

**(1:5) - I AM BLACK, BUT COMELY, O YE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, AS THE TENTS OF KEDAR, AS THE CURTAINS OF SOLOMON.** - THE BRIDE CONFESSES HER SIN AND HER RIGHTEOUSNESS. She addresses the “*daughters of Jerusalem*,” probably the same ones described as “*virgins*” and “*upright*.” These are sinners saved by grace. She addresses them as they too are members of Christ’s bride, His church - sinners saved by grace and brought into the kingdom of God’s grace through Christ. “*Jerusalem*” means “*peace*” or “*peaceful*” - Peace with God through Christ. Fellowship within the bride of Christ begins with this Gospel confession - “*BLACK*” with sin, darkness, and no light.

“*As the tents of Kedar*” - Kedar was one of Ishmael’s son, the son of the bondwoman. “*Kedar*” means dark and so describes the sinfulness that we have within ourselves (*Rom. 7:14-25*). “*But comely*” - Beautiful and pleasing unto God “*as the curtains of Solomon*.” Could this be a metaphor for the temple of Solomon, the place of sacrifice and worship where God dwelt with His people above the mercy-seat? YES, and Christ is our only mercy-seat! HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? How can one who is “*black*” (sinful within) be considered “*comely*” (beautiful) in the sight of the Lord? Is this real, or is it fictional? Is Christ pretending that His bride is not what she really is? ABSOLUTELY NOT! The reality of all things is not proven by what sinful creature like us see with our physical eyes. The reality of all things is proven by what God sees (*Job 15:15; 25:5; Rom. 3:19-20; Heb. 4:12-13*). If Christ sees His bride as righteous, rest assured that His bride is righteous. This issue is the heart of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. Those who believe God’s Gospel, members of His bride, confess their own sinfulness (as dark as “*the tents of Kedar*”), and that the only righteousness (beauty) they have before God is the imputed righteousness of Christ (as beautiful as the “*curtains of Solomon*”). CHRIST’S BRIDE HAS BEEN WASHED IN HIS BLOOD AND CLOTHED IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPUTED (*John 16:10*).

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST SEES THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST WHICH SHE DID NOT SEE BEFORE - *Isa 53:2 - For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* Before we were born again, we looked upon the true Christ with contempt, but after the we are born again, we see His beauty and our own ugliness. We see that His beauty is our beauty, A BEAUTY NOT OF OUR OWN MAKING BUT OF HIS WORK (*Php. 3:9; Isa. 54*).

**(1:6) - LOOK NOT UPON ME, BECAUSE I AM BLACK, BECAUSE THE SUN HATH LOOKED UPON ME: MY MOTHER’S CHILDREN WERE ANGRY WITH ME; THEY MADE ME THE KEEPER OF THE VINEYARDS; BUT MINE OWN VINEYARD HAVE I NOT KEPT.** - The bride seeks to turn the eyes of others away from herself because of her sinfulness and her failures. The keeping of the vineyards and vineyard could be a reference to our fall in Adam who, in the Garden of Eden, disobeyed God and plunged the whole human race into a state of sin and death (*Rom. 5:12*). It could also refer to our own personal sins and failures to keep the law and work out a righteousness before God. We do not desire that others look to us for salvation. LOOK TO CHRIST, FOR HE IS THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD (*Isa. 45:21-25; John 14:6; Rom. 10:4*). We know that if we are truly saved, we are witnesses on this earth for the Lord. We also know that people will see us and make their judgments concerning matters of salvation and right relationship with God. For that reason, we should be careful to strive to be able witnesses for Christ and good stewards of the grace of God. But our desire is that sinners not look to us but to Christ and glorify God in salvation (*Matt. 5:16*).

**(1:7) - TELL ME, O THOU WHOM MY SOUL LOVETH, WHERE THOU FEEDEST, WHERE THOU MAKEST THY FLOCK TO REST AT NOON: FOR WHY SHOULD I BE AS ONE THAT TURNETH ASIDE BY THE FLOCKS OF THY COMPANIONS?** - The bride now looks upon her Husband as the Shepherd of the sheep (*Heb. 13:20-22*). Just as in the case of Christ as the Husband who has taken full responsibility for the complete salvation and eternal well-being of His wife (the church), as the Shepherd of the sheep, Christ has taken full responsibility to redeem and save His sheep (*John 10:11, 14, 27-30*). The bride here expresses her God-given desire to be with her Bridegroom, her Shepherd, to feed in green pastures and drink from the fountain of life (*Psa. 23*). She wants to be where His Word, His Gospel, soothes, feeds, and encourages her, and in the fellowship of His church, His sheepfold.

**(1:8) - IF THOU KNOW NOT, O THOU FAIREST AMONG WOMEN, GO THY WAY FORTH BY THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FLOCK, AND FEED THY KIDS BESIDE THE SHEPHERDS' TENTS.** - This the Bridegroom's response to His bride's request. When it comes to matters of salvation, the Bridegroom ALWAYS gives His bride what she desires (*1 John 5:14*). He ALWAYS gives her what she needs according to His will. In His answer, He recognizes her beauty - "*o thou fairest among women.*" Again, this is the beauty that He gave unto her - His own beauty by His own righteousness imputed to her and the beauty of spiritual and eternal life within that causes her to look to and love Him. This is how He truly sees His bride. This is no legal fiction. It is real. The Lord will not impute sin to His people. He will remember their sins no more (*Rom. 8:33-34; Heb. 8:12; 10:17*).

"*If thou know not ... go thy way ... shepherds' tents*" - Notice how the word "*shepherds*" here is plural. There is only one true Shepherd of the sheep, and that is Christ, the Bridegroom of the church. But there are man UNDER-shepherds who are His ministers whom He calls forth and equips to preach His Word to His people. He tells His bride to follow the people of God to the place where His people are fed by the under-shepherds (faithful witnesses and pastors). This is where God's Word and His Gospel is preached - His churches. Christ's bride needs to be where the Bridegroom is worshipped and honored.

-- **(1:9) - I HAVE COMPARED THEE, O MY LOVE, TO A COMPANY OF HORSES IN PHARAOH'S CHARIOTS.** - The description here is not anything related to pharaoh himself. He was an evil, unbelieving man. The Bridegroom compares his bride's beauty to pharaoh's horses. Christ's church can be compared to horses for their strength, majesty, and comeliness. They are strong in Christ, and in His grace, and are very comely and beautiful in their trappings, clothed with the righteousness of Christ and the graces of His Spirit. They are well fed and well cared for by their Master. They are not like wild horses galloping on their own and in different directions. They are trained and bridled horses pulling together the chariot of God's glory and guided by Christ in His Word. They cost a great price, the blood of Christ; are well fed with the finest of the wheat; and are under the care both of angels and Gospel ministers.

-- **(1:10-11) - THY CHEEKS ARE COMELY WITH ROWS OF JEWELS, THY NECK WITH CHAINS OF GOLD. WE WILL MAKE THEE BORDERS OF GOLD WITH STUDS OF SILVER.** - Christ's bride is adorned with the robe of His righteousness for her justification, but also adorned with the jewels and the precious metals of the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit (*Gal. 5:22-26*). IT IS ALL THE WORK OF GOD BY HIS POWER AND GRACE IN CHRIST - *Eph. 2:10*