



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

by WAYNE PALMER

S O N G O F S O L O M O N



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3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
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INTRODUCTION

The Book Song of Solomon focuses on the love God designed to be shared between husband and wife. Through that relationship, the Lord Jesus gives us a glimpse of His intense love for us, and the yearning He wishes to stir up in our hearts as we await His return on Judgment Day.

AUTHORSHIP

Song of Solomon was written by David's son, King Solomon. In 1 Kings 4:32, we learn that King Solomon wrote 1,005 songs. The first verse calls this the "Song of Songs," indicating that this was the greatest song Solomon composed. As a song, this was no doubt sung with musical accompaniment.

PURPOSE

Song of Solomon teaches us about God's gift of sexuality. It is a strong and beautiful thing when used as God designed it within the marriage of a man and a woman. Solomon guides us through the courtship process, showing the great restraint of the lover and his beloved as they control their desires through their betrothal period and reserve their sexual activity for their wedding night. It concludes with the married couple enjoying God's gracious gift as they delight to live with each other.

OUTLINE

Song of Solomon can be divided in this way:

I. THE UNION: FOUR CYCLES (1:2–5:1)

A. FIRST CYCLE (1:2–17)

1. Consummation (1:1–4); 2. Courtship (1:5–8); 3. Wedding (1:9–11); 4. Consummation (1:12–17)

B. SECOND CYCLE (CH. 2)

1. Wedding–Consummation (2:1–7); 2. Courtship (2:8–15); 3. Wedding (2:16); 4. Consummation (2:17)

C. THIRD CYCLE (3:1–4:7)

1. Courtship (3:1–5); 2. Wedding (3:6–11); 3. Wedding–Consummation (4:1–7)

D. FOURTH CYCLE (4:8–5:1)

1. Courtship (4:8–11); 2. Wedding (4:12–15); 3. Consummation (4:16–5:1)

This book can be a great blessing to married couples who relive their courtship and celebrate the love and passion God created between them. Single people who read this book are reminded of the value of self-control and abstinence and the assurance that it is worth waiting for the incredibly beautiful gift of marital love.

But beyond these earthly gifts, Song of Solomon speaks of a higher love, the love between Jesus Christ and His Bride, the Church—all believers. Just like the biblical betrothals, Jesus has taken us as His Bride and laid down His life on the cross to purify us from our sins and make us worthy to be His for all eternity. With His ascension, He is at the Father's right hand, preparing a home in heaven for us. Now we wait with longing for His return on Judgment Day, when He will take us away from this sad earthly life, and bring us to the joys and pleasures of life in His presence forevermore.

II. THE REUNION: MARRIED LIFE (5:2–8:14)

A. FIFTH CYCLE (5:2–6:10)

1. Search (5:2–8); 2. Praise (5:9–16); 3. Garden Dialogue (6:1–3); 4. Garden Dialogue (6:4–10)

B. SIXTH CYCLE (6:11–8:4)

1. Search (6:11–13); 2. Praise (7:1–9); 3. Invitation (7:10–13); 4. Longing (8:1–4)

C. CONCLUSION (8:5–14)

1. Love: Theological Highlight (8:5–7); 2. Love: Application (8:8–12); 3. Final Appeal (8:13–14)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I. THE UNION: FIRST CYCLE

1. CONSUMMATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1–4

Song of Solomon is a dialogue between the bride, the groom, and others. It opens with three cycles tracing the relationship of the bride and groom from courtship to marriage to the consummation of that marriage. Primarily, these first three cycles look back on the courtship, the yearning they experienced awaiting their wedding day. This first cycle is set in the time between wedding and consummation, as the groom leads his bride to their marriage bed.

Read 1:2–4.

Song of Solomon begins from a vantage point between the public wedding and the private wedding night. From here, the couple will look back on the difficulties of their betrothal period in the coming verses. But first we see the sheer delight the wife has in her husband. In the second half of verse 4, a chorus of friends join in, most likely the daughters of Jerusalem (the virgins in Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1–13).

Q 1: Name some church hymns or songs that delight you as you express your joy and delight in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

- Answers will vary, but may include *LSB* 442, “All Glory, Laud, and Honor”; *LSB* 537, “Beautiful Savior”; *LSB* 525, “Crown Him with Many Crowns”; *LSB* 524, “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds”; *LSB* 449, “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded.”

2. COURTSHIP—SONG OF SOLOMON 1:5–8

Now the couple briefly flashes back to their courtship days. The bride is introduced to us as a woman of humble origin (note how sensitive she is about her dark [tanned] complexion).

Read 1:5–8.

In Solomon's day, only those involved in menial labor were dark, having to work out under the sun. Clearly the bride is not a daughter of wealth or social prominence. She is a hardworking laborer, but when Solomon chooses her, she abandons her responsibility working in the family vineyard and goes in search of him.

Q 2: What might you expect those who are aware of her social standing to think about her betrothal to the king?

- They would likely look down on her, even despise her, because they expect a rich and powerful king like Solomon to be betrothed to a

princess of Israel, a daughter of a wealthy, powerful, and prominent nobleman, instead of this commoner. It is quite like a Cinderella story.

Q 3: How is this similar to Jesus' social and economic standing in life, as well as the believers who make up His Bride, the Christian Church?

- God chose Mary, a common virgin from the despised town of Nazareth to be the mother of His Son. Jesus Himself worked as a carpenter, then was an itinerant preacher throughout His ministry. As far as Jesus' Bride goes, most Christians are lowly, despised by the world around us. We are accused of being narrow-minded, hate-filled, and ignorant.

It is interesting to note the reference to the groom as a shepherd in verses 7 and 8, especially since Jesus is our Bridegroom and our Good Shepherd.

3. WEDDING—SONG OF SOLOMON 1:9–11

The discussion now turns to the wedding, and the bride gets all decked out for the occasion.

Read 1:9–11.

The groom and others speak about the bride dressed in all her finery. He compares her to the noble horses that accompanied the fine Egyptian military. The others promise to adorn her with ornaments of gold and silver.

Q 4: Thinking of the bride's humble origins—and ours as poor, miserable sinners—what does this level of ornamentation indicate about our marriage feast with Jesus Christ?

- Christ Jesus will lavish His treasures on us as He brings us into His Father's presence. The place He is preparing for us is not a humble two-room shack, but His Father's house filled with many mansions.

4. CONSUMMATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 1:12–17

The scene shifts back to the consummation as the bride and groom recline together in a cedar sanctuary. It is reminiscent of the temple Solomon built, and it points ahead to Jesus' body as He became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). This "temple" was torn down on the cross, then raised again the third day (John 2:19).

Notice how much this Song uses sensual imagery, that is, the fullness of enjoyment we can draw from the five senses God has given us. As we revisit the bridal chamber, the sense of smell is appealed to through the perfumes—just as we saw in 1:2–3.

Read 1:12–17.

In Solomon's culture, aroma and perfumes were signs of luxury and wealth, the sweet smells delighting the nose and enhancing the joyous experience between

husband and wife. The bride is adorned with all kinds of precious perfumes, reminiscent of the myrrh and frankincense brought to Jesus by the Wise Men. The Old Testament spoke of many of the temple sacrifices as aromas pleasing to God. Likewise it speaks of our prayers, which rise before God as incense, a pleasing aroma.

Q 5: Describe some times when Jesus was anointed with expensive perfume.

- In Luke 7:36–50, Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman. She kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment. John 12:1–8 discusses perhaps the most extravagant gift, when Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha, broke open a very expensive ointment and poured the entire contents on His feet and wiped them with her hair.

I. THE UNION: SECOND CYCLE

1. WEDDING—CONSUMMATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1–7

Just as in the first chapter, the second chapter of Song of Solomon begins with another cycle in which we start with the couple's consummation, revisit their courtship and the wedding, and return to the marriage bed or couch.

Read 2:1–7.

As bride and groom delight in each other, he describes her beauty among women in striking terms, "As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women" (2:2). This is especially amazing when we recall the lowly estate in which he found his wife. Yet even though she was poor, covered in dirt, and dressed in ragged and torn clothing, he chose her to be his bride.

Q 6: What encouragement can this bring when we feel unimportant and unappreciated by the world?

- Our Lord shows no partiality toward the powerful, prominent, or beautiful. His love moved Him to suffer and die for all people, but only those who humble themselves to confess their sins and cling to His salvation will share eternity with Him.

2. COURTSHIP—SONG OF SOLOMON 2:8–15

Again we return to the courtship days of the bride and groom. Note the tension of courtship—the desire surrounding the promised love, and waiting eagerly for the consummation.

Read 2:8–15.

The betrothal of Solomon and his bride took place at the end of the rainy season (winter in the Near East) and the beginning of spring, when flowers bloom and trees bud. This is the time of year when the Creator renews His creation again—foreshadowing Christ's return to perfectly restore creation. The arrival of spring builds excitement in the bride knowing her wedding day draws nearer.

Q 7: Name some moments when Christ's coming seems closer to you and your anticipation for that day grows stronger.

- Answers may include the Advent and Christmas season, when we recall Christ's first coming (His courtship with His Bride, the Church) and pray "Come, Lord Jesus." It can include the Easter season, when we recall His glorious resurrection and look forward to our own resurrection when He returns. It could include our Lord's ascension, when the angels promised the disciples that Jesus will return in the same way they saw Him go into heaven. Answers also might include times of sickness, grief, or difficult trials.

3. WEDDING—SONG OF SOLOMON 2:16

In one quick verse, the cycle spins back around to the wedding, in language reminiscent of Genesis 2, where God joined our first parents, Adam and Eve, in marriage and the two became one flesh.

Read 2:16.

“My beloved is mine, and I am his” (2:16). In this life, faithful marriages show this mutual love and giving imperfectly, but they give us a glimpse of our Savior’s love for us.

Q 8: Describe some aspects of marriage that reflect the two becoming one. Where is this still imperfect and incomplete?

- The marriage bed is a great example, as well as the children who are the fruit of the two becoming one. A house and home built by the husband and wife and the life lived together is a great example. The imperfection shows itself in the secrets husband and wife keep from each other, the arguments that arise, the strain and struggle of sinners trying to love selflessly.

4. CONSUMMATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 2:17

Again we briefly return to the marriage bed or couch and its quiet, restful delight described as the day breathing and shadows fleeing.

Read 2:17.

This verse describes early morning when breezes blow or late afternoon when a cooling breeze settles in. These are the experiences of a happily married life together, not the burning desire and yearning tension of courtship.

Q 9: What glimpse does this give you of our eternal paradise with Christ, our Lord and Savior?

- The longing and yearning we now feel for His return will be long gone, and we will enjoy the contentment of being in His presence and enjoying the joys and pleasures of His new heaven and new earth.

I. THE UNION: THIRD CYCLE

1. COURTSHIP—SONG OF SOLOMON 3:1–5

In the third cycle of his song, we revisit the courtship as the Shulammitte makes a nighttime search for Solomon.

Read 3:1–5.

As her wedding draws close, she goes out in the night to search for her betrothed. When she finds him, her thoughts carry her to their wedding night. A Church Father (early leader of the Church after the time of the apostles) named Bede compared the bride's searching in this passage to Mary Magdalene rushing out to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning. Just like the Shulammitte, Mary searches the garden for the illusive Jesus. Like Solomon, He stands there, waiting to call her name so she can recognize His presence with her.

Q 10: The cares of this life can drown out our longing for Christ's return. What are some good ways to rekindle our eager desire for the day of the Lord's coming?

- Weekly worship is so important as we step away from our busy lives to focus on the bigger, eternal future that awaits us. Holy Communion gives us a foretaste of that great wedding feast being prepared for us in heaven. Daily Bible reading and prayer is also helpful—especially books like Revelation. Our daily problems and large burdens can also drive us to that yearning.

2. WEDDING—SONG OF SOLOMON 3:6–11

This section gives us the fullest description of the wedding itself in the book. It is a loose description of the wedding rite in Solomon's day. The groom traveled with his friends to the home of the bride. She was waiting for him clothed in a veil and adorned with jewels. The groom escorted her to his home accompanied with singing and a dancing crowd. When she entered his home, they were married.

Read 3:6–11.

The wilderness through which Solomon travels reminds us of God leading Israel, the Bride of Christ, from the wilderness wandering into the Promised Land.

Q 11: How does this description show us a foretaste of Christ's return on Judgment Day?

- Jesus will be surrounded by the mighty angels as He returns in splendor and glory to bring His Bride home. We wait anxiously for that day to arrive.

3. WEDDING—CONSUMMATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 4:1–7

Like a couple standing before the altar, Solomon describes the beauty of his bride as she stands before him on their wedding day.

Read 4:1–7.

The groom slowly gazes upon the beautiful features of his bride, adoring her and delighting in her beauty. It is fitting that husband and wife appreciate God's careful craftsmanship and artistry in creating the male and female form. We may picture this same delight in Adam and Eve when they first gazed upon each other in the Garden of Eden when God united them in marriage as husband and wife.

Q 12: How do our deeds of love, inspired by faith, bring such delight to Jesus?

- As a groom delights in his beautiful bride, so Jesus Christ delights in us who were brought to faith by the Holy Spirit and washed clean in His blood. Like the Shulammite of lowly origins, we marvel at His undeserved grace in choosing us to be His own. Our deeds done from grateful love reflect His love first given to us and bring delight to His heart.

I. THE UNION: FOURTH CYCLE

1. COURTSHIP—SONG OF SOLOMON 4:8–11

Once again we cycle back to the days of courtship. For a fourth and final time, we focus chiefly on the relationship before and leading up to the wedding and consummation. As we await our Savior's return and the beginning of the wedding feast in heaven, we will see certain similarities we share with the Shulammite, waiting anxiously for Solomon to come and take her as his bride.

Read 4:8–11.

Solomon calls the Shulammite to leave her people, come out from Lebanon, her home, and be his bride. In a way, it is reminiscent of God calling Abraham to leave his home and enter into a new relationship with Yahweh as his God.

Q 13: In what ways does Christ call us out from our old lives to be His Bride?

- Through the Gospel and the waters of Baptism, Christ leads us to repentance and faith. Repenting of our old, sinful life, we are led on a new path as we serve God and one another for Jesus' sake.

Q 14: How does verse 9 reflect Jesus' love for His Bride, the Church?

- His heart is captive to His Bride, whom He calls His sister. Indeed, by taking on our human nature, the Son of God became our brother, and through Baptism into His Father's family, we are His sisters and brothers.

2. WEDDING—SONG OF SOLOMON 4:12–15

Now at the wedding, Solomon stands face-to-face with his bride. Gazing at her through her veil, he pours lavish praise on her.

Read 4:12–15.

Solomon's words stress the Shulammite's virginity. She has forsaken all other men and saved herself for him alone. In the sense of being Christ's Bride, humanity lost its virginity with Adam and Eve's first disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Every sin we commit thereafter is an incident of unfaithfulness to our God. But thankfully, Jesus' blood shed on the cross has washed away all our sins in the water of Baptism. United together as the Bride of Christ, we stand before Him with our virginity restored, "without spot or wrinkle . . . holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

Q 15: How does this teaching guard you against either being secure in your sin or despairing of it?

- The idea of spiritual virginity is a high and impossible demand for us to keep on our own. It reminds us that we must be absolutely

sinless if we are to earn heaven by our works. But Jesus' death and resurrection assures us our sins are gone and forgiven, our spiritual virginity is restored, and we are completely free.

3. CONSUMMATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 4:16–5:1

Using the imagery of eating delicious, fresh fruit from a garden, the bride invites her husband to come to her and consummate their marriage. The groom uses her imagery to show he did indeed consummate that marriage. The “others,” the chorus of their friends, encourage the bride and groom to be “intoxicated” in their love and desire for each other.

Read 4:16–5:1.

We, the Christian Church, are the Bride anxiously waiting for Judgment Day when our Lord Jesus will return to judge the world, restore His creation as the perfect new heaven and new earth, and consummate our marriage as we join together in the wedding feast provided for us by God our Father.

Q 16: How might you be able to use this book to encourage a Christian brother or sister who is disillusioned with marriage?

- Most of us can imagine an ideal marriage—even if our own experiences with marriage have not lived up to it. It is the same with thinking of God as our heavenly Father. Our earthly father may have been a horrible comparison—abusive or absent. But we still know the kind of relationship we longed for with our earthly father. You can speak of this ideal relationship with a father and between husband and wife to give them a glimpse of what is waiting for them in heaven.

II. THE REUNION: MARRIED LIFE— FIFTH CYCLE

1. SEARCH—SONG OF SOLOMON 5:2–8

Now we reach the beginning of the second half of Song of Solomon—at least thematically. As the first part principally spoke of the courtship period for the Shulammitte and Solomon, this second part chiefly looks at the couple’s ongoing love after their wedding—their delight in living together and learning to know each other more and more deeply while their love grows ever dearer.

Read 5:2–8.

This passage is similar to the first nighttime search the Shulammitte made for Solomon in 3:1–5. But where she called Solomon “him whom my soul loves” in chapter 3, here she calls him “my beloved.” It implies they are now married, but still seeking each other, longing for more intimacy.

It finds an interesting parallel to the Old and New Testament churches.

The Old Testament Bride saw their Groom, the promised Messiah, in the prophecies made of Him. They loved Him, but did not yet know Him. When Jesus came into the flesh, His Bride saw and heard Him and was betrothed to Him. We still yearn for the day He will return and consummate our relationship forever in the new heaven and the new earth. In the rest of the Song, we will see the New Testament Church struggling through times of persecution while we await our Beloved’s return.

Q 17: Think of the bride’s sluggishness to rise from bed and greet her beloved husband when she hears (or dreams she hears) him knocking at the door. How is that similar to our Christian lives here on earth?

- Both as individual Christians and as Christian congregations, we are often caught up in earthly concerns, slow and sluggish to respond to our Lord’s words, His promises, and His call to share His salvation as we should.

2. PRAISE—SONG OF SOLOMON 5:9–16

At the close of the last section, the Shulammitte asked the chorus, the virgins of Jerusalem, “If you find my beloved . . . tell him I am sick with love” (5:8). They respond by asking why her beloved is more than other men in Jerusalem. The bride describes her husband so they will recognize him when they see him.

Read 5:9–16.

Note the details she uses to describe him from head to foot. She has carefully studied his body, in which she delights.

Q 18: Before Jesus returns, we cannot sit and gaze upon His beauty and glory. So how can we get to know Him better the way the Shulammitte came to know Solomon?

- The four Gospels reveal many details about Jesus to us. As we carefully study and meditate upon His words and actions, we gain a deeper understanding, appreciation, and admiration for the Son of God, who loved us enough to become one of us, teach us about God's love, and die on the cross for our salvation. We take delight in who He is and what He has done for us and for all the world.

3. GARDEN DIALOGUE—SONG OF SOLOMON 6:1–3

Now that the daughters of Jerusalem have heard the Shulammitte's description of Solomon, they ask where he went so they know where to look for him.

Read 6:1–3.

Solomon has other duties that have taken him from his bride. At the moment, he is grazing his flocks in the garden. Note her boldness and confidence in his love. She is convinced that as soon as he hears that she is longing for him, he will come to her. In a sense, we could say the same about Jesus. He left the earth at His ascension and now sits at His Father's right hand ministering to His Bride, the Church, through pastors and teachers, and directing everything that takes place on earth for her benefit. But when God the Father determines, He will be delighted to return from heaven.

Q 19: How can we gain confidence that our Lord Jesus loves us and is eager to come and take us to His home?

- Recalling Jesus' words and His miracles reminds us of just how much He loves each of us and cares about every part of our lives. No physical, financial, or relationship problem is too small for him to concern himself with. Add to that His glorious Supper, where He comes to feed us with His body and blood and commands us, "Do this in remembrance of Me." We may often forget just how much Jesus loves us, but He truly, definitely does.

In Song of Solomon, each time Solomon describes his bride, he is speaking to her using the word *you*. But the one time when the Shulammitte describes Solomon, she is speaking to the virgin daughters of Jerusalem, speaking about him. That has a fascinating application to Christ and us. So many of Jesus' words and promises for us are that personal, face-to-face kind of communicating ("Truly, I say to you..."). Though we do speak to Him in prayer, we should be busy describing Him to others too.

Q 20: How can the way the Shulammitte spoke of Solomon inform our witness about Jesus?

- The Shulammitte adored her husband. She was not at all ashamed to describe him and heap praises on him in doing so. That should be the attitude or spirit that enlivens our witness. We absolutely adore our

Savior, who gave His very life to save us. And the Holy Spirit makes us bold to describe His saving love and heap praises on Him without shame or fear.

4. GARDEN DIALOGUE—SONG OF SOLOMON 6:4–10

For a third time, Solomon’s description shows his great love and adoration of his bride.

Read 6:4–10.

Verses 8–9 are fascinating in their historical context. Solomon actually mentions having other wives and concubines to his Shulammitte wife. At this time, he apparently had sixty wives (queens) and eighty concubines. The “virgins without number” are likely later wives and concubines (v. 8). At the time of this Song, Solomon held the Shulammitte as chief among his queens. In 1 Kings 11:1–8, we learn that Solomon eventually married seven hundred women and had three hundred concubines.

Q 21: What stumbling block does Solomon’s polygamy give you as you try to see him foreshadowing Jesus?

- The idea of polygamy is so foreign to us, it is hard to think Solomon could have honestly held the Shulammitte as first among his wives, or to think she would not have been jealous of his other wives and concubines. But in a culture that considered this marriage practice normal (at least for kings and chiefs), it is easier to understand why the virgins desired to be married to such a great and powerful king, and took for granted they would have to “share” him with others.

Interestingly, when the New Testament speaks of Christ’s relationship with His Church, it stresses monogamy—that all of us believers are joined together in the one Body of Jesus Christ, His one and only Bride, the Church. For all eternity, we will live together as a husband with his one collective wife in heaven. But we Christians are also individuals. Perhaps Solomon’s sinful and self-destructive polygamy reminds us that Jesus alone is truly capable of loving each and every believer without diminishing His love or showing favoritism toward one over the others or any form of partiality.

II. THE REUNION: MARRIED LIFE— SIXTH CYCLE

1. SEARCH—SONG OF SOLOMON 6:11–13

In this brief section, the Shulammitte is going through one of Solomon's gardens looking for him, because in 6:2 she tells the daughters of Jerusalem to look for him there. We learn in Ecclesiastes 2:5 that Solomon planted many royal gardens. While she is there, Solomon's royal chariots arrive and whisk her away—it is likely that Solomon is riding in the chariot with her, for in the next section he will praise her beauty once again. After she has left, the daughters of Jerusalem urge her to come back so they can gaze upon her beauty too. Also this is the only place in the song where the bride is identified as the Shulammitte. But that in itself is not a name, but an adjective describing the humble city of her origin.

Read 6:11–13.

This section describes a temporary separation of the married couple as is often experienced in our day because of business trips, attending to a parent's failing health in another state, and so on. It explores the yearning for intimacy that such couples experience as they are parted and long to be reunited.

Q 22: How do these temporary separations parallel our time awaiting Christ's return on Judgment Day?

- Sometimes they prove the truth of the old adage "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." This is when our longing for Christ is strong and we cling closer to Him in faith, while yearning for His return. But because of our sinful hearts, the painful yearning of absence can lead to doubt, distraction, or unfaithfulness because it seems like He will never return. Daily Scripture and devotion reading along with weekly worship and regular reception of Holy Communion can keep our love and longing growing as we await our Savior's return.

2. PRAISE—SONG OF SOLOMON 7:1–9

In this section, Solomon again praises the beauty of his wife. The intimacy of their marriage is plainly seen.

Read 7:1–9.

Within the blessing of holy marriage, God's gift of sexuality is to be cherished between husband and wife and not neglected.

Q 23: What factors tend to keep a husband and wife from enjoying the precious gift of physical intimacy as often as God desires for them?

- Answers can include hectic schedules, pressures at work, needs of children, lack of time and space to be alone and intimate together.

Q 24: Why is it important for married couples to make time and space in their lives to be alone together?

- It is easy to drift apart in marriage as we let other things slip between us and our spouse. We need to make our marriage our highest priority after God; for if that is neglected, every other part of our family and our life will suffer.

3. INVITATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 7:10–13

The Shulammitte, Solomon’s wife, yearns to reconstitute their marriage, to enter a closer state together—something like a second honeymoon. It is similar to the desire of Christians for Christ to return so we can bask and live in His presence forever.

Read 7:10–13.

The scene the Shulammitte recommends for their second honeymoon is a garden in the springtime, the same place and time of year in which they were married. It is not a long stretch to see the Garden of Eden when mankind was first created and our relationship with our God was perfect. Now the Church, like the Shulammitte, seeks a second honeymoon with God, our husband. We pray “Come, Lord Jesus,” pleading for Him to come and bring us to the new garden (the new heaven and the new earth) in the springtime (when Christ will make all of creation new and perfect forever).

Q 25: Consider what you normally think when you say the words “Come, Lord Jesus.” What are you normally thinking about?

- For many of us, this is our common table prayer. So we think of inviting Jesus to be with us as we eat, to put His blessing on the food that we eat and our time of fellowship together. But it should always be said with a yearning, a desire for this time of sin and sorrow to be through, for renewal and perfection to break out over God’s creation.

4. LONGING—SONG OF SOLOMON 8:1–4

This section closes out the sixth and last cycle in Song of Solomon with the couple once again consummating their marriage.

Read 8:1–4.

The Shulammitte is now with Solomon in a public place, possibly Jerusalem. She wishes she could express her marital affection publicly, but knows it is not appropriate to do so in public in that culture. Besides, there are some with hostile intentions (envy, jealousy, hatred) in the city. Her husband’s embrace comforts her, but she strongly urges the daughters of Jerusalem to not stir up her desires until the time God appointed has come.

This parallels our experience, living as Christ’s Bride in a world hostile to Jesus Christ and His believers. Only when He returns will our reproach be lifted and we will live in glory and joy forever.

Q 26: What lesson can engagement teach us about this time while we are awaiting our Lord Jesus' return?

- An engaged Christian couple must often struggle through the yearning and desire to consummate their union as they await the day appointed by God for them to do so—their wedding day. Even after marriage, it is not appropriate for a husband and wife to satisfy their desires at every time or place these arise. Yet it is good and right for them to experience that yearning—it would not be natural if we felt no such yearning, if we only felt lukewarm toward each other. Likewise, we Christians desire to hasten the day of our Lord's return, but we must wait patiently. We will face hostility, rejection, and persecution until the day appointed by God the Father finally arrives.

CONCLUSION

1. LOVE: THEOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHT—SONG OF SOLOMON 8:5–7

In this final portion of the Song of Solomon, we clearly see our relationship to Jesus Christ through that of the Shulammitte and Solomon.

Read 8:5–7.

The Shulammitte begs Solomon to set her as a seal upon his heart, a seal upon his arm. In Old Testament times, seals were tools that indicated ownership. Important documents were written on papyrus, rolled up into a scroll, and tied up with a cord and wet clay. Into that clay, the owner impressed his seal to prove the document was authentic from his own hand (today we use our signature). Therefore the seal was extremely important to the owner, a treasured possession without which he could not conduct his business.

Solomon was a busy king with many pressing matters. It would be easy for his queen to be lost in the shuffle. She asks that he remember and treasure her in everything he does.

Q 27: How does this relate to our pleas and prayers to Jesus as He sits at the Father's right hand in glory, governing everything that occurs in all of creation?

- At times, we may be convinced that our worries and cares are too small for Jesus to be concerned with, thinking He has much bigger problems to solve. But that is denying Jesus' tender love for us—along with His omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Jesus is present throughout His creation, He knows all that takes place everywhere, and He is capable of doing anything He chooses to protect and bless His Church. The amazing thing is that first in Jesus' mind is the welfare of His Church. Before ascending into heaven, He promised His disciples and us, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). In truth, we are the apple of Jesus' eye—the delight of His soul.

Q 28: What does the phrase, "for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave" (Song of Solomon 8:6) tell us about Christ's love for us and our love for Him?

- Death is a powerful enemy of mankind, and the grave or hell hunts, tracks, and pursues humans no matter what they do. But Jesus' love for His Bride is so strong He became human and endured the cross and hell to set us free from death and eternal separation from Him in hell. He died that we might live.

In response, the love the Holy Spirit works in our heart moves us to endure distrust, persecution, and even martyrdom rather than turn away from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In marriage, the bride and groom promise to abide together for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness or in health, and let nothing but death separate them. But in Christ, not even death can separate us from Jesus, our Lord. He has conquered death so we can abide with Him forever.

2. LOVE: APPLICATION—SONG OF SOLOMON 8:8–12

As the Song nears its end, we get a word of advice. It is appropriate for all Christians as we await the return of our Savior, but especially as we teach, encourage, and protect the children in our midst.

Read 8:8–12.

In Old Testament Israel, it was the duty of brothers to protect their sister's honor and take part in the arrangements for the betrothal process with the family of the groom. In verses 8 and 9, they pledge to guard and protect her virginity for the day of her wedding.

Q 29: What responsibilities do we Christians have to keep and care for one another?

- As we await our Savior's return, it is appropriate for us to guard the spiritual purity of other Christians so they forsake all other gods and cling to Jesus Christ alone. Pastors in particular are given this responsibility by Christ. After murdering Abel, Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). The answer is yes; he was. And we all are too.

3. FINAL APPEAL—SONG OF SOLOMON 8:13–14

The Song closes with the Shulammitte in the gardens speaking with her companions, the daughters of Israel. Solomon longs to hear her voice as well. In reply, she calls to him to make haste to come to her.

Read 8:13–14.

This ending very aptly describes the state of Christ and His Church as we await the day of His return. We go to our Lord's gardens, our local congregations, and learn the Gospel wisdom that has been passed down from generation to generation. Christ longs to hear our voices raised in prayer and united in song. And anxious for His return, we pray "Come quickly, Lord Jesus."

Q 30: How is the last verse of Song of Solomon similar to Revelation 22:20, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"?

- In both passages, the bride is calling for her husband to come quickly to fill her yearning heart, to take her into his arms and be with her forever. At the close of Revelation, the Church prays the same thing—for Jesus to come and take us home.