

Song of Solomon 1:1-8

Song of Solomon 1:2-4 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine, your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is perfume poured out; therefore the maidens love you. Draw me after you, let us make haste. The king has brought me into his chambers. We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you.

We have just one more bit of business to take care of before moving onto the actual study of the book of the Song of Solomon. We have been reading the book over the last couple of weeks and so we have been working with the question of "What does the book say?" in order to get to the next question, which is, "What does it mean?" The fact that we are aware of is that the Christian church and also the Jewish faith has traditionally seen the Song as a deeply spiritual book with a meaning that is more than what can be recognized as a result of a casual reading of the book.

Throughout the Bible, God has chosen to use metaphors rooted in human experience to express His experience of relationship with His people and our experience of that relationship as well. So we have the 23rd

Psalms and have learned to think of God as our shepherd and ourselves as His sheep. The metaphor teaches us about God's love and care and instructs us in the disciplines of trust and obedience.

The Temple sacrificial system represented the realities of human sin and failure and the means that God provided to atone, to make these failings right with Him. The sacrifices, properly offered carried a scent that was pleasant to the God who received them.

Reference was also made to God as the caretaker of the vineyard, the vineyard being the people of God. This metaphor often focused on the expectation that the vineyard would prove to be fruitful and the options the caretaker had when it was not fruitful as it should have been.

The temple served as the center of worship but the worship of God was to be personal and constant. The great commandment was that God's people were to love Him with heart and soul and mind and strength and as part of that they were to revere His word and to give constant attention to the word of God as spoken and written by Moses and by the prophets. His commandments were to be embraced and obeyed.

Allusion is made to each of these spiritual metaphors which were a part of Israel's natural language of worship in just the first few verses of the Song and again and again throughout the book. Words have definition and they also have connotation and the Song should be heard and sung in both ways.

Finally, these allusions are all found within a song that is about a loving relationship between a man and a woman. This has also served as a metaphor of the relationship between God and His people from Hosea to the Apostle Paul. In the Old Testament, God is often portrayed as the husband of an unfaithful wife. In the New Testament the church is the Bride of Christ and the Coming of Christ is the marriage feast of the bride (the church) and groom (Christ).

This is the primary metaphor of the Song and we would want to go so far as to say that the Song is meant to be just that, a metaphor of the relationship and intimacy that is intended by God to be the experience enjoyed between Himself and His people. Instructive for the Song is Eph. 5:32, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Is marriage instructive for the church or the church for marriage?