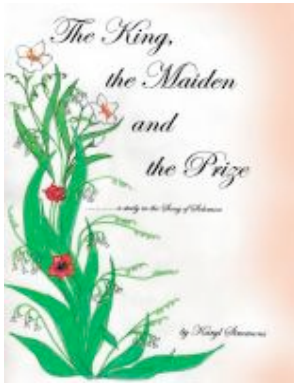




*The King,
the Maiden
and
the Prize*

.....a study in the Song of Solomon

by Karyl Simmons



The casual reader of the Song of Solomon doesn't realize the priceless treasures that are hidden there. The message emerging from its pages is for the church of the last days and it has been revealed for 'such a time as this!' It is like a musical drama that tells a lovely story, but contains mysterious prophetic visions and truths that prepare the bride of Christ for the return of Jesus, the Bridegroom King!

The King, the Maiden and the Prize

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The King, the Maiden, and the Prize

Karyl Simmons

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CHAPTER ONE

THE KISS

VERSE 1

The song of songs which is Solomon's.

There are two main characters in the song and Solomon is one of them. His name means peace and in this allegory, Solomon represents the Bridegroom, Jesus.

- *The song is symbolic of one's spiritual walk or journey through life.*

This book is like a musical drama that tells a story using many characters. You will most likely find yourself somewhere in this song and, hopefully, you will be encouraged to press on to the goal of the Prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. We will be discussing the Prize further in the next verse.

There are many songs mentioned and recorded in the Word:

Rev. 5:9 – The song of the redeemed.

Rev. 14:3 – The song that only the 144,000 Jews can sing.

Rev. 15:3-4 The song of Moses and the Lamb

Zeph. 3:12 “Did you know that there are songs which God sings to you and me?” (NKJV)

The Psalms of David are full of songs that he wrote. King David was the man who the word says was “a man after God's own heart.” There are many anointed songs that Christians enjoy today written by gifted song writers who love the Lord and His Word. But this song, a song that Solomon (a man whose wisdom according to I Kings 4:30, “...excelled that of all other men” (NKJV)) wrote, is the “Song of all Songs!”

VERSE 2

THE SHULAMITE (speaking to all):

“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,

(She then turns to Solomon and says)

For your love is better than wine.”

The Shulamite is the other main character in this drama and she is speaking to the characters that are mentioned in this scene. The scene takes place outside the King's chambers and those present are the Shulamite, the King, and the daughters of Jerusalem. Shulamite means daughter of peace. We will see this maiden, who is not at peace at this point in the song, become an instrument of peace in chapter six and she will become as one who finds peace at the close of the song. She represents one who is born again and who is an integral part of the church of the living God. Allegorically, she represents the bride of Christ.

- *The kisses are to embrace discipline and receive instruction.*

It is God's invitation to the "casual" Christian to seek a more intimate relationship with Jesus, to absorb His Word, and to allow it to train one in Godliness.

Ps. 2:12 "Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." (NKJV)

- *His mouth is symbolic of His speech.*

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (NKJV)

These divine kisses of instruction and discipline that come from God's mouth are communicated to us today in many ways. They come primarily through personal meditation on the Word, but they can also come through sermons, songs, and testimonies of others, through prophetic revelation of the Holy Spirit in a vision or a dream, and through Bible based counseling, etc. These kisses will groom us to take our place in God's kingdom where we are citizens.

We cannot afford as Christians to be ignorant, indifferent, or lazy about our destiny in God's kingdom, and neither is the maiden of this song as we see her make this request for the King's kisses. It is clear to me that she is after something and she must have His kisses in order to get it. I believe that she is after "...the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

I also believe, after studying the song, that the prize is the **matchless life transforming love of the Bridegroom King for His bride!** We will see, as we study the song further, that seeking after this bridal love will eventually create in the maiden a capacity to return this most excellent love to the King as she is changed from glory to glory.

II Cor. 3:18 "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (NKJV)

Now we all know that God loves us even while we were yet sinners and lost in the world, but this love is that and more. It is the love of the Bridegroom for his bride, the ultimate prize. The Apostle, Paul, speaks of this prize:

Phil. 3:14 "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (NKJV)

Paul also speaks of the prize in Corinthians when he talks about those who run in the race. He tells us to run to win the prize:

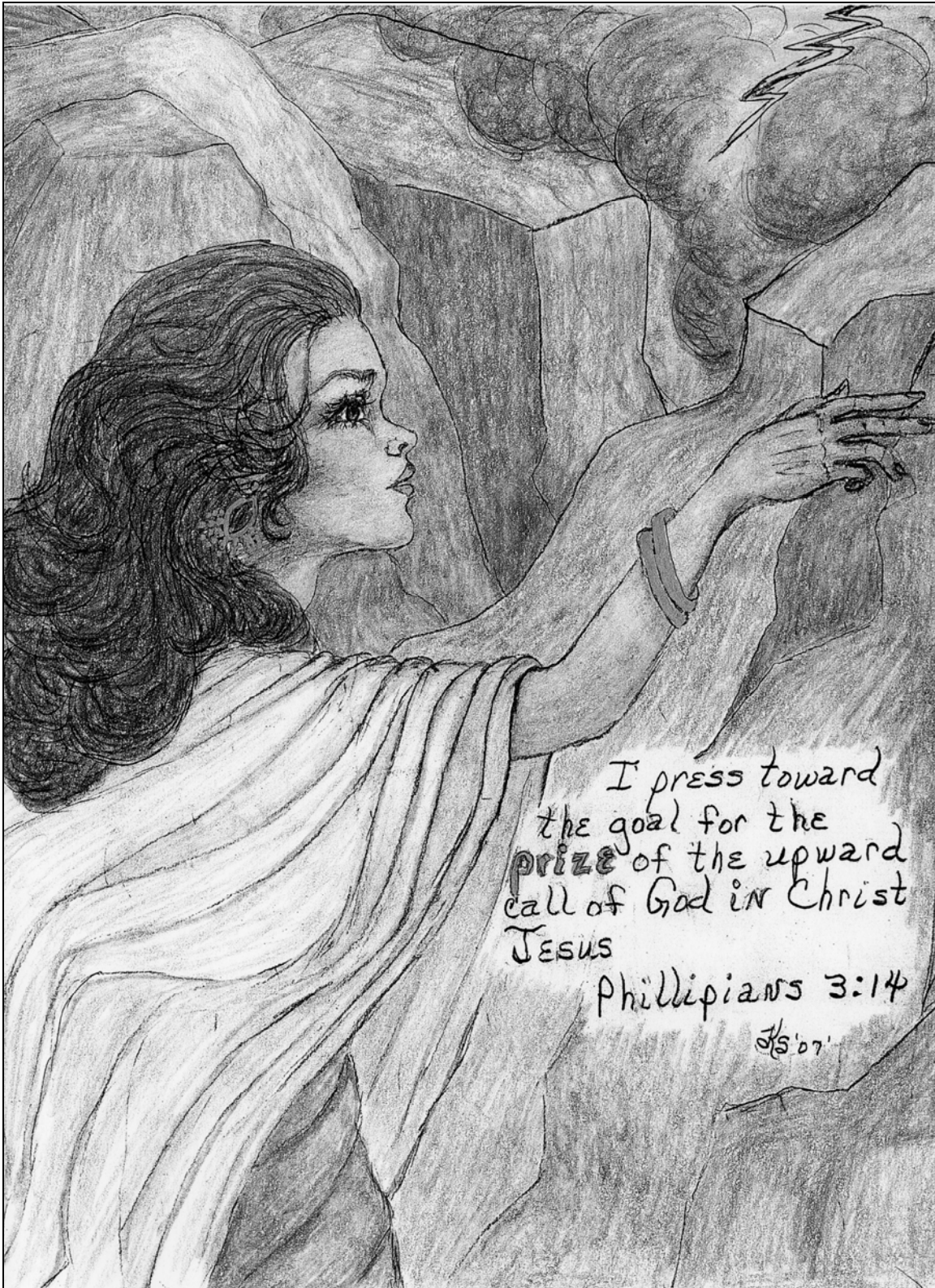
I Cor. 9:24 “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” (NKJV)

In verse four of this chapter, we will see the maiden of the song promising to run with her Beloved in this kingdom race as she pursues the prize. At the close of the song we will see her find her place in God’s Kingdom at the side of her Bridegroom King as His bride-queen. Studying her journey will give you and me the inspiration to follow her example in her pursuit of the prize.

We are told in Matthew 11:12 that the Kingdom of God suffers violence and that the violent take it by force! The Greek meaning of the word, violence, is to “force, to crowd one’s self into, to be seized, to press.” We are to press forward in this race with violence in our effort to seize the prize.

It is this prize that we all seek in our life’s journey. In striving to gain it, we are transformed and we become like Jesus, as we will discover in this “Song of Songs.” In reaching for the prize, we move toward our destiny in God’s kingdom; to sit at Jesus’ side in order to rule and reign with Him as His glorious bride-queen. We will gain the prize if we press toward the goal, never giving up, and if we endure the fullness of testing that perfects us for “that day.”

Heb. 12: 1-2 “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God.” (NKJV)



We will see the maiden in this song experience the cold north wind of adversity. She experiences the hills and mountains of challenges and obstacles. She experiences the testing that would separate her from her Beloved if she allows it. The Holy Spirit will use these “tests” to refine her and prepare her to take her place in God’s Kingdom as the glorious bride at the side of her King. We will see her finally embrace her destiny in the Kingdom of God, but only after she has endured the fullness of testing.



The maiden says to Solomon:

“Your love is better than wine.”

- ***Wine is symbolic of the joy of the Holy Spirit at work in one’s life***

The maiden says that His love is better than wine because His bridal love for His bride-queen and the bride-queen’s passionate love for the King is the Prize, and it is the end result of the joyful work of the Holy Spirit in her life.

Eccl. 7:18a “The end result is better than the beginning...”

In ancient Jewish tradition (which both Solomon and Jesus observed), when a man approached a young maiden and her family with a contract of marriage, there were a number of things that took place. One was that a cup of wine was shared between the prospective groom and the bride’s family after they had agreed upon the terms of the marriage contract. If the bride accepted the cup and drank the wine as well, then she also was agreeing to the contract and, by drinking the cup of wine, she was saying, “Yes, I will prepare myself to become your bride!” This sealed the contract.

Christian, this is a picture of what happens today when we accept Jesus and drink in the Holy Spirit which allows His sanctifying work to begin to change our lives. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. When Jesus was preparing to leave this world and go to the Father, he told us that He would send the Holy Spirit to come and remain with us forever.

John 16:7 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you, but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” (NKJV)

John 16:13 “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you in all truth; ...”

We receive the Holy Spirit when we invite Jesus into our lives.

John 20:22 “He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit, ...”

And then, God promises that Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire that will transform us. Jesus spoke these words to his disciples:

Acts 1:4-5 “On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”” (NIV)

John the Baptist spoke these words about Jesus, concerning this matter in the Gospel of Matthew:

Matt. 3:11 “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance but He who is coming after me is mightier than I whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (NKJV)

John 7:37-38 “On this last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of His heart will flow rivers of living water.”” (NKJV)

Jesus was speaking here of the Holy Spirit. He did not leave us orphans...He left the Holy Spirit to abide with us and in us.

John 14:16-18 “And I will ask of the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (NIV)

I believe that our soul (heart and mind) is then sealed to Jesus by the Holy Spirit when we receive Him. What is it to be “sealed” by God with the Holy Spirit? Webster gives a long list of meanings for this word, seal, but there are two that seem to apply in this instance:

1. Something that confirms, ratifies, or makes secure: Guarantee, assurance.
2. To fasten with or as if with a seal to prevent tampering.

When we receive the Holy Spirit to abide in us, He is our guarantee that we belong to Jesus and no one else has the authority to tamper with us.

II Cor. 1:21-22 “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (NKJV)

Eph. 1:12 “...in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” (NKJV)

Eph. 4:30 “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (NKJV)

Then when Jesus baptizes us in the Holy Spirit and with fire, the refining process begins in us and transforms us into His glorious, spotless bride.

Today in communion, when we take the cup of wine, we are reminded of our covenant with the King and of our part in that covenant. We are saying to our Bridegroom, Jesus, “Yes, I have accepted your contract of marriage and I will allow the Holy Spirit to prepare me for our wedding day!”

I believe the Shulamite had already accepted the cup of wine at this point in the drama, and now, she is about to experience the joy of the Holy Spirit at work in her life that will prepare her to embrace her destiny and take her place in the Kingdom as the King's bride-queen.

Eph. 5:18-19 “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (NKJV)

This is a picture of the joy of the Holy Spirit at work in us.

- *Wine is also symbolic of the blood of Jesus.*

In the ancient Jewish tradition of marriage there was a bride price that had to be agreed upon before the contract was sealed. It was a costly price that the bridegroom was required to pay for the bride. The bride price that Jesus paid for you and me was His shed blood on the cross of Calvary. Every time you drink the wine in communion which represents his blood, the blood of the new covenant, you are remembering the costly bride price that Jesus paid for you. You and I are very precious to Him.

In Summary

The wine speaks of our wonderful salvation; it speaks of the fire of the Holy Spirit that works in our lives to cleanse and refine us so that we can move on to our destiny in God's Kingdom. The wine ultimately speaks of the joy that the Holy Spirit brings into our lives when he fills us with His presence and His power.



VERSE 3

THE SHULAMITE (to her Beloved),

“Because of the fragrance of your good ointments,

Your name is ointment poured forth;

Therefore the virgins love you.

- *Ointment is symbolic of His loving acceptance.*

Fragrant ointments were very costly in Solomon’s day. They were used for healing and for beautifying.

- *Fragrance is symbolic of the evidence of something.*

The name of Jesus is poured out on all mankind, and for those who receive and appropriate it, there is loving acceptance, beauty, and healing that will grace their lives throughout their journey through life. We see the teenagers of today falling prey to peer pressure because they crave acceptance. We all want and need acceptance because we were created that way. We were made in our Father’s image and He wants us to accept Him. We never outgrow the need for acceptance.

Yes, Jesus accepts all who come to Him in His name for He is not willing that any should perish.

II Pet. 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance.” (NKJV)

When we accept Jesus into our lives, He gives us His name and we carry His name on our lives. We are betrothed to Him. We are accepted, we belong to Jesus! That craving for acceptance is met in Him! There is confidence that comes from belonging to Jesus, in knowing that we are accepted by the King of all kings. That confidence is the evidence (or fragrance) of His name on our lives and it is like ointment poured forth. That fragrance, Christian, will affect those around you just as His presence in the maiden’s life has had an effect on the virgins in this verse. The virgins like the transformation that they see taking place in the Shulamite.

The “virgins” are more characters in the song. They are those who have not “...accepted other suitors in the world.” But they have not yet accepted the King’s contract of marriage either. They have not been born again, but they are open and seeking within the life of the church.

The virgins love the mention of His name and the promise of marriage, but they are not yet ready to invite Him into their lives and receive the joyful work of the Holy Spirit, which is the wine. You can read more about them in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25.

What the Shulamite maiden is saying here to Solomon is this, “The virgins love You because they are beginning to see the evidence of the healing beauty that carrying Your name brings into my life.” The maiden, at this point, is still dark with the effects of sin that remain on her life, as we will see in verse 5 of

this chapter, but the King has given her His name upon sealing the contract of marriage. Having the assurance that she is loved and accepted by Him in spite of her present condition will continually work in her life to transform her as the effects of sin are washed away. We will see this transformation taking place in her throughout the song.

Maybe you are one who has heard the gospel message and you love everything about Jesus, but you have never asked Him into your life...you never accepted the salvation that Jesus offers to all those who will accept Him. You will not see or be a part of God's glorious kingdom or know what an intimate relationship with the King is like because you have not been born again. If that is the case, then let me encourage you, precious one, to set this book aside for a moment. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive you and make a decision to turn from your sinful ways. Ask Him to come into your life as Lord and Savior to live and reign from this day forward! Please do not put it off, for no one is guaranteed a tomorrow here on this Earth!!

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said the him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It is encouraging to realize that our Lord loves and accepts us even while we are yet still dark with the effects of sin, ignorant of His ways, and spiritually immature much like this maiden is at this point in the song. He loves and accepts us during every stage of the transformation that is taking place in us. It is His bridal love, the Prize that motivates us to move on through each phase of maturity to our destiny. This is just one more reason why it is so important for you, Christian, to study the Word so that you can know how God feels about you and how He sees you. Having the assurance that you are loved and accepted, in whatever state you are in, makes the administration of the Holy Spirit, who is at work in you, much easier and this transformation that we see taking place in the maiden of this song can take place in your own life as well!

King Solomon gave the Shulamite His name when she accepted the terms of His marriage contract. The Shulamite asked for His kisses in verse 1 of this chapter because she knew that she must have them in order to fulfill her part of the contract. His kisses, which are His instructions and discipline, received in an atmosphere of loving acceptance, are used by the Holy Spirit to do the joyful work in the maiden. The joy of the Holy Spirit at work in her and her determination to lay hold of the Prize will transform this humble maiden into a bride fit for a King and one that is ready to embrace her destiny in His kingdom.

VERSE 4

Draw me after you (away) and let us run together. (NAS)

Let the king bring me into his chambers. (NIV)

(The daughters of Jerusalem speak and say to the Shulamite)

We will be glad and rejoice in you.

(Then to the King)

We will remember your love more than wine.

(The Shulamite (speaks to her Beloved))

Rightly do they love you.

(Speaking of the daughters of Jerusalem)

The maiden makes three requests of the King here in this verse:

1. Draw me.
2. Let us run together.
3. Bring me into your chambers.

- ***The drawing and the running are the heart of this song.***

Spending time in the King's chambers is where most of the transformation takes place in the maiden so that her life begins to produce a balance of the *drawing* and the *running*.

- ***His chambers are the secret places where the couple share private intimate time together.***
- ***Draw me away speaks of intimacy.***

This is the maiden's heart cry to know her King intimately. She longs to be an extravagant worshiper of God filled with a holy passion for her King.

From a practical point of view, what exactly are we talking about when we refer to "drawing apart" or that intimate time spent alone with Jesus? How does one do that and just exactly what can one expect to happen? Most importantly, what is there to gain from it?

The song talks much about drawing apart with the Bridegroom; that intimate time spent together in His chambers and of being in His embrace and receiving the kisses of his mouth. The whole song is presented within the context of a marriage between a man and a woman. In a marriage, when one desires to have intimate fellowship with his mate, he will set in motion a deliberate plan to create an atmosphere that the other person in the relationship cannot resist. He will set aside time to draw apart from the busy life just to spend time alone with his mate.

It works the same way if you, beloved, desire to spend intimate time with the Lord. Your comfortable living room or den might be the perfect setting for a time spent in the secret place of the King's chambers, or it may be outdoors under a tree with the natural praises of nature all around you.

From my own experience I have learned that the Lord cannot resist an atmosphere of praise! (**Ps 22:3**). For example, I put my favorite praise and worship CD on if I am at home, and I keep the Word of God at my fingertips in case He wants to speak to me from its pages. I prepare my heart for Him with self examination, confession, and repentance after I have settled myself into my favorite chair, then I wait before him as He fills my senses with His presence.

I may journal my thoughts after reading from my favorite devotion book or express my worship as I dance before Him. I may turn on my keyboard, write a love song and present it to Him or just sit at His feet (so to speak) and simply soak in His love.

This is a time to meditate on the Word/Jesus after receiving it; to seek understanding, wisdom, and knowledge of what I have been given. It is a time to rest in the Lord and to wait before Him, for the mysteries of God and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him, *and He is in us!*

Col. 1:27 ...this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (NKJV)

Col. 2:2-3 ...Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (NKJV)

New life is the fruit born out of a time of intimacy in the King's chambers where one comes to know the King. It is the results of the drawing and of the running ... this is what you stand to gain!

Receiving the kisses of His mouth are the prerequisites to the impregnation of His word that is conceived in the King's chambers. This word (the word of God is also spoken of as a seed in the scriptures) is carried in one's spirit where it grows by the power of the Holy Spirit to maturity until it is birthed in ministry. This rhema word (rhema is a Greek word meaning "God's word as revealed by the Holy Spirit"), when it comes forth in ministry, brings spiritual rebirth and renewal into the lives of those who receive it. When this occurs, then more souls are birthed into the kingdom where they are nurtured and matured to a place in their walk where they begin to produce more fruit in like manner.

In terms of marriage, it is like a woman who has become pregnant with her husband's seed. She has received the seed into her womb (or spirit) where it remains for a period of time to be nurtured (meditation) and it grows there (understanding) until it is birthed as a new life (which is ministry of that word to others in knowledge and wisdom).

These words were spoken by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians within the context of marriage:

Eph. 5:32 This is a mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (NKJV)

I am always reluctant to end those special moments with my Lord and eager to make more time for Him the next day. I never fail to come away from those times encouraged, inspired, and empowered to run with *Him wherever He directs.*

- ***To run is to partner with the Bridegroom King in His work. It is obedience in action, at His unction, with a heart to minister to the needs of others.***

We have a picture of the "drawing" in the life of Mary, and the "running" in the life of Martha. Read Luke 10:38 and John 11:2.

Christians today need a balance in their lives of the two. We need to spend time in His presence in order to know Him more intimately and we also need to be ready to run with Him in ministry when He calls. One who is consumed with ministry to the exclusion of time apart spent in the Lord's presence in

intimate fellowship many times experiences what we call physical and spiritual “burn out.” They have become spiritually dry.

On the other hand, one who will not leave the King’s chambers to share the truths they have received there, when He calls them to run in ministry with Him, is in danger of becoming a stagnant, stale pool of water going nowhere. A stagnant pool of water is a place that can breed all kinds of sickness and disease. Either extreme hinders useful service in the Kingdom of God.

This Shulamite knows about the King’s chambers and she asks Him to carry her there where they will spend intimate, life changing time together. She knows that being in His presence will wash away all the darkness that is mentioned in the next verse from her life. This is a private place, a secret place, where she will learn this balance of drawing and running, among other things, and she longs for the day. It is here in these chamber experiences that the maiden’s personal relationship with the King will develop and mature.

This secret place is mentioned in the Word numerous times. The Lord calls us today to join Him there for intimate fellowship! References to the secret place are found in:

Ps. 91:1, 4, 9-11

Matt. 6:6

Ps. 27:4-5

Is. 45:3

The daughters of Jerusalem are major characters in the song. They are those who have accepted the King’s contract of marriage and are in various stages of maturity. The Holy Spirit is at work in them to prepare them for their wedding day. They are the Shulamite’s support group because they are like-minded in their common goal. They are all after the Prize and they encourage one another to attain it. We will call them the bride company. Our maiden is now a part of this group and they are glad for the maiden. They rejoice with her as they remember their own chamber experiences with the King and they are renewed in their determination to gain the Prize.

The daughters of Jerusalem carry the rhema word from their own chamber experiences with the King as they run in ministry with the King and we see them ministering it to the maiden at the King’s table in his banqueting house in chapter two of the song.

- ***Remembrance***

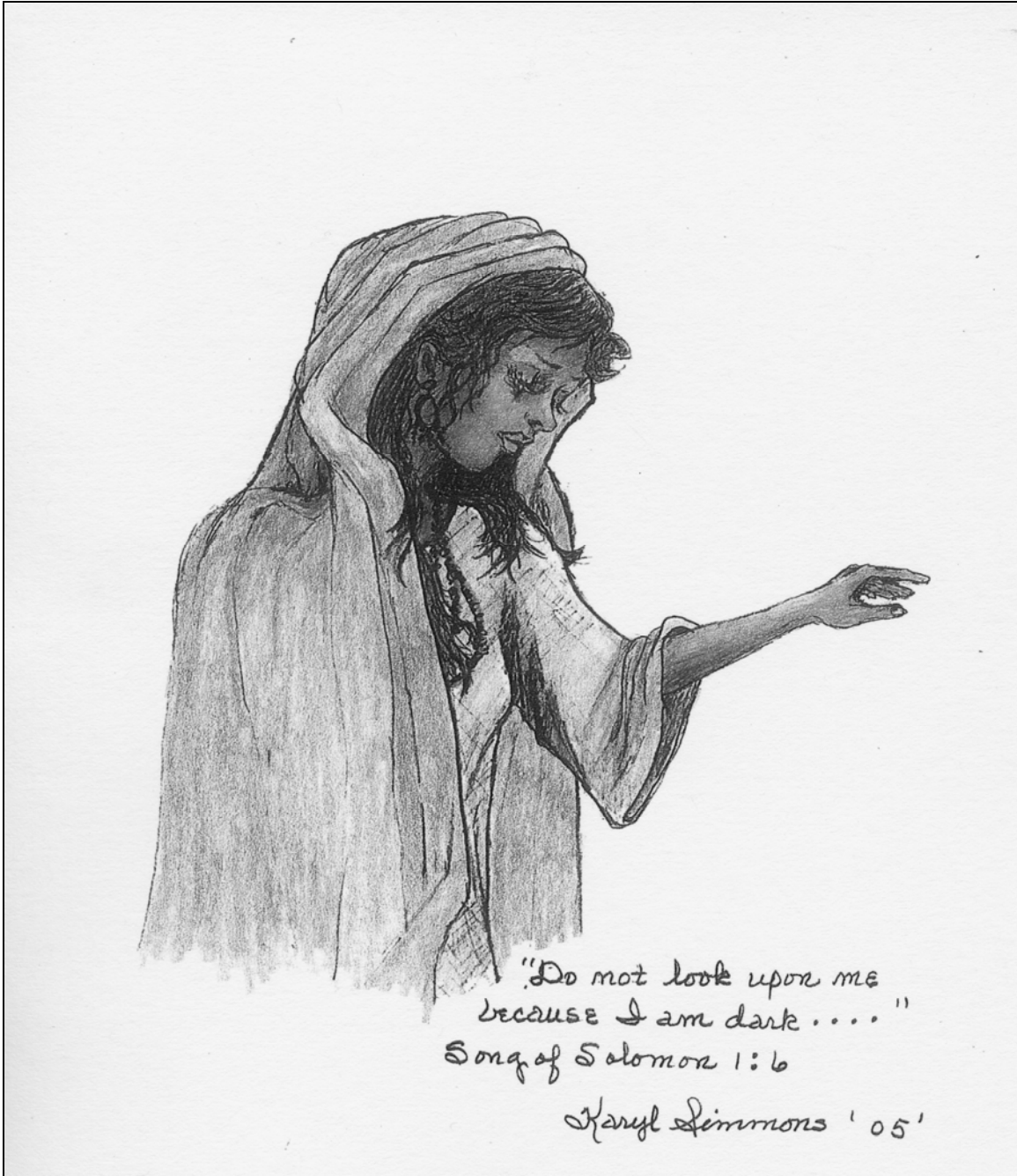
There is something about remembrance that we do well to know. Remembrance stirs our passion. In this case it is our passion for Jesus that is stirred. Remembering will bring us back to our *first love* as referred to in Revelation.

Rev.2:4-5 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works... (NKJV)

In communion, when we drink the cup of wine, we are instructed to remember Jesus, and the passion for Him in our hearts is stirred.

I Cor. 11:25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

In the last portion of this verse the maiden compares the love that the daughters of Jerusalem have for the King to the love the virgins have for Him and she says that the daughters of Jerusalem love Him in the right way.



VERSE 5

I am dark but lovely,

O daughters of Jerusalem.

Like the tents of Kedar,

Like the curtains of Solomon.

- *Dark is symbolic of the effects of sin.*
- *Loveliness speaks of radiance, purity spotlessness and blamelessness.*
- *Tents were temporary houses for the nomad shepherds. They were made from the skins of wild goats and were grey or black in color.*

Kedar was one of twelve sons of Ishmael, the son of Abraham and the Egyptian servant girl, Hagar. The Arab peoples of today originated from these sons. Kedar was a nomad shepherd who dwelt in the desert of Arabia. Kedar literally means dark. You can find a description of these people in:

Gen. 16:12 He shall be a wild man, his hand shall be against every man and every man's against him. (NKJV)

The maiden compares her life to the tents of Kedar. The tents of Kedar speak of wild wandering with no roots, darkness (the effects of sin), obstinate and willful stubbornness (goats), and a disagreeable, mean-hearted personality. On the other hand, she compares her life to the curtains of Solomon which were white and made of fine linen.

- *White speaks of purity.*
- *Linen speaks of righteousness. (Rev 19:8)*

Solomon was a famous king of noble descent in the royal lineage of Jesus. He was the second son of David and Bathsheba and he was known for his wisdom. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,000 songs. He authored Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. He was extremely wealthy and he possessed a great army with chariots and the finest horses. He loved women and maintained a harem of some 700 wives and 300 concubines.

It would seem that the maiden is contradicting herself with her remarks to the daughters of Jerusalem. This is what is called a paradox. The maiden is stating a fact here to the bride company. She realizes that she still carries the effects of sin on her life at this point in the song, but she then makes a statement of faith as well when she says, "But I am lovely."

This is to say, “I realize that I still carry the effects of sin on my life but I am now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit is at work in me, and I am becoming radiantly spotless and blamelessly pure. He has redeemed me from a life of dark wandering and strife to a life of royalty lived in peace and plenty.”

Is. 60:1 Arise, shine, for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. (NKJV)

- *The glory of the Lord is the beauty of this character.*

Saints of God, we have been redeemed in like manner, and the Holy Spirit is at work in us right now. He who has begun a good work in us is able to complete it.

Phil. 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

When we accept Jesus, we know that His blood washes away our sin. The Word says it washes us as white as snow and we become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

II Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NKJV)

God, then, sees us from His point of view through the blood of Jesus. Because His blood covers us and washes us, He sees us as righteous. We, on the other hand, are seeing things from a different point of view.

Yes, we have accepted the righteousness of Christ by faith (which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen), but we are in a process; we are being changed from glory to glory as the effects of sin (which is the darkness the maiden speaks of) is being replaced with loveliness. This is sanctification!

The Shulamite maiden continues on in the next verse to confide in the daughters of Jerusalem the cause of her darkness.

VERSE 6

Do not look upon me because I am dark,

Because the sun has tanned me.

My mother’s sons were angry with me,

They made me the keeper of the vineyards.

But my own vineyard I have not kept.

- *Sun is symbolic of Jesus, the Word.*

John 1:14
Matt.17:2
Ps. 19:4b-6
Ps. 84:11

In this case the Word was used out of context or legalistically (which is the Word minus the Spirit), and it was being misused by the Shulamite's brothers in order to benefit their own interests.

- *Vineyards are symbolic of the areas of one's interests and concerns.*

Her mother's sons would be the maiden's brothers. The brothers represent those men and women in the church who are religious, legalistic, and controlling. They are much like the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day. They have deceived themselves into believing that they are doing God's work. They are making the maiden take care of areas of interest and responsibility that were not hers to do, causing her to neglect the areas for which she was responsible. They are angry with her because she is no longer under their control; she belongs to the King now.

You will see later in the song that these brothers are not balanced in the Word. They use the Word out of context to benefit their own interests. They are not at all concerned about how their selfish, abusive, controlling behavior affects those whom they dominate. The maiden was made to work in the heat of the day with no concern for her welfare and it had its sinful effects on her life. It must have caused great resentment, hurt, and bitterness in her heart toward her brothers. She was obviously ashamed for the bride company to see this darkness in her soul. These brothers are not necessarily false prophets or false teachers; they simply are not rightly dividing the Word. They are religious and not sincerely seeking God's presence to work change in their lives. They don't even realize that they need to change. They are steeped in legalism (which is the Word minus the revelations of the Holy Spirit).

The Shulamite's statement of faith in verse 5 intimidates these people who, up until now, have been able to dominate and control her. This maiden is beginning to break free of their influence and she is beginning to grow closer and stronger in her relationship to the King.

Have you ever encountered these brothers in your life song? They are still in the church today!

Before you think too harshly of the brothers, though, stop and think! Have you ever been in a position to behave like the maiden's brothers? We are all assigned to a flock to care for and sometimes there is a thin line between responsibly leading and protecting, and in controlling and dominating.

VERSE 7

(TO HER BELOVED)

Tell me, O you whom I love,

Where you feed your flock,

Where you make it rest at noon,

For why should I be as one who veils herself

By the flocks of your companions?

The Shulamite is seeing her beloved King now, as the Shepherd over a flock of which she is a part. This flock functions in an orderly and peaceful manner, according to the King's plan, and the maiden will learn servitude here in their midst.

I Cor. 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion (disorder) but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. (NKJV)

I Cor. 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order. (NKJV)

- *His flock represents those who serve as they follow Him.*

The maiden sees that her Beloved, the Shepherd King, leads His flock to good places to feed and drink. He protects His flock from harm and He cares for their needs. He makes His flock rest at noon. (Read Psalm 23)

The King's companions are part of His flock (those who serve as they follow Him). His companions stay very near the Shepherd King and are leaders that the King has placed within the flock. They are most likely the pastors, apostles, preachers, teachers, and evangelists of Ephesians 4:11 and I Corinthians 12. They are those in the church with the various ministries of healing, miracles, helps, administrations, etc. They have been given to the saints that are submissive to their authority to equip them for the work of the ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

Eph. 4:12 ...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (NKJV)

Each one in the King's flock has flocks as well whom they are responsible to serve. They are the body of Christ within the church – His hands, His feet, His voice to carry the gospel and minister to the needs of others, as they follow the Shepherd King. We will see in the next verse that the maiden has a flock to care for as do the King's companions mentioned in this verse. God has a purpose and a perfect plan for each of us and we must walk in it, God's way! If all in the Shepherd's flock are functioning according to His plan, they will learn how to serve effectively while under God's protective authority. They will also learn how to serve as a protective authority over others in the flock while they are maturing in servitude.

Compared to the maiden's abusive brothers who made her work through the hottest part of the day out in the scorching sun with no concern for her welfare, this is a wonderful revelation of her Bridegroom King and it makes her aware of how much she is beginning to love Him. She is eager to mature so that she can take her place as His bride-queen. She wants to eat her spiritual food directly from His hand and she questions why she cannot feed nearer to Him. After all, she is His bride-elect! We can see here a glimpse of the darkness, the willful stubbornness, that she confessed to the bride company in verse 5 of this chapter. But she is hungry to grow in knowledge and to mature so that she can lay hold of the Prize.

What she must realize, though, is that there are no spoiled brats in the bride company and there are no short cuts for the bride! She must learn to do things God's way.

Now, what is this veil that the maiden refers to here in the last part of this verse?

A young woman in ancient Jewish tradition, when she agreed to a contract of marriage, would wear a veil when out in public. The veil, in honor of the contract, was a sign to all other potential suitors that she

was spoken for and not available for marriage to any of the other young men. It was much like an engagement ring that young women wear today.

- ***The veil in this verse symbolizes the maiden's witness to the world that she belongs to the King.***

It represents her commitment to serve Him and His interests alone; that she will keep herself pure for Him alone, and that she will allow the Holy Spirit to prepare her to take her place as His bride-queen. Her veil covers and protects her from the influences of the world that would pull her away from her focus, and her determination to lay hold of the Prize. It seals the maiden's body for the King alone.

This is speaking of the maiden's lifestyle – a life style of servitude and righteousness. In verse 2 of chapter 1, the maiden's soul was sealed. We are a spirit that possesses a soul and lives in a body and here, her body is sealed or certified, not to be tampered with, unto righteousness and servitude.

II Thess. 5:23-24 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (NKJV)

VERSE 8

THE BELOVED

If you do not know,

O fairest among women,

Follow in the footsteps of the flock

And feed your little goats

Beside the Shepherd's tents.

- ***Goats are symbolic of those who are willful, stubborn, and disobedient. They are in need of someone to disciple them. (Matt 25:31-46)***
- ***Shepherds are those who are committed to the care of those assigned to them.***
- ***Tents speak of mobility and in this context, a heart to follow after God.***

The shepherds, in their servitude, go to where the need is. They go and they lead their flocks into God's presence, and where there is food for them.

- *Fair means beautiful or unveiled. Unveiled speaks of transparency, vulnerability, and availability.*
- *To follow speaks of submissive obedience.*

The beloved Shepherd King speaks now for the first time in the song. He is telling her, in response to her obstinate question, that if you do not know why I require you to take your place in the flock before you can move on to your destiny, and if you want to know, then submit yourself to the godly authority that I have placed over you (the shepherds) and learn from the experienced wisdom of those in my flock who have learned to serve as they follow Me.

John 12: 26 “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall My servant also be, if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” (NAS)

Notice that even at this early stage in her transformation, the King refers to her as *fairest among women*. In her vulnerable transparency before Him, He calls her beautiful even though her attitude is one of obstinate, stubborn, willfulness. He is seeing, instead, the finished work in her.

In verse 4 of this chapter, the Shulamite asked to run with the King, which is to partner in ministry with her Beloved, but she must receive spiritual nurturing and training in the body of Christ before she is ready to do this. Being trained and fed God's way offers her protection from the influences of the world while she learns these lessons in servitude.

This is also a lesson for her in obedience to God's ordained, delegated authority; how to function under it in order to get her needs met and how to learn to be that godly authority over her flock, the little goats, as she ministers to their needs and disciples them.

The maiden has been given the King's kisses of instruction that she asked for in verse 2.

It is so important for us as Christians to realize that one of the enemy's most effective tactics against us is to isolate us from the body of Christ. If you are effectively serving and growing in the body, then you are a big threat to him! If the enemy can pull you away from your protection, then he is better able to trip you up. He will even attempt to destroy you, if you allow it.

John 10:10 “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (NKJV)

There is a great temptation among Christians today who have had a bad experience within the life of the church to withdraw and isolate themselves. Many fall away completely from their walk with the Lord.

Did you know that there is a scientific law that states that when things are isolated, they tend to deteriorate? There is no such thing as a perfect church! After all, the church is made of people like you and me and I will be the first to say that I am far from perfect.

In I Cor 11:27-29 we are instructed, when taking communion, to examine ourselves first, and discern the body of Christ before eating the bread representing Jesus' body and drinking the wine representing His

blood. The church is one of our Lord's primary interests and therefore, our interest as well. There, we are to serve His interests as He directs.

I Cor. 11:27-29 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of this bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. (NKJV)

Remember this! Finding our place in the body of Christ is what God has purposed for us in order to bring us to our destiny with Him. Taking our place there is like accepting the veil and wearing it so that all the world will know that we belong to Jesus and will serve Him all the days of our lives. He just may be saying to you that if you want Me to feed and satisfy you, then you must find My purposes for you in the body of Christ within the church and follow in the footsteps of the flock!

This is the first of four tests for the maiden...will she pass it?

VERSE 9

I have compared you, my love,

To my filly among Pharoah's chariots.

- *A filly is a young, fit, energetic, strong, and beautiful female horse. A filly would also be inexperienced and untrained, but eager to run.*

This lovely animal must be broken and trained so that it can be guided with a bit and reins in order to be useful to the King. Many times they are stubborn and strong willed which are good traits in a horse when brought under the subjection and control of its master. This would be what is referred to as a spirited filly.

- *Chariots are horse drawn vehicles used in warfare by the Pharoahs of Egypt.*

The King sees the same traits in this Shulamite maiden that He sees in His filly. This maiden will be trained for warfare before this song is ended, as we will soon discover.

Look for the bride of Christ, beloved, in these perilous last days, to be trained and ready for spiritual warfare.

Notice the King refers to the Shulamite here as "My love," speaking of His love for her even though she is inexperienced, untrained and strong willed much like the flock she is to care for – the goats.

VERSE 10

Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,

Your neck with chains of gold.

- *Cheeks are symbolic of emotions. It speaks of the heart's affections.*
- *Ornaments symbolize her acceptance.*

Ornaments were a part of the bride price in the marriage contract that the prospective groom offered to the prospective bride. In this case they were probably earrings. Genesis 23:22 and 29 talks about this in the account of Isaac, his servant and Rebekah. These ornaments speak of her born again experience; her acceptance of Jesus into her life.

- *Gold is symbolic of God's diving nature.*
- *Chains are symbolic of authority.*

These chains are like the bits and reins the King would use to train a filly so that he could guide her.

- *The neck is symbolic of the will.*

We see the Shulamite here in this verse wearing the ornaments. In wearing the ornaments, the maiden is showing to all that she has accepted the King and his kisses of instruction and discipline, and that she has placed her heart's affections on Him alone. She is wearing the gold chains as well, which says to all, "I have also accepted the Godly authority that you have asked me to submit myself to (which are the God-ordained leaders in the body of Christ), and I will learn to embrace servanthood, God's way, by an act of my will." The maiden has accepted the veil and she will wear it as a witness to all the world of her commitment to her beloved bridegroom King.

Yes, the Shulamite maiden has passed the first test! How about you, Christian?

VERSE 11

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

(speak and say to the maiden)

We will make you ornaments of gold

With studs of silver.

- *Gold speaks of God's divine nature.*
- *Ornaments speak of acceptance.*
- *Silver speaks of redemption.*

These ornaments may have been a crown, bracelets, rings, or earrings; notice that they are all *circles*.

- *Circles speak of unending love, much like the rings that are exchanged in a wedding ceremony today.*

The bride company wants the Shulamite to accept their encouragement to help her to remember that the love of the Beloved for the bride is unconditional and unending. His love produces God's divine nature in her life, and that His sacrificial love has paid the price to redeem her from the dark bondages of her past.

Dear one, do you take the initiative to encourage other Christians to reach for the goal of the prize as the daughters of Jerusalem are encouraging the maiden here in this verse?

This verse is a picture of *discipleship*. We have all been commanded to go and make disciples of all nations, and each of us has a flock that we are to disciple. If we will all follow God's plan, then the whole world will have an opportunity to be saved!

VERSE 12

THE SHULAMITE

While the King is at his table

My spikenard sends forth its fragrance.

- *Spikenard is symbolic of praise and worship.*

Spikenard is a spice. It was a very costly and fragrant oil used in perfume and ointments of Solomon's day.

- *Spices are symbolic of the various administrations of the Holy Spirit in one's life.*
- *Fragrance is the evidence of something.*

The Shulamite has taken her place in the King's flock and is submitted to the authority of the shepherds as she is being trained in servitude. But, what she really longs for is to be in a more intimate setting near her King at his table and to be fed by His hand. She is not satisfied to just be in His flock, feeding with the others near the shepherds' tents.

Her focus remains on Him and the prize. She sees Him at His table where she longs to be and she begins to praise Him and her worship begins to fill the atmosphere where He is. This scene is repeated in

John 12:1-2 while Jesus was reclining at a table in the home of Lazarus. While Martha served, Mary began to pour out a very expensive container of spikenard on the feet of Jesus and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Lazarus was at the table of the King where the maiden of this song longs to be. She eventually finds herself there in the next chapter but note in verse 9-11 of this account in John that the chief priests were plotting to kill not only the King, but Lazarus as well. They wanted Lazarus dead because his life was a living witness of Jesus' resurrection power and many were following Jesus because of his testimony. This situation was causing the priests to lose control over the people...sound familiar?

**Ps. 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil. (NKJV)**

Here in these verses from the Gospel of John, we are finding more insight into the brothers of the song. Beware of the brothers, Christian, in your own life's song for they will attempt to stifle the life of Jesus in your life and the effects it has on those around you. They are those whom the brothers have previously been able to manipulate and control to their own advantage.

The maiden's praise and worship is evidenced by a fragrance that rises before the King; a fragrance that He cannot ignore or resist. True praise and worship is a work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. God is seeking true worshipers today and He inhabits their praises.

John 4:23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him." (NKJV)

Ps. 22:3 But you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. (NKJV)

Why do you think that God seeks our worship? Well, worship is love and adoration. The very things we need from God, he needs from us! We are made in His image and we have the same basic needs that He has. Our praise and worship creates an atmosphere that our Beloved will inhabit. It invites His presence into our circumstances where we can connect and minister to one another.

Christian, are you able to lift true and sincere praise and worship to the Lord in the midst of hard circumstances, especially when you do not seem to receive the answers to your prayers that you desire in a timely manner? Let us take a valuable lesson from the maiden and learn from her example in this verse. This is what the Bible refers to as a *sacrifice of praise*.

Heb. 13:15 ...let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (NKJV)

True praise and worship will lift you above your circumstances and place you in His presence where you will find strength and comfort in His embrace.

I would like to take the liberty to share a poem that I was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen several years ago after seeing this in a vision.

Praise Takes You There

By Karyl Simmons

Close your eyes for just a moment and still the hands of time.
Behold a golden temple in the quietness of your mind.
Ornate doors swing open wide as a glorious sight unfolds,
And all of heaven watches as the King descends his throne.
How many times you've wondered how this event would be,
Your eyes beholding Jesus – to feel, to touch, to see.
You marvel at the beauty this dwelling place commands,
Yet fading in all its glory now, as Christ before you stands.
His eyes, they see right through you. This One knows you well.
He doesn't speak a single word, there's nothing left to tell.
For all the truth you've sought to know is found in this one life
The one who died that you might live, this man named Jesus Christ.
And the glorious beauty that enthrones Him is created by one thing;
Your praising heart that lifts Him up and loves Him as you sing.
Did you know that He sings? He's rejoicing over you
Joining his voice with your voice and the angels' voices, too.
It's a great big hallelujah time as you dance around together
You laugh, He laughs – rapturous joy that lasts forever.
So keep this thought for always in the recesses of your mind,
And recall it often, child of God, and you'll delight to find
That praise will always take you there, to wondrous sights unknown,
And place you gently, every time, before His glorious throne.
All your needs are met right there before His mercy seat,
And all the truth that heaven holds, you'll find at Jesus' feet.

VERSE 13

A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me

That lies all night between my breasts.

- *Myrrh is symbolic of suffering love.*

Myrrh is a spice therefore it is another work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. Myrrh in ancient times was very costly and was used in embalming and to beautify. It was sweet smelling and very soothing and healing. It was given to Jesus as a drink when He was on the cross.

- *Night speaks of suffering through a dark, hard time.*
- *Between my breasts is a phrase that speaks of embracing.*

The Shulamite is saying in her praise and worship to her Beloved that she is learning to embrace His suffering love through this dark, hard time in her life.

What is it to embrace His suffering love? It is putting someone else's need above your own need, comfort, or desires because you love Jesus and because the Holy Spirit has directed you to do so. It is dying to self and crucifying your fleshly desires in sacrificial love for someone else with a peace that passes all human understanding. It is loving those who persecute you or treat you badly (someone like the brothers in this song, for instance) with the joy of the Lord strengthening you to do so.

It is hiding yourself in your Beloved's embrace and holding on to Him and enjoying His presence during the dark, hard times and staying there until it passes.

The ultimate example of suffering love is Jesus on the cross. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. The cross that was in Jesus' day a symbol of suffering and certain death and that was most feared has now become a symbol of life and hope because Jesus willingly and obediently chose to embrace suffering on that cross. He did it out of His love for you and me and out of His love for His Father. The Father knew that we needed someone to rescue us from sin and death, so he sent Jesus to take our sin on the cross in order that we could walk free of it into abundant life with Him. In doing so, He conquered Satan and death on that cross. Jesus is my hero and a Man among men.

To embrace suffering love is a choice one makes. Read the words of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew when the soldiers came to arrest Him while He was praying in the garden:

Matt. 26:53 “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (NKJV)

In like manner, Christian, if you will choose to embrace suffering when it comes, rather than fear it, or think to avoid it, you will find freedom from Satan's chains – freedom to live the abundant life that the Father meant all along for you to have.

II Tim. 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (NKJV)

Rom. 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

I Pet. 2:20b-21 But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. (NKJV)

Suffering, at some point in one form or another, is a given in a person's life and Christians are not exempt. The thought of facing those dark, hard times used to frighten me until I learned to face them from my Beloved's embrace (much like the Shulamite is learning to do here). I am discovering peace in His arms, in the midst of those hard times and Satan has lost his stronghold in my life – that stronghold was the fear of those dark, hard times.

You will remember that the maiden's soul was sealed by the Holy Spirit to God not to be tampered with. If you belong to Jesus, Satan has no authority to tamper with you. One of his many weapons is fear

and when you, child of God, eliminate fear from your life by replacing it with faith and trust in your Beloved's ability to save you, you disarm the enemy of your soul of that weapon.

VERSE 14

My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blooms

In the vineyards of En Gedi

- *Vineyards is symbolic of one's interests or concerns.*
- *Henna blooms speak of being transformed into His (Jesus) image.*

These flowers were used by Jewish maidens for adornment in Solomon's day. Their leaves produced a dye that the people of that day would use cosmetically to color their hair and beards.

En Gedi is a beautiful, refreshing oasis in a harsh, dry desert place in Israel. It is in the Judean desert and is a place where David would go many times in order to hide from King Saul as recorded in the Old Testament.

In this verse, the Shulamite is saying, in her praise and worship, "My Beloved has become my adornment and He has transformed my life so that I am able to delight myself in Him and His interests even though I am in a hard, dry, barren place."

Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (NKJV)

She has learned to hide herself in Him during times of trouble.

Ps. 32:7 You are my hiding place, You shall preserve me from trouble, You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. (NKJV)

Col. 3:3 For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (NKJV)

Yes, the King's love for you, beloved Christian, can refresh you and grace your life with beauty, even during those hard, dark times. Jesus is that safe refuge – that place you can run to in times of trouble.

VERSE 15

THE BELOVED

Behold, you are fair, my love!

Behold, you are fair.

You have dove's eyes.

- *Fair means beautiful and unveiled. Unveiled speaks of transparency, vulnerability, and availability.*

The Beloved responds to the Shulamite's praise and worship by affirming and then reaffirming to her just how beautiful she is to Him in her worship. Her beauty is in her transparency and her vulnerability to Him. We are instructed in I Chr. 16:29 to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Transparency and vulnerability before God is a prerequisite to holiness.

Any time the maiden is before the King, she is unveiled and available to Him. You will remember that the maiden wears the veil when she is out in public to discourage other suitors.

The Beloved is saying to this Shulamite, "Look at you, just look at you! You are beautiful!" He then refers to her again as "My love."

Every woman (including myself) I have ever known cries out, in one way or another, to be known by someone, anyone, as beautiful. Men and women long for acceptance, admiration, affirmation, and approval. Did you know that God, in his wonderful wisdom, made all that way? That need in our lives is what He uses to draw us to Him because He is the One who can truly fulfill that longing deep inside us! Many of us have spent a lifetime looking in all the wrong places to have that need met, but it is met only in Jesus!

The King then admires the maiden's eyes and refers to them as dove's eyes.

- *Doves can focus on only one thing at a time.*

The maiden's eyes are focused on her Beloved and on Him alone while she walks through this hard time of her life. Her ability to stay focused on Him as she worships her King draws His admiration.

VERSE 16

THE SHULAMITE

Behold, you are handsome, my beloved!

Yes, pleasant!

Also our bed is green.

The Shulamite in the previous verses of this chapter has asked for the King's kisses. She has:

◆ Expressed an appreciation for His name.

◆ Expressed a desire to know Him better.

◆ Expressed her appreciation to Him for the benefits that knowing Him is bringing into her life in worship.

Now suddenly, she realizes how very attractive He has become to her and how very much she enjoys His company. She feels safe and comfortable with Him. This Shulamite is beginning to fall in love with the King! She has begun to express ownership of Him when she refers to Him as “my Beloved,” and in so doing, fills His greatest longing to be loved and adored.

- *Bed speaks of rest.*
- *Green speaks of lushness, health, and life.*

The Shulamite has discovered that since she has submitted her will to Him and stopped striving in her flesh, she has found a rest in Him that produces a lushness of life and health even in this dark, hard time.

Christian, this is a discovery that would grace your own life’s song with a peace that would pass all understanding if you would learn it from this maiden’s own experience. Stress is the opposite of peace. Stress will destroy your peace and, if not handled properly, it will destroy your health. We must learn how to enter into His rest.

Heb. 4:9-10 There remains therefore as rest for the people of God. For he who has entered his rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. (NKJV)

Matt. 11:28 “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (NKJV)

Phil. 4:7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (NKJV)

VERSE 17

The beams of our houses are cedar

And our rafters of fir.

- *Beams and rafters are structural components in a house.*
- *Houses speaks of one’s body.*
- *Cedar is symbolic of the righteousness of the new creation.*
- *Fir is symbolic of death.*

In essence, what the Shulamite is saying in her worship of the King is that becoming a new creation who is righteous in God’s eyes and dying to the old man while in this body are structural truths that she can

build upon now that they are set in place. The Shulamite can now grow into the spiritual maturity that she desires for her life. She is determined to lay hold of the Prize!

II Cor. 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. (NKJV)

CHAPTER ONE REVIEW

1. What does the Song of Solomon represent? _____

2. In the context of this study, what does it mean to receive His kisses?

3. There are two things that wine symbolizes. What are they? _____

4. In the context of this study, whom do the Shulamite's brothers represent? _____

5. Willfully disobedient and stubborn people are represented by what? _____

6. What does Solomon mean when he compares the Shulamite to a filly? _____

7. When the Shulamite wears the ornaments, what is she saying? _____

8. What is unusual about doves' eyes? _____

9. One's interests and concerns are represented by what? _____

10. In the context of this study, what is the Prize? _____

CHAPTER TWO

THE EMBRACE

VERSE 1

I am the rose of Sharon

And the lily of the valleys.

- *The rose of Sharon is a common, ordinary flower in Israel.*

You can see them all along the countryside. They are very hardy and plentiful. Less plentiful is the lily of the valleys.

- *The lily of the valleys is symbolic of the Bride of Christ.*

This is the bride who struggles with compromise, indifference and complacency (the valley).

In chapter 1 verse 5, the Shulamite maiden confesses that she is dark and then she makes a statement of faith when she says that she is lovely. Now, in this verse, she states another fact: *she is common and ordinary and that there are many others like her*. She then makes her second statement of faith when she says she is the *lily of the valleys*. She is saying, “I am the bride of Christ even though I surely do not look like it right now, for I am struggling with compromise, indifference, and complacency. However, I have determined to gain the Prize.”

Meditate on these scriptures for a while:

Matt. 7:14 ... narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life and there are few who find it. (NKJV)

Matt. 22:14 ...for many are called but few are chosen. (NKJV)

Dear one, will you be one of those who will press on until you lay hold of the Prize? Will you strive to fulfill your destiny and take your place beside the King in God’s Kingdom as His glorious Bride-Queen, even though you are a common, ordinary servant of God that struggles sometimes in the valley of compromise, indifference, and complacency?

I have observed from the Word and from my own experience that the company of those who are seeking a more intimate relationship with the Lord gets smaller and smaller the closer they get to Him. Not only does the company of people grow smaller, but the individuals, themselves, grow smaller or less dominant in the relationship as one becomes more and more like Him.

John 3:29-30 “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. 30: “He must increase, but I must decrease.

Christian, will you allow these truths from God's Word to strengthen your determination to have all that He has purposed for you, even when the path gets narrow and hard, and those who travel it with you become fewer?

VERSE 2

THE BELOVED

Like a lily among thorns

So is my love among the daughters.

- *Lily is symbolic of the Bride-Queen.*
- *Thorns are symbolic of the sinful, cursed earth.*
- *Daughters are referring to all other women of the world.*

Again, the Beloved is speaking words of affirmation over His bride. Notice that the bride's statements of faith in the previous verses are in agreement with what the King says about her, except for her reference to the valleys. The King is seeing the completed work of the Holy Spirit in her in spite of her struggles.

The King is saying here, "My love, My bride, who is pursuing the promise of the Prize, stands out in stark contrast from all the other women of the world who are living on this sinful, cursed earth."

I heard someone say once that having Jesus in your life doesn't make you perfect, but it does make you different. God says in I Pet. 2:9 that you are chosen, you are royal, you are holy, and you are special (or peculiar).

Every ordinary man or woman of God in this world has the extraordinary promises of God offered to them, but they must determine to embrace and walk in those promises if they are to gain the Prize. This is what makes you different or peculiar to all others – you are living in this world, but you have a Heavenly goal in sight. You are after the Prize!

But be aware that your enemy, Satan, the father of all lies and the god of this world, will attempt to deceive anyone who has determined to embrace the promises of God. He wants to prevent you, child of God, from walking in those promises because he would like to make God look like a liar and His Word seem of no effect. We know, though, that God cannot lie and that His Word is powerful.

Heb. 6:18 ...that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, ... (NKJV)

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (NKJV)

Satan would also like to make you feel like a failure in order to discourage you from pursuing the Prize. But God says that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you as mentioned in Philippians 4:13.

Deception is another weapon that Satan will use to trip us up as we run the race. Knowing, understanding, and doing the Word will disarm the enemy of this weapon, as the maiden will soon discover.

VERSE 3

THE SHULAMITE

Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods

So is my beloved among the sons.

I sat down in his shade with great delight

And his fruit was sweet to my taste.

- *The apple tree represents Jesus.*

An apple tree in the woods stands out from all other trees because it provides fruit that nourishes everyone who eats of it.

- *Trees of the woods represent all humanity.*
- *The sons represent all other men in the world.*
- *Sat down speaks of rest from all physical activity.*
- *His shade is His protection from the effects of sin.*

You will remember that the brothers used the word legalistically (with no revelation of the Holy Spirit) against their sister. They made her work out in the heat of the day, causing her to be dark with the effects of sin.

- *His fruit is His revealed truth.*

They are the apples mentioned in verse 5 of this chapter.

The Shulamite sees her Beloved as superior to all other men of all time. There is just no one like Jesus. She looks to her Beloved for her nurturing, for protection, and for truth. Jesus said in John 14:6 "...I am the way, the truth, and the life..." His way offers us protection and His truth (which is His fruit) nurtures and sustains His life in us,

The maiden rests from her labor under His shade with great delight, and she begins to nibble on His revealed truth. This is delightful to her because she, no doubt, is remembering how she was made to labor for her brothers out in the heat of the day with no concern for her welfare. This is a step closer for her to His table and nearer to Him where she longs to be, feeding on the Word straight from His hand.

These truths and His great love for her are lifting her up out of her ugly circumstances and they are washing away the effects of sin (the darkness of her soul). They are sweet to her because they nurture and strengthen her spirit.

Ps. 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth. (NKJV)

When was the last time that you, beloved, took the time from your active lives to rest under Jesus' shade and to nibble on His revealed truths?

VERSE 4

THE SHULAMITE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

He brought me to the banqueting house,

And his banner over me was love.

- *Brought, in this case, is to carry.*

In chapter 3 we will see Solomon's couch or palanquin that carries the maiden to her wedding day. It is a portable chair that is carried on the shoulders of valiant men. We will discover that this palanquin represents our faith in God and His Word and the Gospel message of Jesus.

- *The banqueting house is a public or corporate setting of the church, a gathering place where those present are offered food from His table.*

Ps. 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over. (NKJV)

- *His banner of love identifies those who have determined to gain the Prize.*

A banner in ancient times was raised as a rallying point for groups with a common interest. Many times it was a signal to call an army to assemble together for battle.

In this verse, I believe the banner lifted over the Shulamite maiden and the other daughters of Jerusalem identifies them in this corporate setting of the church as the bride company. They have rallied together under this banner of love and have made a proclamation to all there that they have determined to

gain the Prize. Furthermore, they have purposed in their hearts to defeat the enemy who would attempt to keep them from reaching their goal.

The Shulamite turns to her support group and proclaims, “The King has carried me into the banqueting house and to a place at His table with you.”

In meditating on this verse and thinking about the banqueting house, I began to reflect on how many times in the scriptures Jesus was concerned about, or involved in, feeding people and giving them physical, but more importantly, spiritual food. That God’s people feed on the Word and drink in the Living Water is much more important to the Father than I think we realize.

John 4:14 “but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” (NKJV)

John 6:27 “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you...” (NKJV)

Prov. 4:20-22 My son, give attention to my words, incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes, keep them in the midst of your heart, for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. (NKJV)

Jesus told Peter to feed His sheep in John 21:15-17; He fed the 4,000 in John 4; He prepared breakfast for Peter and the other disciples by the seashore after His resurrection in John 21:1-14, and in Psalm 23:5 He prepared a table for me!

In this song alone, there are numerous references to feasting on the rhema word.

Let us now see what transpires in the maiden’s life as she finds herself at the King’s table in the banqueting house. I believe at the end of this study we will fully understand the importance of God’s rhema word in the life of a Christian.

The Shulamite expressed her desire to be carried into the King’s chambers in chapter 1, verse 4. She was given instruction and correction (His kisses) that she must follow in order to prepare herself to eventually take her place as the King’s bride in His Kingdom. She made her statements of faith in verse 1:5 and in verse 2:1 and she set her heart’s affections and her focus on Him alone. She found rest under His shade as she tasted of His revealed truths, all the while longing to be nearer to Him and to be fed at His table.

Now her faith in God has carried her into the banqueting house and to His table where she has joined the other members of the bride company under his banner, proclaiming to all who are there that she belongs exclusively to Jehovah Nissi as He places His banner of love over her. Jehovah Nissi is one of the Hebrew names of God meaning “my banner.”

The ordinary Shulamite shepherd girl glories in the fact that she is finally at the King’s table where she saw Him in chapter 1. She had longed to be at his table as she worshipped Him. Now she is rallied around His banner of love with the rest of the bride company, a runner in the race with those who have determined to gain the Prize!

VERSE 5

Sustain me with cakes of raisins.

Refresh me with apples

For I am lovesick.

- *Cakes of raisins are symbolic of the solid food of the Word.*

Raisins are dried grapes. Grapes are the fruit of the vine (the church). These cakes of raisins are the solid food of the Word and they are offered to her through the administration and the auspices of the church.

- *Apples symbolize the revelation of truth from the Word by the Holy Spirit.*

Do you remember the little shepherdess back in chapter 1, verse 7, who wanted so much just to feed near the Shepherd King – the humble maiden who saw Him at His table and worshipped in verse 12? Well, now she is not only at His table and next to Him, but she is in His embrace! You will see in the next verse that she is drinking in the administrations of the Holy Spirit as the bride company serves her the solid food of the Word. This rhema word refreshes her spirit with truth that is revealed by the Holy Spirit who is at work in her. In Matt. 7:7 Jesus promises that all those who seek will find!

Her Beloved has prepared a table for her in the presence of her enemies. All are there in the church (including her brothers), and she is overcome with a holy passion for Him. She is lovesick! Feasting on His rhema word has this effect on our lives.

**Ps. 23:5 You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.
(NKJV)**

Who are her enemies? Her enemies are those who would kill the work of the Holy Spirit in her life – in this case, they are her brothers and they are still in the church today.

Do not be discouraged, Christian, when you encounter the brothers in your life's song, and do not be dismayed when you find them in the life of the church. Remember that Judas was one of the twelve disciples who walked with Jesus and he was a part of God's plan in the lives of the other disciples.

I must say again that the church today is not perfect because it is made up of imperfect people like you and me. But the church is part of God's plan for your life. Satan would love to isolate you from that place where God has purposed for you to serve and mature. He does not want you to have the Prize! He does not want you to find your place in the Kingdom and move into your destiny.

When we have been in the manifested presence of the Lord, it can leave us physically exhausted or as in this verse, lovesick. Jesus reveals Himself little by little and we are changed from glory to glory or we could not bear it.

John 16:12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (NKJV)

**Ps. 39:13 “Remove your gaze from me, that I may regain my strength,
before I go away and am no more.” (NKJV)**



VERSE 6

His left hand is under my head,

And his right hand embraces me.

This is an intimate picture of the Beloved with the Shulamite that we will see two other times in the song. Here they are in a corporate setting of the church. They are in the banqueting house reclining at His table. She has been feeding on the solid food of the Word and Revelation Truth.

- *Now his left hand is under her head. This speaks of the renewing of her mind.*
- *His right hand embraces her as He captures her heart's affections.*

She is resting in His arms as she meditates on the rhema Word that she has just been fed and she is beginning to know Him more intimately. You will remember in the previous verse feasting on the rhema Word has caused her to be lovesick and now the King is capturing her heart's affections.

Never hesitate, beloved, to draw apart to spend time in this embrace. While you are there, ask the Holy Spirit to bring revelation to you as you feed upon the solid food of the Word. You will soon find that your mind will be renewed and you will discover a holy passion for Jesus in your life as He captures your heart's affections.

I Cor. 2:13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (NKJV)

VERSE 7

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,

By the gazelles or by the does of the field

Do not stir up nor awaken love

Until it pleases.

- *Gazelle is symbolic of the resurrected Jesus who has overcome. It is speaking of the Bridegroom King of the song.*
- *Does of the field is symbolic of the gazelle's hungry partner. It is speaking of the maiden in the song.*

This hungry maiden has just feasted on the raisin cakes. She has taken in the rhema Word that was ministered to her by the bride company. The King is now holding her in His embrace as He renews her mind with that Word. He is capturing her heart's affections as her eyes are focused on Him alone. She is, no doubt, receiving more of His kisses which are His instruction and discipline or correction.

The maiden has longed for this moment ever since the day she accepted the King's contract of marriage, but she was not ready for the Kings embrace until now. She had to follow His instruction and endure His discipline (correction) first, and she admonishes the bride company not to rush others into this place of intimacy before they are ready. The Gazelle is the One who woos and draws the doe there, and the bride company is also not to disturb the couple or disrupt what is taking place.

I Thess. 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit. (NKJV)

Notice here that the Shulamite has matured to a place in the bride company where she is now instructing and admonishing them as well as receiving their ministry to her.

VERSE 8

THE SHULAMITE

The voice of my beloved

Behold, he comes

Leaping upon the mountains,

Skiping upon the hills.

The scene has changed, some time has passed, and now the maiden is in a nice, warm, safe place where she has fallen into a state of complacency and indifference. She is about to experience her second test. There is so much that she must learn before she will be ready to take her place in the Kingdom and move toward her destiny as the King's glorious Bride-Queen.

- *Mountains are symbolic of obstacles.*
- *Hills are symbolic of challenges.*

Both the mountains and the hills have blocked the maiden's view of her Beloved and it is vital for her to keep her focus on him at all times if she is to mature through this time of preparation and run with the King (which means to partner with him in ministry).

Christian, if you have determined to run in this race, you will face these challenges as well. Mountains and hills are things most Christians view as bad and something to be avoided, but notice that the Beloved comes to the maiden upon them. Mountains and hills can be very intimidating, but God, in his great love and infinite wisdom, uses the mountains and the hills in our lives to test us. Tests are needful in order for us to mature to the place where we are able to reach for the Prize and move closer toward our destiny.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. (NKJV)

Much has transpired in the maiden's life between verse 7 where she was enjoying her Beloved's embrace and verse 8. The King had released her and no doubt had called her to run with Him in ministry over the mountains, but the maiden had chosen to remain in the valley of indifference and had allowed the obstacles and challenges in her life to block her view of her Beloved which had resulted in this state of complacency that she now is in.

Do you remember in verse 13 of chapter 1 how the maiden expressed, through her worship, to the King that she was learning to embrace suffering in order to conquer her fear of it? Well, it seems the maiden has gotten stuck in her attempt to conquer that fear – fear of the suffering she most likely would face if she were to follow her Beloved over those hills and mountains, so the King comes to rescue her. At first, she hears his voice.

Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29 and Rev. 3:6, 13, and 22 all say, “He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (NKJV)

Matt. 13:9 “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (NKJV)

John 18:37 “...Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” (NKJV)

- *Leaping and skipping speak of victoriously overcoming.*

Then she catches sight of Him again. She says, “Look! Here He comes. He has been victorious in overcoming all of the obstacles and challenges that have blocked my view of Him.” She must keep her eyes on Him and follow Him over the mountains and hills if she is going to conquer them, for He knows the way. **He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!**

As we journey through this life, mountains and hills are things we all face and they are mentioned numerous times in the song. They are the very things that the Beloved calls us to climb as you will see in verse 12 of this chapter. He comes to us on the mountains and we must face the mountains with Jesus and conquer them in His power in order to reach our destiny.

Ps. 121:1-2 I will lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. (NKJV)

It is the mountains and hills that create the shadow (or fear) when we are in the valley of complacency and indifference. Fear is why so many Christians become stagnant in their walk; some becoming so bound up with it that they are not able to move at all. But our Beloved comes to us like the gazelle, skipping, running, and leaping victoriously over the mountains and He calls us to join Him there for He is ready and able to free us to run with Him.

Ps. 23: 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me... (NKJV)

It is upon these mountains and hills where God dwells. To conquer our fear of them, and to climb their heights running with Jesus over them, is to dwell in His presence.

Christian, what are the mountains and hill in your life? Keep your focus on Jesus, the One who leaps and skips over them. He will show you how to overcome those obstacles and challenges.

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (NKJV)

VERSE 9

My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.

Behold, he stands behind our wall;

He is looking through the windows,

Gazing through the lattice.

- *Gazelle is symbolic of the resurrected Jesus Who overcomes. The gazelle is a fleet-footed animal noted for its attractive eyes and it is native to the Middle East.*
- *Stag speaks of fearlessly conquering all opposition or competition. It is an adult male deer or hart.*
- *Wall is symbolic of one's determination. A wall can keep you safe and protected but it can also become a prison.*
- *Windows speak of looking into the soul through the eyes. It has been said that the eye is the window of the soul.*
- **Matt. 6:22-23 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (NKJV)**
- *Lattice speaks of evasiveness.*

The maiden recognizes that her Beloved had conquered all the obstacles in her life. He is fearless in conquering all competition or opposition that might confront her to trip her up, bind her up, or get her off course. He is standing, suggesting that He is ready for action. Yes, He is ready to free her to run.

The maiden refers to the wall as our wall. This is saying that He is determined and ready to support her determination to run with him in ministry. He is looking into her soul and He sees through her evasiveness, her indifference and complacency that are caused by her fear.

The Word has much to say about the Lord's gaze:

Jer. 16:17 For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes. (NKJV)

Ps. 39:13 Remove your gaze from me, that I may regain my strength, Before I go away and am no more. (NKJV)

Ps. 44:21 Would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart. (NKJV)

Heb. 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eye of Him whom we must give account. (NKJV)

Christian, when you find yourself in the presence of your Beloved, His gaze will see right through you and if you remain there long enough, His gaze will burn away all the dross in your life until all that is left is pure and holy passion for your King.

VERSE 10

My beloved spoke and said to me:

“Rise up my love, my fair one,

And come away.

Again the King refers to the maiden as His love and He calls her beautiful in her transparent and vulnerable state. He speaks to her so, even though He sees her evasiveness toward Him and He gently woos her.

Prior to this moment, the maiden has spent precious time with the King. She has been under His shade tasting of His fruit and in His banqueting house at His table eating raisin cakes. She has spent time in His embrace, having her mind renewed and her affection captivated. Now He calls her to rise up from the complacency into which she has lapsed, for he is determined and ready for her to run with Him.

Remember how she asked to run with Him earlier in chapter 1? Well, now the maiden, at this point in the song, must be thinking *what? And leave this nice, warm place? Why, there are mountains out there ... I can see the shadows of them across this valley I'm in ... and God only knows what else is out there!!*

She is comfortable and serene just sitting right where she is behind her determination. She is secure and content tucked away from all those problems and challenges out there in the world. She is content to reminisce about her past experience with the King, but He continues to woo her from this place that has now become to her like a prison. Hiding behind her determination to run with Him (words come cheap) has

created a prison that holds her back and fear has her bound. This maiden just wants to rest in the King's embrace and feast on the apples and raisin cakes so that she will not have to face the mountains.

VERSE 11

For lo, the winter is past

The rain is over and gone.

- *Winter*

The cold north winds of adversity blow in the winter. The maiden has been in a safe, secure place, protected from it, but sooner or later she must face it and allow the Spirit to use it to do His work in her. She will eventually come to appreciate its purpose in her preparation.

- *Rain*

Water is very scarce in Israel and the rains, early and later, come in the winter. Rain speaks of blessing from God in adversity because the rains were essential to good harvests and plenty. After they had come and gone, then it was time to work and prepare for the harvest.

Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 that there is a season for everything, a time for every purpose under heaven – a time to plant – and it is planting time for them. It is time for this maiden to sow some of that rhema (revelation) Word that she has been feasting on. Read the parable of the sower in Matt. 13:3-4 and 13:18-23.

Timing can be crucial – God's timing, that is. She must learn to obey without hesitation when He calls.

The King continues to woo and draw her just like she asked Him to do in chapter one. He loves her through every stage of this maturing process as He encourages her, challenging her to leave her comfort zone. It is time for her to roll up her sleeves and go to work with Him in His vineyard. Oh, but the maiden wants to stay inside and be fed apples!

Beloved, the Lord calls us to both the drawing aside in intimacy with Him and the running in ministry. We must have a balance of the two! Remember that faith without works is dead.

James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (NKJV)

VERSE 12

The flowers appear on the earth;

The time of singing has come,

And the voice of the turtledove

Is heard in our land.

- *Flowers are a sign of fruit to come.*
- *Time of singing speaks of harvest time.*
- *Turtledove is a type of the Spirit of God being poured out through the sacrificial work of Jesus.*

It is springtime and flowers always come before the young fruit appears. The Beloved wants her help in His vineyard (His interests) to water and prune the plants in preparation for the coming harvest.

This is evangelism and discipleship and it is an exciting and joyful work that the King wants the maiden to share with Him. The King is saying “Now is the time for salvation.” It means sacrificing her own comforts in order to partner with Him in His interests. God pours His Spirit out on this kind of endeavor.

Salvation is being poured out and the Father honors the sacrifice of one’s personal interests in order to partner with Jesus and His interests.

VERSE 13

The fig tree puts forth her green figs,

And the vines with the tender grapes

Give a good smell.

Rise up, my love, my fair one,

And come away.

- *Fig tree is symbolic of Israel*
- *The vine is symbolic of the church.*
- *Her green figs speaks of the young, immature nation of Israel.*

When the King speaks of the vineyard, He is speaking of his areas of interest. He is concerned for the welfare of Israel. These are God’s chosen people and they need ministry. Genesis 12:3 tells us that God will bless those who bless Israel, and we are commanded to pray for the peace of Jerusalem in Psalm 122:6. Zion is the apple of God’s eye as told in Zechariah 2 and, in the context of the Song, Israel is God’s wife and the King’s mother.

**Hosea 2:19-20 I will betroth you to Me forever
Yes, I will betroth you to me
In righteousness and justice.**

**In loving kindness and mercy,
I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,
And you shall know the Lord. (NKJV)**

In Luke 19:41-44 Jesus wept over Jerusalem because she did not know the time of her visitation. Jerusalem speaks of the mature bride of Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven, made up of Jew and Gentile as referred to in Revelation 21:9-27. The King is also concerned for His church. He is after a bride-queen and He wants her at His side in the Kingdom. I believe this is why God ensured that this Song was not excluded from the Bible for it contains this vital message to the church. It shows you and me how to gain the Prize.

Is it any wonder, in the light of these scriptures, that Israel is very special to our Lord, and we, the church, have been grafted into her? Jew and Gentile, one in the spirit, is referred to as the olive tree and it is talked about in Romans 9, 10, and 11. We will see in the sixth chapter of the song the prophetic fulfillment of this which is God's plan for His people. Oh, how Satan, the one who divides with no cause, has worked to prevent this from coming to pass down through the ages.

- *Tender grapes are new converts in the church.*

Also mentioned here is the fruit of the vine who are young Christians (the tender grapes) in the church who must be discipled. The King says that there is evidence that they are ready.

The King asks her a second time to rise up out of her complacency, her lack of trust or whatever it is that is holding her back and come away with Him. He is asking her to run in ministry with Him for there is much work to be done in his vineyard (His interests). The olive tree (Jew and Gentile, one in the spirit), or Israel and the church, must be pruned and watered (discipled) so that they will produce the abundant fruit that God desires.

Notice here that the King reemphasizes His love for the maiden and proclaims her beauty once again, even in this state of indecision and evasiveness concerning His interests.

VERSE 14

Oh, my dove, in the clefts of the rock

In the secret places of the cliff,

Let me see your face.

Let me hear your voice;

For your voice is sweet,

And your face is lovely.

The King knows that the maiden is going to compromise, but He still calls her "My dove" (the one who is focused on Him alone). He is seeing in her the finished work and He calls her to the clefts of the rock in the secret places of the cliffs. The clefts and the cliffs are on the mountains and hills.

The King calls the maiden fair in verse 10. She is available to Him for intimacy, but He wants to have intimate fellowship with her as they run in ministry and she is hesitant to run because of her fear of the mountains.

Saints of God, there is a secret place where we can enjoy intimate time alone with Jesus, while climbing the mountains and hills together. Spending intimate time with our Beloved in the secret place is absolutely essential to us if we are going to conquer those obstacles that challenge us in this life.

The King is calling the maiden to run with Him over the mountains and hills. She must face them, but she must face them with her eyes on Him.

**Ps. 121:1-8 I will lift up my eyes to the hills-
From whence comes my help?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made Heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall not slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
The Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve you from all evil;
He shall preserve your soul.
The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and even forevermore. (NKJV)**

The King is asking the maiden to lift her eyes to Him, to rise up, overcome her fears and face the mountains of obstacles. Her obedience to do this makes her lovely in His sight. He wants to hear her voice as she lifts it in prayer. He wants to hear her confessions of faith and her testimony, for her voice is sweet to His ear and these things will help her to overcome the hills and mountains that she is facing.

Christian, the Bridegroom, Jesus, calls to you today to the clefts and cliffs on the mountains. He wants to see your eyes focused on Him as you face the mountains and hills in your life. He longs to hear your voice lifted to Him in prayer and in your confessions of faith. He longs to hear your testimony, the testimony of an overcomer!

VERSE 15

HER BROTHERS

Catch us the foxes,

The little foxes that spoil the vines,

For our vines have tender grapes

- *Foxes are sources of vexation.*
- *Little foxes are small, irritating vexations.*
- *Vines speak of the church.*
- *Tender grapes are the new Christians in the church.*

Remember the maiden's brothers? Well, here they are again, those religious, legalistic, controlling individuals in the church. These folks get really nervous when others in the church get a little too intimate with the Lord or too spiritual, because then, they are not able to control them.

They are thinking that their sister has just "gone off the deep end," so the brothers, in an attempt to manipulate her, very slyly ask her to take care of these small, irritating church matters. They know these matters are not her area of responsibility but theirs. They want her under their thumb and use these tactics which have worked before.

The maiden succumbs to their tactics at first because she loves and cares about her church family very much. But then...

VERSE 16

THE SHULAMITE

My beloved is mine and I am his.

He feeds his flock among the lilies.

The maiden recognizes that she is being drawn off course and she gets refocused. She is saying, "Hey, wait a minute! I belong to my Beloved and He is feeding His followers among the lilies (The bride company who have determined to be His Bride-Queen) and that is where I need to be! Chasing foxes for my brothers is not what I'm supposed to be doing!"

VERSE 17

(TO HER BELOVED)

Until the day breaks

And the shadows flee away,

Turn, my beloved,

And be like a gazelle

Or a young stag

Upon the mountains of Bether.

- *Shadows are symbolic of fear.*
- *Bether means separation.*

The maiden realizes too late that she has been influenced by the manipulation and control of her brothers and her fear of their displeasure. She sees that her Beloved is gone and she calls to Him to turn around and come back to her until this dark time passes. She has waited too long to obey His voice and she has allowed this mountain to separate them so that she can no longer see Him in His resurrection power as He fearlessly conquers all opposition to her.

Our Shulamite has failed her second test! As a result, this maiden is suffering through a hard time once again. She is experiencing the discipline of separation now.

This is when the Lord removes His manifested presence from our lives in order to draw us after Him. Jesus has promised in Hebrews 13:5 that He will never leave nor forsake us, but we need to understand that there is a difference in His presence with us and His **manifested** presence.

Let me give you an example. Let's imagine that you took your child with you to the local mall. You had taken great pains to instruct her to stay with you, and you told her of the dangers of wandering off. Suppose that your child had forgotten your conversation and wandered off in spite of your careful instruction, but you had kept her in your sight. You hide behind a counter and watch as that child suddenly realizes that you are not to be seen anywhere and she is lost, alone, and frightened. She begins to frantically search for you. Now, you would never leave that child alone and unattended, but you would remain out of her sight just long enough to teach her a lesson. In this circumstance, you would teach her a valuable lesson that might save her from a potentially dangerous situation later on.

The maiden is in a potentially harmful state and the King is drawing her after Him and out of this place of complacency by removing His manifested presence from her. She must reposition herself to be able to focus on Him again so that she can see to follow and run with Him in ministry.

The King loves her too much to let her stagnate in her walk and let her settle for less than what she has determined to gain: **the goal of the Prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Have you experienced in your spiritual journey a time such as this? We call it a "dry" time.

Can you pinpoint what may have caused the Lord to remove his manifested presence for a season?

Did it make you thirsty enough to rise up out of your circumstances to pursue Him?

CHAPTER TWO REVIEW

1. Which two flowers does the Shulamite compare herself to? _____

2. Why does the Beloved compare the maiden to a lily among thorns? _____

3. Why does the maiden compare her Beloved to an apple tree? _____

4. Who are the enemies of the Shulamite and whom do they represent today? _____

5. When the Beloved embraces the maiden, His two actions represent what? _____

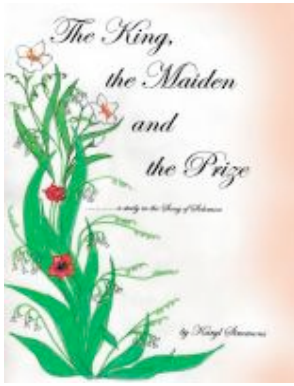
6. Mountains and hills are symbolic of what? _____

7. Leaping and skipping are symbols of what? _____

8. New converts are described as what? _____

9. Why do the maiden's brothers ask her to catch the little foxes? _____

10. Fear is symbolized by what? _____



The casual reader of the Song of Solomon doesn't realize the priceless treasures that are hidden there. The message emerging from its pages is for the church of the last days and it has been revealed for 'such a time as this!' It is like a musical drama that tells a lovely story, but contains mysterious prophetic visions and truths that prepare the bride of Christ for the return of Jesus, the Bridegroom King!

The King, the Maiden and the Prize

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