

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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The Song of Solomon

This book is unique among the books of holy writ. It is a story of love, in tender, romantic language, which Hebrews recognize as a story of love between God and Israel, and Christians recognize as a story of love between Christ and his Church. It is frequently read at Passover season by the Jews, in commemoration of God's loving favor at the Exodus, and it is a good time for the saints to consider it also, in commemoration of Christ's loving gift, through which his bride is born (Genesis 2:21, 22, John 19:33, 34).

Verse one contains a title, "The song of songs, which is Solomon's." This form of speech, "song of songs," is used to indicate a superlative, something like Deuteronomy 10:14, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," or Exodus 26:33, where "most holy" is literally "holy of holies." 1 Kings 4:32 says Solomon spake "three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five," and among them all the "song of songs" is this book in scripture.

WHO IS SPEAKING?

One of the difficulties in studying this book is defining who is speaking to whom in the drama. This problem is largely solved by recognizing the gender, in Hebrew, of the nouns used as terms of endearment. For example, in the King James version, the word "love" as referring to one of the parties usually comes from *rayah*, Strong's number 7474, which means "feminine of 7453; a female associate." This is the word used in 1:9, 1:15, 2:2, 2:10, 2:13, 4:1, 4:7, 5:2 and 6:4. The exceptions are 2:7, 3:5, 7:6, 8:4, where the word love is *ahabah*, Strong's number 160, which means "feminine of 158 and meaning the same," namely affection, and always translated "love." Therefore, whenever the word "love" is used of a person, it refers to the woman. (The New American Standard Bible changes the "he" of 2:7, 3:5, 8:4 to "she" to accord with this.)

When the word "beloved" is used, it always refers to the man. In every case but one this word is from the Hebrew *dowd*, Strong's number 1730, "by implication a love-token, lover, friend," always used of the masculine, rendered variously "beloved, father's brother, love, uncle." The lone exception in this book is Song of Solomon 1:16. In this case the Hebrew word is *ahab*, Strong's number 157, the masculine version of *ahabah* referred to above.

This simple rule - "love" means the woman and "beloved" the man - is very useful in understanding the flow of the book.

THE TWO MAIN CHARACTERS

The two main characters are, of course, the man and woman lovers of the story. The man is referred to by name as "King Solomon" in Song of Solomon 3:7,9,11, 8:11,12. The woman is once termed "the Shulamite," which is a feminine term for "peace" as Solomon is a masculine name for "peace." The woman is evidently Solomon's idealized companion, and probably does not identify any particular real woman.

Some have wondered if this term referred to one of the women close to David, "Abishag the Shunammite," but the two words are different, "Shunam" is not "Shulam," and it would probably be against acceptable custom for Solomon to write as he does of his father's consort. Some have wondered if the woman was the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1), supposing possibly she was dark skinned, and fit the description of Song of Solomon 1:5, "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." But it is highly unlikely Solomon would thus have idealized a woman of foreign nationality. The reference to color is not intended as a racial designation, but as symbolic of the distress and affliction of this cherished woman, as for example in Job 30:30, Psalms 119:83, Lamentations 4:8 and Lamentations 5:10. This woman is a picture of the Church, and the affliction she suffered represents the trials which purify the bride of Christ.

"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" (Song of Solomon 1:6). By the end of the book, however, this bride to be comes into her own possession, the fruits of which she willingly yields to Solomon. "My very own vineyard is at my disposal; the thousand shekels [the value of its produce, verse 11] are for you, Solomon."

In Song of Solomon 1:7 the woman asks how to locate the affection of her heart. "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?" So we long to be with our beloved, and as we search the way, we are told "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" (Song of Solomon 1:8). So we are advised, if we wish to find our Heavenly Bridegroom, to follow the path of the flocks of the Lord's people. Fellowship and associate with them, and you will be led to the Master at the end of the way.

The remainder of chapter 1, and the first six verses of chapter 2, are filled with expressions of affection, each for the other, symbolically representing the spiritual pleasantries each sees in the other. "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof" (verse 12). This reminds us of the fragrant spikenard Mary poured upon her King Jesus, a loving devotion whose fragrance has permeated the ages (Mark 14:3). The other symbols, doves eyes (peace), cedar, fir, green (life), and others, represent various qualities of their relationship.

THE MAIN CHALLENGE OF THE BOOK

Song of Solomon 2:7 is a refrain which appears three times in the book, and expresses the whole point and lesson of the book. It is about how the bride to be responds to the impulses of affection which she feels for her beloved. "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you will not arouse or awaken my love, until she pleases" (NASB).

The Lord is looking to see how his love will rouse his bride to devoted reaction. In other words, how our love for the Lord will motivate us to stir ourselves to consecrated action in response to our longing for our Lord. As gazelles are easily frightened by the least commotion, so the Lord urges that the test on his loved one will be her self motivation, rather than any fearful commotion brought about to stimulate a frenzied response.

In general this would apply to all of our consecrated living. In specific, however, the story intertwines this test with the advent of Christ at his return to receive his bride. In this respect it is something like Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." There is a principle here applicable to all the saints to open the door of their hearts to the Lord, and respond to his fellowship, and his tender care through life's experiences. Thus "him that hath an ear to hear," no matter where during the age they may live, "let him hear what the spirit saith to the Churches."

We can gain a principle of devoted conduct from each of the messages, even if the specific circumstances of one or another stage have passed with history. But to those living during the Laodicean stage of the Church this admonition is rife with meaning about the parousia of Christ, and the attendant blessings of harvest truth served by our returned Lord. "I will... sup with him, and he with me."

So with the Song of Solomon. All the saints, whenever they have lived, were to be responsive to the loving impulses of the spirit's call, and rouse themselves from any spirit of lethargy. But specially does this apply to our eagerness to embrace the advent of our master, the end of the age, the fruition of our hopes, and the establishment of the Kingdom. We should have "an absorbing interest in the fact, the time and the manner" of these issues (C19).

THE HARVEST

The remainder of chapter 2 is about the approach of the beloved for his love, emblematic of the return of Christ in the Harvest to take his bride. "The voice of my beloved!" exclaims the bride, "behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills" (verse 8). What majestic language. So do we see the influence of our bridegroom in the affairs of the kingdoms of this earth, touching here and there, an evidence that the harvest of the ages is upon us.

"My beloved is like a roe or a young hart" with boundless energy, animated, as it were, ever the more with the prospects of the coming union with his love. "Behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice" (verse 9). We see his glory, not directly, but incidentally, as he shows himself through the lattice of fulfilled prophecy.

He calls to us with enthusiasm. "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away" (verse 10). What thrilling words! The time of our union with Christ has come! In preparation we rise up from any lingering stupor to embrace the loveliness of faith's vision, and prepare ourselves through the adornment of character for the encounter.

"For, lo, the winter [of loneliness and affliction during the Gospel age] is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle[dove] is heard in our land" (verses 11, 12). It is spring time ... harvest time! Signs of life and vitality are everywhere. "The fig tree forms its early fruit [Israel is growing again], the blossoming vines spread their fragrance [the aromatic influence of the Lord's saints springing forth in praise and thanks]. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me" our Lord invites! (verse 13, NIV).



King Solomon in Royal Splendor

He encourages us, "My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside [wherever we may be scattered among the nations], show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely" (verse 14, NIV). Let us then respond with understanding, and the loveliness of thanksgiving and devotion, and speak of the blessings at hand.

"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom" (verse 15, ÍÉÍ). So the governments of Christendom, the remnants of the old Roman empire, these agents of the adversary, "foxes" (Luke 13:31,32), come to the end of their power during this time.

"My lover is mine, and I am his; he browses among the lilies" (verse 16), enjoying the fragrance of his lover in the happy union. We could almost close the book here, with this lovely picture. In fact the remaining verse of the chapter is almost the way the book does close, in 8:14, "Come away, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the spiceladen mountains" (NIV, compare 2:17). But there are more lessons to come, in the next two episodes.

THE ZEALOUS RESPONSE OF THE BRIDE

Song of Solomon 3:1-4 shows the earnestness of the church for the return of Christ. "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not" (verse 1). She decides to wait no further; but go in search of her beloved. "I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not."

Prophetically this fits the Miller Movement, an awakening among Christians to anticipate the near return of Christ. But some disappointment followed, and they "found him not." The watchmen of the city found her,

and an exchange followed. "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" she asks (verse 3). So the saints asked of the leaders of Christendom, the watchmen of the city, but found no satisfactory response.

She passed from them, continuing her search rather than giving up. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth" (verse 4). What wonderful news! Passing by the disappointments of the Miller Movement, and finding the leaders of Christendom had no helpful information, the Lord's people soon find the announcement of present Truth, the Lord has returned, and they fasten their hold upon their precious find. "I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me," just as Rebekah joined Isaac in the tent of Sarah, who represents the spiritual mother of the saints, the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 24:67).

In verse 5 we have an appropriate reminder of the "test" on the bride - the refrain of 2:7, 3:5, 8:4, "that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till she please" (NASB). The bride is gloriously triumphant in this test.

Verses 6-11 show the matter from the other point of view, from her beloved Solomon's view, he coming out of the wilderness "like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant," as though fulfilling the words of Revelation 3:11, "Behold, I come quickly," and Ésaiah 40:10, "his reward is with him." He is ready for the union with his love (verse 10), and for the crown of further glory, majesty and authority he receives "in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" (verse 11).

The "threescore valiant men" in his entourage, who "hold swords, being expert in war," every one with "his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night," may be another representation of the saints preceding the harvest, the sword of the spirit being their protection against the terrors of the night of the gospel age. The symbolism of the number 60 shows they are still in the imperfect, though redeemed, flesh.

Chapter four is a lovely description of the beauties Solomon sees in his bride to be. "Behold, thiü art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks [veil, NIV]: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead." The doves' eyes speak of the peaceful influence of the holy spirit. The veil perhaps represents the veil of flesh which temporarily intervenes between Christ and the church. The hair, an emblem of devotion to one's vows, as in the law of the Nazarite vow, is here lush and full, "as a flock of goats," perhaps mingling the thought of faithfulness with sacrifice, as goats were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement.

"Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them" (verse 2). This speaks of the loveliness of her smile, and perhaps also, symbolically, of the bride's readiness to appropriate spiritual nourishment to be built up in all the graces of the spirit.

"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks" (verse 3). Red lip coloring, and a touch of rouge, are still used today to beautify the ladies, but here the coloring was delightfully natural. The red which is so lovely on a woman probably represents her appreciation for Christ's sacrifice - like the scarlet "thread" Rahab displayed out her window, and the pomegranates on the hem of the high priest's garments. Her thoughts are focused on this, and it is reflected in her speech.

"Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men" (verse 4:4). The symbol of tower and shields may refer to her faith (cf. Isaiah 21:5), which lend such an upright air of confidence to her appearance. Verse 5 shows she is fully developed in the lovely graces attractive to the Master, inviting as a bed of lilies for repose.

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense" (verse 6). Meanwhile, until the consummation comes, the sweet aroma of sacrifice (myrrh) and priestly ministering of the faith to others (frankincense), continues. "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" (verse 7), as we should be, "not having spot, or wrinkle ... be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).



Solomon who sought wisdom (2 Chronicles 1:10)

The beloved continues to address his love in verses 8-15, in lovely terms of endearment representing her spiritual bounties, and in verse 16 she invites his affections. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." He accepts the offer. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse," and likens the delights to the fragrance of myrrh, sweetness of honey, softness of milk, and tang of wine (5:1).

THE RETICENT LOVER

In Chapter 5 (except verse 1, which really belongs with chapter 4), we find another scenario, reminiscent of chapter 3, but with quite a different attitude by the woman. This chapter shows the kind of response to the Lord we could manifest, if we allow a spirit of ease to replace our zeal. It reflects the disposition of the Great Company.

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (verse 2). The zealous lover in chapter 3 was meditating "on thee in the night watches" (Psalms 63:6), but this one was sleeping. In chapter 3 she arose before the advent of her beloved, and went out searching for him. But here she wakes only at the knock of the master. The Lord has returned, and calls his people out of the house (cf. Luke 12:36, Revelation 3:20, 18:4).

But even then this lover does not respond willingly, but with excuses. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" (verse 3). She is more concerned with her

discomfort than with meeting her beloved. She fails to respond even to his gentle entreaty. So many Christians are comfortable in their beds of faith, ruminating on the beliefs of the past, and do not heed the knock of prophecy, nor rise to meet him, nor make any effort to light a lamp for their path, or as Revelation 3:18 expresses it, anoint their eyes "with eyesalve" that they may see.

Her beloved makes another endeavor to rouse her, and then withdraws. She seems to sense her peril, and finally rouses, but tragically, too late. "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with ... sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer" (verses 5, 6).

As she sallies forth in search, she too encounters "the watchmen that went about the city," but at this late stage they treat her roughly. "They smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" (verse 7). After some affliction, the veil of flesh is removed, and this experience of the Great Company ends. This seems to occur when the city of Christendom is still intact, before the great earthquake of plague 7 divides the city, and it falls (Revelation 16:19).

Verses 8 through 6:3 record a discussion between this lover and the "daughters of Jerusalem" about her beloved. This interchange may picture an interchange between the Great Company, in their last experiences, with the nation of Israel, who is just beginning to learn about this one so beloved of the woman. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?" (verse 9). This leads to an exquisite description of the beloved, masculine, firm, stately, "the chiefest among ten thousand," fragrant and delightful. He is "white" (pure), "ruddy" (brings redemption), and his head is of gold (divine authority). Like his love, he also has lush dark locks of hair, but described as a raven rather than a goat. He also has doves' eyes (the peaceful influence of the holy spirit), and his words and counsel are delightful. "His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

This description seems to impress the daughters of Jerusalem. If this has an antitype in the prophetic drama, perhaps it is that Israel will begin to respond, in their hour of desperation, to the advantages of such a Messiah. "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee" (Song of Solomon 6:1).

Surprisingly, this lover seems to know where he is. "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" - all terms associated with his bride in chapter 4. Christ has joined with the zealous ones beyond the veil, and is already appreciating their delights. The Great Company has missed the privilege of being among the bride, though they still recognize a privileged relationship (Song of Solomon 6:3).

ANOTHER DESCRIPTION OF THE BRIDE

Song of Solomon 6:4 begins another description of the bride, repeating some of the elements of her previous description, and adding others. "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah [regional capital of the northern tribes of Israel], comely as Jerusalem [the main capital of the nation]," "majestic as troops with banners" (NIV). Her hair, teeth and temples are described as before.

"There are threescore queens" - perhaps those called to queenly station, the number matching the armed associates of Solomon mentioned earlier - "and fourscore concubines" - this number elsewhere identifies the Ancient Worthies (2 Samuel 19:32, 35 cf. also Micah 5:5) - "and virgins without number" - the Great Company class. "But my dove, my perfect one, is unique, the only daughter of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her" and she received the adulation of the maidens, queens and concubines (verse 9, NIV).

In verse 10 (NIV) an undisclosed questioner interjects, "Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?" Could a more grand description be given of this bride in all her glory? A similar rhetorical question introduced her beloved in Song of Solomon 3:6, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed ...," and another follows in Song of Solomon 8:5, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" In each case this style of question introduces one of the lovers as they approach the rendezvous.

Verses 11 and 12 are evidently an expression from the beloved "I went down to the grove of nut trees to look at the new growth in the valley, to see if the vines had budded or the pomegranates were in bloom. Before I realized it, my desire set me among the royal chariots of my people" (NIV). As our lord approaches to see if the harvest is ripe, it seems but a brief time before the fruition is come, and he is acknowledged the leader of the people.

Verse 13 - then the onlookers seek another glance of the peaceful bride, "Return, return, O Shulamite ... that we may gaze on you!" Perhaps these are the "daughters of Jerusalem" (Israel), or perhaps others (the world) who wait in "eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19, NIV). And what will they see? "As it were the company of two armies" in magnificence (cf. Revelation 19:14).

YET ANOTHER DESCRIPTION

Song of Solomon 7:1-9 is another lovely description of the bride, but this one differs from the others. Now we see the bride as she appears beyond the veil, in glory. Read over this poetic passage in the NW, and note the different variety of lovely remarks. Her hair is no longer as a flock of goats, but now in glory her hair is "purple" (King James), or "like royal tapestry" (NIV), in either case symbolic of her royal office. Now her feet, legs, navel and waist are described, all neglected before, so that now her entire person is described. These regions were included in the description of her beloved who has always, in context of this book, been in his spirit glory. In verse 4 her neck, before symbolic of her faith, is still stately, but now described as ivory, a term also used of Christ (Song of Solomon 5:14). Before her neck was as a tower, now this grandeur is shown even in the smaller member, her nose. Verse 7 describes her as robustly fruitful, not merely for pleasant repose as before, as she prepares to nourish others (cf. Ezekiel 47:12).

Verse 10, "I am my beloved's" - this refrain also appears in 2:16 and 6:3, but now he is not otherwise occupied, "feeding in the lilies," waiting for her, but "his desire is toward me." The time has come, and verses 11-13 speak of the consummation.

THE CLOSING CHAPTER

The narrative is now complete, and some closing lessons follow in chapter 8. Verses 1 and 2 mention some of the mild embarrassment the woman has experienced, longing after one who she was not close to naturally (just as most of the church, gentiles, were not naturally identified with the Jewish Messiah). But now all is well (verse 3). Verse four repeats the "challenge" of the book, which the bride has passed successfully. In verse 5 the bride "cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved," no longer separated as in Song of Solomon 3:6. She has been raised under the apple tree, a symbol of her beloved, her protector and nourisher. She formerly "sat down under his shadow" (Song of Solomon 2:3), but now her upbringing is complete.

Verses 6, 7 are an exultant praise of the strength of divine love which has bonded these two. "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong

as death, its jealousy [fervor, zeal, earnestness] unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like the very flame of Jehovah [Margin]. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned" - it being too precious for merely mundane values (NIV).

Verses 8, 9 remember the less responsive lover of chapter 5, the Great Company. "We have a young sister," not so well developed. "What shall we do for our sister for the day she is spoken for? She will have a place proportionate to her faith. Has she been like a wall, stable in her faith? Then on her will be built "towers of silver." Has she been like a door, through which others accessed the realms of faith? Then, as with the temple doors, "we will enclose her with panels of cedar." The two symbols combine to represent life (cedar) in the spirit (silver) realm, but she does not become the bride of the great beloved. But as for the triumphant bride, "I am a wall" of faith and devotion, beautifully developed "like towers. Thus I have become in his eyes like one bringing contentment" (verse 10).

"Solomon had a vineyard in Aal Hamon [wealth, abundance]; he let out his vineyard to tenants. Each was to bring for its fruit a thousand shekels of silver. But my own vineyard is mine to give," and she gladly yields its value to her beloved Solomon, with due payment for those who have labored for her. "The thousand shekels are for you, O Solomon (cf. Genesis 20:16), and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit" (Song of Solomon 8:12).

The woman's closing words echo the longing of the saints through the ages. "You [Jesus] who dwell in the gardens with friends in attendance, let me hear your voice! Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (Verses 13 NIV, 14).

-David Rice

The Book of Job

(Continued from previous issue ... full text available electronically from the author at chagensickl @ attbi.com)

DOCTRINAL SIGNIFICANCE

Perhaps the main importance of the book of Job is to answer the simple question as to why a loving God permits evil. Viewed from this standpoint, job represents mankind grappling with the facts of sin and death around him. As representing man, Job can only be used in a limited sense. Man's condition is a direct result of his own sin. Job had done mostly noble deeds and lived an upright life when his evils befell him.

Job however, like all mankind, has been pushed into an ever more defensive posture by false arguments that has caused a measure of self-righteousness. Faultless as Job was at the beginning of the book, he was justifying himself by the conclusion of the debates.

The final remedy of a double restoration required five components:

(1) The need for a ransom, as pointed out by Elihu (Job 33:24). Even then, there is always a possibility of sinning to such a degree, after being redeemed, that there is no more ransom available (Job 36:18).

(2) The need for man to recognize the supremacy of God, and therefore his own sinful and undone condition (Job 40:4). As the Apostle Paul worded it, it is possible, even after knowing God, to glorify "him not as God" (Romans 1:21).

(3) The need to proceed beyond such a recognition of personal sin to a full repentance of that sin (Job 42:6).

(4) The necessity for man to forgive and accept those who have been counted as their enemies (Job 42:10).

(5) The need of man of full instruction in the laws of God so that he may do them - rendering "unto man his righteousness" (Job 33:26).

Two other doctrinal points are worth mentioning in the book of Job.

(1) The resurrection of the dead - "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" (Job 14:14,15).

(2) Resurrection dependent upon redemption - "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25, 26).

THE CONTRAST OF JOB AND SOLOMON

The lives of Job and Solomon yield a sharp contrast. Job was a righteous man who was afflicted through no direct cause of his own. Solomon was a man who often strayed far from God, and yet was a man of fabulous wealth. On the surface, Job was a good man who suffered bad things and Solomon was a bad man who enjoyed a majestic life style. Yet both had some things in common - both desired to be servants of God, both had a relationship with the Creator, and both earnestly sought what it was that God desired of them.

Solomon wrote three books on his search for this relationship. In his first writing, The Song of Solomon, he reveals his search for emotional security. In his second, Proverbs, he reveals the progress of his mental being. But it is his final book, Ecclesiastes, that opens his heart as he notes the vanity of riches and discovers the true meaning of serving God: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).

The book of Job arrives at the same conclusion: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28).

JOB AS AN ALLEGORY

In the allegory, Job represents natural Israel in the harsh experiences of their Diaspora. What happens to Israel is really a microcosm of the experiences of all mankind. Therefore the lessons are almost the same - the reason why God permits evil.

Allegorically the three comforters represent three different, though closely related, opinions as to why man's, or Israel's, troubles have come. Eliphaz ("my god is gold") giving the materialistic or mercantile answer, prosperity is the indicator of divine favor; Bildad ("disputant, or son of contention") the philosophic explanation; and Zophar ("sparrow, or twitterer") the reply of organized religion. The young man Elihu, in contrast, gives the theologically sound answer of ransom and redemption, representing the answer of the true church.

God's answer is given from the midst of the storm, even as he sends his breath upon Israel from amidst the four winds (Ezekiel 37:9,10). And as the vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37) further shows, there is one series of developments that brings about a partial reconciliation with Israel (the gathering and putting on muscle and tissue), but the full restoration begins after the further act of the "four winds."

The final restoration of Job 42 is replete with allegorical pictures of this rehabilitation, including:

(1) Job's enemies must come to Job, acting as their priest, to have him offer their sacrifice for them. The Gentiles must come through Israel to approach God. In this manner, he will be working with Israel as priests and Levites (Isaiah 66:21).

(2) As Job's prosperity was not returned until he prayed for his comforters, so Israel will have to pray for those who have been their persecutors to receive their full blessing.

(3) All Job's acquaintance and kin must dine with him, bewail, and bemoan him, and give him two gifts - a golden earring and a piece (literally "a lamb") of money. So all mankind must dine with, or make "a covenant of salt" with Israel, express their sympathies for Israel's unjustified evil treatment, and bring two gifts - their "ears" by paying attention to the teachings of restored Israel and a "lamb" of money, the recognition of the value of what Christ, the "lamb of God," has done for Israel and for all mankind.

(4) Job's original count of 12,000 animals - 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke (or 1,000 total) oxen, and 1000 asses (assuming each of the 500 "she" asses was accompanied by a "he" ass) was doubled to 24,000. So Israel's original 12 tribes will be considered as "doubled," or duplicated when the kingdom work is complete and the Gentiles are all grafted in to the original "olive tree" (Romans 11).

(5) Job's three named daughters may show three works of the holy spirit through Israel in the future since all three names are oft-used symbols of the spirit. Jemima (dove) showing the peace making work with Israel, Kezia (cassia, one of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil, Exodus 30:23-25) representing the anointing of Israel to a special work in the kingdom, and Karen-happuch (horn of cosmetic oil) the sweet aroma of the blessing that will come about through them.

(6) As Job's life was extended to the third and fourth generation, so Israel shall carry on their work among restored mankind until all men are brought back to full perfection - covering man's sin unto "the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:7).

CHARACTER LESSONS

In addition to the doctrinal, allegorical, and historic lessons to be gained from a study of the book of Job, there are a number of important character attributes illustrated therein.

(1) The patience of Job -bearing up over the removal of all our temporal possessions and even our health, still praising the Lord.

(2) The dangers of the "wedge" - allowing ourselves to react to criticism and thus seeking to defensively justify ourselves.

(3) The danger of questioning God's dealings with us, as Job so frequently did in the later part of the dialog with his friends.

(4) The tact of Elihu in his kindly approach to Job before leveling his own criticisms.

(5) The carefulness to seek always to speak, as Elihu did, in the "uprightness" and sincerity of our hearts.

(6) The avoidance of the harsh spirit of superiority or judgment over our fellows, as was used by the three so-called comforters.

(7) The appreciation of the greatness of God which he demonstrated in showing job the power and wisdom that went into the creative process.

(8) The recognition that when we condemn God's people it is him that we are speaking ill of, and not just the person we criticize.

(9) The necessity of praying, even for our enemies, before we can hope to obtain full divine favor. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

Job, for all his faults and failings as a natural human being, is still a remarkable example of righteousness and faith. Though at times his faith faltered, it never failed. His hopes, even though dim for a season, became fully realized. He was a doer of righteousness. So we must do the same.

- Carl Hagensick

Transition

With this issue we welcome Bro. Richard Doctor to the staff of Beauties of the Truth, who has agreed to accept the duties of Managing Editor. Bro. Jerry Leslie, who has served in this capacity for several years, suggested a change, in the spirit of humility, but has agreed to continue on the editorial board. The members of the board wish Bro. Doctor the Lord's rich blessing in his new responsibilities, as he serves with a view to pleasing our Master, and edifying the brethren. Please note our new mailing address: Beauties of the Truth, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532.

The Defense of Truth

(Proper and Improper Methods)

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

Question: May it be inferred from this text that purity of doctrine is placed first above all other considerations and that the defense of truth comes before peaceableness?

In endeavoring to resolve this matter, it will be helpful for us to examine the Greek word translated pure in this text and to establish its true meaning and then to verify this from other scriptural usages of the same word.

DEFINITION AND USAGE

Pure is from the Greek hagnos, defined as "chaste, pure" (Young) or "properly, clean, i.e. (fig.) innocent, modest, perfect" (Strong's #53). In the noun form hagnotes, it means "chastity, purity," or "state of being clean."

This word hagnos is used only eight times in the Bible and is translated "chaste," "clear," and "pure" (Young). In the noun form, it is found only once, where it is translated "pureness." The eight occurrences are as follows:

Philippians 4:8, "Whatsoever things are pure..." I Timothy 5:22, "keep thyself pure."

James 3:17, "The wisdom from above is first pure ..."

1 John 3:3, 4, "... purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 2 Corinthians 7:11, "... ye [are] clear in this matter."

2 Corinthians 11:2, "... as a chaste virgin to Christ." Titus 2:4, 5, "... discreet, chaste, keepers at home."

1 Peter 3:2, "... your chaste conversation ... with fear." The noun form (hagnotes) is found in 2 Corinthians 6:4-7, "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions ... by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness ... by the word of truth..."

By usage then, we conclude that every instance in which hagnos is used (omitting James 3:17 which is under consideration) finds it pertaining to purity and chastity of Christian thought and conduct. No instance where it applies unmistakably to doctrine is apparent.

The one occurrence of the noun form hagnotes seems especially enlightening, 2 Corinthians 6:4-7. Here the Apostle sets forth a long list of ways by which the Christian can commend himself as a servant of God. "Pureness" (chastity or purity) is listed separately from "knowledge" and from "the word of truth," suggesting that the purity referred to is that of Christian conduct.

CONTEXT

To properly understand the Apostle's intent in the James 3:17 text, we need to consider it as part of the whole setting of the chapter, especially beginning with verse 13, to the end. The lesson he seems intent on conveying appears to be that there are two kinds of wisdom-heavenly and earthly (or "devilish"). Each brings forth its characteristic fruitage. If there is truly a wise man among you, he says, let him demonstrate it by the Christian conduct it produces: good works, meekness, chastity, and a nature that is peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. These provide ample evidence of the heavenly source of the wisdom which is directing such a life.

On the other hand, if there is bitterness, envying, and strife in the heart, this is clear evidence that the wisdom producing it does not descend from above, but is "earthly, sensual, devilish." For where envying and strife abound, there will be tumult, works of evil, and unrighteousness. Since God is not the author of tumult and evil works, such wisdom stems from Satan and should be recognized as such.

This entire chapter (James 3) seems to be devoted to a discussion of proper and improper conduct, including the use of the tongue. Seen in this context, the expression wisdom from above identifies the source of the development of true Christian character and the manifestation of the fruits and graces of the spirit. The matter of doctrine, true or false, does not seem to be under discussion in this chapter at all. **CONCLUSION**

James 3:17, "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable," etc. is sometimes quoted as justification for employing a disputatious and combative spirit in defending the purity of the truth. It is believed that at all costs and by whatever means our doctrine must be defended from all encroachment of error. Certainly the desire to hold fast the doctrines of truth in their purity is a commendable one. But neither this text nor any other in the Bible gives us license to become overly combative in doing so, or to abandon the Christian standards of conduct governing all of our actions.

James tells us pointedly, in his summarizing verse of the entire chapter, that "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." Those who cast aside this standard on the grounds that it is justified by James 3:17 are to that extent lacking in the heavenly wisdom, which never produces bitterness, or tumult, or strife. To the contrary, the true wisdom is marked by purity of thought and conduct, and a nature that is peaceable, gentle, and easy to be approached.

Such a disposition will provide an atmosphere for open discussion of truth subjects without undue wrangling, bitterness, or fear of contamination by hearing opposing thoughts. And one directed by the heavenly wisdom need not, under any circumstances, resort to the methods of the Adversary to gain his ends. The means which are lawful and approved of God are quite sufficient for the Lord's people in their valiant defense of the truth, and these should be consistently adhered to. If this is done, the results may confidently be left in the Lord's hands.

"The servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men; skillful in teaching, patient of wrong, gently correcting those who put themselves in opposition; for perhaps God will give them a change of mind to a full knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25, composite translation).

- Charles Redeker