

Song of Solomon

"The Beauty of Married Love"

Background Information

Seven times, Solomon is named as the author within the book.

Some ancient translations called this book "Song of Songs," meaning that it was the greatest song that Solomon penned (out of 1005; 1 Kings 4:32).

Though there are two major "characters" (Solomon and the Shulamite woman), this is one unified poem. Likely, the Shulamite woman was Solomon's first wife.

Due to its strong erotic language, some suggest the book is not about human marriage, but is an allegory of God's love for His people. However, such is a stretch.

In older times, Jewish men were not allowed to read this book until they were married, and if they remained single, until they were 40 years of age!

Time Covered and Outline

The poem is not meant to tell a major series of world events. Instead, it covers a "time period" of romantic love, beginning before marriage, and then consummated and enjoyed in the bliss of marriage. Since two "springs" are mentioned (2:11-13 and 7:12), at least one year passes in the poem.

The book's outline follows that theme:

- I. The Courtship (1:1-3:5)
 - A. The lovers' remembrance (1:2-2:7)
 - B. The lovers' expression of love for one another (2:8-3:5)
- II. The Wedding (3:6-5:1)
 - A. The groom (3:6-11)
 - B. The ceremony and first night together (4:1-5:1a)
 - C. God's approval (5:1b)
- III. The Marriage
 - A. The first disagreement (5:2-6:3)
 - B. Restoration (6:4-8:4)
 - C. Growing together (8:5-14)

Major Themes

God's love reflected in marital love
The grace of marriage
Sexual purity before marriage
Sexual enjoyment in marriage
Faithfulness

Solomon's Natural Knowledge

1 Kings 4:33 speaks of the breadth of Solomon's wisdom including a strong knowledge of the natural world. In the short book of Song of Solomon, he put that to good use, as there are at least 41 references to locations or the natural world.

God's Character in Song of Solomon

Faithful (8:5)

Loving (8:6)

Pure (3:5)

Marriage-approving

Jesus in Song of Solomon

There are no overt references to Jesus in this poem, but the intimate portrait of the marriage relationship shows the closeness of Jesus and His Church (Ephesians 5:32).

Key Words in Song of Solomon

Beloved (Hebrew *dod*). A term of endearment used almost exclusively from the male to female in Hebrew poetry. 1:14; 2:8; 4:16; 5:1; 5:6; 5:10; 6:1; 8:14

Myrrh (Hebrew *mar*). An herb with a bitter taste; sometimes used symbolically of something bitter or precious. 1:13; 3:6; 4:6; 5:1; 5:5; 5:13

Elsewhere in the World...

During the time of Solomon, Greek mythology was becoming fully developed, as worship of Zeus, Athena, Poseidon, and other well-known gods was practiced.

Elsewhere in Scripture...

The book of Song of Solomon was likely written in Solomon's midlife or later life, reflecting back on his early days, before he sinned and added a harem of unparalleled size. The joy he felt for his first wife in their marital bliss is not seen in other parts of the Bible, but is hinted at in Ecclesiastes 9:9).

Two Songs from Song of Solomon

Some suggest that Song of Solomon is an allegory, picturing God's love for His people Israel, that would be fully realized in the person of Jesus Christ.

From this view, two hymns we sing as praise to Jesus have come. Both come from Song of Solomon 2:1. "The Lily of the Valley" and "Jesus, Rose of Sharon."