fair," or "all fair." Now he compares her beauty with that of the moon. If she was Abishag (I Kings 1:3), we are not surprised at this description; for she was "a very fair damsel." Have you noticed what a beautiful, healthy, happy face the moon always wears? She is always smiling. And when she appears full-orbed, her neighbors, the stars recede and hide their faces. Such was the wise man's impression of the beauty of the one he loved.

But this portrait of beauty must have been intended to convey deep spiritual meaning, even as all these descriptions and comparisons. How could these elaborately picturesque descriptions be given of a woman, except she was to be a figure of a company of saints, perfected

and beautified by their Lord? Indeed, the Bride company is as fair, or beautiful, as the moon. The Bride is fair because she beholds the face of the Fair One in glory. She becomes changed from beauty to beauty by gazing upon Him. Some people claim to see a man in the moon. Watch real spiritual saints, and you will see "The Man of glory" mirrored there. "Christ lives in me," we can truly say. It is most logical then, that those who are in Christ, and acknowledge Christ in them, and are being transformed into His image, should be named "fair as the moon." The Lord Himself pronounces them so, because He sees that they have absorbed His own beauty and loveliness; they are "partakers of Christ." He will cause other saints to behold the real character of full overcomers, and they will be amazed at the perfect product of redemption.

3. "Clear as the sun." In Solomon's eyes, the Shulamite was "pure" as the sun; that is, he could detect no spot, or taint of impurity in her character. Indeed, he had said to her, "There is no spot in thee." Her face shone with undimmed splendor.

How marvelous are the Holy Spirit's descriptions of God's people. Here is a beautiful and wonderful unfolding of her beauty intensifying -- from astonishment to grandeur and from grandeur to awe. Who dare look into the face of the sun? His brilliant beams are blinding to the extreme. It is his pure, clear light which makes it so. He is himself a ball of fire. There is no purer, brighter, more needed planet than the sun.

Aye! what a symbol of the Bride of Christ. As it is written in Judges 5:31: "They that love Him are as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." She is the purest, holiest object in the universe next to Jehovah Himself. She is like "the Sun of righteousness." She possesses His fire. She is glad with His brilliancy. While beholding the face of the transcendently glorious "Sun of righteousness" she is "changed from glory to glory" - from the calm, brightness of the morning to the smiling beauty of the moon and then into the glory of the sun.

Indeed, Jehovah covers His saints, as well as Himself, with light as with a garment -- Psa. 104:2. Oh, who would not covet to be among the princes, the coming Shulamite of the heavenly Solomon of millennial power and glory? Who can help aspiring to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God?" Who can help longing to "be presented faultless before the throne of His glory with exceeding great joy"? Yea, even on the throne with Him? "They that be wise, or teachers, shall shine as the stars forever and ever" - Daniel 12:3; and "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" -- Matt. 13:43.

4. "Terrible as an army with banners." The Hebrew word "ayom" means "awe-inspiring," and is translated terrible here and in verse 4, and also in Hab. 1:7. Other Hebrew words also are translated "terrible," or fearproducing; for example, "yare," (Psa. 45:4), but rendered "reverend" in Psa. 111: 9. The Shulamite appeared awe-inspiring, majestic. She was fully developed and strong. She was a woman in every sense of the word. She reminded her lover of an "army with banners," parading with colors flying. She proved herself prepared to be the king's bride.

Again, the choice one of her mother stands forth as an interesting type of an overcoming band of believers. As to our attitude to God, we are lamb-like, yielding, ready to serve or be slaughtered. We are always absolutely and gladly in entire subjection to Him. But as to our attitude to Satan, the flesh, and the world, we are lion-like, unyielding, ready to reign and slaughter. We inspire awe and command the respect of men. Being in subjection to "The Lamb of God," we bring everything of the world, the flesh, and the devil under subjection through the power of "the Lion of Judah." God would teach us, that by faith we may reign over the world in every phase of its character during the present time. As we are overcome by the love of Christ

and walk in the Spirit, so we altogether overcome all the world in us and about us. We actually make everything serve us for Jesus' sake. We are truly to terrible." As we are lost in God by faith, occupied with the sweetness of the Lamb of God, we appear terrible to onlookers. We possess an invisible, inexplicable, invincible power which unconsciously to its possessor, overcomes everybody around us.

And they, who thus overcome now, will be most closely associated with the Lion of Judah when He roars against the nations in fierce judgment in opening the next age. He and His co-workers shall pour out the bowls of Divine wrath upon this Christ-rejecting, Truth-crushing, infidel world. "The terror of the Lord" will climax in the jugernaughts of Divine indignation, even in "flaming fire" upon the wicked during the tribulation days. Those, who flame and flow together with the Lord here in deep heart-union and fellowship, will share in dispensing the judgments. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" -- I Cor. 6.

The King's Final Examination

"I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley,
and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded" - 6:11.

Solomon is now fully satisfied with his friend. He is persuaded that she is qualified to be His bride. His last visit with her beheld the foregoing imposing picture of her beauty, stateliness and perfection. She is all that he can desire. The "garden enclosed," the "fountains of gardens" (4:12-15), delights him to the uttermost. She is blossoming and budding with brightest promise of unspeakable fruitfulness. There is no garden like his spouse. She is prepared, and he is ready for the wedding.

But how about the other gardens (6:2), even the "garden of nuts," mentioned here, which figure all the King's subjects. The "vine" speaks of his entire realm, and the "pomegranates" suggest the most devout and useful individuals in the realm. Therefore, this visit. Is the kingdom flourishing and hopeful, and are its representative characters budding with the promise of increasing usefulness? Are they prepared for this, the most important union in the kingdom? Are the queens and concubines in full accord with this coming event? These questions occasioned his final walk of investigation through the garden of nuts.

Stop! Listen! Hear Solomon's abrupt thrilling chorus to His base solo of examination. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib" - 6:12. The Revised Version reads: "Before I was aware, my soul set me among the chariots of my princely people." The explanation is simple. The meaning is wonderful. The word "Amminadib" means. "my willing, or princely people." The word "nadib" means "willing, noble." The word for "prince" in the exclamation, "O prince's daughter (ch. 7:1), is "nadib". Ah! wonderful! I say. Before Solomon scarcely realized what he was doing, the arrangements for the wedding were made; their mutual friends were notified; and they were speeding away to the place of marriage. His soul, flaming with true love for the choice one, landed him on his "palaquin" (car of state), or chariot of Lebanon, with his "princely" spouse by his side. Her sparkling eyes, her pleasing, pleading voice and firm purpose of heart not to suffer longer delay, overcame him. Had the Shulamite's father just then given her to the King, as was the custom? -- Gen. 24:51.

BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY!

What a perfect picture of the long-looked-for time, now at hand. The heavenly Bridegroom has been making warm overtures to the saints, especially in the closing days of this age. He has been wooing them to Himself for bridal fellowship. Some have accepted the invitation and are reciprocating His love. They understand and appreciate His endearing words of comfort and hope. Their cry is, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly." They long for the glorious wedding in the air. On the other hand, the Lord has been making repeated visits, as it were, to discover the exact status of the Church and Israel. Is the Bride company making herself ready for the wedding? Has she put off all that pertains to the old creation, the flesh? Is she having her wedding garments made? Has Christ, as Bridegroom (not as King only), the chief place in her heart? Is she saying with all the heart, "I am my Beloved's"? Who of His people are really refreshing Him with "the fruit of the Spirit -- love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance"? Who are greatly rejoicing and satisfying His heart with constant worship and adoration?

One of these days, He will make a last visit to the "garden of nuts," and close this age. He will come to ascertain whether "the vine is flourishing," and will find Israel (the vine, Isaiah 5), ripening with prospects of accepting His Messiahship. He will know if "the pomegranates are budding," and will see the valiant of Israel, the 144,000, preparing to be present at the wedding in the air. He will behold all companies of saints -- "daughters, queens, and concubines" -- all who are concerned in the coming of Jesus, qualifying for their respective spheres for that glorious day. Is that too much to hope for? Prevailing conditions seem to answer, "Too much! Impossible! Strife and division on every hand forbid such a prospect."

But Jehovah is on the scene. He controls the actors on the world's stage. What He has purposed, He will do. He says, "I will watch over my Word to perform it! The operations of the Holy Spirit in believers are so rapid, perfect and hidden, that all things are being made ready. It is "the day of the Lord's preparation." While Satan is fitting his dupes for anti-Christ, God is preparing His people for His Son, who shall reign. The Jews are looking with brightest hope for their Messiah; but our Lord Jesus Christ will be that Messiah.

"Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib" -- 6:12. One of these days, our heavenly Lover will call on us here for the last time. Our Solomon will find His longing Shulamite fully prepared, full grown, fully developed, happy, strong in the Lord, "called and chosen and faithful." Rev. 17:14. He will find in her His own bursting, blooming, vigorous resurrection life. As to her beauty, she will adorn the holy city. Her colossal strength, "pillars in the temple of God," will overwhelm the angels and saints with sublime awe. By her sweet, deep, warm fellowship with her heavenly Lover and her inexpressible adoration of His worthy majesty, she will be "to the praise of the glory of His grace" to the uttermost. The fragrant fruit of her fervent love will prove her right to queenship with Him throughout the ages. Hallelujah! It will be seen that she is indeed His "willing, noble, princely people," even "willing in the day of His power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning" -- Psa. 110:3. The heavenly Shulamite will conquer the heavenly Bridegroom with her ardent love and over-mastering desire for the nuptials in the sky. The Father will give her in marriage to His most deserving Son, our Lord. In turn, His longing for His "Darling" (Psa. 22:20), and for His millennial reign and glory, will impel Him to snatch her away and take her back with Him.

One of these days, our Lord will come too near to the earth. The graves will suddenly open. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed." The full overcomers, from among the dead, and the living, will speed away to glory; "and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Oh, what a bright prospect! Oh, what a glorious day! Oh, how real and fascinating it grows as we ponder the blessed Word, and "comfort one another with these words" -- I Thess. 4:13-18.

LOVE'S DEPARTURE DEPLORED

"Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee" - 6:13.

This cry implies that Solomon took his love away soon after beholding her so beautiful and majestic, as seen in verse 10. This is the first time that the daughters acknowledged her name, which means "peaceful, perfect, complete." They acted in her presence as though they did not care much for her and did not believe her to be true to her name. But now, that she has disappeared, they call for her. But they were never granted the privilege of seeing her again until after her marriage, until the "Peaceful" one was joined to the "Peaceable" one.

And can it be thought strange that we should expect such disappointed ones to exclaim, "Come back, come back, O Shulamite"? Will they not cry, "Come back, O ye spiritual ones. We miss your fellowship. We miss your burning zeal. We miss your triumphant faith, your shouts of praise. We miss your melting tenderness. We miss your untiring concern for us; your counsel and your prayers." I tell you there will be sobbing children and companions who will be heartbroken. There will be sad lamentations and regrets, there will be shame-covered believers groaning because they did not believe the true report; but made light of the faith and victories and experiences of their brethren, calling them "fanatic." Therefore, we should not wonder that John exhorts thus -- I John 2:28 -- "And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." I tell you that then groans will grow, and tears will flow. The troubled, anguished, sorrowing, saint will weep, lament, and well-nigh faint, not finding where to go.

"ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE"

"What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies" - 6:13.

"Why will ye took upon the Shulamite as upon the dance of Mahanaim?", R.V. Here we are reminded of Jacob's experience on his way to meet his brother, Esau. Gen. 32:2. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host; and he called the name of that place, Mahanaim," which means two hosts, or camps. The onlookers beheld the Shulamite before she fled away as one, "terrible as an army with banners"; but after she was gone, they thought of her as "two hosts, or camps." Those angels came to Jacob from heaven as Mahanaim, or two hosts.

There will also be two messengers from earth seen in heaven as Mahanaim, or two hosts, even Christ's "princely people," the heavenly Shulamite. And are you surprised to find that John tells us of these very companies? "I looked and behold a door was opened in heaven ... And behold a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne ... And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones, and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting; and they had

on their heads crowns of gold ...And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind" - Rev. 4:1-6.

Most marvelous is the blessed Word of God. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are almost constantly associated together; but they are distinctly two companies. They speak of two phases of experience, or two offices, but one in faith and purpose. They are rulers and worshippers. They are most likely the Bride, for John sees them first in heaven immediately after the thrones are set in heaven. He sees two hosts, for these numbers, twenty-four and four are representative numbers. They are "redeemed out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, made unto God, kings and priests, and shall reign over the earth." Rev. 5:9, 10. This is marvelous that these should be typified and symbolized by the Shulamite, who is viewed as two hosts.

This foreshadows a truth that few care to hear. Some believers will be translated to glory, while others will remain behind. Some will be raised from among the dead; but others will remain for a later resurrection. Paul ran for this out-resurrection, and taught it to us, saying, "If possibly I may attain to the resurrection from among the dead ones" - Phil. 3:11, Diaglott. Moses enjoyed an out- resurrection -- Jude 9 with Matt. 17:1. Likewise, did other saints of the Old Testament -- Matt. 27:52, 53. And an advanced translation is certainly offered to Philadelphia overcomers - Rev. 3:10. Enoch and Elijah enjoyed an out-translation under the old covenant. Why may not some under the new covenant? As Mary was first at the tomb and first to see her risen Lord, so will some be first at the tomb again to join Paul in the out-resurrection from among the sleeping saints. They learn all about Christ now, and will know His resurrection then.

It is as true as it is solemn, that some believers will miss the first-rank rapture. In the type, they are figured by the daughters, queens and concubines. They are less yielding to God. They walk in the flesh, though they may have received the Spirit. They are more occupied with service than with worship. They know the Lord Himself less than they know His work. Their fellowship with Him is not of a bridal character, but rather that of a slave. They are of the Jonathan and Martha class.

LOVE'S LAST CONQUEST

Chapter Seven

The Beloved's Panegyric

This chapter falls into two parts. It relates happenings immediately before and after the wedding. The first nine verses are the first part -- a tender melody of climaxing panegyric from the Bridegroom to the Bride. The first seven verses are sung before the marriage, and the next two afterwards. Then the last verses give the Bride's warm response. The primary portion of the King's song contains a ten-fold graphic picture of the beauty and majestic grandeur of his Friend. It begins with the feet and culminates with her magnificent stature.

"How beautiful are they feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman" - 7:1. The Hebrew word for prince is "nadib," meaning "noble, princely, willing:" It is the latter part of that significant word "Aminadib." The Shulamite's father was probably a "prince in Israel," or in the princely line. At least there is this lesson here. To be willing to yield to the King was considered noble and princely. This title

being given to her is further evidence that she is the "Amminadib" or "princely people" of chapter 6:12.

Two fundamental facts are named in this first verse. The Shulamite's "feet in sandals" (R.V.), are regarded as beautiful. This is unusual; for the feet are among the "uncomely members" of the body. But this woman's feet are fair to behold in homely sandals. "The joints" of the thighs are like jewels. Consider the delicately fitting jewels in a watch, and you will understand the perfect union of hip and thigh. God Himself is the "cunning Workman." That is the way He builded a woman for Adam - Genesis 2:22. These two members, the thigh and feet, speak of the firm, stately and beautiful carriage of the Shulamite.

With ever increasing wonder and delight this holy drama proceeds. Here we are reminded of the "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," and of the "whole body fitly joined together" - Eph. 4:16; 6:15. But this must refer in a deeper sense to "the assembly glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle" - Eph. 5:27, R.V. The Holy Spirit, the cunning Workman today, works in yielding saints and beautifies their every step. The walk of the natural man is horrible to the Lord; but "how beautiful are the feet of him that publisheth peace" -- Isa. 52:7. And who does this like overcoming believers? The thigh is a strong member of the body. It speaks of "the loins girt about with truth." When we eat the Word of God, we become strong in the Lord, strong to stand and endure hardships and bear burdens. Samson smote the Philistines "hip and thigh;" that is, he broke their strong places. The joints of the thigh, being jewel-like, therefore, teach the perfect, firm, easy, calm, steady, practical walk in the light. Coupled with the feet, the walk is beautiful. Bezaleel in Moses' day, was chosen and anointed of God to devise cunning works in gold, in silver, and brass. He was filled with the Spirit in all manner of workmanship for erecting the tabernacle in the wilderness. He represents the Holy Spirit. His name means, "God's shade, or protection." The Holy Spirit was the Shade and Protection of Jehovah over Israel, as seen in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. And He today is the never-failing Shade over His people from the heat of trial and their Protection from all their foes. He is indeed the cunning Workman. He sets the members in the Body of Christ as it pleaseth Him - I Corinthians 12. He also makes the Word of God effectual in them that believe it.

Aholiab was appointed to work with Bezaleel. He was a cunning workman and an embroiderer in blue, in purple, in scarlet and in fine linen. See Ex. 31:2, 6 and 38:29. His name means, "tent of a father." He represents the Apostle Paul. It pleased the Lord to make Paul "a wise masterbuilder." He laid the foundation of the Church, which is a "habitation of God" - Eph. 2:22. Thus he is the chief agency on earth in erecting "a tent" for our heavenly Father. Few people realize the important place that he has in the counsels of God. He espoused the Church to one Husband, that he might present a chaste virgin to Christ -- 2 Cor. 11:2. He is warning and teaching every man (every saved one) in all wisdom, that he may, if possible, present every man perfect in Jesus Christ - Col. 1:28. Paul said, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel" - Rom. 2:16.

"And every wise hearted among you shall come and make all that the Lord hath commanded" - Ex. 35:10. See also Ex. 36:1. The spiritual successors of Paul, beginning with Timothy, Titus, etc., have continued this cunning work in the Church, by proclaiming his Gospel. This results in "the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering unto the edifying of the Body of Christ" -- Eph. 4:11-16. Out of this mystical Body, the Church, Paul's Gospel is building a Bride for the heavenly Bridegroom. The joints of her thighs are jewel-like. The effective results of

the pains- taking toil of the cunning Workman, the Holy Spirit through the agency of Divinely guided workmen. We have a right to expect to walk beautifully and with stately unblameable mien.

"Thy body is like a round goblet, wherein no mingled wine is wanting" 7:2. Wine stimulates and invigorates the body. The Shulamite had frequented Solomon's banqueting house, or house of wines -- 2:4. Her body showed the good effects of drinking good wine, such as was entirely free from mixture, or adulteration. Her form was perfectly proportioned and most comely.

This speaks to us of the indwelling and operations of the Holy Spirit. It is more than Pentecost begun. It indicates a company of saints who have drunk deeply of the fulness of the Spirit and keep on drinking. Some believers yield sufficiently to be filled initially with the Spirit; but bridal saints yield to the Spirit so as to go on with Christ, grow up into Him in all things and increase with the increase of God. They become well-rounded in experience and show aptitudes of usefulness. They keep filled with the Spirit by walking in the Spirit, and not in the flesh. They show that no "mingled wine" has any place in them. They are delivered from formalism, or a dry spirit. They are not fanatical; have no wild spirit. They are not anointed with an unguent made by man. They are anointed with "the holy anointing oil, compounded according to the heavenly Apothecary" - Ex. 30. It is unmixed and unmixable. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things" - I John 2:20, 27.

"Thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies" -- 7:2. The king had before found his friend "all fair, undefiled," lovely in disposition and undivided in her devotion. Now, he beholds her fully developed and capable of being useful, fruitful, productive. He was not going to wed a doll, or an ornament, but a woman.

Oh, what an impressive picture of real, practical sainthood. When Jesus comes, He will not select babies for His Bride. He does not want simply a spiritual ornament to gaze upon. The Bride company will be useful and powerful, as well as beautiful. They demonstrate the probability of their future place by what they are now -- "a heap of wheat set about with lilies." They are productive now. They have the appearance of a stack of grain in the open field studded with shining lilies. They demonstrate spiritual motherhood, the proof of which is the lily-like younger and growing believers who worship with them. Thus, they are qualifying for their higher and fuller fruitfulness in the glory. Through their union with Christ up yonder, "a nation will be born at once" - Isa. 66:8. "The residue of men (all Israel) will seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" -- Acts 15:17. After the wedding in the air, the great world-wide revival will come. We need not look for it before then. "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins" -- 7:3. In chapter 4:5, this same delicate statement is made with these words added: "which feed among the lilies." The Shulamite is not feeding among the lilies now. She is ready and waiting for the marriage ceremony. She is qualified to be a bride, fully satisfying her lover.

For the spiritual interpretation of this verse, see notes on chap. 4:5. However, it is proper to add here, that as in the type, so in the anti-type. When the time figured here comes, the bridal saints will be in heaven, waiting for the wedding there. There will be worshipping and adoring the Lord, and assisting Him in putting down His enemies. He will have to judge Christendom as false to Him. Laodicean Protestantism will be spued out of His mouth and the great harlot will be destroyed before He can take to Himself in wedlock His true Bride. During those days of warring and waiting, the heavenly Bridegroom will admire His overcoming, or "princely people," and

enjoy their fellowship. His heart will be overwhelmed with utter delight. He will not feel disappointed with them. They will be just what He longed for and sought to have them be. They will intoxicate, or abundantly moisten Him with their sacrifice of praise (Isa. 43:24), and will show their entire fitness to be His Bride.

Let not false modesty, the result of sin in the flesh, hinder us from understanding the will of God, either in the natural or supernatural. "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" -- Titus 1:15. This entire description is no doubt a pen-picture, by the Holy Spirit, of Eve fully formed in all her beauty and perfection. Why is it not also a portrait of a typical bride today, filled with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit, in order to foreshadow the Bride of Christ? The Holy Spirit never employs imaginary things to illustrate or symbolize truth. He uses actual facts, persons and scenes. In Bible times, marriage was expectant with loving reproduction, but not for carnal gratification alone. Hence, it was the gravest reproach for a woman to be barren. All that foreshadowed the impossibility of the Bride of Christ being barren. The third verse, therefore, most beautifully typifies her healthy, reproductive state after the translation and before the wedding in the air.

"Thy neck is a tower of ivory" -- 7:4. Ivory is white, hard, and bony. Hence, it suggests beauty, purity and strength. A neck like a tower of ivory figures majestic beauty and womanly purity, with refined and polished strength. The neck is also an important support. It holds up the head, which is likened to Carmel in the next verse. It also connects the head with the body. (See notes on chapter 4:4).

We are still studying about that wonderful company of people, called the Bride of Christ. The neck speaks of that principle in overcomers, which directly connects those who possess the necessary senses of usefulness with the body. Some saints especially exemplify firmness with beauty of character, and strength with refinement and purity. They may be quiet; for the neck does not speak. It has no mouth. These saints stand by immovably and hold up Christ as Head of the Body. Indeed, they are as a tower of ivory -- hard against evil, firm for the truth, shining with glory. They seldom miss a meeting. They do not gossip, nor criticize. They pray and pay. They prove to be a vital connection between the Head and the Body, the Church, and acknowledge Christ as "Head over all things in behalf of the Church."

"Thine eyes are like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim." Heshbon was a town in Moah, east of the Jordan, and captured from the Amorites by Reuben and Gad. It means, "reason, or stronghold." In its wall, was a gate, named "Bathrabbim, or daughter of many." Near the gate, were two renowned fishpools, whose clear waters sparkled perpetually. The eyes of the Shulamite were evidently big and bright, sparkling and clear, especially when gazing upon her beloved. At least, so they were to him. Twice before, he said to her, "Thou hast doves' eyes." Again we marvel at God's Word. We saw previously, that "doves' eyes" figure enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. Now, eyes like the Bathrabbim fishpools indicate the vast usefulness of doves' eyes. The vision of bridal saints is not only to be admired, as being clear and wonderful, but it is to be prized for enabling others also to see. Fishpools abound in fish, figuring life and fruitfulness. As the two fishpools were at the entrance into Heshbon; so, the eyes are in the head, the seat of reason, the stronghold of the old creation. But fishpool-like eyes, suggesting a spiritual grasp of Divine things, make even Heshbon, or reason, productive. They "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bring into captivity every thought to the

obedience of Christ" - II Cor. 10:5. And that makes such believers bridal saints. "Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus" -- 7:4. Lebanon is the snowy white mountain range lying west of Damascus. The tower was on the sunny side of the mountains. It was a military tower, whence a watchman sighted danger, or saw an enemy coming, and gave warning. Thus, the watchman was, in some sense, a guide also. Did Solomon admire a large nose? Rather, his bride's nose was prophetic of a future function which she would fill. She would differentiate and separate the precious from the vile. Many a wife has saved her husband from numbers of troubles by sensing the future and giving him caution. The tower of Lebanon faced Damascus, which means, "silent is the sackcloth weaver." It is said that Uz, Shem's grandson, founded Damascus. The new world which emerged from the flood may have been so green and growing, and life so redolent and prolonged, that Uz may have supposed that there would not be any more deaths, or not many at least. Hence, the sackcloth weaver went out of business. The Shulamite's nose did not forebode gloom and death. It was a token of perpetual life, of which Damascus is a figure, being the oldest city in the world and still is in existence. Spiritually, the nose speaks of discernment and inquiry. Discernment of spirits is the seventh of the nine spiritual gifts named in I Corinthians 12. It is profitable to have the nose in the Bible frequently, although some people say that it is not necessary. "He that is spiritual judgeth, or discerneth all things; yet he himself is judged, or discerned of no man." I Cor. 2:15. He knows his rank. He knows God's will as far as he needs to know, and he understands those who do not understand him, but misjudge him. The spiritual man pries into the secrets of the Lord, by searching the Scriptures in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. "The name of the Lord is his strong tower; he runs into it and is safe." Prov. 18:10. The scent of bridal saints is from the viewpoint of heavenly whiteness and purity. They are looking down from their magnificent tower. They are in Christ, and through the Spirit, discern approaching dangers. They smell the footsteps of the foe afar off.

Their cautions and warnings may not be heeded now, but after the resurrection of Paul's Smyrna cohorts and the translation of their Philadelphia associates in the faith, the imposing function of their spiritual nostrils will be manifest. Study the career of the four living ones and the twenty-four elders in the book of Revelation. For nearly seven years before the wedding in the air, they will be there. They will discern the throne and Him that sits thereon. They will discern their place there and assume that authority. They will discern the voice of the great, sublime Stage Manager as He shall call the holy actors forth to their various performances. First, they will engage in unspeakable adoration of Christ who will be on His throne. Then they will lead the redeemed in song and praise. Also, they will call the four international horses of the seven years of trial on the stage - Revelation 6. Throughout those troublous times, they will show themselves worthy to be the Wife of the Lamb.

"Thy head upon thee is like Carmel" - 7:5. Carmel is an elevated tableland by the sea. Every Scripture citation of it indicates its fruitfulness and excellence. Carmel means a park, a place of order and beauty, a fruitful field. "The excellency of Carmel" is emphasized in Isaiah 35:2. The Shulamite possessed a prolific mind. Hers was not an empty think box. She was quick to perceive and understand. She saw things in their right relations. Order and symmetry enabled her to have a rich store of thoughts and facts. Her head was indeed an "intellectual park." Bridal saints in particular "have the mind of Christ" - I Cor. 2:16. They refuse the reasonings of the natural man. They accept God's reasonings - Isa. 1:18. They think Divine thoughts, because their minds are stored with His precious Word. They hold a "straight course in the truth" - II Tim. 2:15. The mind

of one really spiritual is truly an intellectual garden of Divine symmetry and beauty. It is prolific with the profoundest thoughts about Christ and His salvation. They stagger and silence the wisdom of men. Only the mind of spiritual believers can grasp the deep and rich and beautiful truths outlined in this "Song of Songs."

"And the hair of thine head is like purple." What is more charming than a wealth of flowing hair on a woman's head? It is her beauty, her glory. The purple color suggests her queenly fitness to be Solomon's bride. "The king is held in the galleries, or tresses" (R.V.), thereof, indicates how fascinating they were to him. He was caught and entangled in the charming ringlets, and curls. We have the spiritual application of the hair in I Cor. 11. The Church is subject to Christ her Head. Women, praying or prophesying with their heads covered, show the dependence of the Church upon Christ. He is the glory of the Church because He is her Head. Some saints take the place of absolute weakness, and then glory in it. They are wholly and continually dependent upon Jesus for everything. They refuse to trust themselves, or any other arm of flesh. To trust Christ is their glory, their charm, their "purple" hair. This is the chief qualification for bridehood. And this simple, confident attitude of saints toward Christ charms Him and captures His heart. He allows Himself to become caught and entangled in the flowing tresses of our weakness. We hang on His strength, and He is enmeshed in our confidence. Glorious union indeed!

"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O Love, for delights" - 7:6. Here the King sums up all the sweet titles in one word - "O Love." He does not even say, "My Love," as formerly. He is overwhelmed with her beauty and perfection. He has found in her what He longed for. She is far more to him now than a lady friend ("rayah," Heb.). She is a charming stature of LOVE ("ahabah", Heb.). Solomon gazed upon his spouse, beholding the ten entrancing features here described, beginning with the feet and climaxing with her royal hair, and he was moved to exclaim aloud, "O Love, how fair and how pleasant art thou for delights," or delicacies - Micah 1:6. He is carried away with the object of his affection, seeing her in her entirety. Every member and function of her body is perfect. He saw no blemish, no lack in any of them. As a culminating eulogy, he shouts, "This, thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to its clusters." 7:7, R.V.

The date palm is here meant, as suggested by the clusters. It has always been a very useful palm in Arabia, Syria, and adjoining lands, because of its leaves, bark, juice and fruit. It grows under adverse conditions. Hence, we read that "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree" - Psa. 92:12. It is erect and stately. Solomon saw in the Shulamite a beautiful stateliness, life and vigor, in spite of trials, and he saw the promise of fruit. Their union was to be a waving triumph over his foes and a typically productive home. She satisfied him to the uttermost. He was ready to be joined to her in holy wedlock.

Will our heavenly Solomon find such a company of saints? After scrutinizing His own people, both within and without, through and through, will He be satisfied perfectly with any of them? For He "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" - Rev. 2:1. He is weighing the people in the scales of Divine Truth. He is searching and separating His own into different grades, as the seven letters to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 indicate. Some saints are overcoming some things, like those of Pergamos and Thyatira. Others are overcoming all things, like those of Smyrna and Philadelphia. Yes, Christ will have a band of believers who will be as perfect and beautiful in His eyes as was the Shulamite in the eyes of Solomon. The chief purpose of redemption would not otherwise be realized.

Study Paul's commendatory words to the Philippians. He enjoyed their fellowship. They were partaking of grace with him. They always obeyed his instruction, in his absence as well as in his presence. Hence, he called them his "joy and crown." Paul records no complaint against that assembly, even as John records no fault in the Smyrnaeans and Philadelphians. He espoused the entire Church to Christ (II Cor. 11:2) and sought by his teaching and prayers to "present every man perfect in Christ" - Col. 1:28, 29. Some saints have accepted their espousal and are yielding to the corrections and instructions, the siftings and cuttings, the polishings and refining's, which make for perfection and prepare for the bridehood of Christ. Solomon could not prepare his bride; that was left for her to do.

Our heavenly Solomon prepares His Bride for Himself, by working in her all of His holy and sweet will through the rugged and delicate workings of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Apostle Paul said, "The Word of God effectually worketh in you that believe" - I Thess. 2:13. What can be more comforting than that? Only believe what is written. God does the rest. Hallelujah! Jesus Christ will have a people that please Him and satisfy Him perfectly. They are flourishing now like the palm tree. Behold their waving branches of triumph. See the clusters of fruition. Who bears the fruit of the Spirit and is useful perpetually like the bridal saints? Surely, it will not be long until the heavenly Bridegroom will summons His fully prepared ones to glory.

The time will come after this overcoming company will have been in glory less than six years, that both they and Christ will be fully ready for the wedding ceremony. He will be filled with deep admiration and over-mastering love for His Bride; for she will stand before Him fully matured in her faith toward God and in her love for Jesus. She too will be absolutely satisfied with Christ alone - not simply as her Savior, nor as the Lord of battles, nor even as King of kings - but she will love and adore Him as her Bridegroom. Wondrous prospect His! Wondrous hope ours! Wondrous the mutual union! Oh, Jesus, haste the day!

THE MARRIAGE HAS COME

"I said, I will climb up into the palm tree. I will take hold of the branches thereof" - 7:8.

How beautiful and picturesque are the figures of speech employed by the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere He speaks in unveiled terms, declaring that "marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled," because it was ordained of God. Heb. 13:4. It is the climax of the earthly relationship, and it figures the culminating purpose of the new creation - the marriage of the Lamb.

Satan, through sin, has painted over the beautiful Divinely-ordained marriage relationship with conduct that would cause blush and shame. It is written therefore, "But whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge." The King appropriated the affection which captivated His heart. What was the result? There was to be fruitage, as expressed by the "clusters of the vine." The glory of the marriage relation among the Hebrews was multiplied births. Rebekah's home folks blessed her, and said to her, "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions" - Gen. 24:60.

One of these days, the proclamation will be heard in heaven, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" - Rev. 19:7. Oh, what a day that will be! That will be the day of all days for Jesus and His people. It will be a day of supreme triumph. A great multitude will shout, "Allelujah; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth" The Man Christ Jesus, the Queen sitting by Him, will occupy the throne

of universal empire. It will be a day of the unparalleled display of a bride's queenly attire - the most costly and splendid, the sublimest expression of love and worth that any king could bestow. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed (mark the language, "arrayed") in fine linen, clean (pure) and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of saints." That will be a day of unspeakable and intoxicating festivities, the beginning of the fulness of "the general assembly," or the heavenly panegyric (Heb. 12:23), where myriads of angels will stand and gaze, and representatives of all ages will be gathered. Therefore, John was bidden to write, "Blessed are they which are called (invited) unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Not the Bride only, but all who shall be there, will be blessed beyond telling. No such banquet, for no such a wedding was ever known before, and there will never be anything like it again. Can you conceive of a honeymoon lasting a thousand years?

The wedding feast will no doubt continue one year after the custom of Jewish marriages. "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war; neither shall he be charged with any business; but he shall be free at home one year and shall cheer up his wife which he has taken" - Deut. 24:5. This certainly is full of meaning for us. The great marriage banquet in the skies will last for twelve glorious months. How can the reunion of the saints over six thousand years break up in less time than that? Impossible!

While Satan is fiendishly manipulating his dupes on earth, and the anti-Christ is having his fling, our Bridegroom will be exulting over the results of His redeeming work and profoundly enjoying the worship and adoration of His people. For one year He will lose sight, as it were, of earth conditions, and will not be charged with business, nor go to war. Oh, how our Jesus will revel in the midst of His people who have believed on His name. Tongue and pen are inadequate to attempt describing that scene. We must wait until we are there.

Then, after the heavenly banquet is over, our Bridegroom, as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, will come out from heaven to assert His blood-bought rights. John saw Him and the armies of heaven descend on white horses, symbols of Divine power, to wage war against the armies of the world. He will subdue all His foes, and cast the beast (the anti-Christ) and the false prophet into the lake of fire, and the devil into hell for one thousand years. Then the fruitage of the heavenly union will begin to be fully manifest. The fruit bearing of bridal saints now is rather like the service of a friend, or like that of children growing up into manhood. But then, it will be preeminently as the fruitage of husband and wife.

After the wedding feast in the air is over and Christ descends with His Bride to possess His rightful possessions on earth, the Jews will accept Him as their Messiah. Then the prophet's questions will be answered -- "Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once?" - Isaiah 66:8. Yes, so it shall be. After that, "the elect will be gathered from the four winds" -- Matt. 24:31. "And so all Israel shall be saved" - Rom. 11:26. "All Israel" means the natural line of Jacob who will accept Christ, for all the devotees of anti-Christ will be slain through the vengeance of the Lamb. II Thess. 2. Then, the Gentiles will also be saved, as we read in Acts 15:17 -- "all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." Thank God, the millennial period will record the great revivals. Men talk glibly today about taking a whole city for Christ, though none has ever done it, for it is not Scriptural. But after the wedding in the air, salvation will flow, not only city-wide, but nation-wide. Hence, John concludes the great, world-wide revival by saying, "And the nations of them which are saved shall

walk in the light of it (the holy city); and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it" -Rev. 21.

But, beloved Reader, let us not forget this fact, that we are called to be a vital portion of that same holy city. It is our privilege to be members of the Bride company, the most essential feature of that city. God forbid that we should slight our privileges and miss the acme of our high calling in Christ.

"And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak" - 7:9. This is Solomon's last lavishing eulogy of his bride. It is a diversion from his usual utterances, which expressed what she was to himself. In this case, it is what she is to others. The phrase, "my beloved," causes the difference. What does he mean by "my beloved"? We find the answer in chapter 5:1, where he said, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." My notes on the latter entreaty there are evidently incorrect. Solomon spoke those words, and not the Shulamite. No doubt, his "beloved" in chapters 5:1 and 7:9, signifies his mother and brethren. Though he loved the "fair one" above all others; yet he enjoyed the fellowship of his friends and relatives also.

After their marriage, he finds that his bride is not snobbish toward his friends and relatives; but she appreciates them for his sake and treats them with the kindest courtesy. Her warm words of tender praise of "his beloved," his mother and sisters and brothers, are like the most costly wine. Her remarks about them are so soft, sweet, smooth, and gracious, that they "glide through the lips." Here again is precious instruction for us. The above verse suggests that buoyant blessing that shall flow to Israel from Christ through the Bride of the Lamb after the wedding feast in the sky. The phrase, "my beloved," finds an explanation in citations such as the following: "Of Benjamin, He said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him" - Deut. 33:12. Also Psalm 60:5. The oft-repeated references to the coming of the Lord in power and glory, always include His Bride, though it is not so expressed. "Those that are asleep" speaks of those of Israel in their graves. In the margin, they are mentioned as "the ancient." The resurrection of the Old Testament saints cannot come until after the wedding in the air, as if the voice of the Bride, filled to the uttermost with the Spirit, should awaken them. Ezekiel saw four living creatures come out of the midst of a great whirlwind of cloud and fire, from the north. They "ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" -- Exekiel 1:4-14. No doubt they figure the full overcomers with Christ, bringing blessing to Israel after the nuptials in glory. Oh, what a vast, honored and glorious ministry they will have in fellowship with their Lord. They may have the most hidden place with Christ now; but she will be the most spectacular and important figure by and by. Hallelujah!

THE FINAL RESPONSE OF LOVE

I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me" - 7:10.

We have already seen the gradation of the Shulamite's devotion to the King; but a review of it will be profitable. First, she said, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies" - 2:16. Her interests were preponderant; her possession was chief. She loved him then, but not unselfishly. Nevertheless, he was patient. He kept pouring upon her his heart-melting affection. Hence, later on, she was compelled to exclaim, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" - 6:3. This time she puts his right to her first, but still reserved a claim upon him. She was

not yet wholly taken up with her lover himself; therefore, she added as before, "He feedeth among the lilies." She admired his choice of associations. Nevertheless, His patience was never ceasing, his love never waning, his devotion augmenting. He triumphed at last. The wedding was arranged. The marriage came. The wedding bells chimed out their mutual joy. The honeymoon was wonderful. The fair one found in her beloved more than she could have hoped for. His devotion to her was exquisite. His love was sweet and deep and real. Therefore, she lost sight of everything else. She could speak only of her Bridegroom himself. She gave him, not simply priority, but the entire ownership of love. "I am my Beloved's," she cried, without any thought as to whether he belonged to her or not. She knew that she, and no other, was her Beloved's. The evidence was there - "His desire is toward me." Every Divinely ordained marriage is like that.

So, it will be with the Bride of Christ. She has been acknowledging Him as her only Head while she was on earth, and the only One to trust. In the glory, she will announce His entire ownership of love. "I am my Beloved's!" She will exclaim, "He has redeemed us and washed us in His own blood and made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign over the earth." Others will be His servants, but she will be His choice One. Others will praise the Lord, but the Bride company will love and adore Him as the Bridegroom. She will have a place near His heart and will be in and around the throne, which others will not possess. Our heavenly Solomon will show that His "desire is toward" those who will be His "Darling" (Psa. 22:50), in a preeminent sense. How He will enjoy His people. "The joy set before Him" will then begin to be fully and gloriously realized. I repeat it, He will ENJOY His own! Three years of rejected, maligned ministry; three hours of suffering in the garden, such as no tongue can describe; six hours on Calvary of which three were separation from God when "He tasted death for every man" - this was His time of suffering. Who but He can know the depth of that most painful separation and the days in the dark tomb? Those last seventy-two hours must have seemed like an eon to Him. "The earth with her bars was about me forever" - Jonah 2:6. Now, two thousand years He has been waiting for the calling out and preparation of His Bride. Do you suppose that Jesus will truly, deeply, really revel affectionately in fellowship with His princely people? He shall indeed "see the travail of His soul and be SATISFIED." Then, it shall be said, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now," and also, "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people" - Isaiah 65:19.

THE WEDDING TRIP

"Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages" -- 7:11.

A Scriptural honeymoon followed that wedding. This tour suggested by Solomon's bride was far different from those of modern times. She did not care to make a long, expensive trip to see sights and to visit places of the arts and amusements. She had ceased to live for herself and is interested in Him alone. She is delighted with the privilege of accompanying him to the plains and fertile fields of his vast domain for the good of his subjects and for the honor of her Lover. His domain was her domain. Was she not the queen? Of course, her queenly instincts caused her to yearn over the people for her bridegroom's sake. His subjects were her subjects now, as in fellowship with him. Should she not look after them? "There will I give thee my love." There, in the midst of profitable and praise-worthy activities, will I bestow upon thee my fervent affection. She is saying, I am no doll; neither do I need to be handled in ease and luxury.

Just so it will be with the Bride of the Lamb. While on earth, she ceased to live for herself. She learned the unchanging delight of living for the welfare of other people. She appropriated her Lord's strength daily to do this. Finally, she won Him as her Bridegroom. The wedding feast of a year's duration and their glorious honeymoon being over, she is eager to return with her victorious Husband as He goes to the same fields of action in great power and glory. The Bride will have an immortal body, "fashioned like unto the body of His glory" - Phil. 3:21.

Leaning upon the almighty arm of her Beloved, she will share personally and richly with Him in all His world-wide interests and conquests. Therefore, John says, "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war ... His name is called the WORD OF GOD. And the armies in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" - Rev. 19:11-14. The principle group in those armies will be the Bride of the Lamb, arrayed in fine linen, pure and bright. John saw the same company earlier, but not yet as the Bride.

He saw them as the four living ones and twenty-four elders worshipping (chapters 4, 5); several of them giving orders (chapter 6), and then as the trumpet angels of chapter 8. By their activities in heaven, so intimately associated with the King in programming the events of the few years preceding the wedding, they will manifest their worthiness for the Bridehood. What a highly honored place some saints will have together with Jesus in heaven during those years of darkness and gloom on earth, in which He will begin to "put down all rule and authority and power." He will reign in peace and righteousness during the Millennium. The saints will be joined with Christ in judging the world. To Him be high and eternal praise!

The vineyard and vine in the song, refer especially to Israel. "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant" -- Isaiah 5:7. Paul, who doubtless will be in the Bridehood, being indeed a pattern saint, maintained the deepest yearning for them. He exclaimed, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my kinsmen according to the flesh" - Rom. 9:1-3. That desire he never lost. And that same love, unhindered by a perishable frame, will fill the heavenly Bride as well as her Bridegroom. Hence, "He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four comers of the earth" - Isa. 11:12. Christ will be glorified in His holy ones and admired in all them that believe on Him in that day - 2 Thess. 1:10.

"There will I give thee my love," will have its wonderful fulfillment also in the ante-type. The Bride will love their glorious Lord in glorified bodies. The "groaning to be delivered" will have passed forever. Their love for the heavenly Bridegroom will flow forth like a warm ocean current, unceasing, unhindered and unchanging. Love wanes with most people after they are married a while. Matrimony in the Lord is sure to grow deeper and sweeter with time. How much more the hallelujah union of Christ and His choice One. Even now we have sweet, tender, deep, melting communion with Jesus. Our heart is enraptured with His love. Tongue cannot express the throbbing's of joy and ecstatic bliss. Sometimes it finds an outlet in cries bathed in glad tears, and other times we are silent with unutterable delight. If it is so wonderful now, what will it be when we are with Him and like Him over yonder? How much more will we pour out our heart and soul in unending devotion then?

If we enjoy the Lord so deeply here amidst trials and tempests, in bodies of humiliation, tantalized by Satan and mocked by men; if the full overcomers before the wedding will "cease not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come", how

gloriously and vehemently and effusively will we behave ourselves after being joined to the Lord in glory. I think Ezekiel paints our decorum, like burning coals of fire and lamps going up and down, running and returning like flashes of lightning, and the noise of the wings as great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech (the winds will shout), as the noise of an host -- Ezekiel 1. Surely the saints will extol the Bridegroom then.

"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" -- 7:13, R.V. The mandrakes, or love apples, reminds us of Rachel's deep desire to glorify her husband, Jacob, by bearing him a son. The mutual love and fellowship between Jesus Christ and His redeemed "Darling" will never wane. The fragrance of the Bride's love apples for her Lord will pervade the heavens with their pure sweetness. At the supper prepared for Jesus in Bethany (John 12), Mary anointed His feet with a pound of very costly ointment, and the house was filled with odor of the ointment. That is a faint picture of the profuse and capturing aroma of the Bride's mandrakes in the glory.

When on earth, Jesus seemed to be surprised at the faith of some. He said of one, "I have not seen so great faith, no not in Israel." He appeared to be amazed at the liberality of the poor widow who gave into the treasury "all that she had, even all her living." He sat over against the treasury and gazed upon her, though she possessed only "two notes." Will He be happily surprised in that coming day of glory at the love laid up in the upper shelves of some hearts? Will He then find some results of the toil and tears of the Bride, of which she is now silent? Will she be able to point with loving pride to some "old fruit," some of Israel saved at the beginning of this age, because she prayed for the peace of Jerusalem? Will she have some "new fruit," some Jews, or Gentiles, saved near the end of this age with which to rejoice her Bridegroom? Such a prospect should not seem strange to us. Be it remembered that Christ, as a Man, does not know every detail of the future. It is written (Mark 13:32), that the Son, as a servant, does not know the day, nor the hour of the darkening of the sun and moon, etc. Let us then, press on, gather largely and lay up abundantly for the eternal comfort and nourishment of our heavenly Bridegroom. Jesus saw the fig tree leafing, and was surprised that it had no fruit on its branches; for fig trees bear fruit before they produce leaves. The Jews were covered with religious leaves. They had the profession and outward forms of piety, but they bore no fruit of faith in obedience toward God. Jesus therefore, marveled at them. Some saints seem slow to see and speak. Outwardly they do not bear much promise. Apparently they may not be laying up much for the Lord. They may be very poor financially, or in natural gifts, but wait. The Holy Spirit knows their hearts, their purpose, their inward loyalty, their loving surrender, their blooming hope. If they do not surprise the Bridegroom with their "fruits, new and old," they will astonish some of their fellows in that day. Who would have supposed that Jael had the wisdom and courage to give the final blow to Sisera? Judges 4.

My life, my love I give to Thee.
Thou Lamb of God who died for me,
O may I ever faithful be,

THE EMULATION OF LOVE

Chapter Eight

"Oh, that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother!
when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised" - 8:1.

Who is the woman that speaks in this eighth chapter? Who can it be that expresses such deep desire for the fellowship of the king? It cannot be the Shulamite. This chapter is not a repetition of the preceding portion. That would contradict the finale reached in chapter seven. And the Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself, nor does He make useless repetitions. What one misguided writer called "the mistakes of Moses," are really blunders of "the wisdom of men." There are no writings anywhere so marvelously in harmony and consistent as the sixty-six books of the Bible. Another woman was gazing upon Solomon and desiring His attentions. There was another actress in that sacred drama. She, too, would win the King's heart if possible. Hence, her language was similar to that of the Shulamite. Therefore, we have another scene from a different viewpoint. She saw that it was too late to have the first place with Solomon. The Shulamite already filled that place in his heart. Nevertheless, she coveted his love anyway. She tactfully appealed to him. She cried for his friendship as a brother. As king, he seemed too far away, too unapproachable; but if he were a brother, she could reach him. And no one, not even the Shulamite, could despise her for loving him as a brother. Furthermore, she assured Solomon that her mother would teach her how to treat him, if he were her brother. She attempted to entice him by suggesting a feast. She said, "I would cause thee to drink of my spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." The woman was neither poor, nor indolent. She grew her own pomegranates and made her own wine. So she reasoned if he could be induced to drink of her best mingled wine, he certainly would show her his ardent attention and grant her, not only the protection of his royal arm, but would also reciprocate her love. Such is the import of verse three.

Of whom is this second lady a figure? Of course, she cannot figure the heavenly Bride of Christ, "the Lamb's wife" -- Rev. 19. Who then? The question of verse 5 suggests the answer. This woman typifies the Bride of Jehovah on earth. She is "Hephzibah," which means "My delight is in thee" -- Isa. 62:4. She represents the full overcomers from Israel, even as the heavenly Bride is made up of the full overcomers out of the Church. David expressed the spirit of this company in saying, "My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me" -- Psa. 63:8. Ruth and Esther are types of the noted of Israel, who will be ready to be joined to Jehovah as His Queen on earth, after the wedding in the air. Some of the worthies of Hebrews 11 will no doubt be in that company.

What is the meaning of the plaintive cry, "O that thou wert as my brother?" We answer. Under the law, Israel could not approach unto God's presence. They needed a go-between. If they could come to Him as a man, no one dared to object, nor despise them. And He certainly would receive them. Jehovah was God to Israel, and they saw that He was to be their husband; but He was far away. He was not human. As it were, they cried, saying, O that thou wert human! O that the Lord would come down to earth and be born of a woman. Then we could understand and reciprocate His love. If thou wert born as I was born, then I would know that thou dost understand my feelings. And is it not written, He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin"? -- Heb. 4:15. But that was the Man, Christ Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, the God-Man.

Hence, when Israel sees Jehovah as the Man, it will be wonderful. When they behold Him coming from glory as the God-Man, it will be easy for them to receive and embrace Him. That is the kind of Lover that Israel will have. That is the kind of Lover that we, who hope to be the Bride of Christ, now have. He came to earth and identified Himself with us in our sin and shame, that we might be identified with Him in His righteousness and honor; and so that He might love us and we might love Him. Knowing Him thus, we can enter into His feelings and He into ours. Many believers live at a painful distance from the Lord because they have not learned Christ as human, and as their elder Brother. He is to them only a great and mighty God.

"I would kiss thee," the woman said. As God, Israel felt that He would despise her, being little and ordinary, and remembering too, how she had failed Him. But as Man, He could understand her and she could kiss Him, that is, bestow her love upon Him and expect it to be reciprocated. Praise God! That is just what will happen. Read and marvel at Isaiah 54:4-7: "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth and shall not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine Husband. The Lord of hosts is His Name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall He be called; for the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee."

Ruth and Boaz wonderfully enlighten us at this point. Naomi represents ancient Israel and answers to "my mother" in our Song. Ruth represents the Bride of Jehovah, the coming "Hepzibah," and answers to the yearning woman in our lesson. Boaz, who became Ruth's kinsman-redeemer answers to Solomon, and represents the Son of God, taking on Himself a human body. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them (Israel) that were under the law, that we (Israel) might receive the adoption of sons" -- Gal. 4:4, 5. Thus, Christ, God's Son, through His work of redemption, became Israel's elder Brother. "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" -- Heb. 2:11. Now they can come boldly unto a throne of grace and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The heavenly Solomon must hear the cry of the second lady. "I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me" - 8:2. Our songstress was an Israelite, and so was Solomon. But who does her mother figure? The mother represents the whole house of Israel. Not all of Israel will constitute the Bride of Jehovah, but only a special, chosen portion of them, even the full overcomers among them, such as Abraham, Daniel, Jeremiah, etc. And as Solomon was of Israel, so was Jesus Christ. Israel was His mother, nationally, even as Mary was His mother, personally. One day He asked, "Who is my mother and my sister and my brother?" Knowing that the audience could not answer, He gave the answer Himself, saying, "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven; the same is my mother and my sister and my brother." All who believed God were the means of bringing Jesus on the scene. If Abraham had not believed God, the promised Seed would not have come. God uses men and women to bring His purposes to pass; hence, His Son could never have been born of a woman; He could never have taken on humanity if some people had not believed. Thank God, He saw to it that some did believe. He knows the hearts of men. Abraham's faith gave to the Father that wonderful Son, of whom Isaac was only a type.

"My mother would instruct me," said the woman. A wise mother always teaches her daughter how to act toward a young suitor. She can speak from experience, as well as from observation. And is it not wonderful? The whole house of Israel has taught certain saints among them how to qualify to be among the Bride of Jehovah. They have been teaching me also how to prepare for the Bridehood of Christ. Jehovah uses the lethargy and disobedience of some believers to stir up others to zeal and loyalty. The dire results of their conduct is a standing warning to those who will heed it. Then, the Lord's kindness and special favors upon those who believe Him and seek Him with all the heart, are great encouragements to be full overcomers. They stimulate faith and obedience in others. Each faithful man and woman in Israel became a powerful example to all those who came after him. Huldah was stimulated by Deborah and Jael. The prophets were provoked by the lives of the patriarchs to greater faith. They will win their "Prize", even Jehovah as their Husband. And all of them are encouraging us to forge ahead for our Prize, Christ, as our Bridegroom in heaven.

The "spiced wine of the pomegranate" finds its application by referring to Isaiah 24 and 43. The time will come when the remnant of Israel will "lift up their voice; they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea." All joy and mirth will be restored in the land. They will drink wine with a song. The merry-hearted will return. The mirth of tabrets, the noise of the singers and the joy of the harp will resound. Israel will again "buy sweet cane" for the Lord, and intoxicate, or abundantly moisten Him with the fat of their sacrifices of praise. Indeed, they will accept God's Son as the all-sufficient Sacrifice. "Then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto His people, Behold, I will send you corn and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen" -- Joel 2:18, 19.

LOVE'S LONGING ANSWERED

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" -- 8:5.

The unnamed lady of our song first entreated King Solomon for a place in his heart. Then, as by the authority of hope, she exhorted the daughters not to interfere with her love affairs. And then, there seems to be a pause in the drama, followed by a sudden surprise. A charming lady is beheld in the distance, awakening in the audience an enquiry, as to who she is. The answer is not stated; but the remainder of the verse and the two following verses imply that it is the lady, who had just sung out of her yearning heart. Her plaintive solo was heard. Her desire was granted. She won the king's attention; they are seen together coming up from the wilderness. She is leaning on his arm.

We have already showed that the second lady in this interesting drama figures a choice company of overcoming saints in Israel. Malachi, no doubt, describes them in saying, "Then they that feared the Lord, spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" -- Mal. 3:16, 17. Jehovah will have a great box of jewels. Among them will be one "pearl of great price" in the heavens, the "Bride of the Lamb," and another Jewel, or "special treasure" in the earth, even the "Hephzibah" of Jehovah. Hear what God says to her.

"Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (My delight is in her), and thy land Beulah (married); for the Lord delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married." Nor is that all the sweet things that He whispers to His earthly "Jewel." Here is more. "As the bridegroom (Christ) rejoiceth over the bride (the Lamb's wife), so shall thy God rejoice over thee" -- Isaiah 62:3-5.

Not All Israel is the Bride.

Surely the half-hearted and unspiritual of the house of Jacob will not be in the Hephzibah class. Lot was righteous as to his standing, but not in his state. Some of the kings of Israel were self-willed and unfaithful. They sinned and repented. They were not steadfast. How can such be counted in the queenhood of the holy God? No doubt there are others also of the Old Testament who will not be in that company. For example, Enoch and Elijah both had an out-translation, and Moses, had an out-resurrection. Also those who were raised from the dead when Jesus was raised (Matt. 27:52, 53), will not be in that company. They "obtained a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35), even as Enoch and Elijah obtained a better translation, as compared with the rest of Israel. No doubt they will have a better, or higher place than the others. Are they not already in heaven, as the "spirits of just men made perfect," or as having their glorified bodies? Heb. 12:23. Will they not be present at the wedding in the air? No doubt the Bride of Jehovah on earth will be constituted of full overcomers of Israel, whose bodies are still in the tomb, and of those of Israel who will "endure to the end" of the tribulation and experience a physical deliverance from the judgments. Matt. 24:13. The woman in the wilderness (Rev. 12) suggests who will make up that company.

"I raised thee up under the apple tree. There thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee" -- 8:5. Solomon here is the apple tree to which the Shulamite had likened him early in their acquaintance. He was useful and practical in his life. Now that this second woman sought his love, he reminded her of the kindly care heretofore. She was born and reared in his royal domain. He, the apple tree, had overshadowed her. Thus he assured her that long before he had given her a place in his heart. The following verse conveys the same thought, and indicates what sort of response he expects from her.

THE TEST OF BRIDEHOOD

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm;
for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.
The coals thereof are coals of fire,
which hath a most vehement flame" -- 8:6.

This is the voice of Solomon to the second lady friend. He intimates what devotion he expects from her if she becomes his wife. Her love to him must be undivided and constant. Her whole heart must be given over to him, and her arm continually entwined in his. He will love her unto death, and he expects her to love him in the same degree. He is jealous over her, and expects a jealous love from her, even a vehement flame.

Jehovah loves His people with an everlasting love. He says, "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy" -- Zech. 1:14. And the people of Israel who shall constitute His bride will reciprocate that kind of love. Loyal hearts and true, will fill up that company. The

indifferent and slothful need not hope to be in it. Israel in the past ran after other lovers. She flirted with the nations and leaned upon their worldly arms. But His future Queen cannot be of that sort. She must have a single eye to Him alone. Her whole heart will be given over to the Lord, and she will depend entirely and only on Him. "The flashes of jealousy are as the flashes of fire, a very flame of Jehovah" R.V, is the declaration here, because of Israel's former departure from the Lord. Paul, speaking for Christ to the Church, said, "I am jealous over you with a Godly jealousy" -- II Cor. 11:2.

"Love is as strong as death." Such was the love of some saints in the past. They died for the truth. They were martyred for their faith in God. The vehement flame of their love for Jehovah burned in their souls. Yea, it consumed them. Such saints will be in the Bride of Jehovah. Before the Lord will be revealed from heaven, there will be some of Israel of that same fiery, self-denying type living on earth. They will suffer for the truth, and be jealous for God. And they will be among the Bride of Jehovah, as well as those of Israel who will be raised from the dead.

BRIDAL DEFICIENCY

"We have a little sister, and she has no breasts.

What shall we do for our sister when she shall be spoken for?" - 8:8.

We have no clear clue to the exact identity of this immature member of a household in Solomon's time. She desired the special attention of King Solomon. She was of marriageable age, no doubt, but not ready for marriage, because she was not mature.

Whom does the little sister typify? Evidently she typifies Judah. The full overcomers of Israel will be ready to be joined to the Lord, when He shall be revealed from heaven; but Judah will not be ready. Judah will be unconcerned about the Lord, giving glory to the nations, when He begins to deal with her. She will miss the bridehood of Jehovah. Her undeveloped condition and the cause of it are indicated in Ezekiel 23. She was flirting with the world. In fact, the bride of Jehovah must come from the whole house of Israel as her mother. Nevertheless, Judah shall be spoken for, and she shall have a place.

(Editors note: Further study on this type by Mary M. Bodie and also Alice S. Mooneyhan, among others, feel that this little sister could represent the non-overcomers out of the Church who miss the bridehood of the Lamb. She could represent the innumerable company of Revelation 7, who are not mature Christians, and therefore are not qualified to be the Bride of the Lamb. We will let the reader decide for himself).

"If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar" - 8:9. Silver always speaks of redemption. Joseph's brethren sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28); but he became, as it were, their redemption afterwards. Judas sold Jesus, his Redeemer, for thirty pieces of silver, the price at which men valued Him. See Zechariah 11:10-14.

Jesus was crucified just outside of Jerusalem, on Judean soil. The palace, or tower, on Judah as a "wall," will be an eternal reminder of where redemption was wrought. Thus Judah will be a wall for all the world, a wall of separation from everything sinful and unclean. Judah as the "door" is the channel of salvation to all men, based upon the redemption expressed by the "Palace of silver." Salvation is of (lit. "out from") the Jews -- John 4:22, because Jesus our Redeemer and Savior, sprang out of Judah. Therefore, Judah brings Christ to all people. The "boards of cedar" speak of the humanity of Christ. The boards were from a tree, which was cut

down and sawn in pieces. Christ was that Tree. He, as a Man, was cut down for us. Redemption and salvation have come by "the Man, Christ Jesus," to the Jews first, and then through them to all men.

"I was a wall, and my breasts like towers; then was I in his eyes as one that found favour" - 8:10. The lady who sang first at the beginning of the chapter, sings here. She was as a great wall. She was fully grown, fully developed, and ready to be shown special attention. This speaks again of the Bride of Jehovah. The full overcomers from the whole house of Israel will be fully ready for their glorious union with the Lord when He shall be revealed from heaven. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" - Isaiah 25:9.

WORLDWIDE WEALTH

"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" - 8:11.

Baalhamon means, "lord of a multitude, or one who rules over a populous place." Solomon's dominion was vast and his subjects, many. We read that "his kingdom was established greatly." We read of his greatness in I Kings 2:12 and 4:20-34: "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river (Euphrates) unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt. They also brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life. He had peace on all sides round about him, and Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. They lacked nothing ...And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country and all the wisdom of Egypt; for he was wiser than all men."

Solomon's far-reaching dominion speaks of the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ over the world. "His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from sea to sea. He shall reign over the kingdom of His father David, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Jesus will be "Lord of a multitude, and over a populous area," even "King of kings and Lord of lords." There will be plenty of keepers throughout His domain. His loyal servants will abound. All the nations will serve and acknowledge His lordship. The "thousand pieces of silver" figure the fruits of redemption, which God's people shall bring to Him. At the beginning of this age, Israel, as a nation, failed to bring in the required results of Christ's redeeming work. But they will fill up that lack when He returns to their deliverance.

"My vineyard, which is mine, is before me. Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred" - 8:12, R.V. The phrase, "a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings" (Isa. 7:23), throws light on these verses. Solomon's vineyard, mentioned before, had a thousand vines for each keeper. Therefore, he expected each keeper to turn in to him a thousand silverlings, or pieces of silver. The songstress of this chapter had her own vineyard in distinction from others. No doubt she meant to reassure the King that she would not come behind with her vineyard; but that he "shall have the thousand" from it as well as from his own. And those who kept her vineyard for her, should have "two hundred" for themselves. "My vineyard is before me. I am looking after it myself. It cannot fail to be productive," she declared.

The Wife of Jehovah will have an inheritance of her own. It will be an earthly one. Jehovah's dominion and interests will be heaven-wide and world-wide. They will include the interests of the heavenly Bride and the earthly Bride. The Bride of the Lamb will have an inheritance distinct from the earth-dwelling Bride, and from other companies of believers. She will have her own vineyard, and yet share in all the interests and honors of her Bridegroom, the King universal, whose name shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, for a thousand years - Isaiah 9:6.

As it were, the earth-dwelling Bride will vie with the heavenly Queen, in turning in "the thousand silverlings," the results of redemption. God has said to her, "I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations . . . and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles; and they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations." "Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the fade of the world with fruit." "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee" -- Isaiah 27:5; 60:3, 5; and 66:19, 20.

"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice. Cause me to hear it" -- 8:13. Other people gave attention to the king's voice, as the king. They showed him courtesy as friends, but this loyal lady desired to hear (Heb. "shamea") his voice, as her bridegroom. She longed to enjoy his personal love, as the last verse suggests. Similarly, Solomon had said long before to the first fair lady, "Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice" - 2:14. Likewise, Solomon's voice was sweet to the second lady. And she added: "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart on the mountains of spices." At last, she dared to call the King, "My Beloved." Before the drama ends and the curtain drops, the unnamed woman ventures to speak to him as indeed her husband. Why this final request of him? Did she want him to depart from her? No. She wished him to regard her as "a mountain of spices," and "flourish himself" in token of his love for her. From chapter 4:10, 16, we learn that the odor of the spices which grew on the mountains, was charmingly sweet and intoxicating. She had before promised to give him of her "spiced wine." Evidently, she offered him a glass of it at this time, as if she were the last one to show him love, and to make his heart merry with "the spiced wine of her pomegranate," which she had gathered from "the mountains of spices."

All people will acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Almighty God and as King of kings and Lord of lords. They will give attention to His commands. The companions of the heavenly and earthly Brides will give Him due honor as supreme Ruler. But the Bride of Jehovah will want to hear His voice as her Bridegroom. She never would be satisfied with the distant feeling of being only His friend. She must hear His sweet, tender, loving voice. As David cried, "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust" - Psalm 143:8. She will venture to call Him her Beloved, and expect Him to rejoice over her, even as He will rejoice over the Wife of the Lamb - Isaiah 62:5. The Bride of Jehovah will intoxicate her Beloved with spiced wine of her high praises. She will give Him glory, not only for saving her from the power and oppression of the enemy, but much more, for His Bridegroom's devotion to her. No music will sound so sweet to her as the chorus, "Thy Maker is thine Husband." She will "sing, and break forth into singing," because of His love to her. And her deep appreciation of Jehovah's love for her will provoke Him to "flourish Himself" with the vigor of eternal youth, like a roe, or a young hart, that is intoxicated and overcome with the sweet, fragrant odors of the spices of the mountains.

THE BRIDES CONTRASTED

The Bride of the Lamb will be full overcomers out of the Church, the Body of Christ. The Bride of Jehovah will be out of Israel. In what respects will the former differ from the latter? The outstanding characteristic of the Wife of the Lamb will be that she will be Lamb-like; but the Wife of Jehovah will be more Lion-like. With the former, it will be more inward. Therefore, God is working in the heavenly company an inward yieldedness, a giving up, a deep sweetness and gentleness. With the latter, it will be outward. She will be more mighty, manifestly a greater fighter in every way. In the past, saints stood firm in the face of armies. They were true to God when the axe came down upon their necks, or when they were tortured. So it will be again with the overcomers of Israel. The power of God will overshadow them and make them courageous and strong. They will conquer by resisting and overcoming their foes.

The Bride of the Lamb conquers by giving up. "Resist not evil," saith the Lord. We conquer by believing. We win by watching and waiting. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, or material, but mighty through God. "The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God," is our great weapon, both of offense and defense. Bride saints in the Church do not fight for their own rights. When Shimei cursed David, he did not let his friends interfere; but he said that Shimei could not curse him except the Lord allowed it. That is the spirit which the heavenly Bride has. Paul describes our bridal robe thus -- "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel against any. Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on (as an overcoat) charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule (arbitrate) in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" - Col. 3:12-16. Thus, saints today weave their wedding garments and make themselves ready for the Bridehood of the Lamb.

Beloved Reader, our picture drama is over. The sweet, charming song has ceased. The final curtain has dropped. The writer enjoyed deeply the study of this song and the penning of the first notes thereon. But, my recent study has been much more profitable, and my revision of the lessons has been far more interesting and glorious than the former. Now, what has the reading of these lessons brought to your heart? I trust that they have magnified Jesus to you, and have created in your heart a desire and purpose to run and win Christ as your Bridegroom -- "the Prize of the high calling of God" -- Philippians 3:14.

THE END

CLAIM OF LOVE

Let heathen rage and stand in unbelief --
My heart, my thoughts are fixed, O God, on Thee!
Though self or friends of world shall bring me grief,
The love of Christ alone hath claim on me!

Let voices call -- not one shall turn my face
From Him who gave Himself to set me free -
My ears are deaf to everything but Grace
That binds my life to God eternally.

Eltha N. Furman

My Savior and my God!
Of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. " Eph. 5:25-30.