

Song of Solomon 4:8-5:1

Song of Solomon 4:16,5:1 Awake, O north wind, and come O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits. I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.

Our passage is considered by many to be the highest moment of the song. Beginning at 3:6 the poetry unveils the experience of the couple as they are wed and this portrayal reaches its climax with the consummation of the marriage in 5:1. The virginity of the woman is attributed to her personhood, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." The drama of the poem is in the effort that he makes to persuade her to welcome him into this garden. In the end, she does so and he eats and drinks deeply of her love. So the portrayal is of equals coming together in a mutually rewarding experience of love. This is the Biblical view of human sexuality and whenever the Bible is said to teach that women are inferior in some way to men it is misrepresented.

It is noteworthy that this passage is found in the middle of the book rather than at the end. We grow up with fairy tales that conclude with the subjects living happily ever after. Romantic movies have the same idea, the kiss is the end of the story and the ever after is assumed to be nothing but glorious bliss. In real life, the wedding and wedding night are just the beginning of the story rather than the end.

The poem is also full of allusions to the garden and the temple. Lebanon was the source for the cedars with which the temple was built. Milk and honey reference the promised land which was rich and blessed (like the garden). The artistry in the temple evoked memories of the garden of God in which God's presence was known and enjoyed by Adam and Eve when God walked with them in the cool of the day.

Imagine the experience of first man who awakens to life by means of the breath of God. He rises from the dust of the ground to discover the garden, full of plants and animals, perfect in every way. His first day is filled with the thrills of discovery with new surprises at every turn. But, might he have asked, "Who am I?" "What does this mean?" "Where did I come from and how did I get here?" Then, he heard a voice,

God's voice, in the cool of the day and they walked together for awhile. Adam asks and God answers. Creator and creature have met and they have communed together but this is not the end of the story but just the beginning.

A Jewish boy is taught the Scriptures and learns all about the stories of God and His chosen people. He is taught the commandments and learns to follow them so that He thinks first about what God wants and this directs his choices. Then at age 12 he enters the temple for the first time as an adult. He hears the law read from the scroll which is the Scripture. The artistry brings him back in mind and spirit to the garden and He hears God's voice of approval and assurance. This is the just the beginning of his journey, not the end of it.

A man approaches his pastor and wants to be baptized. The pastor asks, but do you know the Lord? Have you given your life to Christ? The pastor explains the gospel to his friend and then he prays the sinners prayer and is saved. Later, the church is gathered and hears the testimony of the new believer and witnesses his baptism. This is not the end or climax of his spiritual journey, it is just the beginning.