

LESSON 1 - CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH *Song of Solomon 1:1*

(1:1) - THE SONG OF SONGS, WHICH IS SOLOMON'S. - God the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon, the prophet/king of Israel (David's son), to write this song of love. It is sometimes called *The Song of Songs* as it is the chief of all the songs (poems) that Solomon wrote (*cf. 1 Kings 4:32*). The Song of Solomon is one of the poetical (wisdom) books of the Bible. The purpose of this song is to show through types and metaphors the greatness and power of THE ETERNAL, SPIRITUAL LOVE OF CHRIST (THE BRIDEGROOM) FOR HIS CHURCH (HIS BRIDE) and THE CHURCH'S LOVE FOR HIM. This is altogether a book about fellowship and communion with Christ. It is not in any sense to be interpreted literally. It is spiritual. It is an allegory, a spiritual dialogue between Christ our heavenly Bridegroom and the church His Bride. So, like all books of the Bible, this is a Book full of Christ. Here, Christ is presented not only as our God, Redeemer, Savior, and King, but also in the most intimate character and personal relationship imaginable, our Bridegroom and Beloved! Here we see the Son of God in marriage union with His elect who are justified by His righteousness imputed and who are redeemed by the blood of His cross.

The love of Christ for His church and the church for Him is here portrayed through the love of a man for his wife and of the wife for her husband. The Song of Solomon is intimate, even passionate, because it is all about the love life of Christ and his church. This love of a man for his wife is set before us throughout the Scriptures as a type and picture of Christ's love for His church: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Rachel, Boaz and Ruth, Hosea and Gomer. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*" (2 Cor. 11:2). The Lord Jesus Christ loves His bride everlastingly, immutably, purely, and unconditionally. And all who are born of God, all who know His Son, love Him. To know Him is to love Him. We do not love Him perfectly as we should. We do not love Him as we desire and as we will in glory when freed from the sins of remaining flesh. But by God's grace and power we do love Him (1 Cor. 16:22; 1 John 4:19). It is His love for us (His bride) that saves us, keeps us, and will bring us to glory. This is a love song of the perfect, sinless Bridegroom to an unworthy, sinful bride. Although unworthy and sinful, she is the object of His love. Christ is presented here as a Bridegroom Who does everything necessary to secure the salvation of His bride and to draw out her love to Him. Consider:

(1) IT IS A MARRIAGE OF SOVEREIGN, UNCONDITIONAL ELECTING GRACE. Christ, God the Son, was appointed by God the Father to be the bridegroom, and His bride was chosen by the Father in Him and betrothed to Him before the foundation of the world (*John 6:37-40; Eph. 1:1-11; 2 Tim. 1:9-10*). He loves His betrothed with an everlasting and unconditional love, mercy, and grace. But the bride that the Father chose for the Son was not a worthy bride. She was not qualified in any way. In fact, she was disqualified because of sin as she fell in Adam, was born dead in trespasses and sins, and as she prostituted herself out to other lovers. We see an illustration of this in the life of the prophet Hosea who married a prostitute named Gomer (*Hos. 1:1-2*). In order for the Son to marry His bride, two things had to be true:

(1) She had to be LEGALLY free to marry. She could not be married to anyone else, and if she was, only death could free her to marry another (*Rom. 7:1-4*). This had to be a JUST and RIGHTEOUS marriage. (2) She had to be SPIRITUALLY drawn or wooed to the Son, else she would never come to Him (*John 6:37-45; 12:32; 2 Cor. 5:14*).

(2) IT IS A MARRIAGE OF SOVEREIGN, EFFECTUAL REDEMPTION. The bride that was chosen for the Bridegroom and loved by Him was an unworthy, an unlovely, bride. She had no worthiness or qualification by which to draw out His love for her. She had no dowry, nothing

to give Him to cause Him to join Himself to her. She was sold into the slave market of sin and death because of her sin. So, it was necessary that the Bridegroom come in time and redeem her, pay the ransom price.

(3) IT IS A MARRIAGE OF SOVEREIGN JUSTICE. His bride was bound to the law because of her sin. If married to the law, she could not justly be married to any other. The Bridegroom had to come and pay her penalty of sin to the law and establish the only ground upon which God could justify her and set her free to marry another (*Rom. 7:4; 1 John 4:10; cf. Hos. 2:19*). As His bride deserved to be condemned to eternal death under the law, the Bridegroom took her place under the law and established perfect righteousness for her. This is her wedding garment (*Rev. 19:6-9*).

(4) IT IS A FRUITFUL MARRIAGE OF LOVE, JOY, AND PEACE. By revealing His unconditional love towards His bride, the Lord imparts and draws out her love to Him (*Rom. 5:1-5; 7:4-6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 1:12-13; 3:16-19; Titus 3:5*). By His love and power towards His bride, the Lord keeps her and preserves her unto glory (*Isa. 61:10-11; 2 Cor. 11:2; Hos. 2:20*).

The language of this love song is very, very intimate. For example, ***“Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine” (Song 1:2)***. Although the language is intimate, even passionate, this love song is not a manual for erotic, sexual love between a man and a woman. The Bible speaks of the intimacy of physical, erotic love between a man and a woman within the sanctity of marriage. Outside of marriage, it is fornication and adultery. But within the God-ordained institution of marriage between ONE MAN and ONE WOMAN, it is ordained and sanctioned by God (*Heb. 13:4; cf. 1 Cor. 7:1-19*). In fact, Biblical marriage between a man and a woman is a beautiful picture of the spiritual and eternal union of Christ and His church (*Eph. 5:22-33; cf. Rom. 7:4-6*). The *Song of Solomon* is a book describing the spiritual courtship, marriage, and growth in marriage of Christ and His church.

So, remember that this book is an allegory, not to be taken literally. It is a spiritual conversation between Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom and the church, all God's elect in every generation, His spiritual bride. Some claim this is God's love song to the nation Israel. And although God had established a temporal and temporary union with the nation Israel under the terms of the Old Covenant, that union was never intended by God to be spiritual or eternal. It was conditioned on a sinful people and doomed to fail to save them and keep them united with God (*cf. Deut. 28*). It was given to show Israel the impossibility of eternal salvation and an eternal union with God based on the terms of the law - “Do and live; disobey and die.” It was given to show them their sinfulness and depravity and to show them their need of salvation by God's grace in and by the promised Messiah. In fact, the Lord, through Jeremiah, spoke of the backsliding and adultery of Israel, and pronounced that He ***“had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce” (Jer. 3:8; cf. Isa. 50:1)***. Judah also backslid and committed spiritual adultery against God, but God suffered longer with Judah because it was His purpose to bring the Messiah into the world later on through the nation Judah. Eventually, however, He put away and divorced Judah. Under the New Covenant that God has made with SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, all conditioned on Christ, there is, and can be, no bill of divorce. God will remember their sins no more (*Heb. 10:17; cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Rom. 8:33-34; Heb. 13:5; John 6:37-40; 10:27-30*). Christ's love for and marriage to His bride (the church) is eternal and can never be broken because He has promised that He will NEVER leave nor forsake His bride.