

I. Song of Songs: the importance of this poem

- A. In the generation in which the Lord returns, the Holy Spirit will emphasize the “Bridal Paradigm of the Kingdom” to His Church worldwide.
  1. Bridal Paradigm of the Kingdom: And it shall be, in that day,” Says the Lord, “*That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ And no longer call Me ‘My Master,’* (Hosea 2:16 NKJV).
    - a) Jesus is not just a King with Power, He is a Bridegroom with desire
    - b) Although there are paradigms of the Kingdom (servant-master, commander-army, creator-creature) that are right and biblical, they paradigms that have the greater emphasis are the family paradigms: God is our Father, and Jesus is our Bridegroom. If we primarily have a servant-master paradigm we will always evaluate our position before God based on our performance. Rather, Jesus would tell us, “<sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends,” (John 15:15).
  2. Most of the major “bridal” passages in the Bible are found in an end-time context. (Isa 62; Jer 3; Hos 2; Matt 22, 25; Eph 5; Rev 19, 22).
  3. I believe the Holy Spirit will emphasize the Song of Songs to His Church in the end-times so that we develop a history of trusting the Lord’s leadership through adversity like He is a loving husband fighting for His bride’s heart the whole time. Going deep in this Song will keep hearts unoffended at Jesus’ leadership both in present seasons of difficulty and through the coming end-time storm.

## II. Allegorical interpretation (Section adapted from Mike Bickle's notes)

*23But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24which things are symbolic [figurative in NIV; allegorically speaking in NASB]. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—25for this Hagar is Mount Sinai...and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—26but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

*(Gal. 4:23-26)*

- The allegorical interpretation has been used in different ways through history. Paul's treatment of the Hagar-Sarah story is translated as *symbolic* by the NKJV, as *figurative* by the NIV, and *allegorical* by the NASB.
- Paul's use of the Hagar-Sarah story in Galatians 4:21-31 is more figurative (typology) than allegorical. Paul's use of allegory differed greatly from Alexandrian allegory (first-century Philo, as well as third- and fourth-century Origen and Chrysostom).
- The Alexandrians used allegory in a way that ignored its historical context and meaning. In 1 Corinthians 9:9-10, Paul used an allegorical interpretation of the “muzzled ox” (Deut. 25:4) to apply to the full-time workers in the gospel receiving finances.
- An allegory is a fictional story with symbolic meaning, with no basis in historical facts. This type of an allegory is seen in the book, *The Chronicles of Narnia*.
- An allegory is a literary form where people or objects symbolically represent truths. Allegories illustrate truths to make them easier to understand. Our primary interpretation of Scripture must be

historical grammatical, taking the Scripture at face value. We approach the Scripture this way unless the Scripture indicates otherwise (Gal. 4:24; Jn. 15:1-6; Rev. 11:8; Isa. 5:1-7; Hos. 2:1-14; Ezek. 16; Dan. 7:2-8, 16).

- Allegorical interpretations are helpful if we only use them to illustrate truths that are clearly established throughout the New Testament.

A. I also find this commentator's thoughts to be helpful here: "Even so, with individual images or phrases it sometimes does seem that the text itself is prodding us to a theological reading; we are sometimes compelled to think, "The poet can hardly have written '...' without expecting hearers or readers to think of...." Of the intent of whoever definitively made Scripture of the Song, we can be more certain: they intended the Song to be about Israel and the Lord. Yet even here, as we have noted, there is no consensus about what individual passages say about Israel and the Lord. What can and must chiefly discipline our theological-allegorical proposals, is what we may call the *canon's* own intent for the Song. **That is, our discernments of a theological story for the overt story are—precisely historically!—appropriate if they fit the text's overt story and if they draw from, and are in accord with, the account of the Lord and his people told by the whole of Scripture.**" Mays, J. L. (2005). *Song of Songs* (p. 11). Louisville, KY: John Knox Press.

B. As we walk through this poem together I will seek to draw connections between the "overt story" (the portrayal of human characters in the poem) and the "allegorical story" (what the story is telling us about the relationship between Jesus and His bride).

III. Main hinderances that prevent many believers from interacting deeply with this poem.

- A. Literary style: we as westerners are accustomed to prose as a method of “getting a point across.”
- B. Sensual overtones: we tend to cringe at the thought of something so sensual describing the relationship between Jesus and His people
- C. A false sense of masculinity that precludes many men from being able to “own” the story of this poem for themselves.

#### IV. S.o.S. 1:1-4 (The Bride speaks in this section)

- A. Superlative tense - verse 1: “Song of songs,” “King of kings,” “Lord of lords,” “Vanity of vanities.”
- B. **“Kisses of His word”** - the “Targum” saw these kisses as the giving of the Law at Sinai, and even more it saw the poem, as a whole, as Israel’s story of betrothal to the Lord at the Exodus and her journey to consummation when she is one day everything the Lord meant for her to be. Indeed during Israel’s exile a permanent temple could not go with them, but the Torah could!
  - 1. “Bernard of Clairvaux, with most of the Christian tradition, read the woman as simultaneously the church and the believing soul, and the lover as Christ. With both the scene of Luke 7:36–50 and the Eucharist in mind, he wrote: ‘I cannot be at peace,’ she says, ‘unless he kisses me with the kiss of his mouth. I give thanks for the kiss of his feet, and for the kiss of his hand; but if he cares for me at all, let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth. I am not ungrateful, but I love. I have received more than I deserve ..., but less than I want. Desire moves me, not reason. Modesty indeed protests, but love conquers’ ” (Bernard, 9, 2). Mays, J. L. (2005). *Song of Songs* (p. 18). Louisville, KY: John Knox Press.
- C. **“For your love is better than wine”** I have this longing to experience more of God, because His love is better than earthly pleasures- better than even legitimate pleasures.
- D. **“Your name is (perfume) poured forth”**
- E. **“Draw me away”** - the section concludes with a pronouncement of longing to be near the king. The bride is infatuated with Him.

V. **Verse 4 continued:**

- A. (The daughters of Jerusalem speak) **“We will run after you”**
  - 1. The daughters in this poem allegorically represent spiritually immature believers looking to the Shulamite for answers about how to get close to the King. They are weak but sincere.
  - 2. Here they are provoked by the Shulamite to want to run after the King as well.
- B. (The Bride Speaks) **“The King has brought me into His chambers”**
  - 1. In the overt story there are sensual overtones here following the request for kisses, yet there lies something beneath this in the allegorical story. In its canonical intent, one cannot help but to think of the Lord here when reading about “the king” (Ps 22:28), yet, following the section describing the kinds of oils used to anoint, one cannot help but think specifically of Messiah, the eternal King of Israel. The chambers then invoke the Holy Place in the temple where God met privately with man.
- C. (The Daughters of Jerusalem Speak) **“We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine.”**
- D. (The Bride speaks) **“Rightly do they love you”**

VI. Verse 5-6 (The Bride still speaking) **“I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, Like the tents of Kedar, Like the curtains of Solomon.<sup>6</sup>Do not look upon me, because I am dark, Because the sun has tanned me. My mother’s sons were angry with me; They made me the keeper of the vineyards, But my own vineyard I have not kept.”**

- A. Dark as in sun-tanned; the context implies this since it seems to be the result of working outside. What seems so unattractive about this (in an ancient near-eastern culture) is that it signifies low social status. Yet here poem itself embraces what is not beautiful to the culture and compares with what is powerful (the tents of kedar- a strong and powerful nomadic tribe descended from Ishamel) and no less than the curtains of Solomon’s temple itself- the beauty of all Israel.

B. Poetically, there are strong tones of shame, self-disgust, and self-disqualification to be heard here. “My soul is dark,” “I am not beautiful,” “I’ve been beaten by the son,” “my family is angry with me, and I’m a failure.”

1. “I haven’t kept my vineyard” could even mean, given the overtones of the poem, I haven’t kept my body for the king. That’s why my brothers are angry with me and put me to work out in the vineyard.

C. Allegorically, these lines portray something powerful about how the Lord relates to the weak but sincere believer who is suffering from shame and self-disgust. You say you are dark, but I say you’re lovely!

VII. Verses 7-10: the Bride requests to know where to go to be cared for by the King and given a place to rest. The King responds, in the allegorical sense by exhorting the Bride to find herself among the flock, and even to feed ones in the flock more vulnerable than herself.

VIII. Verses 11-14: the Bride seeks out comfort in the King

IX. Verse 15: **Behold, you are beautiful, my love! Behold, you are beautiful! You have dove’s eyes.**

- A. Dove’s don’t have any peripheral vision and can only look at one thing at a time. Allegorically, the Lord is prophesying over His bride that she has undistracted devotion for Him. This is at a time when this kind of maturity is not yet true about her living condition. This is how Jesus leads us, He calls out our budding virtues.

X. Verses 16-17: the Bride praises the beauty of the King

XI. S.o.S 2:1 (Bride Speaks) **I am the rose of Sharon, And the lily of the valleys.**

- A. Verse 2 (King speaks) **Like a lily among thorns, So is my love among the daughters.**

XII. Verse 3 (Bride speaks) **“I sat down in His shade with great delight”**

- A. The allegorical story speaks here of the bride finding rest from her earlier inner conflict of shame and self-disgust. She was unworthy because she hadn’t kept her vineyard; she was unworthy because her brothers were angry with her; but now she rests in the shade of what is secure of what is already provided.

- B. I believe we should see the finished work of the cross in the allegory. The imagery of the tree, and certainly it is the work of the Cross that that is in mind when Jesus says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.<sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28-30 ESV).
- C. The place of rest is in what Christ has secured and provided by His work on the cross. We are tempted to relate to God on the basis of our own victories and failures: we have a good week and we feel confident before God, we have a bad week and we feel insecure before Him. The shade is provided by a tree that has been there long before you arrived! We are called to have dove’s eyes in this area as well! - That is a faithfulness and singleness of mind about our own standing before God and what He says about us. To have doves eyes rather than agreeing with our security before Him one minute and agreeing with condemnation the next.

XIII. Verses 4-7 is the Bride’s testimony to those who are more vulnerable than herself of the rest and freedom she has found in receiving the King’s love.