

Song of Songs

Chapter 5

Lover

I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.

5:1 The lover claims the beloved as his garden and enjoys all her delights. *my sister*. See note on 4:9. (CSB)

He has entered the garden, which belongs to him and to no other man. The myrrh and spices, the wine and milk and honey are his to enjoy. (PBC)

With this garden scene the Song of Songs harks back to the Garden of Eden and the first couple (Genesis 2:18-25). When God created the woman and brought her to man, Adam exclaimed with joy, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The Genesis account continues ... they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” (PBC)

Since the fall into sin, God’s institution of marriage has been ravaged by every kind of abuse and wickedness. Yet at its best, married life can still be a taste of Eden. It takes more than romantic love or physical attraction to make a union in which two people truly become one flesh. It takes God. (PBC)

Christ is prompt to answer the invitations of His friends, when they are made in sincerity; and His communion with them is “sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” It is a feast “of fat things full of marrow, of wines one the lees well refined.” Is. 25:6. (CB)

Friends

Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.

Eat ... O lovers. The friends of the lovers applaud their enjoyment of love. (CSB)

drunk with love! Chorus describes passion as a kind of intoxication. (TLSB)

This center section is the heart of the Song. The bride and groom have given themselves to each other. The two have become one. Everything in the courtship and wedding led up that point. Everything that now follows reaffirms its. (PBC)

According to the NIV these two lines are spoken by the “Friends.” Yet since the poem has just treated the most intimate portion of the wedding, its consummation, it’s unlikely that the friends would be present. Others have suggested that the wind is personified and speaking to the lovers in their garden. There is a better choice of speakers – God Himself. It seems fitting that the Lord would seal this wedding with His blessings. The uniting of a man and woman in marriage has God’s blessings. One of Solomon’s proverbs says it this way: “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22). (PBC)

The two are called “friends” and “lovers.” In these roles husband and wife fulfill God’s original plan for marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). God designed marriage to be the closest friendship between two human beings. Moreover, the Genesis account also declares that “they will become one flesh.” They become one in many ways, but especially physically, sexually. This is why sexual unfaithfulness strikes so devastating a blow against the marriage union. Friendship and sexual unity are two of marriage’s chief blessings. (PBC)

With this benediction the Song’s wedding comes to a close. It would be wrong for us to leave this happy scene without one more look at our heavenly bridegroom Jesus Christ. At the end of the world He will come in glory with all His angels and take His bride to be with Him. Then we shall join in “the wedding supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7-9). But even now we have the joy of His unseen presence. Likening himself to the best man and Christ to the groom, John the Baptist expressed the joy of every believer when he said, “The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend attends who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. The joy is mine and it is now complete” (John 3:29). Christ Himself also spoke of the joy He brings, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them?” (Matthew 9:15). The Bible makes many such comparisons between a wedding and our spiritual bond with Christ. Scripture also some differences. The husband-wife bond lasts only for this life and ends with death (Matthew 22:30); Romans 7:2); with Christ we have eternal life (John 11:25-26). Earthly marriage is consummated with the physical union; “but he unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17). Finally, Christ’s dealings with us are always perfect; our dealings with one another are frequently distorted by sin. (PBC)

4:16b–5:1 We indulge heartily in the things of this world. How much greater to partake of the things of God! • Lord, teach us to enjoy the good of this life, but to consume with zeal Your Word, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting the revelation of Your great love for us in Jesus. May our breath become fragrant with the message of Your salvation as we speak to others. Amen. (TLSB)

Beloved

² I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My lover is knocking: “Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched

with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night.”³ I have taken off my robe— must I put it on again? I have washed my feet— must I soil them again?⁴ My lover thrust his hand through the latch-opening; my heart began to pound for him.⁵ I arose to open for my lover, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh, on the handles of the lock.⁶ I opened for my lover, but my lover had left; he was gone. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him. I called him but he did not answer.⁷ The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. They beat me, they bruised me; they took away my cloak, those watchmen of the walls!⁸ O daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you— if you find my lover, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love.

5:2–8 While 5:2-8 is the most perplexing periscope in the Song, it is a cohesive unit. Its main theme is the beloved’s search for him who loves her. In 3:1-5, her first nocturnal search for him, her characteristic phrase for Solomon was “him whom my soul loves” (3:1-4). In her second nocturnal search (5:2-8), she calls him “my lover” (5:2, 4-6, 8), which in this context may be paraphrased as “him who loves me and has married me.” This text is parallel in some respects to the to the brief search in 1:5-8 and in many respects to the more detailed search in 3:1-5, but ends in pain and frustration, while both 1:5-8 and 3:1-5 lead into scenes of the wedding (1:9-11 and 3:6-11). (CC)

Song 5:2-8 begins the fifth cycle of the couple’s relationship (5:2-6:10). The cyclical dimension of the Song continues even after the marriage. While unfulfilled longing is the chief characteristic of the period of courtship, it also permeates this text. Therefore 5:2-8 indicates that longing and searching may continue throughout life, even after marriage. We are not placed here amid scenes of their first love, but of those of their married life, and of the original ardour of affection maintaining itself not without trial. (CC)

Applied to the church, the implication is as follows. The chief characteristic of the OT church was an as-yet-unfulfilled longing as she waited in faith for the advent of the Messiah according to God’s promise. In Christ’s earthly ministry, the Bridegroom arrived and claimed His bride for Himself. Yet even after Christ’s first advent, the NT church continues to live by faith with a fervent longing for the consummation of all things. She searches for Him in those places where He has promised to be found: His Word and Sacraments. As she seeks Him, she must endure various kinds of pain and suffering in this world according to the theology of the cross (Song 5:7). But those trials do not thwart her search: she continues to find renewed joy through the means of grace and to exult in the hope that soon she will meet her Bridegroom face to face. Luther is among those commentators who recognize the cyclical dynamic of this periscope within the book as a whole:

For just as there are changes of weather, so war follows peace, happiness follows sorrow, consolation follows affliction – and then some new

afflictions follows consolation ... This is the way it must always be in this kingdom. (CC)

The dynamics of the periscope have implications for Christian marriage as well as the church. An unmarried couple may hope that marriage will put an end to loneliness and unfulfilled desire. Yet even after many years of the most satisfying Christian marriage, spouses will still experience various kinds of pain and yearning for a more perfect joy. Human marriage is, after all, an institution that pertains to this present creation, which is passing away (1 Cor 7:31). Those who by grace alone attain the life of the world to come will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will live like angels before the unveiled face of God (Luke 20:34-36). Only then will we search no more. (CC)

The honeymoon is over. Now we find the couple in a different setting as the anticipation and excitement of their courtship and wedding pass into the routine of day-to-day life. The wife is alone; no doubt she has her own room in the palace. Her husband has been away and has now returned. (PBC)

5:2–3 The Shulammitte has been asleep in bed when Solomon comes knocking. Unprepared, she is unwilling to respond. (TLSB)

5:2 *I slept ... was awake.* Love holds sway even in sleep—just as a new mother sleeps with an ear open to her baby’s slightest whimper. (CSB)

The beloved is either half-awake or dreaming, as indicates with the words. A sudden knocking at the door interrupts her drowsy state. (PBC)

MY SISTER, MY DARLING, MY DOVE, MY FLAWLESS ONE – Nowhere else in the poem does Solomon address his beloved with so long a list of endearing words. (PBC)

5:3 Instinctive reaction raises a foolish complaint before the language of love takes over. (CSB)

She is unwilling to open up the door. It is too much bother. What a contrast we find between her indifference here and that night before their wedding when she couldn’t sleep for thoughts of “the one my heart loves!” (3:1). (PBC)

While the Song does not mention divorce, its third major sections opens on the all-too-common note of martial discord. One commentator observes, “Actually she was no different from many a modern housewife who becomes so involved in taking care of her husband’s children and house that she forgets about her husband. Wives of course, don’t have a monopoly on indifference. Husbands exhibit the same traits as they put more time and effort into making money than into a happy marriage. (PBC)

What holds true in marriage, often is the case in spiritual lives, too. As a matter of fact, marriage problems are often related to spiritual problems. When there is

something wrong in one area, the other will also suffer. Jesus says, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). Too often we respond with selfish and sleepy indifference. We don’t want to be bothered, In this way our life with God begins to break down. (PBC)

5:3 MUST I PUT IT ON AGAIN – Spiritual slothfulness has its foundation in the want of fervent love towards Christ, and is therefore exceedingly guilty and offensive in His sight. (CB)

5:4 THRUST HAND THROUGH THE LATCH-OPENING – This is an earnest token of His desire to enter. In its spiritual application, it denotes all the ways in which Christ arouses His slumbering people. Christ is too faithful to leave His church slumbering in sinful inaction. By mingled judgments and mercies, accompanying His word and Spirit, He will arouse her to a sense of her duty, and bring her to repentance. (CB)

Solomon eagerly desires to be with his bride. This overture of the bridegroom reaching to open the door stirs the Shulammitte’s heart. The door would have had a fist-sized keyhole through which one would reach with a key that matched a set of pins, which held the bolt in place. (TLSB)

5:5 *my hands ... flowing myrrh.* Love’s eager imagination extravagantly lotioned the beloved’s hands with perfume. (CSB)

Oil of myrrh, dripping from her hand onto the door handle. This experience (vv 2–6) may be a half-waking dream (cf v 6). (TLSB)

The mention of her hands dripping with myrrh seems to refer to the ancient custom of a lover leaving myrrh on the handle of his beloved’s door. (PBC)

The fingers of penitent believers drop with sweet-smelling myrrh. Their tears and confessions of sin and works meet for repentance, are most precious in God’s sight, and will in due time be rewarded with His returning presence and favor. (CB)

the bolt. The Shulammitte reaches to open the same door that Solomon had set his hand to earlier. (TLSB)

5:6 MY LOVER HAD LEFT – The Song doesn’t say exactly why the lover left. From what follows later in this chapter, it seems he wasn’t angry. Most likely he felt rejected. Again, it does not take much effort to apply this situation to marriages today. Indifference, sharp words, hurt feelings, withdrawal – one thing leads to another. If the pattern isn’t broken it can lead to the destruction of a marriage. As we see them now, the lovers are separated. (PBC)

Similarly Jesus warns us about rejecting Him. To those who continually put Christ off and turn their backs on Him, He declares, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin” (John 8:21). Now is the time to listen

to Christ, just like now is the time to work on your marriage. Tomorrow may be too late. (PBC)

Those who have backslidden from God are often left for a season in darkness that they thus may feel more deeply the evil of sin, seek Christ more earnestly, and set a higher value upon His love. (CB)

5:7 THE WATCHMEN FOUND ME – In the beloved's first encounter with the watchmen they were helpful (3:1). This time the watchmen take her cloak and beat her up. (PBC)

Just as we were able to relate the good watchmen to faithful spiritual leaders, we can easily identify these evil watchmen as false prophets. They take from believers the "robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10) which is theirs in Christ Jesus. By directing people away from Christ and to their own works, these watchmen cause great harm. (PBC)

It's true in our spiritual relationship with Christ – as in our marriages – that when we let the relationship slide, we are asking for all sorts of troubles. We lay ourselves open to numerous temptations and danger. We become easy prey to wicked people and bad advice. (PBC)

When for their sins the Redeemer withdraws His presence from His people, they are helpless, and exposed to injuries and insults from the world that lies in wickedness. (CB)

Viewed positively, "the watchmen of the city walls" in this verse may be compared to the brothers in 8:8-9 who seek to preserve their "little sister" as "a city wall" – that is, they want to safeguard their sister's virginity until the day she is spoken for in marriage (8:8). One may also think of the custodial role of the Shulammiter's brothers in 1:6. The "watchmen" (3:3; 5:7) might be a metaphorical designation of brothers as guardians, but more likely they are indeed actual city watchmen who exercise a role that is in some respects similar to that of the brothers in 1:6 and 8:8-9. Just as the anger of the brothers at the Shulammiter in 1:6 may have been justified in that she neglected the family vineyard and instead pursued her lover, so too the violence of the watchmen against the Shulammiter in 5:7 may have been justified in that she neglected her own safety in her reckless pursuit of her lover. (CC)

BEAT AND BRUISED ME – This commentary's view is that the Shulammiter's motivation and action are pure, but rendered her vulnerable to injury and susceptible to the misinterpretation that she may have been seeking a sinful liaison. The watchmen carried out their office under God with good intent, even if their perception of the Shulammiter was not entirely accurate. Their office (like that of pastors) included the responsibility to safeguard the virtue of the city and its inhabitants – including the preservation of premarital virginity – and they also may have chastised the Shulammiter for behavior that left her vulnerable to rapacious evil men who might have been lurking in the city at night. Hence the

periscope depicts the vulnerability and suffering that may come to those who are captivated by divine love (8:6), and the violence inflicted by the watchmen ultimately serves the cause of the Gospel according to the theology of the cross. (CC)

Watchmen's treatment of the Shulammitte is in stark contrast to their behavior during her previous search in 3:1–5. We are not explicitly told why. (TLSB)

5:8 I CHARGE YOU – The adjuration warns that anyone who is motivated by love and who pursues it with abandon should be prepared to endure derision in this world. Nevertheless, the joy of such love more than compensates for any suffering one may endure. After all, this divine love is able to overcome even death and grave (8:6), and indeed in Christ it has already done so. (CC)

The church and the individual Christian may consider it a privilege and a joy to suffer for the sake of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. He has ascended on high and has given His gifts (Eph 4:8), so His departure is for our benefit (John 16:7). Nevertheless, His bride yearns for Him to be visibly present with her, even as He was before His ascension. This was His promise: "In a short time, you shall see me no longer, but again after a short time you shall see me" (John 16:16) – and then her search shall have ended. (CC)

I AM FAINT WITH LOVE – With this last phrase she wants her husband to know she still loves him as she did before. Clearly, she has repented of her indifference. (PBC)

Despite suffering, she remains ever focused on the one her heart desires. There is no curing her sickness except to have the one she seeks. (TLSB)

Nothing can compensate the true believer for the loss of Christ's comforting presence, and He will not rest till he has recovered it. (CB)

Friends

⁹How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others, that you charge us so?

5:9-16 This commentary's Christological and analogical hermeneutic often appeals to the NT affirmation that Solomon is a type of Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself stated during His earthly ministry, "One greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42). The portrait of Solomon in Song 5:9-16 transcends a literal depiction, and most of the imagery has rich Christological and ecclesiological implications. (CC)

Christ is the only one who truly measures up to the glorious portrait in Song 5:9-16. He is entirely desirable (5:10) in actuality, with no sin or blemish of any kind. The unblemished condition of His bride, the corporate church, is hers by way of imputation according to His grace (Song 4:7; 6:10; Eph 5:26-27). (CC)

5:9 The friends' question provides an opportunity for the beloved to describe the beauty of her lover—which she does only here. (CSB)

us. Daughters of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

The friends, who have probably been attending to the beloved in her misery, now comfort her. They also remind her of the former days of love. They address her as “most beautiful of women,” just as they did in the beginning of the poem (1:8). To strengthen her in her resolve to amend the wrong, they ask her questions which lead her to think about why her lover is so important to her. Why, they ask, are you now so eager to find him? (PBC)

5:2–9 Life is often confusing. When our Lord comes to us, we may be slow to hear and to believe. We may look for Him and not find Him where or as we want. In such times of confusion, call on the Lord in prayer and seek Him in His Word. He promises to hear and to comfort you. • O Lord, we need You. Do not forsake us, for if we are left to ourselves, we will surely perish. Amen.

Beloved

¹⁰ My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. ¹¹ His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. ¹² His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. ¹³ His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. ¹⁴ His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires. ¹⁵ His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. ¹⁶ His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

5:10–16 More intimate portrait of Solomon than provided elsewhere in the Song. (TLSB)

5:10 *ruddy*. See 1Sa 16:12. (CSB)

Red, full of life and vigor. Solomon's father, David, is described as ruddy in 1Sm 16:12. (TLSB)

The word for ruddy is the Hebrew word *adom*, from which the name Adam come (for he was taken from the earth). The lover, then, is earth-colored, reddish-tan. (PBC)

TEN THOUSAND – She is using it to represent a very large number. In a word, her husband is unique. (PBC)

5:11 GOLD – She is referring to his radiant tan coloring. (PBC)

black. The beloved's hair was also black. (CSB)

5:12 *by the water streams.* The lover's eyes sparkle. (CSB)

beside streams of water, bathed in milk. His eyes are clear, reflective, bathed in the abundance of God's favor. (TLSB)

washed in milk. Describing the white of the eye. (CSB)

5:13 *spice ... lilies.* These similes probably compare sensuous effects rather than appearances, as do the following similes and metaphors, at least in part. (CSB)

dripping with myrrh. Love's pleasant excitements are aroused by the lover's lips. (CSB)

5:14 *chrysolite.* This is a yellow or greenish gem. The Hebrew says "Tarshish." A better translation might be "jewels of Tarshish" or "Spanish jewels," since Tarshish was an ancient name for Spain. (PBC)

sapphires. Hebrew *sappir* (from which the English word "sapphire" comes). (CSB)

This probably refers to the blue lapis lazuli which abounds in the Middle East and not to the modern sapphire stone. (PBC)

5:15 MARBLE – This symbolizes strength as well as beauty. (PBC)

alabaster columns. White, strong, sturdy, like the magnificent pillars of a king's palace (cf Est 1:6). (TLSB)

appearance is like Lebanon. Awesome and majestic. (CSB)

choice as its cedars. The cedars of Lebanon were renowned throughout the ancient Near East, and their wood was desired for adorning temples and palaces. (CSB)

5:16 *mouth.* The lover's kisses and loving speech. (CSB)

She has listed a total of ten features of Solomon. Like the number seven, ten is a popular biblical number. It signifies completeness. We think of the Ten Commandments, the tithe (a tenth given to the Lord), ten men forming a town council (Ruth 4:2). (PBC)

In Revelation 1:12-16 St John relates the glorious appearance of Christ. John describes Christ's head and hair as being "white as snow," his eyes "like blazing fire," "his feet "like bronze glowing in a furnace" and his voice "like the sound of rushing waters." John adds, "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance." Although John's portrait of Christ differs in many details from the

description of Solomon, it leaves an overall impression not unlike that of the Song. Both pictures are of glorious and radiant kings. (PBC)

5:10–6:1 Pray for your spouse (even if you have not yet met your spouse). If you are or were married, consider celebrating God's gift of a spouse by describing your spouse's best qualities. Whether you are married or single, rejoice in the love of Your Lord. • O Lord, You speak well of us in Jesus! Teach us to speak well of all whom You have covered in His righteousness, especially those nearest to us. Help husbands and wives to love and honor each other, and as Christians, help us to speak well of our Bridegroom, Jesus, so that all the world would want to seek Him. Amen.(TLSB)