



SONG OF SOLOMON

DAVID CARTLEDGE

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ABOUT THE AURTHOR

David Cartledge

9th Sept 1940 – 24 Oct 2005

David Cartledge gave his life to the Lord at the age of 15 and three years later God called him to the ministry. He went to an Australian Bible College a year later (as a 19 year old) and graduated three years later. The following year he was married to Marie who stayed at his side, often sharing in the ministry work throughout his life.

For the first two years of his ministry David was an assistance pastor in Hobart, Tasmania. Then, in the following four years, David and Marie planted a Church in the relatively small country town of Devonport (also in Tasmania). After this, David pastored a Church in another small country town of Lithgow (in New South Wales).

In 1970, at the age of 30, David was called to pastor a Church in the growing city of Townsville (Queensland). In the 18 years he was there, the church saw incredible growth. David embraced the charismatic renewal, and the church was in revival! The meetings would go on until all hours of the night. At these meetings people were touched, miracles occurred and the church exploded.

As the church grew, David decided the church needed to buy land to build a larger facility so he purchased 92 acres of land on the outskirts of the city. On this property he started a Bible school and a Christian school, the first to be started by his Church denomination in Australia.

At the age of 37, David became a member of the Australian National Executive of his Church denomination and held a leadership position of this movement for 26 years.

As a leader within his Church movement, David's strategy was church planting. His determined, faith filled and systematic approach to implementing this strategy resulted in many churches being planted, initially in the state of Queensland, and then, partly as a result of his example and influence at a national level, throughout Australia.

At the age of 48, after growing the Townsville church from a few dozen to well over 1,000 people, and seeing through the building of a large auditorium, Bible College, and Christian School, David and Marie moved from Townsville to start a church with a small group of local people on the Gold Coast. Moving from such a large church (in Townsville) to start a new church would have been hard for someone who had "broken through" and overcome enormous challenges, but because God had spoken to him, he moved. It wasn't long before he had established a church on a main road close to Surface Paradise and saw it grow rapidly.

At the age of 53, the National Executive of David's Church movement asked him to become the President of the national Bible College just outside Sydney. He accepted and remained in that position for nine years. In that time he instituted many changes and improvements. He moved the College from Katoomba in the Blue Mountains to Chester Hill, much closer to the centre of Sydney. This move involved the miraculous purchase of a former large, Australian Defence Services property.

At the age of 62 David began travelling the world, inspiring churches to move into the prophetic and apostolic realm and went to be with the Lord a few years later. He had given his all and he left a legacy of a life of devotion and service to God. His wife Marie continues to serve the Lord and is a wonderful example of a mother (and Grandmother) for the family she and David raised together as they served in ministry.



"Our movement has been deeply impacted by David Cartledge. He is truly one of our greats. What David believed in, he believed in 100 per cent. Whatever he did, he did 100 per cent. He spoke fervently about faith, and lived so fervent by faith."

Brian Houston, Hillsong, Australia

INTRODUCTION

THE FALLING IN LOVE FALLACY

Before an adequate study of the Song of Solomon can be entered into, the question of how love occurs between two people must be examined. Unless a clear understanding of the factors which cause a man and a woman to love one another is established, there will be misinterpretation of this book - the theme of which is the love relationship between Christ and his Church.

For some centuries the world has been deluded by the spurious idea that love is some magical and mysterious effect generated by forces external to us. This mysterious power is believed to smite a person with an uncontrollable emotional stirring which completely cancels out the power of the will and diminishes human responsibility.

This idea that people "fall in love" is both a fallacy and a dangerous supposition which is part of the cause of many marriage failures. If people have love thrust on them by some outside force, then that love can also be taken away, i.e. They can just as easily fall out of love with their first partner, and be smitten with "love" for someone else. In this case, it is "fate" which is responsible.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN ROMANCE SYNDROME

A. Initially this was probably developed in Greek mythology. Certainly the idea was advanced that there was a god of love - EROS (from which the word erotic stems). This god of love was known by the Romans as Cupid (the word in Latin means "desire"). He is most often represented in art as carrying a bow and wearing a quiver of arrows, and the Greek idea of romance arises from the myth of Cupid and Psyche which appeared in the "metamorphoses" or "Golden Asp" of the Latin writer Lucius Apuleius in the Second Century AD.

The story concerns Psyche the youngest and most beautiful of three daughters of a King who aroused the jealousy of Venus the goddess of love and beauty. She sends her son Cupid - the god of love to strike Psyche with his arrows thus inspiring her with passion for the ugliest of mortals. Cupid, however, is caught in his own trap and "falls in love" with her himself. Eventually she appeases Venus' wrath - Jupiter, father of the gods grants her immortality and she is united with Cupid.

Amazing as it may seem, the whole of romantic culture has been built of mythical foundations such as that of Cupid - the unseen force which is enabled to fire his arrows of desire into the heart of a man or woman and thereafter control their destiny.

B. This idea of an outside force directing one's destiny is also the basis of belief in the horoscope. It is supposed that mysterious forces generated by the configuration of the stars control our fate - especially in the area of love and selections of one's marriage partner.

C. This romantic notion was further developed by the travelling Troubadours who flourished in Provence, Southern France and Northern Italy during the 12th and 13th Century. Their simple songs in the language of the common people instead of Latin, the literary language

of the middle Ages were filled with the theme of love and often "tragic love". They, like the Greek mythologists, attempted to create a world of fantasy to help people escape the harshness of their times, and the theme of romantic love was a perfect vehicle for this, being remote from harsh realities.

D. Shakespeare's plays often revolve around the theme of "tragic love". Romeo and Juliet is a classic example of the desires of that period i.e. An attempt to escape from the "arranged marriages" which were the basis of society for thousands of years.

E. In more modern times this emphasis on Romantic love has become more prominent as the Western World in particular has accepted these philosophies without question and "falling in love" (or out of it) has become a way of life. The Romantic Novel and the intrusion of Hollywood with its world of make believe has created an alternative reality for us. Most people accept this false premise of love as genuine, and often dissatisfaction is engendered in people because they attempt to measure their marriage and love relationship with their partner with the unreal lives of those portrayed on screen or in literature.

F. The modern romance ideology is based on the "critical mass theory". In modern physics the "critical mass" or the point where an uncontrolled chain-reaction resulting in a nuclear explosion is reached by exposing the proper proportions of radio-active materials to each other in a close enough proximity for the atoms of each part to bombard the atoms of the other part thus releasing their energy.

The romantic view of love expects that when "Mr Right & Miss Right" meet each other, it will be love at first sight. They will be swept off their feet with an uncontrollable emotion since they are fated for each other. Their destiny is already set. Cupid has been at work and they have now fallen in love. The attitude expressed in the marriage vows in so-called liberated weddings, i.e. "to live together as long as we both shall love", is the end result of this pernicious theory that love is an emotion stirred by forces external to us and outside our control.

2. THE BIBLE TEACHING OF "TRUE LOVE"

It needs to be understood that from earliest times marriages were not contracted between the young man and young woman on the basis of their feelings for each other. In most cases the marriages were arranged by the parents or a marriage broker often against the wishes of the parties to be married.

Isaac's bride was chosen for him by a servant. Eliezer was entrusted by Abraham with the responsibility of choosing a woman with the right heritage and qualities to be a fitting wife for his master's son. They did not even know each other or meet each other until the wedding night - **Gen. 24**. Jacob felt a deep desire for Rachel and contracted with her father for her hand in marriage in return for seven years labour on Laban's properties. However without even discussing the matter with Jacob, Leah the oldest sister was substituted for Rachel.

A. The Bible teaches that love is not merely a feeling, but an act of the will. **Eph. 5:25** shows us that love is more than a romantic stirring. It is a command. Paul made this declaration, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it", in the context of arranged marriages. Many, if not most, of these men were married to women they had not chosen themselves. Their families had set up the marriage and it is very likely that some men found themselves married to a woman who had little appeal to them. Yet the command is

absolute. The will, more than the emotions, is involved - at least, the action of the will must come first and then the feelings (i.e. romance) will follow.

Love has been accurately defined as "a sacrificial choice which seeks the highest and the best for the object of its affection".

B. We also note from **Eph. 5** that this love by an act of the will is required to be:

- a) Initiated by the husband
- b) Sacrificial - "even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it".
- c) An irrevocable union
 - i) "one flesh never to be divided"
 - ii) total identification with each other
 - iii) bone of each other's bone and flesh of each other's flesh.

C. Love is responsible - **1 Cor. 13:4-5** AMP teaches that love endures long and is patient and kind, is never envious, nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vain glorious, and does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited, arrogant or inflated with pride. It is not rude and does not act unbecomingly. Love does not insist on its own rights and its own way for it is not self-seeking, touchy, fretful or resentful. It takes no account of evil done to it, and pays no attention to a suffered wrong.

True love accepts the responsibility to become totally pleasing to and compatible with its partner.

D. The Song of Solomon shows that true love is inexhaustible and cannot be quenched by circumstances.

Song of Solomon 8:7.

3. FACTORS REQUIRED TO CHOOSE A PROPER LOVE RELATIONSHIP

Attraction.

Generally a couple are drawn to each other because of some pleasing aspect of the other person's appearance, personality or character. He or she may be handsome (or beautiful), witty, intelligent, dashing, exciting, or highly motivated, etc., and these aspects may have an effect on the other person arousing their interest. This is a valid place to start in the development of a relationship, but it is not enough to build a marriage on alone.

Availability.

The desired partner may have attractive qualities, but if they are already married, or have some other area of disqualification the desire will soon pass. Also we are generally only drawn to those in the circle of our acquaintances.

Responsiveness.

If the object of our affections does not respond to the initiatives within a reasonable period of time, the interest in them will wither and be replaced by a drawing towards someone who will respond.

Suitability.

This is a deliberate act of choice. A person may have facets of attractiveness, but still be entirely unsuited as a marriage partner, either ethnically, socially, educationally, or spiritually. It is important to centre the desires on a person who is in general areas compatible with you. This does not mean that the man and woman should be uniform.

There will be many great differences between them but there should be sufficient common ground for them to build a life together on. In this area spiritual compatibility cannot be overstressed.

Covenant.

When the selection process has finally achieved a good result in the choice of one's partner, it is necessary to seal that with a covenant that is unbreakable. This is the marriage vow. It establishes the permanence of the relationship and builds security into both the lives by giving guarantees of exclusivity. All others are now excluded as possible partners for all time.

The covenant has a cost to it. The strength of the covenant is loyalty and the cost of it is death. In other words, a true covenant means that either partner would, if necessary, lay down their lives for the other.

Surrender.

Following the commitment achieved in the covenant of marriage, the way is now prepared for the full expression of love between the partners. This finds its expression in the total surrender of each to the other - **Eph. 5:21**. A successful marriage is based on the surrender of selfishness for the benefit of the other. Marriage is giving and not just receiving. While authority and submission are important and the recognition of differing roles in the marriage union, there is a great need for there to be a mutual humility and a surrender of independence.

Intimacy.

On the basis of both covenant and surrender, a true intimacy can be achieved. The marriage can be consecrated and continually enjoyed as partners give themselves to each other with no reservations. A proper intimacy on this basis will serve to strengthen and promote the marriage relationship.

4. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

A. We choose to love God as we have established that love is choice and not a feeling alone, it becomes apparent that our relationship with God depends on our decisions rather than our emotions.

Those who wait for a wonderful feeling of love toward God to descend on them may never know the joys of an intimate relationship with the King. The Bible teaches us that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. **Mark 12:30**. This involves our choice process and it becomes a deliberate responsible act.

B. We learn to love God. Just as there is a process of drawing one to a full appreciation of the other partner which eventually leads to a full commitment, so we gradually learn to see the beauty of the Lord and to surrender to Him. We love Him because He has taken the initiative with us. **1 John 4:19**.

PREFACE

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK

1. The superior one

Solomon composed 1005 songs (**1 Kings, 4:32**), but this song is the superior one. It is called the Song of Songs or ultimate song and this is because of its special, but hidden theme. Solomon was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write truths which he did not understand himself - note **1 Peter 1:11-12, and Eph. 3:9**.

He was also the author of Ecclesiastes and the comparison and differences in these two books is significant. Ecclesiastes was written toward the end of Solomon's life after he had grown cold toward God through his many marriages to heathen women (**1 Kings 11:1,3**). He refers to the utter futility of attempting to gain satisfaction through knowledge alone, and calls it "Vanity of Vanities" compared to the "Song of Songs". These books compare the opposite extremities of human experience.

Ecclesiastes is a book about the Old Nature, while the Song of Solomon is about the New Creation.

Ecclesiastes talks about "all things under the sun" but the Song speaks of all things in the Son.

Ecclesiastes is a book of wandering. The endless search of the soul for significance in an apparently meaningless existence.

The Song of Songs is about rest - the true rest of having found the heart's desire, and having no further need to search for meaning.

True fulfillment comes not in acquiring knowledge for its own sake, but in loving, being loved, and achieving the highest approval of our lover.

2. The greatest song however is the Song of Solomon.

Jewish tradition recorded in the Talmud says that there are 10 songs in God's dealings with His people. The first is the song of Adam when he heard God's promise of redemption, and the last is the song of the saints on seeing the glories of heaven. The greatest song however is the Song of Solomon.

3. Under 30 were forbidden to read

Those under 30 were forbidden to read it by the Rabbis as it was considered to be only comprehensible to mature people. Its teaching is for those who are maturing spiritually. Frank language is used throughout this song but it is never rude or crude. It must be read with an appreciation of Eastern culture which is very explicit without being obscene. True love is neither sensual or prudish, but is a total openness and full surrender of two people to each other. Though various parts of human anatomy normally not mentioned in public are referred to, it is only that their typological significance can be seen, and not to give rise to indecency.

4. Based on an actual incident

The book is most likely based on an actual incident. Dr. H.A. Ironside maintains that she was of an Ephraimite family whose father was dead and the children were raised by the mother (**1:6**). They apparently worked in one of Solomon's vineyards (**8:11 and 1:6**). There were probably at least two sons and two daughters for the Shulamite had a "little sister", (**8:8**; and "my mother's

children" in Hebrew is "my mother's sons") and it is possible from the attitudes expressed that they were her half brothers and the Shulamite was the Cinderella of the family. While working in Solomon's vineyard one day she sees him for the first time and from then on he, instead of his work, gives her meaning for her existence.

5. The Shulamite

The other main idea of this book is that the Shulamite loved a local Shepherd but was abducted by Solomon for his harem. This theory completely destroys any typical teaching of the book, and was developed by Heinrich von Ewald, a German theologian of the 19th Century. He could be called the father of Higher Criticism, or liberal theology.

6. Not "apparently" a religious book

In any event, the book is unusual in many respects. It is not "apparently" a religious book. There is no mention of God, salvation, justification, faith, redemption, holiness, prophecy, the first or second coming of Christ, sin, etc. However, these things and many other truths are "hidden" in the book. It is an allegory of truth, and its interpretation depends on the Parabolic Principle. Jesus employed this in telling His parables. **Matt. 13:11** shows that He told the parables not as simple stories to illustrate truth, but to conceal it so that only those who would earnestly seek for it could find it.

7. The Song of Songs which is Solomon's

This book is called "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's". This love song is initiated by the King to woo us to Himself. He is the one who first loved us (**1 John 4:19**), and who takes the initiative in drawing us to Himself. The issue is not really our search after Him, but His search for true worshippers - **John 4:24**.

8. A Love Song

The book is called a song. It is in fact a love song. There is a strong connection between worship and singing. Both the personality and spirit of man are able to be released to God in singing. It is a wonderful vehicle for expressing the inner-most aspirations of the heart.

10. "Solomon" and "the King" are typical of Christ

Throughout these studies whether it is stated or not, references to "Solomon" and "the King" are typical of Christ; and references to "the Shulamite", "the woman", "the spouse", "the bride", etc., are typical of the Church or individual believers.

11. Song of Solomon is the ultimate Song

a) While the Song of Solomon is the ultimate Song, it relates to other ultimate expressions in God, i.e. the Holy of Holies, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, etc.

b) In this respect it is also a book of progressions. The Holy of Holies has much typological teaching which relates closely to the Song of Songs. In fact, they are necessary to each other in order to be able to fully interpret both.

As the Holy of Holies could only be reached by going through the Outer Court and the Holy Place, the expression of love in the Song of Songs shows progressive development and maturity of love in order to reach its ultimate.

12. The "hidden theme" of this book is a revelation of the ultimate relationship between Christ and His Church.

It is His goal to transform His people from believers or servants to His lovers. Those who will worship him not out of duty, fear, need or ulterior motive, but out of uninhibited and unselfish love.

Eph. 5:21-32 shows that Christ is seeking to make a bride by transforming His people into His own image and likeness. It is His desire to wean us away from other interests to bring us to a face meeting with Himself in the excluding confines of the Holy of Holies. He also seeks the pure produce of that intimate love between Himself and His people - true holiness and worship in spirit and in truth.

13. The typical teaching of the book does not start at salvation. At the beginning of chapter one there is the assumption that this has already occurred. The Shulamite is a member of Israel and therefore is in the "Kingdom" of Solomon. She is already at "work" in the vineyards and so is involved in service to the King. However, she does not have a love relationship with the King. She subsequently comes into a new "revelation" or appreciation of the King and as a result of this begins to discover how to love Him rather than to merely serve Him. It was this "revelation" of God which changed Job's situation, enabled him to pray for his friends and brought an end to his bondage. He said, "I have heard of you with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you" (**Job. 42:5**).

The Queen of Sheba is a further example of the change that occurs in us when a fuller "revelation" of Christ comes to us. She had heard of the wisdom and acts of Solomon and was intrigued with him, but when she saw him, her heart melted and there was no strength left in her - **2 Chron. 9:1-6**.

We can tend to take Jesus for granted at a distance, but when we really "see" Him, our hearts will be overwhelmed. His glory is beyond description and the very revelation of His glory changes us - **Ex. 33:17-20 cp 2 Cor. 3:18**.

The Shulamite has already experienced some growth in her life. The book begins at a point of change in her. She "sees" the King and from that point on there is a total change in her desires.

The biological change that takes place in us at puberty is akin to the change that can and does take place in us after we are saved. When this change in our body takes place, there is a resulting change of desires, preparing us eventually for marriage. It prepares us for love. In the same way, the believer is being changed from one "saved" and "serving" to one "loving".

14. a) King David is a type of Christ in conflict and conquest. He pictures Jesus overthrowing the power of Satan and bringing freedom to humanity.

Solomon depicts Christ as the Prince of Peace - reigning over His people and seeking to share His throne with them.

b) Jonathan loved David for what he did, but the Shulamite came to love Solomon for what he was. It is possible for us to appreciate the victory, power, and gifts of Jesus to His Church, and yet to lack a deep personal relationship with Him. He seeks to get us seeing beyond anything he does for us to what He is, and to love Him for Himself alone.

An allegorical story has been told which well illustrates this point. It is as follows:

"Two neighbouring countries had experienced tensions due to the belligerence of one of them. The King of the other country in a conciliatory move sent his only son to negotiate better relationships between these estranged countries.

The belligerent leaders decided to hold a welcome banquet for the Prince during which they would present him with magnificent gifts. Since his baggage had been searched they knew that he would not be able to respond in kind, and thus he and his country would be embarrassed as "cheap skates".

The banquet was held and the gifts presented. At the appropriate time the Prince presented to the rival King an envelope containing the promise in his father's own handwriting, "the bearer may have whatsoever he or she desires upon demand".

The belligerent King flew into a rage, threw the paper on the floor and declared that the prince and his father had attempted to shame his country. The prince fled for his life.

Some days later, three old hags were searching for food at the city dump when one of them discovered the paper containing the King's promise. Filled with delight at their good-fortune, they decided to test its validity and make the journey to the neighbouring state.

They became progressively overwhelmed at the opulence and magnificence of all they saw in this Kingdom. The people were joyful and every need was provided. On arriving at the capital city their amazement knew no bounds to see the perfection and beauty of the city. Those who lived within its glittering walls were a privileged people to say the least.

On their arrival at the palace they were breathless at its beauty, and the serenity and gracious state of its servants were beyond description.

Producing the King's handwritten promise caused them to be ushered into the King's audience chamber whereupon the King asked what they had come for.

They produced the paper and the King agreed it was his promise and would be fully honoured.

The first hag spoke up and said, "O King, if only I could be allowed to live in your city, my highest desires would be fulfilled".

"Take them away, clean them up, give them new garments and provide the best quarters available in the city for them", said the King.

"Just a moment O King," said the second hag, "That is what she wants, but I desire something different".

"Well what then?" said the King.

She said, "I am overwhelmed by the beauty of your servants and their significant ministry in your presence, seeing you from time to time. I desire to live in your sanctuary as one of your closest servants".

"Do as she asks," the King said to his aids. "Now take them away".

Then the third hag spoke up, "O King, that is not my desire and you promised in your covenant that we have whatsoever we desire upon demand".

"Then what is your desire?" said the King.

She said, "The first one wants to settle in the city, and the second wants to serve in the sanctuary, but I want the Son. For if I have Him, I have everything."

And it was done to her as she desired."

This simple parable illustrates that in our relationship with God it is all too easy to settle for merely living in His Kingdom (the city) or being involved in His service (the sanctuary), instead of pressing in beyond those things for an intimate relationship with the Lord Himself. He seeks those who will seek after Him with all their heart.

The Key to the Book.

This is found in **Chapter 4:8**, when we see the Bride prepared for and entering into the King's ministry.

Divisions of the Book.

- A. Chap. 1:2 - 2:7 - Love's Relationship Launched
- B. Chap. 2:8 - 3:5 - Love's Relationship Lost
- C. Chap. 3:6 - 5:1 - Love's Purpose Revealed
- D. Chap. 5:2 - 7:13 - Love's Power to Restore
- E. Chap. 8:1 - 8:14 - Love's Objective Realised

SECTION ONE

LOVE'S RELATIONSHIP LAUNCHED

Chapter 1:2 - 2:7

This part of the book describes the new believer already engaged in spiritual activity, coming to an overwhelming discovery of the intimate love relationship which is possible between the believer and Christ. The first step in Initial Love is "fervent desire", and it is this which is called the "first love" (**Rev. 2:4**), or the "proto-type". The burning passion for the Lord Himself sets the stage for an ongoing love relationship instead of the drag and grind of duty. This "first love" with the Lord is generally uplifting rather than challenging. Marriage leads to confrontation and change, but courtship is non-confrontational and concentrates on blessing.

This "first love" is often emotional mixed with spiritual, and is based on needs met or blessings imparted by the Lord. This level of relationship is generally self-oriented in the sense that the degree of blessing the believer is receiving determines the response to the Lord.

There are great heights of experience with the Lord with the associated blessings and impartations. Unfortunately at this stage of the Bride's development, these often give way to serious defections from the Lord and tremendous disappointments. These first experiences of love are not deep enough to live on and a more satisfactory basis for an abiding and fulfilling love must be found. However, with characteristic grace and understanding the King accommodates Himself to the woman's weakness and accepts her where she is. He stoops to her level and begins the love relationship at the point of her need and desire, but continually seeks to lead her to a greater capacity for His love and a higher level of both response and responsibility. If we waited for full maturity before loving the Lord, we would not draw near to Him. It is the love relationship with Him that matures us as marriage works maturity in us in the natural sense.

1:2 (a) - "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"

While working in Solomon's vineyard, the Shulamite sees Him for perhaps the first time and His magnificence and majesty overwhelms her. She can no longer settle for mere activity in the Kingdom. Her heart's desire is set on a personal and intimate relationship with the King. She is "pressing in" for something more than mere duty or basic salvation. Her heart is aroused to love. The routines of religious exercise can never satisfy if we have seen the King in His beauty - **Ps. 45:1-8**.

Her desire for the kisses of His mouth suggests both the need for a response from the King which will signal his acceptance of her, and her desire for an ongoing relationship.

Various kisses are referred to in scripture:

- a) Judas' traitorous kiss upon the cheek - this is the kiss of divided interests. **Is. 29:13** - "worship with lips, but the heart is far from God".
- b) The Prodigal Son receives the Father's kiss of forgiveness upon the neck
- this is the kiss of restored relationship.
- c) Mary's kiss on the feet - this is the kiss of self-abnegation. She did not feel worthy to look Him in the eyes. While her humility is admirable, a real love relationship cannot develop while she is

in the servant's mode. The Shulamite has been at this stage, at service in the vineyards, but she longs for more. Jesus said, "I call you not servants, but I call you friends" (**John 15:15**). In order for there to be a successful relationship between the Lord and His Church, we must rise to the fullness of His stature (**Eph. 4:13**), so that we have a true compatibility - Note also **Eph. 5:27**.

d) The Holy Kiss (**1 Thess. 5:26**) - this is the kiss of general fellowship, but it does not indicate more than a group acceptance.

e) The kiss is a picture of the revelation of Christ to us which builds our relationship with Him. When Joseph (a type of Christ) revealed himself to his brethren, he kissed them (**Gen. 45:15**).

The kisses which the Shulamite desires, however, is the kiss of love - the intimate kiss of mouth to mouth which:

i) seals the choice of each other

ii) excludes all other relationships - this kiss cannot be given to a multitude at once. It is by its very nature exclusive and is parallel to commitment.

iii) reveals the true feelings of one for the other. The kiss conveys whether there is desire or reservation in either partner

iv) indicates the desire for eventual and total fulfilment of the love both expressed and promised by the kiss.

The revelation of the King stimulated the desire of the Shulamite for an even deeper and exclusive relationship of Him.

When Mary Magdalene sought Jesus at the Garden Tomb, she said to the man she assumed was the gardener, "Where have you taken Him?" (**John 20:15**). For Mary there was only one Him! Her love for Jesus excluded all other relationships and completely separated her from the illicit relationships of her past. She experienced the expulsive power of a new affection.

Like the Queen of Sheba they came from all Kingdoms to see Solomon, but this servant girl - the sun blackened Shulamite dared to enter into an intimate relationship with him. She pressed in beyond others. Like Bartimaeus (**Mark 10:46**) she refused to be refused or distracted by the crowd around her who were content to be part of the Kingdom, but did not desire the King for himself alone.

1:2(b) - "for your love is better than wine"

Love between humanity and God is the highest form of relationship and has within itself a satisfaction and a stimulation that cannot be found in "natural" stimulants. Wine is a temporary stimulant but the Shulamite is longing for a permanent relationship.

Even in our Christian life with the Lord, there is a need to progress beyond basic levels of relationship. John 4:24 says that the Father is seeking people to worship in spirit and truth. Praise is valid and necessary, and it is the means whereby we enter into the King's Court (**Ps. 100:4**). The intimate and exclusive place of love is the Most Holy Place and this is the relationship. In the Most Holy Place the only light is God's light, the only voice is His voice, and the only seat is His throne.

This love is better than anything He does for us - better than any blessing or gift. Wine speaks of the Holy Spirit's stimulus. While the Gifts of the Spirit are important and essential, they cannot substitute for a genuine love relationship with the King and in fact they will only find their best expression as a result of loving God.

The original language shows that the word "love" in this verse is actually plural and suggests that God has a wonderful variety in the expression of His love to us.

In order for that love to be effective it must have an excluding quality. Other things take a lesser priority than the development of our relationship with Jesus. Even His work, or His blessings to us must never take precedence over Him. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" He had just given Peter a miraculous catch of fish and wanted to know if He was more important to Peter than the things He did. (**John 21:15**)

1:3 (a) - "(Because of the) savour of your good ointments your name is as ointment poured forth"

The ointments of the King are both fragrant and dominating. In His presence the odour of His ointments cancel out any smell, including the work stained coarseness of the Shulamite. The presence of the Lord has a particular effect about it which tends to saturate those who have been in His presence so that they exude the same qualities.

An odour generated by such ointments is discernable before the person is, and may be smelt before the person wearing them can be seen. The Shulamite discovers that the King's ointments and their ability to overpower negative odours are really a manifestation of what the King is as a person. It is characteristic of the King to take a person naturally disqualified as the Shulamite is, and to transform them by His love which is better than wine, just as His ointments negate the bad odours of her unprepared state. In this sense His actions and His Name are synonymous.

The name "Jesus" means "He shall save His people from their sins". His Name is an ointment poured forth to deal with humanity's offensiveness. His name, Jesus, (& Emmanuel - God with us) has been poured forth from heaven. It did not originate on earth. **Matt. 1:20-23**. The pouring forth of His name also relates to His redemptive work for the human race, for He "poured forth" His soul unto death. **Is. 53:12**.

The ointments referred to in this verse of the Song are identified in Ps. 45:7-8 - myrrh, aloes and cassia, and were received by Jesus because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. His Name and nature are synonymous. He will save from sin, but He hates sin Himself & there is in Jesus, a correspondence between His power and character.

Myrrh is most often associated with death. Jesus received it as a gift from the wise men (**Matt. 2:11**) showing that he was born to die.

Aloes was often used in embalming the dead, and it also has a powerful effect as an insect repellent. It drives away those things which attack humans & bear disease.

Cassia was used in incense and forms part of the Old Testament way of worship to God. Jesus' submission to drink the cup of the world's iniquity and thus surrender his will to the Father (**Lk. 22:42**), and the extension of his hands on the cross were acts of worship to the Father - **Ps. 141:2**

His death and burial are vital components of the redemptive plan of God. Jesus is our anointed High Priest. He is the Balm of Gilead. He has ointment for our spiritual and physical wounds, and since all of his power for the human race is now in His Name, it has become as ointment poured forth.

The Shulamite discovers that Solomon's name is a revelation of what he is. His ointments are so recognisable that the very mention of His Name immediately evokes a remembrance of the savour of His good ointments.

The name "Christ" means "anointed". He is the head of the Church who has been exalted and received this special name, together with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for His people - **Acts. 2:33**. He is the only source of this anointing for us and this is another reason why His name is as ointment poured forth. By the power of the Holy Spirit and the use of His Name, we are enabled to produce the effects of what He is, and His good ointments are revealed in this. Since His name is above every other name, His ointments are without comparison.

The Christian really has more than mere "power of attorney" to use His name. Like the Shulamite we have entered into a marriage relationship with the King and are actually partakers of His Name. His Name is poured forth upon us and not restrained for a special group in the Church. The newest and weakest child of God has access to the authority and blessings of His Name.

1:3 (b) - "therefore do the virgins love thee"

Psalms 45:13-15 tells us that the "virgins" shall be brought unto the King. The pure in heart shall see God - **Matt. 5:8**. Those with pure desires for God will respond to the fragrance of His outpoured ointments and will love Him. Those who are pure in heart will be drawn to Jesus because of what He is. There is often a reason why people get caught in cults or apostate religion. Sometimes the motive of their spiritual search is not to please God but themselves. Note 1 **Cor. 1:22** - "The Greeks seek after wisdom and the Jews require a sign".

The word "virgins" also means "hidden ones" (**Ps. 83:3**). Those who seek after God become cut off from the world. Their lives are identified with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection (**Rom. 6:4**) and are hid with Him in God (**Col. 3:3**). There is an exclusive quality to walking with God - the former companions and interests no longer have anything in common with a "hidden one". This hidden aspect of the God seeker's life is manifested in the personal prayer relationship. While there is a time for corporate prayer, there must be a time each day to seek God where not even the closest friend may intrude. Jesus said that this needed to be done in secret - **Matt. 6:6**. This is analogous to the marriage relationship where husband and wife are able to share and commune together without close friends or even family intruding, just as the kisses of His mouth (**v. 1**) cannot be shared with a group. To be a virgin or hidden one is to have a one to one relationship with the King. Some are satisfied with or never go beyond a congregational worship relationship, but the hidden ones are shut in with God alone in the secret place.

However, the virgins (in verse 3) are plural. To walk with God is not to walk alone. It simply means that a change of emphasis in our lives will produce a change of companions. Elijah thought he was alone, but God had others who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and these were "hidden ones" **1 Kings. 18:4 and 19:18**.

1:4 (a) - "Draw me and we will run after you".

The Shulamite, having experienced the excluding and stimulating nature of His kiss and the power and beauty of His name, desires to go further in her relationship with the King. So far the King has not spoken and she realises that this time of courtship leaves all the initiative for the development of the relationship to Him so she asks to be drawn closer.

Only the King can draw us. Jesus said, "No man cometh to me except the Father draw him" (**Jn. 6:44**). Some teach that the things of God are totally at our initiative. All we need to do is confess positively or exercise various techniques and we will get what we want, however we must grasp early in our relationship with the Lord that He is sovereign and can do with us as He will. He is the potter and we are the clay. **Is. 45:9-10, and 64:8, Jer. 18:6, and Rom. 9:21.**

There are many other things in life which can "draw" us - ambition, materialism, pleasure, etc. She knows that we become what we submit to and seeks the expulsive power of a new affection. At this point only one thing is of importance to her - to be drawn into an intimate relationship with the King. Even in Christian life there can be aspects of Jesus' ministry which initially attract us, and this is both understandable and permissible as long as the end result is to transfer our affections from the things He does to what He is.

Some of the drawing powers of the Lord are similar to stages of human love relationships:

a) Physical attractiveness - His ministry to us at the level of the body through healing or physical sensation attracts our attention.

b) Gifts - the impartation of the Holy Spirit and the nine Gifts of the Spirit is another attraction. A gift indicates to the recipient that the giver has an interest in her.

c) Presence - Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always". The awareness of His personal presence not only draws us from the world but also tends to wean us from His blessings to Himself. His presence becomes the most powerful aspect of the whole relationship. Moses cried out, "If your presence doesn't go with me, I do not want to go" (**Ex. 33:15**).

d) Fulfilment - when in the presence of the King we feel totally fulfilled. Our deepest needs are met. He makes us to be "whole" people.

e) Words - His communication to us is largely through His words. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow (are drawn after) me" **John 10:27**. "To whom else shall we go, you have the words of eternal life" - **John 6:68**. To a person in love, the voice of their loved one is the sweetest sound in the world.

The Shulamite here expresses her first commitment - "draw me and we will ..." This is the expression that is made in the marriage vows - "I will". It indicates the surrender of one person to the one loved. True love requires more than the reception of blessings and an interest in the other person. While these things may lay the foundations of the relationship, there is a point where no progress can be made until there is a commitment - a surrender of the will.

The Shulamite unfolds a powerful principle of true love for God. She says that if she is drawn "we" will run. This plural word indicates that if she comes under the influence of the King this will generate such an effect in her that others will also follow Him. Real love for God is the foundation of true evangelism and not some humanly motivated programme. **Matt. 22:37-38.**

Shows us that the result of union with God is to love ones' fellow men. The woman who met Jesus at the well of Samaria immediately seeks to draw others to Him. **John 4:29**.

The result of being drawn to the King will be swift progress. The Shulamite says, "we will run after you". This is a reference to the way God intends to do His quick work in righteousness in the End-time Church.

The running expresses that once the King has drawn us, there will be an increase in our desire for Him and a sense of urgency to fulfill that desire for God.

It also shows us that His drawing power will generate pursuing power in us. We can run faster than we can run when the hand of the Lord is upon us. **1 Kings. 18:46**.

Maturity in God does not depend on time elapsed, but on progress. It can be swift or slow, depending on our desire and decisions - "we will run".

In order for that "run" to be effective:

a) every distraction or interference needs to be discarded - **Heb. 12:1**.

b) other people may wish to side-track us from our purpose to seek the King - **Gal. 5:7**. They must be avoided or refused.

c) Discipline and determination will be needed. Personal areas and the natural desires must be carefully controlled so that we may achieve the goal - **1 Cor. 9:24-27, Phil. 2:15-16**.

d) There are times when patience will be needed. The runner may not always be in sight of the goals - **Heb. 12:1**.

The drawing power of the Lord to change our way of living and motivations is seen in **Ps. 119:32** (Amp) - "I will not merely walk, but run in the way of your commandments when you give me a heart that is willing". This is the greatest requirement for a true relationship with the King. We need to seek God and have a willing heart - one sensitive to His plans and priorities. Another translation says "enlarged heart" and suggests that in order to run after Him we need an increase in our spiritual capacity.

1:4 (b) - "the king hath brought me into his chambers"

This is the first time that the "King" is referred to by any title, and it shows us that the development of love between us and the King leads to submission to His Lordship. The King is the absolute authority.

It also shows us that this intimate relationship brings about a revelation of the King. We see Him exalted when we see Him through the eyes of love. In the previous part of the verse, the Shulamite had asked to be drawn and this is swiftly answered. The King brings her into His chambers. Entry cannot be forced. It depends upon us being drawn by Him. Our responsibility is to wait on the Lord, seek Him, desire Him, and develop a willing heart, and He will bring us into the chambers which are the King's most private suite in the palace and refer to the "secret place" of **Ps. 91:1**. They are plural and speak of the Holy Place and Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle or Temple. Only the High Priest was permitted to enter into the Most Holy Place and only as He was summoned by God do so. We see in the Tabernacle the progressively

excluding nature of a relationship with God. Any Israelite could enter the Outer Court to offer his sacrifices as he needed or desired to. Any priest could enter into the Holy Place to perform his service, but only when he was rostered to do so. The High Priest alone could go into the Most Holy Place.

The further we go with God, the more we are closed in with Him and the more restricted our options. The access to a new level of spiritual experience is totally at the initiative of the King, but is granted to those with a hunger for Him. We cannot force our way into God by techniques or carnal methods. He does not have to, and will not, respond to anything but His own ways. Nadab and Abihu tried to force God to accept their own means of entry to the Holy Place, but died doing it. **Num. 3:4**. Only those washed and prepared as Esther was may come in. **Esther 2**.

The chambers in scripture are connected with the bridegroom. **Joel 2:16, & Ps. 19:5**. The King is revealed as the Bridegroom, married to His spouse who has earnestly desired Him and sought to be drawn close to Him. This relationship, while available to every believer, is hid from those who do not seek after Him. He may be seen as King, but never known as Bridegroom. God will not permit those unprepared for His glory to proceed. **Ex. 33:18-23, Heb. 6:3**.

These chambers are called the "treasure house" in **Nehemiah 10:37-38**, where the corn, wine and oil were to be stored. Corn is a type of the "Word of God", wine symbolises joy and oil stands for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. These elements of a Christian life are available in full measure through a secret place relationship.

We enter His gates with Thanksgiving - this is for what He does, and we enter His courts with praise for what He is, but the Most Holy Place is only entered in love as we are one spirit with God. This is for His benefit alone and is true worship - **John 4:24** - "The father seeks such to worship Him".

1:4 (c)- "we will be glad and rejoice in you, we will remember your love more than wine: the upright love you"

Three elements have emerged in the first part of this book - love, the King's drawing or bringing her in, and rejoicing, which is a natural product of the first two things.

Rejoicing is an essential component of a true relationship with God. Lifeless and formal religion is a false and devastating substitute for vibrant faith expressed in praise, singing, clapping, dancing, etc.

Ps. 16:11 declares that in His presence is fullness of joy. It is impossible to have a manifestation of the King's presence without there being an overflow of the human personality.

This joy is a "secret place" experience. The first time rejoicing occurs it is in connection with the King's chambers.

Once again we see that the effect of the King on the Shulamite is transferred to many others. "The King has brought me in - we will rejoice". The overflow of joy in the King's presence is infectious and imparted to others in exuberant evangelism. The bride has a proper balance of Spiritual life at this point. She is pressing in for all she can receive herself, but is not seeking it for herself alone. She is moved by the need of others also, and has not become super-spiritual or selfishly motivated. She says, "we will remember your love more than wine".

Jesus told us to remember His death, which is literally the expression of His love for us. The communion is intended to keep His love fresh in our lives. The scripture also tells us to remember all the way the Lord has led us and not to remove the ancient landmarks. (**Deut. 8:2, and Prov. 22:28**) His acts in the past form the basis for our love for Him to be expressed.

This remembrance promotes a further release of love toward the King in those who are upright. Those with a true heart are the type of people who will respond to God and seek a secret place relationship with Him. In-verse 3 they are called virgins or hidden ones, now they are termed upright. The phrase can be translated, "they will love thee uprightly". This shows the motives of those who earnestly seek Him. They want the result of it to be for His glory alone.

1:5-6 (a) - "Look not upon me, because I am black"

Soon after being brought by the King into the Bridegroom's chamber, the Shulamite is seen outside again. She has reacted to what she has seen in that glorious place. Her own image has been reflected in the mirrored walls and she doesn't like what she sees. The Tabernacle was lined with golden boards which reflected the light of the lampstand in the Holy Place, or the Shekinah glory of God in the Most Holy Place. The closer we get to God and the more we know of Him, the more we also know of ourselves. Initially, and until we can learn to see ourselves as the King sees us, it can often be a disturbing thing to come before His glory. We feel so exposed and unworthy because the memory of our past life is still with us, even though we have been forgiven and cleansed. The Shulamite is here facing the struggle with condemnation common to every believer.

She sees herself in the mirror and feels so out of place. Just a short time ago she was a toil stained and begrimed vineyard labourer. She blurts out, "I am black. I am like the tents of Kedar (which are made of black goats hair)". The King takes up the reply. This is the first time in the book that He has spoken and it is significant that it is over this issue. He is bringing her a revelation of her new nature and total identification with Him. As far as our redemption is concerned and the effectiveness of a whole spiritual life, this truth is essential. He says, "But you are comely (or beautiful). You are like the curtains of Solomon".

These curtains of Solomon's Temple were of fine twined linen which is a type of the righteousness of the saints. **Rev. 19:8**. The King declares to us when we are overcome with unworthiness, "You are clothed in my righteousness and your sins and iniquities are remembered no more". We must learn to see ourselves as God sees us and accept the total power of Jesus' blood to cleanse us from all sin and impurity. God completely accepts us and we negate this unless we can accept ourselves.

The King also addresses His acceptance of the Shulamite to a group called "the daughters of Jerusalem", and He uses her as an example to them. This group is identified by **Galatians 4:26**. Jerusalem from above is the mother of us all, so these are within the Kingdom of God, but they are uncommitted. They lack the qualities of desire which caused the Bride to be drawn into the King's chambers. They are those who bring forth limited fruit - 30 fold, and 60 fold, but never go all the way with God - **Matt. 13:8**.

Despite the King's commendation of her, the Shulamite is unable to accept her state of acceptance and she answers, "Look not on me, for I am black because the sun has looked upon me". In other words, she was sunburned. This has occurred during her work in the vineyards

prior to meeting the King and pursuing Him. However it is not a fault with her new nature. It is only a surface problem. Sunburn can only be avoided in one way - stay out of the sun!

This is a vital element of Christian victory - "flee from evil". Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". We must never voluntarily expose ourselves to situations which will "burn us" or create problems in our relationship with the Lord. The company we keep effects the way we live - "evil communications corrupt good manners" - **1 Cor. 15:33**.

Sometimes our contact with the world is unavoidable and there is a resulting sunburning of our exterior. Jesus said to Peter (John 13), "He that is clean only needs to wash his feet (where there has been contact with the world); and he is completely clean." When we are "sunburnt" we need only to avoid the sun, and stay in the King's chambers and the skin will return to normal.

The Shulamite has left this place of safety and restoration under a compulsion to try and buy the King's favour through works.

1:6 (b) - "My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept".

The next we see of her is working in the vineyards again. In order to try and stifle the feelings of unworthiness and inadequacy to be the Bride of the King, she has reverted to the things she knows best - self satisfaction through achievement and involvement. However these works are not necessarily of advantage to the King, but are an end in themselves and merely puff up the flesh nature. The foundations of our relationship with the King depend on faith. Unless we can accept His mercy and redemptive work for us, there will always be a flaw in our association with Him and we will be motivated to live out of human effort or experience rather than the restoring and releasing power of His love.

Part of the reason why she is back working in the vineyards is because of the attitude of "her mother's children". Her relationship with the King had been an acute embarrassment to them. They were angry with her. The depth of her desire and devotion had shown up their carnality and immaturity. It is usual for those who are static in spiritual growth, or have a mixed relationship with God, to persecute those whose relationship is unquestionable. Note Ishmael and Isaac - **Gen. 21:9**.

They are called "children" - note **1 Cor. 3:1**. A child is not ready for a Bride relationship. Rather than be inspired to grow or improve their response to the King, these children successfully reduce the Shulamite to their level. This is the regular pattern of religion. This religious duty is designed to keep her in check by making her too busy as keeper of the vineyards to pursue Solomon. It replaces relationship with flesh-satisfying activity and makes captives of those who wish to press into a deeper relationship with God.

The subtlety of this religious duty is that it was a promotion from a mere vineyard worker, to being in charge. Every activity in the church needs to be carefully weighed in terms of its end result. Will it promote me or my relationship with Jesus. This promotion to "keeper of the vineyards" was an appeal to her vanity and successfully enticed her to abandon relationship for career.

These "children" are correctly translated "my mother's sons". As believers we have become the Sons of God - **1 John 3:1-2, and John 1:12**. These religious people have misplaced their origins

and see themselves as sons of the Church, rather than sons of God, and in this respect the Church may become an idol since it substitutes for an unadulterated relationship with God. It is possible that these "mother's sons" were the Shulamite's half brothers as Ishmael was to Isaac - half-world (Hagar was an Egyptian) and half-spiritual.

However after a period of doing her various duties she comes to the sorry admission, "my own vineyard have I not kept". In attempting to please her mother's sons, she finds that her primary responsibility - the cultivation of her love with the King, has lapsed. In being part of the Church it is essential that our personal relationship with Christ comes before anything we do in spiritual service. Without the blessing and life of this relationship, the best of spiritual activities are reduced to dangerous religious duty.

Jesus said to Martha who was obsessed with pointless activity, "You are careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful. Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her" (**Luke 10: 40-42**). This parallels the vineyards (many things) and vineyard (one thing needful).

When we preside over the souls of others but fail to establish a full relationship of love with God, we are seeking to pull specks out of others' eyes while a log remains in our own.

This feverish activity is caused through her feeling a need to "buy" the King's favour. Since she saw herself as black and has obviously not accepted the King's view of her, she has involved herself in keeping the vineyards in order to feel worthy of His love. However, this only accelerates the problem until she loses sight of Him altogether.

1:7 (a) - "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you make your flock to rest at noon"

This verse represents the first attempt by the Shulamite to restore her relationship with the King. The inadequate start to her union with Him had been caused by:

A) Her inability to accept the revelation of her new nature. Legalism had a stronger hold on her than faith.

B) Her feverish activity of works instead of faith to try and buy the King's favour.

As a result of these two things, she discovers that she has lost His direct presence, and though initially the promotion to keeper of the vineyards had dulled her sense of need, she simply cannot go on without Him.

The disciples discovered that without the presence of Jesus they "toiled all night and caught nothing". His presence is the only thing that makes our activity meaningful and fruitful. **Luke 5:4-6 and John 21:3-6.**

She becomes aware and craves for three things that only come from a proper relationship with the King, and she calls on Him for specific instructions about how to find Him again.

The three elements she needs from the King are:

i) Feeding - a believer's life apart from Jesus is in progressive decline and increasing spiritual famine until, like the prodigal son, we will attempt to fill ourselves with husks - **Luke 15:16**.

Jesus alone is the source of sustenance, and this spiritual food is only available to us in His word. Absorbing it is the equal of being with Him physically. However, it must be the spirit of the Word, and not merely the letter. **John 6:48-68, and 2 Cor. 3:6**.

ii) Rest - during the period of her decline she has been feverishly busy and it had achieved nothing except to exhaust and totally frustrate her. Heb. 4:1-11 tells us that proper faith in Jesus brings us into a state of rest where we are not depending on our own efforts to make God accept us. The shepherd of our souls (**1 Pet. 2:25**) brings us into a state of perfect rest (**Ps. 23:2**) so that all we do for Him is not by natural energy but is empowered by Him.

iii) Light - "where you make your flock to rest at noon". This is when the sun is at its maximum and its light is the greatest. At this time shadows are also at their least extent. Light speaks of revelation and the Bride discovers her need to knowledge that is directly from the Lord. Previously her mother's sons had given her direction and it had proved to be damaging to her. She seeks for Him to "tell" her both where and how to go. **Prov. 4:18** declares that the path of the just is as a shining light that keeps increasing in revelation. This revelation knowledge is brought to us by the Word of the Lord. It not only feeds us, but guides us - **Ps. 119:130** - "The entrance of your word gives light".

It is also important to note that our rest in Christ is related to receiving revelation. She had not been able to rest when she was in the King's chambers as she could not accept His opinion of her. Now she knows that this point is crucial if she is to progress in her love with the King. **Rev. 1:16** shows us the Lord as the sun shining at noon-day.

This verse also gives us the first time that she actually declares her love for Him. She had expressed desire and admiration for what He was and did, but now she admits that she loves Him. It occurs after the decline in her relationship with Him and she now knows just how much He means to her. **Verses 2, 3 and 4** had talked about how good His love was and how the virgins or the upright loved Him, but it has now reached a deeply personal level with the Shulamite.

The stages the Bride has gone through so far in this song have been kiss me, draw me, look not upon me, they make me, and tell me. Each of these has a connection. The first kiss develops a desire for a deeper relationship. When she gets that she can't handle it and settles for the ideas of others instead. That, in time, frustrates her and she comes full circle asking for the King to have His will in her life.

These stages could also be defined as:

- a) Revelation (She sees Him)
- b) Relationship (She loves Him)
- c) Reaction (She runs away)
- d) Religion (She is in bondage)
- e) Restoration (She seeks Him again)

1:7 (b) - "why should I be as one who turns aside by the flocks of your companions"

She is weary of side-tracks and longs for restoration of a true relationship that is not based on "religious activity" - i.e. the keeping of vineyards. She is not satisfied with the activity of the companions - those loosely connected with the Lord but doing their own thing - building their own Kingdom and establishing their own "flocks", not the Lord's flock. She has already been burned by the religiousness of the "mother's children".

She had asked the King where His flock rested. A genuine work of the King will result in the building up of the Body of Christ & not the sectionalising of it which is the product of men drawing away some of the flock after themselves (**Acts 2:29-30**). This is sectarianism. Many people with a seeming desire for the King get caught up in false cults and are "turned aside". This phrase is also translated "wander". Following the flocks of men instead of the flock will result in confusion and consequent wandering instead of going forward with a sense of purpose.

Note that the companion's flocks are plural and competitive, while the King's is singular. There is only one flock of God and we cannot build that up while building up "ours". --

Even the fellowship of the best of God's people cannot substitute for fellowship with the King Himself.

1:8 - "If you know not, O thou fairest among women, go your way in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your kids beside the shepherd's tents."

a) The King refers to her as "the fairest among women". This is the second time He has spoken and He is still saying the same thing. He said when she withdrew from His chambers - "you are comely", etc. Although she has had a period of regression, the King has not changed His opinion of her, and still wants her to see herself as He sees her. Her last view of this was "I am black". The Church is the object of Christ's affection and is the fairest of all things in the universe - **Eph. 5:2 and 25**.

He responds to her question, "Tell me", by saying, "If you know not", and infers that she really should know, but He goes on to provide direction for her. He gives her the means of recovery.

b) Follow those who have already blazed a trail into God. Keep close to those who are close to God. Sometimes it is easier to relate to a godly person we can talk to and see, than to God whom we can't see. (Note 1 John 4:20). Paul said, "be followers of me, even as I am of Christ" **1 Cor. 11:1, and 4:16. Note Heb. 13:7, 1 Thess. 1:6, and Heb. 6:12**.

Footprints point to an historical situation. They are a record of the path others have walked in, and we are encouraged by the Lord to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" - Heb. 6:12. Both Church and Biblical history provide outstanding examples for us to evaluate in developing a right relationship with the King.

Heb. 10:25 declares that we ought not to forsake assembling ourselves together - not just meeting together, but being built (assembled into a building) together. The whole of the Christian message is built on being disciplined - **Matt. 28:19-20**. We are told to "follow the faith" of those over us in the Lord - **Heb. 13:7**.

c) Observe the footsteps of the flock. Once again the vision of the "Body of Christ" is essential to a vital relationship with Christ the Head of the Church. There must be a "flock

consciousness" and not a sectarian emphasis. Jesus said, "there is one flock and one shepherd" - **John 10:16**.

d) "... feed your kids beside the shepherd's tents."

This takes her back to her evangelistic desire of verse 4, "Draw me and we will run after thee". As soon as she begins to restore her relationship, there is again an emphasis to bring others to the Lord. Kids are young ones - new converts. Let her show her love to her Lord by feeding His sheep, by caring for His lambs (see **John 21:15-17**), and she need not fear to miss His presence. While sharing with other under-shepherds in caring for His flock, she will find the Chief Shepherd at her side, and enjoy the tokens of His approval. It will be service with Jesus as well as for Jesus. True maturity is expressed in teaching others the way of the Lord. **Heb. 5:12-14**.

e) The theme of oversight and authority in the Church is emphasised by the King.

"... feed them beside the shepherds' tents". These are not the "companions" but the true under-shepherds of Christ who are building up His flock. It re-enforces the truth of obeying them that have the rule over us (**Heb. 13: 7**). Submission and headship is a vital necessity in being joined to the Lord (**Eph. 5:21-32**).

Whenever a worshipper went to the Tabernacle, his approach was always through the tents of the Levites and past Moses' tent. Although we do not believe that any "priestly class" distributes the means of grace to us, yet there is a vital necessity to recognise and honour those whom God has placed over us in the faith. God said to Aaron, "Moses shall be as God to you". **Ex. 4:16**.

f) The "shepherds" are plural and this speaks to us of the multiple ministries the Lord has given to His Church to provide balanced teaching. The five Ministry Gifts of **Eph. 4:11** all work together to build up the Body of Christ.

1:9 - "I have compared you, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots"

This is more correctly translated "I compare you to my mare harnessed to Pharaoh's chariot".

a) The King calls her "my love" for the first time, and it occurs in the context of correcting her. He never condemns but lovingly adjusts the Bride and although he is pointing out a weakness in her, it is done with the reassurance of His love for her and also with a positive solution to the problem.

b) The King points out to the Shulamite that there is still much of the world in her. Horses speak of the strength and pride of the world system and as such are a substitute for the power of the Holy Spirit. cp **Ps. 20:7, Zech. 4:6, Ps. 147:10**. The horse, from the standpoint of its natural characteristics, was a symbol of speed in those days. The swiftness described in the maiden's movements is parallel to her running after Him (**1:4**), except that here her swift movements have a natural and not a spiritual source. Note also **Ps. 33:17, Amos 2:15, Hosea 1:7, Job 39:19-25, Is. 31:1-2, and Ex. 15:1**.

i) She is still pulling Pharaoh's chariots and he is the ruler of Egypt which is type of the world (**Rev. 11:8**), and is the place which God delivered Israel (the Church) from. The Kings of Israel were in direct disobedience to God in acquiring horses. **Deut. 17:16-20**.

Note that linen yarn was also purchased with the horses - **2 Chron. 1:16**. Linen speaks of the righteousness of the saints which is imparted by grace and cannot be bought. **Rev. 19:8. Eph. 2:8-9**. A dependance on the attitudes and motive power the world system will put our relationship with God, which is based on grace and not works, in jeopardy.

ii) This is a picture of the Church advancing the cause of the god of this world. God's work must be done in God's way. If a spiritual motive is mixed with a fleshly programme, the flesh will dominate. **John 3:6** - that which is born of the flesh is flesh.

Expedience is one of the major traps for the Church. We get caught with the philosophy that the end justifies the means, and that we can do God's work through carnal ideas as long as it works; It was this philosophy which caused Abraham to bring Ishmael into the world and the nations are now in turmoil as a result. God's work done in the energy of the flesh, though it be in the very best of motives, will promote Satan's cause and not God's. The world's techniques gimmicks, and fads, are not holy.

Jesus was tempted to draw attention to Himself by leaping from the pinnacle of the Temple.

This type of carnal expediency in ministers only produces wood, hay and stubble in the local Church instead of gold, silver and precious stones. **1 Cor. 3**. Hudson Taylor said, "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply".

iii) The Bible says, "Be not as the horse or the mule which have no understanding" - **Ps. 32:9**. This refers to the Shulamite/Church as being still insensitive to the ways of God. She needs to be pulled in with the bridle and bit to be kept on course. She still doesn't understand what is happening and depends on correction instead of revelation for spiritual progress. **Ps. 103:7** shows us that Israel was spiritually insensitive and could only see the acts of God. Moses knew God's way.

Peter, in carnal reasoning, tried to give Jesus "good advice", but was rebuked as thinking Satan's thoughts. He was really insensitive to the ministry Jesus had come to perform. **Matt. 16:23**.

This insensitivity in the Shulamite is also expressed in being headstrong or stubborn and constantly needing to be chastened or tightly controlled by the King to keep her on course.

1:10-11 - "Your cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, your neck with chains of gold. We will make you borders of gold with studs of silver."

The King does not point out her need without referring to the solution to the problem, or His view of her.

a) The cheeks refer to her natural beauty. The cheeks determine whether a person is beautiful or not; and in the maiden they are figurative of a natural endowment of good looks.

The cheeks of Jesus were not comely. His visage was marred more than any man's (**Is. 52**). His beard was plucked out (**Is. 50:6**). There was no beauty that we should desire Him. Out of his brokenness has come beauty for the Bride. Despite the vestiges of the "horse nature" in her, the King sees her new nature as beautiful and adorned with jewels. These jewels are the gifts of God and the result of His work in the Church. They are mostly produced through pressure. The things in our life most appealing to God are those involving sacrifice. "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow me" - **Luke 9:23**. Without

this motivation all that is produced in us is worthless. **1 Cor. 3:12-13**. Jesus gives us true beauty for our ashes - **Is. 61:3**.

The rows of jewels is more correctly "braided hair". Her natural endowments are considerable but she is still as a horse if she depends on natural glory instead of what is imparted to her by the King. Note **1 Cor. 11:15**.

b) The unadorned neck is one still independent. It is still not submitted to another as a Bride is to her husband, as her betrothal chains worn around her neck signify. The neck speaks of our will. The proud, rebellious, and stiff-necked have not submitted their will to God. **Is. 48:4, cp Prov. 1:9**.

Gold is a type of Deity. Here the King is saying that the solution to the headstrong, impulsive, unbroken horse spirit is its replacement with the Divine nature - **2 Pet. 1:4**. When our will is submitted to His will we are no longer advancing Pharaoh's (Satan's) purpose.

c) "We" speaks of the total involvement of the Godhead in this work of revealing His nature in His people.

The borders of gold is better translated 'a crown or circlet of gold'. This then supersedes the glory of her hair and shows us that God's glory in us far surpasses any natural graces or beauty we may have. **1 Cor. 1: 29 and 31**. It takes time and skill to beat gold into this type of braid and only the Lord Himself can do His own work in us to overshadow and make absolute our natural beauty or skills.

d) The "studs of silver" have a two-fold meaning:

i) The stud was actually an earring. Rebekah, as a type of the Bride of Christ, received the earring from Eliezer, who represents the Holy Spirit preparing the Bride for her union with Christ. **Gen. 24**. This earring is also identified with an acceptance of the Lordship of Christ. **Exodus 21:5-6** tells us of the slave who voluntarily chose to become a "love-slave" for ever. His ear was pierced as a sign to all of his acceptance of his master as the total authority in his life for ever. In **Rom. 1:1**, Paul declared himself to be the "doulos" (Greek) of Jesus Christ. This means the "love-slave".

ii) The stud or earring was of silver, which is a type of redemption. The King is making her to understand that the only freedom from the horse nature is to stay upon redemption ground, realising that there is nothing in her natural life or old nature which is appealing to God. The only beauty she will ever have is because of redemption. Her acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ and her faith in His redeeming work gives the Godhead the opportunity to bestow chains of gold (Divine nature) over her rebellious will and to supersede her natural glory with that which is of God.

1:12 - "While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the fragrance thereof."

The Shulamite now responds to this dealing with her life and begins to deepen her relationship with the King. The correction of her "horse nature" leads her to His table. It is this process by which the borders of gold, etc. are imparted to her. What she feeds on will make a change in her.

This is a reference to the daily provision of Solomon's table which has typical significance. **1 Kings 4:22-23, 27, 10:5** shows us that the King Himself and His work on behalf of His bride evokes a spiritual response from her far more than any legalism could do. He inspires her to respond to him by the revelation of Himself. The whole of the Christian faith is built on this revelation of Christ. It is the "rock" on which the Church is built. **Matt. 16:17-18.**

a) There are five things revealed in the kinds of food on Solomon's table:

- i. Meal offerings - some of the foods were of the category from which the Meal Offerings were taken. These speak of the Humanity and Holy life of Christ. They are those things which grew out of the earth as He was the "root out of dry ground". **Is. 53:2.**
- ii. Meat Offerings - the meat dishes typify the blood atonement of Christ on our behalf. Like the sacrifices of the Old Testament and Christ Himself, they had been slain before coming to the Table.
- iii. Note - the only eating in the Tabernacle was Shewbread (meal) and offerings (meat).
- iv. The Abundant Provisions speak of the availability of His grace to everyone, and His ability to meet our total needs. His resources are far beyond our capacity to exhaust them.
- v. Solomon spread the same food every day at his table. It tells us that the cross and its cleansing work is basic to our relationship with the King. It is the basis of fellowship with Him every day.
- vi. The Shulamite has to be a partaker. Jesus said unless you partake of me you have no part in me (**John 6:53-58**), and it is by this means that the "horse nature" is dealt with. Note **2 Peter 1:4.**

b) The Shulamite says when she sees what has been done for her that her spikenard sends forth its fragrance. There is a voluntary response to this revelation and a sacrificial one. Note Mary's offering of spikenard - **Luke 7:36-50**. She saw Jesus (by revelation) and knew Him as the perfect man preparing for the cross.

C.T. Studd, the mighty missionary to the Congo said after a life of supreme Lordship in the Gospel, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice that I can make for Him can be too great."

The oil of spikenard was usually reserved for the marriage relationship. The Living Bible version of this section is, "The King is enchanted by the fragrance of my perfume". Our sacrificial love for Him gives God His greatest delight in us. **Eph. 5:2.**

1:13 (a) - "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me."

a) Myrrh is produced from a small bush which spontaneously exudes this fragrant gum.

It is both precious and bitter, and is associated with death. **Mark 15:23**. Jesus received it as a gift from the wise men in his infancy (**Matt. 2:11**), which was a sign that he was born to die. His body was embalmed with it. **John 19:39**. He was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. **Is. 53:3**.

Myrrh was also part of the Holy Anointing oil (**Ex. 30:23**) and this shows us the impossibility of separating the various parts of Christ's life and ministry. He was anointed not just to do miracles and meet physical needs, but to accomplish the plan of the Godhead for humanity's redemption. Myrrh represents His suffering love for us. The bride knows that He is precious to her because of the bitterness of his suffering for her.

Myrrh oozed out of the trunk of the bush naturally and is a type of Jesus laying down His life voluntarily. John 10:18 - "No man taketh it from me".

The merchants of Babylon (the false religious system of **Rev. 18:11-13**) weep because no-one buys their myrrh (ointments) any more. Substitute sacrifice and human penances can never deal with sin. Only the suffering love of Christ has been able to meet the bitterness of human need.

1.13 (b) - "He shall lie all night between my breasts."

b) Anytime Solomon is not with the Shulamite it is night time.

The two breasts of the woman refer to the elements of our spiritual life which enable us to maintain our relationship with Christ. **1 Thess. 5:8** also speaks about a night-time situation and tells us to put on the breastplate of faith and love. These two characteristics will sustain the Church through the long night of Christ's physical absence from us. During the Church age we walk by faith and not by sight. **2 Cor. 5:7**. Faith and love create reality. Others may not see Him, but His Church has His presence and an intimate relationship with Him, though He is physically absent.

The place between the breasts is secret and personal. His faith and love is being developed within us from the inside out, rather than from the external to the internal. The expressions of our love for, and trust in Him are personal and private before they are ever public.

c) This is the only place in the book where she refers to the King as "my well-beloved" and it speaks of a new depth of relationship which occurs in the revelation of the bitterness of His suffering for her and the provision of the Atoning work of the cross.

1:14 - "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi."

a) The cluster of camphire (henna flowers) spoke of two things:

- i. Camphire is the henna flowers - bright orange used by Jewish women for adornment, which ordinarily did not occur within a vineyard. In fact, even the flowers of the vines were not seen as they were covered by the leaves. This reference shows us how conspicuous Christ is. Henna flowers in this environment would be as conspicuous as a burning bush in the desert. He stands out among all the vineyards.

Previously she had been made the keeper of the vineyards. Now with the King dominating the scene her service is kept in right perspective.

- ii. He was as a bundle of myrrh between her breasts. This is the secret, personal part of the relationship. The bright conspicuous henna flowers represents the outward witness of her inner relationship with the King. The myrrh always precedes the camphire.
- iii. The word "camphire" comes from the Hebrew "Kopher" which means to cover and is the same word used for "atonement" in **Lev. 17:11**, and also for "pitch" in **Gen. 6:4**. The Ark was "pitched" within and without. It was the atoning work of the cross which has made Jesus conspicuous to all human history. He is beyond comparison with any other.

b) Engedi was located in a wilderness and is where David fled from Saul. The bright camphire in a place like this speaks of the King's beauty being revealed in the bitter test. Jesus, like David, came unto his own

c) Engedi means "a fountain", and a refreshing spring still flows there. It was given to Judah (Praise) in the allocation to the tribes (**Josh. 15: 62**), and is declared to be a place where the fishers will spread their nets (**Ezek. 47:10**). When Christ is held in a conspicuous position and is lifted up in praise among the vineyards, and more important than the work itself (v **6b**), there will be an ingathering of souls.

1:15 - "Behold, you are fair, my beloved, you are fair; you have doves' eyes."

Her fairness is determined by her vision. Since the revelation of the King at His table, she has been looking only at Him and this has produced such a change in her that the King twice emphasises her fairness. The doves' eye has "fixed field focus". It can only focus on one thing at a time. Her concentration on the King is producing revelation within her. **Matthew 6:22** - "If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light." Note also **2 Cor. 3:18** - what she sees is what she is. Previously she had been as the horse - insensitive, but now her perception or spiritual insight makes her commendable to the King.

The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and this speaks of the supernatural dimension of her relationship. Whilst ever she allows God to work in her (note **verse 11**), the horse nature will be totally subdued.

The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself, He always and only lifts up Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us will produce "fixed field focus".

1:16 - "Behold, you are fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our bed is green."

a) The woman discovers the total satisfaction of His presence - "you are fair, yea, pleasant", and in this she finds rest. She has sought rest in verse 7. She now has a proper balance between feeding (verse 12) and rest. Psalms 23 says, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures". True spiritual rest, as outlined in **Hebrews 4:1-11**, will also bring refreshing and freshness (green). Her rest is the product of the "revelation at his table" and "the myrrh between her breasts".

b) Note that she says "our" bed. This represents a new place of her acceptance of the King's work in her. The last time she had gone into His chambers the effect on her was self-condemnatory. Now she sees herself "identified" with Him - a joint heir with Christ. Rom. 8:17. The next verse also carries this thought of identification with Him - our house, our rafters. When we have Christ we have everything. **Col. 2:10 LB.**

This also suggests co-habitation - in order for the bed to be "ours", the Shulamite has to share it with Him. There is more to our identification with Christ than mere legal rights. There is the practical, and daily outworking of that relationship. It cannot be "our" bed in a separate relationship.

The wonderful thing about our joint-heir status with the King is that not only do we receive His benefits, but He accepts our indebtedness and takes responsibility for our development.

c) However, this joint-heir relationship also represents a precarious place of intimacy - the knife edge of spiritual balance. This high point of their relationship is also the beginning of a further undoing in her life due to becoming familiar with His presence, and it emphasises the constant need for balance between faith and love, lest faith to appropriate His provision for us become presumption or technique and become more important to us than his direct presence.

1:17 - "The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir."

The strength of "their house" - the local Church is the humanity of Christ which the cedar speaks of. It is almost impervious to rot and is extremely durable. It represents the incorruptible human nature. Though He was a root out of dry ground (**Is. 53:2**), yet He never succumbed to the corruption of the human race. The doctrine of the humanity of Christ and His Incarnation are essential to having us as a house built for God's habitation **2 John, verses 9 & 10.**

Cedar wood was used in the purification of lepers (**Lev. 14:4**), and in the waters of separation (**Num. 19:1-10**). Both of these incidents relate the cedar (Christ's incorruptible humanity) to our need to be separated from sin and the world.

The fir is actually cypress, and is generally associated with death. The cypress is commonly grown in Jewish cemeteries and is called the tree of death. The woman's view while in true spiritual rest will be of the humanity and atoning death of Christ. While ever her vision is fixed (**verse 15**) on this, she is secure.

The redemptive work besides being her food (**verse 12**), is also her covering from the elements or storms of life, and protection from sunburn (**verse 6**).

Both cedar and cypress were used extensively in Solomon's Temple which is a picture of the Temple being built for God in His people. **Eph. 2:21-22.**

2:1 - "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

The woman is still speaking and her self-image has greatly improved. Through her re-discovery of the King's presence, the revelation of His nature and provision for her, the fixed vision she has of Him and her rest with Him, she no longer sees herself as black. Her revelation of the King is leading her on a journey of self-discovery though this is progressive.

However, the rose of Sharon is just a common crocus (Heb. narcissus) which grows profusely in the valleys. It is an evergreen plant which flowers for about 4 months a year. She recognises that changes have taken place in her and she is now closer to accepting the King's view of her. She still does not see the unique nature of her relationship with Him, and tends to compare herself with others and reduces her relationship with the King to the level of the ordinary and common. Her faith is not yet ready for a full appreciation of what He has done for her, but at least she has left the bondage of seeing herself as black and is protected from sunburn now.

2:2 - "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

a) The King is now responding to her new faith declaration, but puts it in its proper perspective. He declares that she is not just a common lily hidden in the valleys, but that she stands out in this world in sharp contrast to all around her. Just as He is as conspicuous as camphor in a vineyard, so she is like a lily among thorns. A bright spot of beauty amongst the ugly and depraved things of this world. **Phil. 2:15.**

b) The lily speaks of Resurrection life, and the King declares that not only is her beauty in contrast to the world, but that her life source is different also. The thorns originated with the curse (**Gen. 3:18**) and are opposed to the life of God in us. **Matt. 13:7,**

c) The King also draws a comparison between her and the daughters of Jerusalem - the mother's children who made her the keeper of the vineyards (**1:5**).

He points out that there is no comparison between her and those who have not gone on in their spiritual life. They are the ones who are still entangled in the cares of this life and bring no fruit to perfection. His special relationship is reserved for those who really seek Him and are not content to be merely "saved".

The other group spoken of throughout the book, i.e. virgins, daughters of Jerusalem, mother's children, companions, etc., are always seen in close proximity to the Bride, but not to the Bridegroom. Many Christian people find it less demanding to relate to the Church or to those who are leading in God than to seek Him personally.

d) Then we see that what she is, is enhanced by where she is. Those who are not spiritually minded will most often be the source of opposition to any new move of God. The King says that this contention against her experience with Him will only strengthen it. Like Joseph, they may put her feet in the stocks, but the iron will come into her soul (**Ps. 105:18**).

2:3 - "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

a) This verse is most likely a reference back to **1:12-17** where she sits at His table and sees his uniqueness and finds her rest and protection in Him.

This re-emphasis of this essential part of her relationship with the King demonstrates the necessity for us to cease from our own efforts to buy His favour and accept His total work for us. It is the only way to lose the horse nature.

b) The woman responds to the King's comparison of her by drawing comparisons of her own. The apple tree referred to here is almost certainly the "citron" - a beautiful evergreen tree. (The

"sons" are those who aspire to lead us, but have no life to give us [John 10:1].) There are two things about this that are significant.

- i. The King is an evergreen. All the other trees of the wood are seasonal. Their beauty will fade. His is constant. The companions of 1:7 cannot be compared to the King. It was these "sons" who had made her the keeper of the vineyards and occupied her with religious duty. Religion is a poor substitute for life and only He can give it. The sectarianism of 1 Cor. 1, "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, etc.", is idolatry. He must be first and foremost always.
- ii. He is her covering. Her rest is maintained when she stays under His protection. Previously she had been sunburned (1:6), but now she has learnt to avoid temptation and remain in the only place of safety. She discovers that there is great delight in this personal and intimate relationship of His table and our bed. Whatever pleasures there are in sin cannot be compared to the lasting joy of a right relationship with the King.

c) "His fruit was sweet to my taste" refers to the produce of His evergreen (resurrection) life. This is not just a revelation of what He is- shown in 1:12, but what effects are produced by what He is, and has done. Righteousness, sanctification and the Gift of the Holy Spirit are some of the products of His life and atoning death. Gal. 3:13-14.

2:4 - "He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love."

a) She has now returned to the King's chambers. Once again the King is bringing her in. The banqueting house can be translated "house of wine". It is a place of feasting and joy. It compares with 1:4, and shows us that far from being the high point of our relationship with the King, the beginning will be eclipsed by a deeper and more meaningful experience between Him and ourselves. This restoration to the King's chambers is as a wiser believer and one more committed to Him than anything He does for us.

This joy and gladness are absolute necessities to our relationship with the King (Ps. 126:2).

This verse also contains the first clue to the real purpose of the Bride's relationship. "His banner over me is love." One of the names of the Lord is "Jehovah Nissi" - Ex. 17:15-16. It means, "The Lord our Banner", and was symbolised by Moses' upraised hands as a banner of war over Israel in their fight with Amalek.

This gives us to understand that the King's love poured upon us is for a purpose. It in turn produces a response of praise and worship shown in the upraised hands. The love between the King and the Bride is not just for a happy introverted spiritual experience, but for aggressive displacement of enemy power. The Bride is destined for spiritual warfare and all of the blessings such as revelation, covering, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of righteousness, joy, etc, are the means of preparing her for this high destiny.

2:5 - "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love."

The new depth of her experience with the King had reached the limits of her capacity to contain it. She was satiated (Hebrew - "wounded") with love. It was more than she could handle and she felt the need for its mystical and spiritual effects on her to be balanced with something practical and tangible, lest she become so "heavenly minded that she was no earthly good".

Spiritual experiences always contain the danger of mysticism and it is possible to develop a "super-spiritual" attitude to life. Spiritual experience must always be related to practical living and include meeting the needs of others.

2 Cor. 4:7 tells us that we hold God's treasure in earthen vessels and often the light is more intense than the vessel can bear. Note Moses' request to see the glory of God (**Ex. 33**). He couldn't see it all. There is then a need for a different approach to spiritual things so that the experience may be fully assimilated, understood and applied.

The flagons referred to are "grape cakes". They have the same source as wine - the grapes, yet are solid and will sustain her without the heady effects of wine. Not all times of our spiritual life are intended to be "cloud nine". Often the less exhilarating parts of our experience with God can be more beneficial to us than the high spots.

The apples are "citrons", the fruit of the tree under whose covering she is protected. She wants the strengthening of the King's own fruits, and is impressed with the need for the less sensational but necessary and sustaining development of His life in her. The "apples" are no longer just sweet to her taste. They are a source of "comfort" - balance.

2:6 - "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

All we know of God is in Christ. All the promises of God in Him are yea and Amen (**2 Cor. 1:20**). He is the Son of the right hand (**Matt. 26:64, Mark 16:19, Luke 20:42, Acts 2:33, 7:55-56, Col. 3:1, Heb. 1:3, 1 Pet. 3:22**). "His right hand doth embrace me" refers to our love relationship with Jesus Christ as the representative of the Godhead and the expression of God's love to us. John 3:16. "His left hand is under my head" speaks of the Holy Spirit sustaining our mind. This follows the declaration that she is "sick" of love. She is beginning to be removed from reality and needs to keep a right perspective lest she become "super-spiritual" and unbalanced. Note **John 16:13**.

2:7 - "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken my love, till he please."

"Do not stir up love till love itself shall please" (Berkley) - the King speaks.

a) There is a right time to be aroused in love. It is not possible to live continually on an emotional high. The King is saying that this is a time for rest and for "waiting" on Him and learning to surrender the initiative of our spiritual walk to Him.

The daughters of Jerusalem, the uncommitted believers who are more interested in sensation than sanctification, are warned not to attempt to produce any soulish effects in the Bride.

b) Some are insensitive to the need of the moment and the Daughters of Jerusalem who have the "horse spirit" are not able to determine what the needs of others really are. They often meddle in

other's affairs and attempt to produce effects or sensations. This type of thing leads to fanaticism.

The roes are of the gazelle family and are a very sensitive species. They are easily alarmed. This section speaks of the wisdom needed in bringing people to an in-depth relationship with the King. Soulless stirring will deter rather than develop the seeker after God.

c) It is often difficult to handle apparent inactivity and some feel the need to constantly keep things "stirred up". This can be distracting when the King is seeking to develop their relationship by His embrace or the re-assurance of:

- i. His love for her
- ii. Her place of security in Him.

d) The hind of the field is a specific reference to the Resurrection life of the King (note verse 8-9). He always deals with us by new life which grows and develops in us rather than by sensations which are imposed upon us.

This concludes the first section of the book

In this period the Bride has discovered much that is disappointing about herself and has to learn to accept her identification with the King. This is brought about in the main by a revelation of the King's character and work for her, the futility of trying to keep the vineyards as a means of buying His favour, dealing with her "horse nature", and learning to "rest" in Him.

SECTION 2

LOVE'S RELATIONSHIP LOST

Chapter 2:8 - 3:5

This part of the Book describes a serious decline in the Bride's relationship with the King. She becomes selfish and spiritually insensitive - even rebellious in order to satisfy her own desires now that she has been "established spiritually".

2:8 - "The voice of my beloved! Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."

This is the first time that reference is made to His voice. It is significant that in this section of the book which deals with her decline, the King's voice is given such prominence. Her decline in part is due to direct disobedience to His voice. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice", and He said to the pharisees, "You believe not because you are not my sheep" (**John 10:26-27**). Self-satisfied religion neither heeds nor feels the need of the voice of the Lord. Note that it was the "voice of the Lord" who sought Adam and Eve after their fall (**Gen. 3:8**).

"... behold he cometh ..."

There are two things significant here. Firstly, this statement is representative of **Matt. 25:6**, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh". The Bride relationship is one in which the soon coming of the Lord will have a powerful, motivating effect, and the Bride is both aware that He is coming and expecting His return to banish the night time of their separation.

Secondly, the voice of the Lord will be a feature of the End-Time. The direct presence of the Lord and specific guidance to His Church by prophecy, the Rhema and fresh revelation on His word are evidences of "His voice". Wherever His "voice" is heard, there will be clear warnings of His soon return and the dangers of spiritual complacency.

"... leaping on the mountains, skipping upon the hills ..."

i) This needs to be linked with the next statement, "My beloved is like a roe or a young hart". **Psalms 22** begins with the words, "To the chief musician upon Aijeleth Shahar"; which means, "according to the hind of the morning". This Psalm of the crucifixion and suffering of Christ is prefaced with the prophetic promise of His resurrection of which the "hind of the morning" is a type, and in the original Hebrew scriptures concludes with the exclamation, "It is finished".

ii) The mountains and hills which speak of obstacles and opposition are under His feet. He is subduing them. **Isaiah 40:4** says that every mountain & hill shall be made low. His resurrection life is the power by which every other authority is subdued. **Eph. 1:19-22**.

iii) This also speaks of the message and ministry of Jesus. His good news or Gospel is said to be proclaimed on mountains - **Is. 52:7**. There will always be opposition to evangelism, but because Jesus is alive, it is under His feet and consequently also under ours.

2:9 - "My beloved is like a roe or a young hart; behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, gazing through the lattice."

" .. he standeth behind our wall ..."

He was on the outside, she was on the inside. The period of rest is over. Now is the time for conquest and the King is already doing it before He calls her. One of the secrets of spiritual success is to determine the way that God is moving, and to move with Him.

She has built a wall to keep out every element likely to disturb her life, and to try to contain her spiritual experience of perfect rest. In doing so, she also kept out the King. Her defence mechanism became a device of division between them. The state of rest was designed to be a temporary one until her spiritual equilibrium had been restored, and she had assimilated the revelation of the King at His table and bed, and as the apple tree. She was trying to hang onto that which was now past and in so doing she missed the next "move" of the King. She saw what He was doing through the window (through a glass darkly - **1 Cor. 13:12**), but she didn't become a participant of that new activity of the King.

He is not responsible for anything that comes between us and Him. This was caused by her desire to control her environment by reverting to what she knew best or had previously experienced. It was like Peter saying, "I go a-fishing", when he had previously left the nets to follow Christ - **John 21:3**.

She is holding onto the banqueting house experience when the King has left it and it now becomes an idol and is preferred instead of His direct presence.

b) She also has the effrontery and lack of spiritual perception to call it "our wall". It was her doing. It was not His will for her. She, like many of us, excused her position by claiming the Lord had led her to do it.

These walls may be previous spiritual experiences or excused bondages. A denomination may result from a move of God, but become the barrier to a "new move" of God. Tradition, spiritual ignorance, reserve, unbelief, complexes, bondages, or self-will may just as easily develop into a wall of defence mechanisms which militate against our co-operation with the King.

2:10-13 - "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of the birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away".

He keeps referring to her as "my love, my fair one". Despite her spiritual decline, He never deviates from his faith opinion of her, and He never denigrates her. His voice is always one of encouragement and also a constant reminder of her new nature.

The King called to her to end her time of rest. **Verse 9** says "he standeth" the time of resting is over. The season had changed. There are seasons with God - **Acts 1:7**. There are times when He will make a strong emphasis in one area and at other times it will be a different truth which seems to pre-dominate. There is a variety of His work both in us and to us, even such spiritual necessities as resting in the Lord, do not continue without adjustment and change.

"The winter is past ..."

It is a time when there is no growth and the King likens winter to her wall. While ever she stays behind it, there will be no further development of her experience. She will stagnate. Human need and spiritual challenge is outside. To avoid it and ignore it as too troublesome is to decline and lose His presence.

His will for the Church is that, after the assimilation of truth and learning to rest in Him, that we will go with Him leaping on the mountains and hills.

"the rain is over and gone ..."

This is winter rain which makes work impossible. The barriers to progress and productivity have passed. It is a time to be up and doing - **John 9:4**.

God's dealings with us change. It is not all testing and trial. The grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, but then there is a change and it brings forth fruit. It is not God's will for a Christian or a Church to be constantly going through times of difficulty and oppression. There is a release.

"the flowers appear on the earth ..."

The King is trying to present to her abundant proof that this is indeed a new day. The time of darkness, unfruitfulness, and negativity has come to an end. Now is the time to release the resurrection life symbolised by springtime. Flowers are an expression of beauty and are essential to the production of honey - referred to later in the book. This is a time when one thing will lead to another. Spiritual progress at many levels and in many directions is possible in this flush of new life.

"... the time of the singing of the birds is come ..."

"Of birds" is not in the original scriptures. Singing represents praise. The victory of subduing mountains is associated with praising God in heavenly places. This is the time for the Bride to come out from behind past experiences and sing a new song unto God. In fact this suggests that Praise is the means whereby she can exit from the wall and it is the entrance into the next stage of God's dealings with her.

"... the voice of the (dove) is heard in our land."

The word turtle is incorrect and it should be "turtledove". It is the same word as used in **Gen. 15:9**.

The dove is a type of the Holy Spirit. Whenever there is activity and progress in the Church, it will be associated with the work of the Holy Spirit, particularly His prophetic voice bringing the people of God into a total restoration.

The Holy Spirit is particularly associated with renewal or revival and the Bride has been in a time of decline. There is a need for spiritual refreshing by the work of the Holy Spirit.

"the fig tree putteth forth her green figs"

- i. The fig tree produces two crops a year and the one which follows winter is generally smaller and sweeter than the main crop. Many of them fall to the ground and are called the green or untimely figs. Regardless of this, they are a good sign. These figs signal that the tree is not dead or sterile and it has survived the winter.
- ii. The dark times of testing and lack of progress through winter rains have not been able to stifle the development of fruit. Even in the most difficult times the Church of God will bring forth fruit. The fig is a fruit used to minister health. **Is 38:21**. What we receive from God is not for ourselves, but for human need. The King is trying to get the Bride to leave her secure place of introverted blessing by pointing out the reason for our blessing and growth.
- iii. It is also obvious fruit. The fig bears its fruit before it bears leaves. The King is indicating to the Bride that she is a fruit bearer and still have life even if much of it falls to the ground. The potential for a bigger and better crop is in her if she will come out from behind the wall.

"... and the vines with tender grape give a good smell ..."

She had spent endless unfruitful hours tending the vineyards, but neglected her own. The frantic effort of trying to buy his favour failed. The King shows her that Resurrection life will produce what carnal effort will not. There is a good smell from these vines - they are blossoming. The vine blossom means that fruit is a certainty, unlike other flowering fruit trees which may blossom but not bear fruit. This is a promise of fulfillment. **1 John 3:2**.

Unlike the fig, this fruit is not obvious, and is indicated by the odour before it can be seen. This speaks of incense of worship producing hidden or inner fruit in our lives.

The fig tree and vine are linked together and this connection occurs frequently in scripture, i.e. **Luke 13:6, Joel 1:12**, etc.

The fig tree speaks of Israel (**Matt. 24:32**), and the vine of the Church (**John 15:1**). There is a close connection between what God does in Israel what He subsequently does in the Church. Israel is often a sign of a move of God or a new emphasis coming among God's spiritual people. i.e.,

- i. 1898 - Theodore Herzl receives a vision of the Messiah and begins to stir up the Jews for the return to Palestine.
- ii. 1900 - Pentecostal revival begins
- iii. 1948 - Rebirth of Israel as a nation.
- iv. 1948 - Release of many of the great evangelistic and healing Ministries in the Church - Kuhlman, Graham, Roberts, Osborn, Hagin, Branham, etc.

- v. 1967 - Recovery of the city of Jerusalem 1967 - Charismatic Catholic Renewal

2:14 - "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs ..."

a) Despite her reluctance to leave her wall and move into a new dimension with the King, He does not condemn, but seeks to encourage her by reminding her of the things that have already been accomplished within her. Previously He said she had "doves' eyes" and that the voice of the dove was heard in the land. Now He says she is like a dove in totality. Our victory in Christ is dependent on life, not law, and the King is attempting to lift the veil of failure and regression from her spiritual vision by showing her herself as He sees her. When we are saved we are one spirit with the Lord - **1 Cor. 6:17**.

The dove is revealed in scripture in various ways, showing the true nature of the Bride and the work of the Holy Spirit in her.

- i. As a bird of sacrifice - **Gen. 15:9, Lev. 5:7**, showing the sacrificial nature of the Church's experience.
- ii. It has no gall. It is free of bitterness and resentment and will not find rest where there is corruption - **Gen. 8:9**. The raven did though.
- iii. It is harmless and gentle - **Matt. 10:16**.
- iv. The dove represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit - **Matt. 3:16**.
- v. It dwells in the cleft of the rock - **Jer. 48:28**.

"The cleft of the rock" refers to the cross and the atoning work of Jesus. He is the rock that was riven. Moses was hidden in a cleft of the rock and there saw the glory of God - **Ex. 33:12-13**. In this passage Moses had actually sought 3 things of God: His presence (**v.15**), His ways (**v.15**), and His glory (**v.18**). The woman has retreated behind a wall of defence mechanisms and a static spiritual level. She is missing the King's ways (leaping on the mountains). She is losing His Presence and only sees Him through a window and will not see His glory, or the next stage in His purpose for her if she stays there.

The Holy Place of the Tabernacle is parallel to the King's chambers and the Banqueting House. There was eating there (shewbread - the bread of His Presence). However there was no eating in the Most Holy Place, but rather a full manifestation of God's glory.

b) The King calls her to remembrance of her place in the cross and shows her that this must produce an ascending work of Grace in our lives (stairs). It is internal and secret, but God's work in us will never be static. It will always cause us to rise higher. This also shows us that every step God leads us to is the place from which we reach the next step - so every step is important. In fact, this is a reference to the way that God deals with us in stages. We are not suddenly there without any need of further development. Stairs are often arduous to climb. It is an effort to rise higher in God and the temptation is always with us to settle behind our wall and be comfortable in our past revelation instead of "pressing on the upward way, new heights gaining every day".

These are secret places

These are secret places (plural) and once again there is a reference to the King's chambers - the Holy and Most Holy Place. The Banqueting House is not all there is, there is more. But these are secret or hidden places (Note **Ps. 91:1-4**). It speaks to us that not only is their progression in God, but our life is hidden with Christ in God. The work that He is doing is not totally visible from outside. There are both green figs (obvious fruit) and tender grapes (hidden fruit).

"Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice".

The King is still reminding her that there is no reason to hide or retreat behind a wall. She looks comely to Him (1:5). It is difficult for us to realise how much enjoyment we give to God when we seek His face. For in seeing Him, He sees us. While we hide from Him behind a wall there is no openness and His work in us is not being shown to Him for His pleasure.

c) He longs to hear our voice. This refers to our praise and worship. **Jer. 33:11**. This ministry is typified by the Tabernacle worship at the Altar of Incense and the King says our voice is "sweet". The time of singing has come, but she is not singing yet. In the whole of the King's relationship with the Bride, He continues to woo her at every stage of her development and through every problem she falls into. The cleft of the rock and the "dove nature", rather than the "horse nature" enhance her countenance. She is beautiful only in what He has done for her and not what she has done for herself.

2:15 - "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

a) The King warns her that little things of the world allowed to come into her life have the potential of being more damaging than many big things. She would be on the lookout for major sins which would destroy her fruit. The little foxes, however, unable to reach the fruitful areas of her life, attack the roots of her life. They destroy the roots and ringbark the vine and eventually sap the whole plant of its energy.

Retreating behind her wall may seem to be such a small thing. But deciding not to join the King in subduing life's challenges is a little fox with sharp teeth.

b) The vine has tender grapes and this is a reference to the possibility of our potential being spoiled through the tolerance of habits, attitudes, or worldliness which we consider to be of no consequence. The King says, "take them (catch) for us. Otherwise the work of the Godhead (**1:11**) will be hindered in us". We are not told to kill them, but to give them to God in surrender.

c) This verse also refers to the attack made on the vine itself. **John 15:1** declares that Jesus is the vine. The enemy seeks to cut off the flow of life between the King and the Bride by distorting or belittling the King. **Gen.3:1**.

d) These are little foxes - and we are told to "take them", in other words we are to get control of small areas of habit and attitude while they are still controllable.

e) They are in the vineyard. This speaks of dealing with ourselves. The closer we come to the time of maturing fruit, the more God deals with little things in us.

"My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies." (2:16)

a) "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

At first appearances this sounds a very spiritual statement. However, the woman identifies the selfish motivation of her life at this stage. She has built a wall to protect what is "hers". In **Chapter 1:6** she had neglected her own vineyard through excessive duty. Now she is becoming

"exclusive" and wishes to keep all other demands and challenges out of her vision. Her own vineyard is all she cares for.

Now she feels that the King exists for her, rather than she for Him. "My beloved is mine", is put before "I am his".

However, much of this expression of devotion is mere formula at this point in her selfish spirituality. She is saying words, but will not obey Him. He is feeding among the lilies. Resurrection life is being manifested in Him, but she will not rise up and come away. She acknowledges Him with her lips, but her heart is far from Him. **Is. 29:13.**

Note **1:4** - "Draw me and we will run after thee", cp **2:17** - "You go and be like a young hart on the mountains". Her attitudes have completely changed.

b) "He feeds among the lilies."

In **1:7** she had asked where he fed. She is still remembering past experiences and is taking for granted that she knows where He feeds so she could find Him whenever she chooses. She is not taking into account that He is moving on and her memories are in danger of becoming lifeless traditions.

2:17 - "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

This is still the period of His physical absence (in heaven). Previously she had said, "He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts (faith and love)" - **1:13**. However, during this period of spiritual decline through her selfishness, she is now prepared to settle for a remote relationship filled with "shadows" until the day break - until He physically comes again. The shadows are things without substance - vain remembrances of previous glory.

The types of the Old Testament are called "shadows". They are of no value in themselves without the fulfilment in the person of Christ. **Heb. 10:1.**

She acknowledges the power of His resurrection life (the roe upon the mountains), but she still refuses to come out from behind her wall. In fact she says to the King, "be thou like a roe on the mountains of Bether" ("Bether" means separation). She is actually prepared to choose her own spiritual comfort and static religious experience in preference to the presence of the King, and as we shall see they become really separated. It is her refusal to obey His voice which brings this about. It is not His plan for her, but it becomes a bitter experience for her.

"By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth. I sought him, but I found him not." (3:1)

a) She sought him on the bed. He may have been there previously, but He had long since moved on to other areas. The last time she had seen Him He was leaping on mountains, etc, and challenging her to leave her wall and co-operate with Him. She is now attempting to revert to an experience with the King prior to that challenge which was more comfortable.

At times we hold onto the spiritual experiences which suit us, to the exclusion of the Lord Himself and when we seek Him in past things, He is no longer there. He must be sought where He is, instead of where He used to be. Whole denominations are built around a past move of God and are bereft of the actual presence of the Lord because of this.

b) The bed had previously been "our" bed (**1:16**), but now it is "my" bed. She has become possessive of His benefits to her and has enjoyed what He has done for her more than she enjoys Him. This is idolatry.

The state (or doctrine) of spiritual rest expressed in such truths, as entire sanctification, victorious living, positive confession, the throne rights of the believers, or the Sovereignty of God, etc, may be pushed, or held to such an extreme that the doctrine itself is more important than the Lord. Some denominations fight vigorously and even belligerently to uphold the veracity and inerrancy of the Bible, but deny the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and resist the presence of God in worship. This then becomes Bibliolatry - the idolatry of the Bible.

c) The word "night" is plural - "nights", and indicates that both the condition of their separation and her fruitless search for Him continued for a considerable period. Religion has such a dulling effect on- the senses that people get caught going through the motions without realising what is happening.

d) However, she is at least beginning to search for Him. At the end of **chapter 2** she was satisfied to be separated from His presence, and to be out of harmony with His working. Her self indulgence has failed to satisfy and now there is a deep cry for restoration and she eventually comes to the realisation that as in **1:8**, she again doesn't know the way to go. In **2:17** she had assumed that she could find Him whenever she chose, and had lost sight of a basic principle of spiritual life. The King must bring us in. The plan of God for us is at His initiative. "No man comes to me except the Father draw Him", Jesus said. (**John 6:44**)

Her search for him fails and the traditions and past experiences she is clutching to, are unable to restore his presence.

3:2 - "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."

a) She arises. This is the first step to restoration. She leaves what she had made hers "my bed". Religion is a spiritual experience past or present which no longer contains the presence of the King, and she now sees it as a hindrance. Though she has failed to walk with Him, her soul loves Him deeply and in the long term nothing else can satisfy her. The prodigal son began his steps to full restoration by "arising" - **Luke 15:18**.

b) However, once again her search is in the wrong place - she goes about the city. This is the structure of man. In fact the first city was built by Cain (**Gen. 4:17**) and Babel was a city built in rebellion (**Gen. 11:4**). Many of the judgements of God fall on cities. The Shulamite has already had problems in her relationship with the King because of walls. He has never been seen in the city in the book so far.

The city speaks of man-made and man-organised religion. Previously she sought him in the area of her past experience, "my bed". Now she seeks him in the structures of others. It had been her prayer not to be turned aside by the flocks of the companions, but she is hindered from finding the King when she wishes to find him because of the interference of man-made institutions.

The streets are established ways. Most religions systems function on an adherence to history and set rigid routines for spiritual practice. The broadways represent rationalising of God's ways. His way is straight and narrow, but the road to destruction expands on His laws and substitutes human thinking for His thoughts. Note, **Matt. 7:13, and Is. 55:8-9**.

3:3-4 - "The watchman that go about the city found me, to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little while that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth. 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 who conceived me."

a) The watchmen could not help her to find the King. It had been a personal disobedience and it had to be a personal search and restoration. This was not a matter for anyone else to take part in.

They were dedicated to the preservation of the city, and their emphasis and desire was different from hers. There is no suggestion that they answered and it appears that they were incapable of relating to her need.

b) As soon as she left them, she found the King. Both the city and those dedicated to its preservation are now behind her. She has finally obeyed the call He made to her in **2:8**. She is out from behind her wall at last.

c) Jer. 29:13 declares that we can find God when we search for Him with all our heart. It is apparent that searching in the wrong places is not searching with all the heart. He had previously given her commands and only whole-hearted obedience constitutes correct seeking.

The restoration of relationship is immediate. There is no gradual acceptance of her by the King.

d) She held Him and would not let Him go, which shows us the closeness of their restored relationship and her commitment to maintain it. She has learned some positive lessons through her negative and regressive experiences. In **1:2** she had wanted Him to kiss her, now she is so motivated by the restoration, that, like Jacob, she will not let go of God (**Gen. 32:26**). It was this determination for God's presence and blessing which changed Jacob forever and it also brings the Shulamite to a new place with the King.

e) She brought Him to her mother's house. She didn't go back to "our house" but to the natural things of her experience.

Jerusalem from above is the mother of us all (**Gal. 4:26**). This teaches us that the system of grace which we are in has many necessary and valid facets and functions which must have the presence of the King in order to avoid becoming merely religions. Such things as programmes and organisations and the utilisation of talents and abilities, education and training, are not evil, but will become a hindrance unless they are energised and given meaning by the King's presence.

f) She had so seriously refused the call of the King and missed moving with Him that she is now feeling the need for a total and in-depth work to be done in her life to avoid such a rebellious and self-centred attitude to Him in the future. She takes Him to the chamber where she was conceived. This represents the basic foundations of her life and suggests the need to return to basic salvation and build a better relationship with thinking based on proper attitudes which will emphasise His glory rather than a grasp for blessings for herself.

3:5 - "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till it please."

This verse is the end of the second section of the book - the period of faltering love.

a) Exactly the same command is given to the daughters of Jerusalem by the King as at the end of Section One. The Bride is now making recovery and the King seeks to protect her from carnal people who would seek a stimulation of her love in an inconvenient way or time. For the moment she needs a particular dealing of the Lord in her life that is totally King centred rather than any blessings or stimulation for herself.

b) The first section ended with her in the King's arms and this second section ends with him in her arms.

This shows us the need for reciprocation of the King's love. Previously their relationship depended on the King providing gifts and blessings for her, and as the recipient of all this bounty, she begins to become self-centred and gift-conscious. Now that she is restored to Him and has taken Him into both the ordinary and foundational levels of her life, she is giving love instead of only receiving it. The second section which starts out so disastrously, finishes on a better plane. The King's patient and constant encouragement to the Bride to join Him, finally creates a hunger in her and produces the needed changes. Her prayer of **1:4**, "draw me", has not been forgotten by Him, nor is it answered only once and then discarded. He keeps it by Him to act on as the occasion demands. Note **1 Kings 8:59**.

SECTION THREE

LOVE'S PURPOSE REVEALED

Chapter 3:6 - 5:1

a) The first, second and third sections of the book all begin with a new revelation of the King. It was contact with Him in **1:2** that developed her desire for Him to kiss her. Section two begins with a new phase of His activity - "leaping on mountains", etc.

b) Both the second and third sections emphasise His coming, **2:8** - "behold He cometh", and **3:6** - "Who is this that cometh", and are representative of His Second Coming and the place and function that the Bride will have in that event. Note, **Rev. 22:17** - "The Spirit and Bride say come".

c) In the previous section she was not prepared to be involved in this new activity of the King and He went without her, leaving her to her religion without His presence. Now she goes with Him.

i) In the first part of this section (**3:6-11**) the Shulamite is never mentioned and is not seen at all. However, it would be incongruous to think that having succeeding in bring her out from her wall and having her reciprocate His love, the King would then leave her.

ii) She is actually there, but now never mentions herself. She is co-operating with the next move of the King, but emphasises only Him. Her life is as **Col. 3:3** - "dead (to herself) and hid with Christ in God".

iii) The King had called her His Dove. The Holy Spirit as a dove never speaks of Himself, but only of Christ - **John 16:13-15**, and the Bride is now filled with the Holy Spirit and seeks to magnify the glory of the King alone.

3:6 - "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?"

a) She is the speaker in this section, drawing the attention of others to the majesty and provisions of the King (who is this), and in so doing produces a great change in those less committed.

b) This section (**v.6-11**) is a wedding procession and related to the public revelation of what has been a personal experience between them. While they have been married and the King had taken her into His chambers (**1:4**), it was not put on public display. Now that she has put the major obstacles to their relationship behind her, she is able to share with Him in this outward manifestation of His glory and her identification with Him.

c) "coming out of the wilderness ..."

Because she is now in Him, she is able to leave the wilderness of her past regression and failure. The King had called her to rise up and come away (**2:10**) and she is now putting the past behind her.

- i. The wilderness is a place of wandering and futility. Israel spent almost 40 years wandering there. There will now be a purpose to her life and no more senseless circuits of the sands of selfishness.
 - ii. The wilderness bordered on Egypt which is a type of the world. Her refusal to obey the King had made her a neighbour of the world.
- d) "like pillars of smoke ..."
- i. The pillar of cloud - the manifestation of God's Shekinah glory which led, covered and protected Israel in the wilderness. The Shulamite is identified with the King and His glory is now hers. She is coming out of her regression a totally new woman in attitude and ability.
 - ii. The pillar of **Rev. 3:12** speaks of the dependability of over comers. Anyone can fail as she has failed the King, but true over comers rise up & come away, leaving their failure behind them & growing in grace & strength.
 - iii. Smoke is caused by the action of fire. This is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and suggests the refining work He does in us to take away the irrelevant aspects of religion in us, and the garbage of our lives (**Matt. 3:11-12**). The chaff is a past stage and is now in the way. Her past failure is burnt away by being totally absorbed in His Shekinah glory.
- e) She, through her associations with the King - being hid in Him, becomes affected by His odours. The smell of Him is on her.
- i. Myrrh - His suffering and death, is re-emphasised to her at this time as she seeks to rebuild on the foundations of her life. She has taken Him to the chamber where she was conceived and now feels the need to draw upon both His redemptive work for her and His example to totally deal with her past religious pre-occupation and her selfishness by living a sacrificial life herself (**Rom. 12:1**). **1 Peter 2:21, 4:1**.
 - ii. Frankincense - was part of the incense of the Tabernacle (**Ex. 30:34**), and was used both at the Altar of Incense for worship to God and as part of the sacrifices - **Lev. 2**. On both occasions it was fire which released its pleasant odour as an offering to God. The relationship of the Bride to the King is maintained by prayer, but this prayer is not the routine of a religious exercise. It is the effectual, fervent (or burning) prayer which satisfied Him (**James 5:16**). She is now under the pillar of smoke and His fire is working in her to produce a fervent relationship, rather than one that is luke warm. **Rev. 3:16**.
 - iii. "... all powders of the merchant ..." The emphasis here is not so much on the type of powders or aromatic dust, but on how they are obtained. **1 Kings 10:15** tells of Solomon's trading in distant lands. These spices were not produced personally, but had to be bought. A merchant sells rather than gives. The King, who is a type of Christ, is seen as the merchant who had sold all that He had in order to buy the pearl of great price (**Matt. 13:45-46**) He loved the Church and gave His all for her. Now the Shulamite is seeking to follow in this same attitude, and drawing on His example, is purchasing spices to add to her fragrance. The price paid is her total obedience to Him and remaining in the secret place - hidden in Him, so only He is glorified.

3:7-10 - "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made its posts of silver, the bottom of it of gold, its covering of purple, the midst of it being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem."

a) "Behold his bed"

- i. It has started out as "our bed", then through the time of her withdrawal from Him it became "my bed". Now it is "His". In order to avoid the danger of once again taking His blessings and excluding His presence, she swings to the opposite emphasis and continues to talk only of the King.
- ii. This bed is best described as a palanquin or litter - similar to a sedan chair. It was a means of travel by the monarchs of ancient times and was borne upon the shoulders of men. It is also called a chariot (v.9). This is really a picture of the Ark of the Covenant being carried on the shoulders of the priests. It was directly over this Ark that the Shekinah glory cloud hovered when God was on the move, leading Israel through the wilderness.
- iii. When David sought to move the Ark on a Philistine cart, it brought death instead of life. The Shulamite has seen the futility of pulling Pharaoh's chariot and knows now that the King's work must be done in His way and if it is, there will be a manifestation of His Presence & Power. Human attempts to substitute for or manipulate the Presence of God will produce death instead of life.
- iv. iii) They are coming up out of the wilderness together in the palanquin. It speaks of both rest and progress. She had previously clutched at the rest of total inactivity and regression to past experiences. Now they are making progress into something more of a revelation of both the King and His purposes. True rest in God is never regression or inactivity, but confident faith in Him, which releases us from having to pull strings and manipulate our environment to our own means.

b) "... threescore valiant men are around it ..."

- i. The genealogy of Jesus contains 60 generations - i.e. 60 male ancestors. **Luke 3:34-38** lists 20 generations from Adam to Abraham. **Matthew 1:2-16** lists 14 generations from Abraham to David, another 14 from Solomon to Jeconiah, and there are a further 12 from Solathiel to Joseph - Jesus' foster-father = a total of 60, which is also typified in the 60 pillars of the Tabernacle's Outer Court.

These threescore men around Solomon's bed are for security. The greatest security we have is in the fact that Jesus is truly human as well as divine. His genealogy connects him to Adam, the human father of us all. During the night of our physical separation from Him, we have a truly human High Priest in the heavenlies who fully understands our need and was tempted in all areas as we are. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. (**Heb. 4:15-16**)

- ii. A further level of protection that Jesus has set in His Church are the Ascension Gift Ministries, which God has established as the Government of His people. **Heb. 13:7, 17**. There are 5 of them (**Eph.4:11**). Twelve is the number of perfect Government. (There were 12 original apostles. Note also the 12 apostles of the Lamb - **Rev.21:14**. 12 and 5 are the factors of 60. These appointments of the Lord are empowered by His own abilities- swords on their thighs. This is spoken of the King Himself in **Ps. 45:3**.)
- iii. In addition to the true humanity of Christ and the leadership of His Church being a security to us in the night, God has provided His "mighty men" of the angelic hosts to protect us. Note all of **Psalm 91** (especially **v.11**). **Ps. 34:7. Heb. 1:14**.

c) Solomon's palanquin was constructed of:

- i. Wood (cedar) of Lebanon - again emphasising the real humanity of our heavenly bridegroom.
- ii. This wood was the framework of the chariot or litter and it shows us that the physical nature of Jesus is the framework upon which all of the redemptive work He has done for us depends. He did not come to us as God, but laid aside His heavenly glory and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. **Phil. 2:7-8**.
- ii. Silver columns or struts. These gave the litter stability and strength and kept it in shape. The reason for Christ's coming was to accomplish redemption. He didn't just come to live a good human existence for us. He was born to die. (Silver is a type of redemption- **Ex. 30:13**. This shekel of redemption money was used to make the supports for the timber walls of the Tabernacle.) Redemption gave His humanity shape or a reason for being.
- iii. Gold - various commentators disagree whether this was the bottom, back, or canopy. Strong interprets the Hebrew "rephidah" as railings, while Young says it means, "seat cover". It is unlikely that the actual seat fabric was gold, as it would have been very uncomfortable to travel sitting on such a surface. It most likely is the seat canopy which would also allow the thought of railings. This would cause the rider to be covered or overshadowed by gold, which is a type of Deity. The redemptive work Christ came to do was not done by human energy at all, although He was perfectly human and humanly perfect, but God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (**2 Cor. 5:19**) and it is this same quality of Deity which is the transforming factor in the Bride. **Gal. 2:20**. God overshadows & transcends every human ability.
- iv. Purple seat (covering) or throne. This colour specifically represents Kingship. The bride is seated with the King in heavenly places by faith and love during the "night season". He is now reigning - all things are under His feet and He is seated (**Eph. 2:6 and 1:20-22**). His authority is established by the Bride's restoration and rest in Him and the progress that is being made in their relationship and joint ministry is dependent on the wood, silver, gold and purple. Jesus didn't operate on earth as God, but as a human being anointed of the Holy Spirit and by His Father's authority. **Acts 10:38**. The Church's progress and activity depends on exactly the same formula.

- v. The revelation of the King and the bride in "His" palanquin typifies the Church's means of locomotion on the earth - ie, as He is lifted up and glorified, so all men are drawn to Him.

d) It was paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem (or inlaid with love by these daughters of Jerusalem - as most translators express this section).

- i. They are changing. The devotion of the Bride for the King is gradually affecting them and inspiring these carnal and settled believers to a new desire for the King. They are now concerned with His glory and progress.
- ii. In fact the next verse (**3:11**) calls them the daughters of Zion. This is the only time in the book that this term is used and it shows the King's intention to bring them into a Bride relationship. Zion is that special place in Jerusalem where the presence of God was on open display in David's Tabernacle - **2 Sam. 6, and 1 Chron. 15.**
- iii. The King has not written them off, but as He has been constant and patient with the Bride, He seeks to promote a change in their attitude also. Christ is constantly using those who are going on with Him to be both the example and inspiration to others who are spiritually static to come alive. One of His means of dealing with us all is to get us to follow the footsteps of the flock. (**1:7**)
- iv. One of the early desires of the Shulamite was "draw me and we will run after you". Now that she is being drawn out of her period of decline, this prayer is being fulfilled. Others are also responding in love to the King.

3:11 - "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

a) These daughters of Jerusalem who can become the daughters of Zion, (they are never spoken of in this way again - showing that it is possible for them, but depends on their response) are challenged by the Bride to go forth and behold King Solomon. It was seeing Him which had changed her from a member of His Kingdom to one loving Him and earnestly pursuing the King in the first instance, and it is the place where they must begin also.

b) The mother of the King (Christ) can only be the human race and a fallen human race at that. Solomon's own mother, Bath-Sheba, was an adulteress who was elevated by Divine Grace to give Solomon his crown. Jesus has come from among the human race. The Church (Jerusalem) is not His mother, but His Bride. Womankind, through Mary, is the specific part of the human race that makes the human race His mother. He is the seed of the woman - **Gen. 3:15.**

4:1-5 - "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair. Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing, of which every one beareth twins, and none is barren among them. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely; thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks. Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, on which there hang a

thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies."

a) The King begins to re-emphasise His view of the Bride and amplifies it into specific descriptions of the parts of her life which delight Him. One translation begins the King's description with, "How bright and brilliant you are my love".

Her period of "real faith" has produced a marvellous effect in her which pleases the King. This real faith was expressed in two things:

Being "hid" in the King - **Col. 3:3**

Not grasping for anything for herself.

She was now trusting the King fully and implicitly and is prepared to go His way, and wait His time instead of selfishly demanding her own blessing .

Her only desire seen in the latter part of the previous chapter is to exalt the King and see others drawn to Him (**3:11**). This attitude causes the King to call her fair.

b) In order to re-enforce His view of her, He repeats the phrase, "thou art fair" four times in the next ten verses. It is important at this stage for her to be able to accept the King's opinion of her. A revelation of her new nature and the power of redemption in her is as valid as the revelation of the King Himself. Without a full acceptance of His work for her and in her, His own coming is not effective. Christ did not come just for the sake of it, so that men would be condemned, but He came for a purpose - that man might be saved (**John 3:17**). It is not enough for God that the gospel is preached. He desires changed lives and this can only happen if His bride can "see" both the effect and effectiveness of His redemptive work for, and His relationship with, His people.

It is for this reason at this stage that He employs "repetition teaching" to fully re-enforce this revelation of herself so that she can respond to Him without reservation.

c) Her emphasis on the King alone rather than what He has done for her in the previous chapter leads to this re-emphasised and extensive revelation of herself. It teaches us that all things that we need in our spiritual life come out of giving Jesus the pre-eminence.

The revelation of the Church's position in **Col. 1:21-27** is preceded by a revelation of Christ - **1:15-19**.

d) Up to this point, whenever the King had expressed His view of her or blessed her, she had either re-acted to it negatively or had taken advantage of Him for her own ends: i.e.,

i) "You are comely - like the curtains of Solomon" had caused the reaction, "look not upon me for I am black", and resulted in the frantic efforts

ii) **1:15-16**, "thou art fair" is followed by "our bed" which eventually becomes "my bed" (**3:1**).

ii) The banqueting house had become "our wall" (**2:4-8**).

f) This time the King develops an extensive description of the things within her which please Him, and does not take her any further or give her anything, or bless her with more, until she can fully grasp this revelation.

g) What He doesn't describe here, He does later, and there are reasons why these later descriptions are not included at this point.

SEVEN FACETS OF THE BRIDE'S FAIRNESS

1. "Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks"

a) It is appropriate that this should be the first description. It is her return to a "fixed-field focus" on the King (**3:6-11**) which has brought her own life into proper perspective. The eyes are the window of the soul (**Matt. 6:22**), and her soul is now filled with His light because it is all she is concentrating on.

b) The dove can see much further than humans. Certain types of doves or pigeons are being trained for use in air-sea rescue operations because of their ability to see long distances.

The Bride's doves' eyes speak of her spiritual perception becoming much clearer and more acute as she concentrates on the King.

She now has a changed way of seeing not only the King, but herself, the Daughters of Jerusalem, and shortly, as a result of her focus on the King she will see her own consecration in more positive terms.

The powers of darkness will also come into open view, but all of these things are held in a proper perspective and order of priorities with the King being supreme in her life.

c) Her eyes are "within her locks"

Hair in the scripture speaks of covering (**1 Cor. 11:15**), and consecration (**Num. 6:5**). These two aspects show her spiritual perception being veiled or hidden from public display. Part of her consecration is to keep under the King's covering and not to promote or parade herself.

Whatever the King shows her she is using only for His glory and not for self-exaltation.

2. "Your hair is as a flock of goats"

a) The hair speaks of consecration as expressed in the Nazarite vow (**Num. 6**). In this vow some things had to go, and something had to grow.

i. The Nazarite could not partake of any product of the vine. This speaks of natural stimulation. The Bride will not seek any other stimulus than the King's presence.

ii. The Nazarite could not touch a dead body as this would make him unclean. The consecration of the Bride involves avoiding:

a) anything which doesn't have resurrection life in it. **Rom 6:4, Rev. 1:18, and**

Heb. 9:14.

- b) anything which is for self pleasure - **1 Tim. 5:6.**
 - c) anything which is not of faith - **James 2:20 and 26**
 - d) anything which is fruitless - **Jude verse 12.**
- iii. iii) The Nazarite could not cut his hair during the time of the vow. This consecration is expressed in submission and total commitment. The references to the woman's hair in **1 Cor. 11:15** show that in the Corinthian culture a woman who didn't let her hair grow was not committed to one man. There was no submission in her life, and she was not under the covering of her husband.

The Shulamite has learned from her independence of the King and has discovered that holding onto her desires when He had tried to lead her into other things was not only selfish but rebellious.

- iv. It also shows that as hair has to "grow" and is not instantaneously "imparted", so true consecration develops or grows from one level to another.

b) Referring to the hair as a "flock of goats" symbolises the sacrificial nature of this commitment to the King. The goat was used for the sin offering (**Lev. 16:5**) and was part of the Day of Atonement offering when cleansing for the whole nation of Israel was performed. **Romans 12:1** tells us that even in the New Testament Church the Lord looks for our total sacrifice, our readiness to be offered, and finds this beautiful in His Bride. **Ps. 116:15**. The commitment expressed in laying down our own desires, and suppressing any destructive attitudes or needs of the body for His glory alone is pleasing to God and is seen as the Hair of Consecration.

c) The hair is referred to as a flock of goats "that eat of (or appear in) Mount Gilead".

Mount Gilead is a rugged and inaccessible region and this suggests that true consecration is lonely, precarious and difficult to attain.

Elijah the Tishbite is thought to have come from Gilead. He was exclusively God's man and this caused his lonely life in an age when the rest of Israel had compromised. However, the plan of God is to feed us in that lonely consecration to Himself, as He fed Elijah throughout the famine. This relationship with the King excludes certain things which are considered acceptable by others, but it also provides a supply of God's grace not available to those who compromise. Note **Jer. 50:19**.

3. "Your teeth are like a flock of sheep"

a) The first thing noticed in this description is that she is no longer considered to be an infant in her development. Babies have no teeth. She now has the ability to masticate and assimilate food. **1 Cor. 3:1-2 and Heb. 5:14** show that the ability to eat strong meat is a quality of those no longer carnal or immature. Jesus offered the crowd of His disciples a diet they could not eat, thus demonstrating their spiritual immaturity - **John 6:53-66**.

b) They were "even shorn".

Sheep produce wool which was a forbidden fabric for priests. They could not wear anything that caused sweat (**Ezek. 44:18**) and instead, had to clothe themselves with linen which is a type of the righteousness of the saints. Wool is the natural product of sheep and it has to be taken off regularly in order to keep the sheep healthy.

- i. The ability to assimilate God's word depends on the product of our natural life being constantly shorn off. **Col. 3:8-9** tells us to "put off" the old man and his deeds. Without a regular shearing of these natural products, the flow of revelation from God's Word will be impeded.
- ii. The other major area that needs to be "shorn" from our lives is "natural reasoning". Whatever we know of God must be by revelation and not through the product of our natural mind.

The shearing is related to "the washing" and both are needed to deal with the "parasites" of life.

a. Jesus spoke of a washing that was needed to cleanse us from the grime collected by our daily contact with the world. **John 13:10**. The process by which this happens in the application of and obedience to the Word of God itself. **Eph. 5:26-27**.

b. The ability to assimilate God's Word is directly related to its cleansing work. The Word does not cleanse from sin, but from wrong concepts, deceptions and attitudes. When we allow the teaching of the Word to change us we are then prepared for its power of revelation, ie, the "strong meat".

c. cc) The Old Testament priest had to change his woolen garments for linen and then he washed at the laver before he could go into the Holy Place and receive light from the lampstand.

c) "Everyone bear twins and none is barren".

The teeth are expected to keep developing. There is no place for a static revelation of the King. The teeth of the bride, or her ability to assimilate the revelation of her beloved were not barren. Every experience and teaching she is receiving is preparing her for more of Him and no part of her life is unproductive.

The twins refer to the "balanced effect" this appropriation of the King is having on the bride. Our natural teeth are in pairs and in the spiritual dimension there is a need for balance. Some go off on tangents absorbing only those things which interest them, and avoiding those aspects of spiritual life which are less stimulating or more demanding. However, the Bride has learned from her previous failures largely caused by being selective rather than balanced in her spiritual life. Now she wants all that is in Him.

4. "Thy lips are like the thread of scarlet".

a) The King tells her that her speech is comely. She is saying the right things and the product of her lips is pleasing to Him.

The fruit of our lips is a good confession (**Heb. 13:15**) and the bride's confession is related to the King's redemptive work. She is talking constantly of the blood which has cleansed her.

Rahab the harlot found salvation through "a scarlet thread" - **Josh. 2:18**, and was redeemed though all around her perished.

b) Lips and eyes work together to give expression to the personality. If the eyes smile, the mouth cannot be set in hard lines.

The Bride's speech and the expression of her mouth is connected to what her eyes are fixed upon. There is now a consistency between her vision and her speech. Both have the King in the forefront.

5. "Thy temples are like a piece of (or halves of) a pomegranate within your locks".

a) The temples more correctly refer to the cheeks.

i) Previously her complexion had been sunburnt (**1:6**), but now it is like a piece of pomegranate, which has a pinkish colour. The King had told her that she was as the curtains of Solomon to Him, but now His work in her has produced a tangible and observable effect. She is really changed. This is not just the legal side of redemption, the imputed righteousness, but the actual working out of imparted righteousness. God declares us to be sanctified, but He also works within us to make that sanctification more than words. The Bride has been changing into the likeness of the King by being in His presence and beholding Him.

ii) Her cheeks are like a piece of pomegranate and this suggests two things:

a) The pomegranate has been cut. Many good or beneficial effects are worked in us through the knife. Every branch that bears fruit is pruned by God (**John 15:2**). Suffering and tribulation are part of the process God both allows or uses to produce change and beauty in us - **Acts 14:22**.

b) Once opened, these halves of pomegranates reveal what is in them. The pomegranate is a fruit full of seeds and this speaks to us of the abundant life that is in the Bride. Often we do not realise how much "life" is in us until the knife of tribulation has been used on us and instead of dying we bear more fruit. Seeds also speak of potential. The Bride, through her relationship with the King, is literally bursting with potential. There is much that is yet to be developed, but the beginnings of that future stage of her life is already apparent.

b) The Bride's cheeks (temples) are said to be within her locks, just as her eyes are. This tells us that the changes wrought in her, the beauty and the life in her is not always observable on the outside. The only place where the Bride is really manifested is in the secret place of her

relationship with the King. He alone sees her as she really is. The world never sees all that is in us.

6. "Thy neck is like the tower of David".

a) There are four types of necks spoken of in the scriptures:

- stiff necked (unyielding or stubborn)
- bowed neck in bondage
- upright neck.
- neck of restoration e.g. Prodigal Son.

The neck expresses the will of man. If it is stiffened, there will be resistance to change or refusal to co-operate. This expresses self will. If the neck is bowed in bondage or servitude, it reveals that the will has been broken and now the person is controlled by an outside force. It generally means that a battle has been lost and now the person is vanquished.

The Bride's neck, however, is not like these previous cases. Her neck is spoken of as a tower of David - a place of defence. So her neck is an upright one, but one of consecration, ever ready to turn to a new direction so that the eyes can maintain a fixed view of the King.

Most of this fallen human race, through His redemptive work, is, or will be, redeemed and become His crown. It is the saints who cause Him to be admired and glorified in His Second Coming when He will be united to them in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb - the day of His wedding and the gladness of His heart. Note **2 Thess. 1:10, and 1 Thess. 2:19.**

b) Her neck is like the tower of "David", who is said to have performed all God's will. **Acts 13:22.** This surrender to the will of God is the best defence of the Bride. Her will yielded to God's will becomes impenetrable by the enemies of her soul.

c) When the Bride has made the decision to choose only the King's way in her life, He adds another dimension of protection to her. A thousand shields of mighty men cover her tower. This speaks of the whole armour of God covering every part so that there is no exposure to enemy strategies. This armour of God is supernatural covering based on our choice to align ourselves with God's will and purpose for us.

d) Previously her stubborn neck expressed in her doing the King's work in her own energy was like a mare pulling Pharaoh's chariots (**1:9**) and the King desired to adorn her neck with chains of gold. These "betrothal" chains showed that she had willingly yielded to His way. This gold, a type of the Divine nature, has a long term effect in her. Initially she had still gone her own way as seen in **Chapter 2**, but eventually the chains of gold upon her neck began to have an effect until this area of choice becomes the strongest part of her experience with the King. She now follows Him and loves Him not because of what He has done for her, but because her choice is to do His will regardless of how she feels or whatever she receives.

e) Another thought regarding these shields is that we are strengthened by the fellowship and support of our contemporaries and the example of others who have preceded us. This tower is like a museum containing the shields of the mighty ones of by-gone times. Their exploits and battles won are thus represented and are an encouragement to us to stand firm also.

7. "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins".

a) The breasts of the Bride were referred to in **Chapter 1:13** - "He shall lie all night between my breasts", but they were not described. Now the King concludes His portrait of her beauty and appealing characteristics with specific comparisons to the breasts. We have already established that typically they refer to faith and love (**1 Thess. 5:8**), the elements that sustain our relationship with the King when we cannot see Him. However we need to understand what effect the Church's faith and love has upon the Lord.

b) In natural love the breasts of a woman serve a much greater function than that of mere mammary or milk secreting glands for the purpose of feeding her baby. They form part of the woman's attractiveness and along with her hair and the rest of her figure establish the apparent and biological distinction from the male.

Proverbs 5:18-19 teaches the young married man to be faithful to his wife and says, "let her breasts satisfy you at all times". The woman's breasts thus form part of the arousal of human love, and we can see that the relationship between Christ and His Church is one in which He is inspired and blessed by the spiritual activity of His Bride. Just as a husband is drawn to his wife by those parts of her figure which make her different from and unique to him, so the relationship with the Lord is enhanced as the Church develops those parts of its life which are unique and mark it out as different to the world.

c) The King refers to the breasts as twins, showing the equal growth and balanced development of faith and love in the Bride. In the Church it is grotesque to see those who emphasise one part to the exclusion of the other. Some are strongly developed in faith, but their love is small, while in others there has been a concentration of love and devotion, but no faith has been brought forth. Rather than being attractive, such distortions of the true form of the believer is repulsive. The following scriptures link faith and love - **1 Cor. 13:13, Gal. 5:6, Eph. 6:23, 1 Thess. 1:3, 3:6, 5:8, 1 Tim. 1:5, 1:14, 4:12, 6:11, 2 Tim. 1:13, 3:10, Titus 3:15, and Phil. v 5.**

The link between these two spiritual aspects is often challenged by the Lord in order to force a balanced development, i.e. if we tell the Lord we love Him, He will test our faith, and if we tell Him we believe Him, He will test our love.

d) The function of the breasts is also pleasing to the Lord. The Bride is the source of nourishment to those who have been born into the family of God. As the woman's breasts provide milk and a feeling of security to sustain a new born babe, so the Church provides food and security for new believers. This practice enhances the attractiveness of the Bride to the King.

e) The King says her breasts are like two young roes that feed among the lilies.

i) **Chapter 2:16** shows the King feeding among the lilies. Now He is declaring that she feeds where He feeds and the reasons for her development of these beautiful and attractive aspects of her life is because of her dedication to seek Him out, to be near Him, and to do what He is doing. The lilies speak of resurrection life and she is determined not to live on the dead things of this world, but only on the life that flows from the King.

ii) The reference to "young roes" suggests that these aspects of faith and love are both enthusiastic and sensitive as the gazelle or young fawns are. They are bursting with life

and energy, but are easily frightened. This is true of the development of faith and love. As in a human relationship, there are always questions and uncertainties.

4:6 - "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will go up to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense."

a) This is the first time the Bride has spoken since she urged the daughters of Zion to go and behold King Solomon (**3:11**). Ever since she re-discovered Him and took him to the foundations of her life ("the chamber where she was conceived" - **3:4**), her whole attention has been fixed upon the King and she is no longer promoting herself or asking for personal blessings.

Now for the first time in a whole chapter she speaks about herself, but it is only in terms of her increasing consecration. There is no boasting of her personal achievements but only a declaration of her developing devotion to the King.

b) Following the King's description of her neck (or will) being submitted to Him, she declares "I will" get me to the mountains. Her choices are now so clear and definite to follow the King and do His will.

i) In **chapter 2:8** she had declined this opportunity and now for the first time since then she is ready to face the mountains.

ii) This amplifies God's way of dealing with us. He brings us full circle to face the things we previously avoided, ie Israel eventually had to face the conflict of Canaan which their fore-father's shrank from.

iii) This time the King has not called her to the mountain, but His description of her has produced in the Bride an overwhelming desire to please Him and to overcome any area of failure left in her. She volunteers to do the thing which was her last point of disobedience to His will. This is the "fruit of repentance".

c) The mountain of myrrh is the place of suffering and bitterness and it speaks of a further application of the cross in her life. In the life of the believer the cross is both a past and present work. Note and compare: **Gal. 2:20, Mark 8:34-35, Phil. 2:5, 2 Tim. 3:12, and 1 Pet. 2:21**. There is now a desire in the Shulamite to enter into the "fellowship of the King's sufferings" - **Phil. 3:10**, and not to pursue her personal pleasure.

d) The hill of frankincense speaks of worship produced through sacrifice. Frankincense is mentioned more in the Song of Solomon than any other book, except Leviticus, which lays down the requirements for both sacrifice and worship. The Bride's intention to depart from her previous disobedience and to voluntarily share the sufferings of the King is an act of worship.

i) This is also seen in that the mountain of myrrh is referred to first. Then comes the hill of frankincense. Once the major decisions of consecration are made, the rest is generally not as hard. Hills are easier to climb than mountains.

ii) Both myrrh and frankincense were associated with her coming out of the wilderness (**3:6**). We never get beyond the need for further application of the cross as we achieve progress in the Kingdom. There is no absolute and total perfection in this life, but a need for the cross all the way.

e) The Shulamite says that she will do these things until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. We have already established that night-time refers to the physical absence of Christ and the day-break speaks of His return or Second Coming.

i) She recognises that until then there will be shadows (**cp 1 Cor. 13**) and no full revelation of His blazing light.

ii) We remember that in **Chapter 2:8-17** she had rejected the idea of conquering the mountains and hills. She has overcome this problem and is now identified totally with what the King has already done. Victory over our weakness and failure is the King's goal in us, and He will keep working in our lives until we break through in these areas and the problems are behind us.

4:7 - "You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you."

The development of the Bride is blessing the King because it is not now potential He sees in her. Her actual state has radically changed until He can say to her what He has never said yet - "there is no spot in you".

a) Not only is her behaviour changed, but her motives at this point are pure as she has lost her self-centredness.

b) Her "all fair" and "no spot" state needs to be compared to "I am black". It is not to suggest that there is no spot on her. The daily contact of the believer with the world may produce a spotting which needs to be washed away with the water of the Word! Grime on the outside and spots on the inside are a totally different matter. Even in chapter one her problem was only a surface problem - "sunburn", but her selfish possession of the King's blessings in chapter two produced an inner uncleanness that could only be dealt with by myrrh or the cross. Now once again she is free from an internal barrier between her and the King, and He is able to present her to Himself without spot or wrinkle. **Eph. 5:27**.

c) The King is able to commend her without being taken advantage of. In previous times when He blessed her or complimented her, she would turn it to her own benefit. Now the King can trust her with His love because she is voluntarily abiding in the mountains and hills of myrrh and frankincense.

d) The various stages of the Bride's relationship with the King show us that success is a process, and not a state.

4:8 - "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir, and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse".

a) This verse is the key to the whole book and reveals both the reason for the King's dealings with the Bride, and her own reason for being. The King's recent endorsements of her were not meant to be an end in themselves, but a means to an end. His expressions of faith in the Bride and appreciation of her beauty were designed to enable her to progress into her real destiny.

Her perfection was a preparation for the spiritual battle and an entry into the ministry and victory of the King. The Church, like Esther of old, is being washed and prepared to engage and

defeat the enemy. We have "come to the Kingdom for such a time as this". **Esther 2:2, 17, and 4:14.**

As with Esther, the ministry of myrrh in the Bride was a stepping stone to the top of Lebanon and all that this involved.

b) The Lord may postpone His intention for a time because of the inability of His Church to progress, but He never lowers His standard or surrenders His purpose. He never gives up. In **chapter 2:8-17** she had not been able to accept the challenge to "come with me". Now the same call reaches out to her again (**4:8**). The Church can never escape the call of God to fulfill its ministry. We may waste time and opportunity, but He will persist until we face it.

i) Some would tend to take advantage of this persistence of the King, saying "it doesn't really matter if I fail. He will eventually bring me in". The call is not only an individual one for a specific personal ministry, but a corporate one. We need to face the fact that Israel eventually fulfilled God's will and conquered Canaan, but an entire generation of Israel missed "their" inheritance.

ii) The second chance also meant a second challenge. Nothing had changed. The Bride has merely postponed the moment of truth and delayed her destiny being realised. In fact she had made the road more difficult because the second time she had to go to the mountain of myrrh alone, before she could go with Him to Lebanon. In chapter 2:8-10 she could have gone with him direct to an overcoming state.

iii) However, we see that the King has the ability to make all things work together for good. Even her failure and taking the long way around. Jesus' unchallengeable declaration is, "I will build MY Church".

c) This is the first time in the book that the King has called the Bride "my spouse". In the Hebrew language this is the word for Bride, but it comes from a root which means to make perfect or complete. The dealings of God are designed to achieve perfection or "maturity" in His Church and the King has been bringing the Bride to this place of maturity so that she will be qualified to face the challenge of her real ministry. She has not been called to the King to be blessed and favoured above others, but so that she will be prepared to be an instrument in His hand to subdue His enemies.

The King never calls her "my spouse" until she is able to say "I will go all the way with you and will not settle where I choose while you go further". The emphasis is not so much on mountains as the Bride's total unity with the King - not only in nature but in purpose. The emphasis is "come with me".

d) This new position with the King brings a totally new perspective of the world to the Bride.

i) Previously she had looked at the mountains as an impossible task, or an unnecessary interruption to her comfortable state. Once having gone to the top, the bride's vision is increased greatly. Before, all she could see was the mountain and the cost involved. Now she sees not the mountain, but the whole of the King's domain laid out before her. She now has a perspective that was impossible before.

The Lord's desire for His Church is to be seated with Him in heavenly places, and to "look down" upon the problems and challenges of this life with a perspective of victory. **Eph. 2:6, cp 1:20-22.** It is true that the view depends upon the vantage point.

ii) There are two basic philosophies of the Christian life which are diametrically opposed to each other. They are "working for the Lord" and "working with the Lord". The first is works based and seeks to earn God's favour by human effort. The second seeks to find God's will and co-operate with him, and it is this alone which will bring success in spiritual things. We are crucified "with Him", buried "with Him", raised "with Him", seated "with Him", and shall reign "with Him". It was God working "with them" (**Mark 16:20**) which brought confirmation of the word by signs following.

e) Mount Hermon is a triple peaked mountain in the Anti-Lebanon range and it appears that the three names, Amana, Shenir and Hermon were applied to the peaks which are about equal distance apart and of equal height.

i) Lebanon, where these mountain peaks are, was never possessed by Israel, although it was part of its promised inheritance. Its occurrence in the Song of Solomon as a spiritual truth written by Solomon who as King did not possess that territory shows us that the Church must not settle for less than its full inheritance in Christ.

Through her new consecration and obedience to the King, the bride has taken possession of a never claimed inheritance. It is now under her feet - Joshua 1:3. She is experiencing the "heavenly places" state of faith. The King has brought her to a place where she is victorious. Note His desire - **2 Cor 2:14**

ii) The names of these mountain peaks are significant in the Bride's victory: ~

a) Amana means "confirmation" or "permanent". The word also carries the thought of "covenant", and is related to the word "Amen". Jesus is called "The Amen - the faithful and true witness" - **Rev. 3:14**. "In Him all the promises of God are yea and Amen" - **2 Cor. 1:20**.

In the heavenly places with the King the Bride receives not only a world view and increased vision, but a greater understanding of her relationship with the King, and the resulting change in her nature. There is a confirmation of truth to her that only came about through her obedience to ascend the mountain with the King.

b) Shenir (Note **Deut. 3:9**) means "covering" and indicates an "armour of protection" provided for the Bride in this high place with the King. She will soon face conflict and opposition as a result of this new state of faith, but is prepared for it by the King before it comes. This is the Church's spiritual armour of **Eph. 6:11-18**

c) Hermon means "devoted to destruction", and in the context of the other names, infers the overthrow of the Satanic Kingdom through the work of Christ on the Cross - **Col. 2:14-15**.

Before we ever face spiritual conflict the King not only prepares our armour for us, but has already overthrown our enemies.

f) While in this exalted place of obedience and revelation, the Bride confronts the enemy - "the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards". In the midst of her new status with the King

and the revelation of herself in Him calling her "my spouse", spiritual warfare begins. In her maturity she at last enters into the ministry of the King.

i) The enemy of our souls who goes about as a roaring lion, attacks the Bride at this point, and not before. She was not a threat before.

ii) The uncovering of the enemy's tactics usually does not occur until the Church ministers to God in heavenly places and high praises. Note **Ps. 149**. Prayer and Praise becomes a weapon of spiritual warfare and exposes the Satanic strategy. It was when Daniel was seeking God that a spiritual battle in the heavenly realm took place - **Dan. 10:12-13**. It was during Jesus' 40 day fast that He entered into a battle with Satan. Paul's high revelation resulted in Satanic opposition - **2 Cor. 12**, and Jesus' transfiguration was immediately followed by a contest with the powers of darkness in an epileptic boy - **Matt. 17**.

iii) The "dens" speak of the root of Satanic bondage. His work may be seen in the valleys, but the source of it is with the Prince of the Power of the Air. The leopards suggest the swiftness of his attack and the unchangeable nature of Satan - "can the leopard change his spots".

iv) The King says to the Bride "look from it". Her view is not to be obsessed with the lions' dens or leopards, but to have a wide and balanced perspective.

g) The King calls the Shulamite His "spouse" five times in the next five verses, though He had never used it before.

Her ascent with Him into the "heavenly realm" and the place of spiritual warfare causes the King to confirm her (Amana) as spouse and this is not taken from her, despite her next decline.

4:9 - "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck."

"You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse".

This can also read, "You have given me courage". It is incredible to realise that we, the Church, meets needs in our Lord. However, it is only the sister/spouse who can ravish His heart.

a) The sister speaks of the common origin of the King and His Bride. There is both a birth and blood relationship between Christ and His Church - we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh - **Eph. 5:30**. Abraham and Sarah were related by both blood and marriage, and so were Isaac and Rebekah, and also Jacob and Leah and Rachel. It establishes a compatibility of natures through a family connection.

b) The Bride, or spouse relationship is one of choice and both these levels of relationship are essential to fully satisfy the King's need for our love.

c) "With one glance of your eyes".

She had doves' eyes which had now received a greater vision because she has fixed her sight upon the King and followed Him to the top of Hermon, where she sees the world in proper perspective. It is this quality of a fixed vision of Him which ravishes the King's heart. Her submission to His will moves Him in love toward her.

d) "With one chain of your neck".

Her submission to His will would not have been possible but for the work of the Godhead begun in **Chapter 1:10**. It is God who is at work in us both to will and do of His good pleasure.

Note **Proverbs 1:9**. These qualities in her bring great blessing to the King and she satisfied His heart in a way that no angel or any other created being can.

4:10 - "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! And the fragrance of thine ointments than all spices!"

"How much better is your love than wine."

The King's response to her love for His is also both parallel to and greater than the Bride's response to His in **Chapter 1:2**. She had said "your love is better than wine". The King now declares that the Bride's love is much better than wine. The joy she causes in the King is unique. Nothing else can bless Him as she does and her obedience and love stimulates the King greatly. She had also commended Him on the "savour of His good ointments". Now the King says of her, "The smell of your ointments (is better) than all spices".

Ointment is the product of spices, but in a crushed form. The dealings in her life to bring her to the fullness of the King's will in her produced a fragrance which had not been present before her time of total yieldedness to Him. Her ascent of the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense though painful, has brought about a new likeness to the King. Previously it was His fragrance, now she is also fragrant.

Wine and ointments are also symbols of the Holy Spirit and show us that the same anointing that was on the Lord is also on His Church and the same effects are produced. She is not only the "spouse" by choice, but the "sister" of common origin and experience. She has been anointed to enter into His ministry. She has ascended the mountains with Him, and been in heavenly places, confronted the lions and leopards of Satanic strategy, and this obedient and anointed life is causing the King to rejoice in her.

4:11 - "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop like the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the scent of thy garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon."

a) Her lips are referred to before (**4:3**) as a thread of scarlet which speaks of a good confession of faith of the redeeming blood of Christ.

However, the King now indicates a further level of this confession, He points out that her affirmation of His truth is not mere glib talk. Just as honey is not made in a moment, and is the end result of a lengthy process, so her speech of faith is a result of the process the King has been working in her life. She is expressing the belief and commitment of her heart. Until the honey is capped in the honeycomb by the wax, it will not properly develop. Her speech is now rooted to things deep in her heart.

The submission of the Bride to the King's will results in something being gained from each experience like a bee collecting nectar from a variety of flowers.

b) The King also says "honey and milk are under your tongue". This speaks of a controlled tongue.

Two things necessary to be imputed to new believers are symbolised by honey and milk, but these elements are only of value to such people if the source of them is wise in speech and has a right attitude - i.e. from a self-controlled tongue. The bee also produces poison from the same source as it produces honey. It is possible for a believer to bring forth blessing or bitterness by the tongue.

Honey is both a predigested food and a source of quick energy. The things of the Lord which have already been assimilated by the Bride will bring about rapid strength in new believers when imparted to them.

Milk symbolises the Word of God fed to new believers, and those immature in the faith - **1 Cor. 3:2, Heb. 5:13, and 1 Pet. 2:2.**

c) The King then tells the Bride that the smell of her garments is as Lebanon. Her recent victorious ascent of the mountains with Him has left its mark on her. She smells like where she has recently been. Her natural environment is now "the heavenlies". Wherever she went now it would be obvious that she had been on the mountain. Previously she had resisted this challenge, but now that she has overcome her previous failure, the victory leaves an indelible imprint on her whole experience.

4:12-15 - " A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; henna, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices; A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon."

Despite the tremendous achievement of conquering of Lebanon, the Bride begins another period of decline. Her first decline in **chapter 1:5** was caused by reaction. Her headstrong period in **1:9** resulted from resistance, and the last decline in **chapter 2:9-17** was caused by rebellion. Now she is recoiling from the awesome challenges she has confronted on Lebanon. The dens of lions and leopards represent a demand on her and an involvement in spiritual warfare which is intimidating to her. She withdraws from the conflict and seeks to retire to more pleasant pursuits.

She has faced and become afraid of spiritual manifestations, and these demands on her in both time and effort. It is easier to opt for a more routine and predictable area of spiritual life, so once again she retreats behind a wall. She becomes a garden enclosed. Her spring of living waters is shut up, instead of flowing out to the needy land. She is becoming parochial in her vision again, and as a result of her reaction to spiritual power and conflict, she concentrates on the development of the fruit of the Spirit instead of the Gifts of the Spirit. Both are essential to a well balanced life.

Nine specific fruits or spices are mentioned - pomegranates, camphire, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh and aloes; and there are 9 Fruit of the Spirit - **Gal. 5:22.**

She is also said to be receiving streams from Lebanon (**4:15**). She is receiving, but not giving out. Eden, the garden of God, has one river flowing in and four flowing out - **Gen. 2:10-14.** (When

Adam sinned and left the Garden, then Eden became a Garden enclosed - the Cherubim closed it **Gen. 3:24**).

Jesus said that his believers would have rivers of living water flowing out from them - **John 7:38** - but the Bride in retreat has only living water flowing in to meet her own need.

4:16 - "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits"

The King is now prepared to leave the Bride in this withdrawn state and He calls for the cold and harsh north wind of adversity to blow upon the garden, and then for the balmy south wind of His love to do the same so that between these two types of dealing with her, some of the product of the garden may reach the world around her. He is intent on the Bride retaining her world vision gained on Lebanon. The King knows that if she is allowed to withdraw from the challenges of spiritual ministry, she will become introverted and self-satisfied in activity which is more pleasant to her. The King's refusal to allow her to relax into an inactive and cloistered state causes the Bride to respond to Him. The last time she had been behind a wall her word to the King was for Him to go and be as a roe or young hart on the mountains of Bethel (**2:17**).

However, the painful lessons she has learned in Chapters 3 and 4 have left a permanent effect on her and her desire was only to escape the challenges of such demanding spiritual ministry as she had encountered on Lebanon. She does not want to be without the King's presence and invites Him to come into the garden. She also acknowledges that it is His garden. She does not lay claim to His possessions as she had previously (**3:1**).

Though her relationship with the King is still intact, despite the fact that she had retreated, the King had already pointed out to her that the fragrance of her garments and her ointments gained through her experiences at the mountain of myrrh (death to self), and the hill of frankincense (worship), and Lebanon (obedience to His will) are better than all spices - **4:10-11**.

Spices are potential ointment, but need to be processed, crushed and mixed first. The King is looking for more than potential or intention in her at this point of her relationship with Him. He wants actual progress and development.

5:1 - "I am come into 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. Eat, O friends. Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

The King has accepted the invitation of the Shulamite to come where she is, and thus accommodates Himself to her weakness at this point. However, in doing so He emphasises a number of important aspects of their relationship.

a) He again insists that it is His garden - not hers. Note **4:16** - "my garden". It is as much His as the ascent to Lebanon was, and these two different aspects of spiritual life are not opposed to each other. The nine Fruit (of the Spirit) that the Bride is concentrating on at this time are not in opposition to the nine Gifts of the Spirit. They are both essential to the proper function and progress of the Bride.

b) He still emphasises the fact of her status as both His Bride and sister. Her choice of Him and their common origin are not changed by this period of moving away. Through this whole book the King's strategy has been to lift her vision by describing her as He sees her in faith. He is not condemnatory now.

The Epistles contain a great revelation about the Church's prestige, purity and power. Yet in actual terms she is often below that. However, the Lord has given a specific outline of His exalted opinions of His people and it is this very declaration which is the motivating factor to restore the Bride to where He wants her. While this may not produce an immediate change in her, yet the seeds of her victory are constantly being sown in her vision by the King.

c) The King also reminds her of her progress by emphasising some of the victories won in her life so far. He mentions the myrrh of self-sacrifice; the honey of her sanctified confession; the milk of her teaching ministry to those young in the faith; and the fact that she is still His sister and spouse.

Peter declared his intention to "stir up the saints by reminding them of their heritage in God" (**2 Pet. 1:13**), and Paul constantly urged the Churches to remember the things of God (**1 Tim. 4:6, 2 Tim. 1:5,6, and 2:14**). The communion was instituted for this very reason - to remind the Church of it's origin (**1 Cor. 11:24-25**).

"Eat, O Friends. Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

The Bride in her state of retreat has called on the King to come where she is. It has always been His intention to get her to come where He is. At the end of verse one the Bride speaks in response to the King's accommodation to her weakness. (Note - she always calls Him "beloved", but He never refers to her in this way.)

The friends she refers to are those closely associated with the Bridegroom and doing His will. Even in her decline from the King's intention for her, she recognises that the higher path is that of total obedience. She is not able, at this time, to overcome her reaction to the demanding ministry she is called to, but acknowledges the necessity of putting aside her own comfort and desires. John the Baptist called himself the "friend of the Bridegroom"

(**John 3:29-30**), and said "He must increase, but I must decrease". Jesus said to His disciples, "You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you" (**John 15:14**). Though she is not now in the place of His appointment for her, the product of her life (fruit) belongs to Him and she does not hold it back from Him. This fruit is also available to those who will do the Bridegroom's will.

The Bride also invites the Bridegroom to "drink". All she has to offer, however, is His to begin with - her living waters come from Lebanon and are supplied to her rather than originating with her. The spring of her life is sealed and her own fountain is sealed as a result of her retreat. She is now living on what she should be giving out and looks on the fact that there is still living water in her life as proof that everything is alright. She does not realise that this flow of life has come from the place she retreated from and that its purpose is to flow out - Note **Ezek. 47**.

Jesus said, "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink, and out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." He does not intend to pour the life-giving water of His Holy Spirit into us, but instead turns our wells of salvation (**Isaiah. 12:3, cp John 4:14**) into "rivers of living waters" - **John 7:37**.

The King intends that by reminding the Bride of where she has been she will be inspired to recover that area of her life instead of running away further.

He has come where she is, but expects that she will now come where He wants her to be.

Section Three ends with the Bride still in decline, but with the King bringing to bear His forces of inspiration, encouragement and the winds of both adversity and blessing to produce a recovery of her ministry.

SECTION FOUR

LOVE'S POWER TO RESTORE

Chapter 5:2- 7:13

The fourth section of the book begins with the Bride now settled in her declension and the first few verses of this period reveal the danger of withdrawing from God's will in our lives. We may convince ourselves that this is a temporary stage to allow us time to come to terms with the things we have experienced or been challenged with.

5:2 - "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 drops of the night."

"I sleep but my heart waketh. It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh".

She is now in a state of total inactivity. The high point of Lebanon is a remote memory. She first retreated behind a wall and now she has made her garden of pleasant fruits a substitute for the total will of the King for her. Now it is no longer a temporary breathing space before once again going into the conflict against the enemies, but has become a permanent state. Once again she and the King are separated by walls of her own making. He had come to where she was reminding herself of past victories (5:1), but she has retreated further rather than responding.

Now she is inside and the door is locked (5:5). He is outside knocking to gain her attention and to awaken her. We see the Lord in this same position with the Laodicean Church of **Rev. 3:20**. Her decline has gone much further than she realised and although in her deepest desires she still longs for His presence, other things have been allowed to crowd this into a lesser priority of her life.

The King uses the same terms of relationship as He has previously used of her - my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, showing that she is not out in the world and lost in wickedness. She is instead closed to Him at this stage in her substitute spiritual dimension. Her concentration on only part of His plan for her, ie only fruit instead of both fruit, and gifts, has become as much a blockage to their relationship as the wall of **chapter 2:9** was.

He says, "My head is filled with dew and my locks with drops of the night".

i) This dew is spoken of in **Psalm 133** as "the dew of Hermon". The Bride has retreated but the King is still maintaining His emphasis on victory over the enemies and a world view vision from heavenly places.

He is the head over all things to the Church - **Eph. 1:22**, and the Bride does not have the right to choose her own path. Her place is with the King. She should be with Him on Hermon.

ii) This is the place of unity and this unity between brethren is described as the anointing oil on Aaron's head that flowed down to the skirts of his garments, as the anointing received by the Head of the Church.

(Acts 2:33) is still flowing to the extremity of His body almost 2000 years later. This unity is also referred to as the dew which brings life and refreshing. This was how the whole world was watered before the flood of Noah's time. It is from this dew on Hermon that her living streams from Lebanon have come. The King wants her to return with Him to the source instead of merely sampling the flow of His life. The King is showing her that her decline is causing a break of unity in His total body. She has pulled back and settled into an area where she is content. Others (the friends) are pressing in to do all His will and so the unity of the total Church is at risk. She needs to return to the place of obedience rather than mere doctrine and debate on the relative values of Fruit or Gifts.

iii) This dew comes down at night-time - when the earth is covered with darkness and some are retreating to a place of security and avoiding confrontation. The King is active and calls His Bride to co-operate with Him when the earth is most needy. She does not exist for her own pleasure, comfort or blessing but to carry out the King's will in reaching this dark and needy world with His victory and refreshing life. The drops of the night may refer to Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane when He sweat great drops of blood and points out the intensity of His spiritual battle to win the souls of men. It is into this battle that the Bride is called and has run away. Note **Philippians 3:10** - "the fellowship of His sufferings", and **Col. 1:24**.

5:3 "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"

In this state of unwarranted rest, where she has departed from the King's will through reaction, a measure of resistance now arises. Instead of responding to the King's call to open the door and remove the barrier between them, she debates the point with Him. She attempts to justify her behaviour, but her view of things is completely out of perspective.

a) The only reference in the whole book so far to her clothing is in **4:11** where her garments are described as being impregnated with the aroma of Lebanon. Her high place of sharing the King's ministry in the heavenly places was part of the qualities in her which had ravished the King's heart. Now she has put away this stage of her life. It is past and she wants to avoid it in the future. "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?". This resistance to His will emphasises and maintains the barrier between them.

She is not now ravishing the King's heart. Notice that while He called her "my sister", recognising that she is part of the new creation, and "my love" referring to His choice of her as the object of His affections, and "my dove" in that she is a partaker of the Holy Spirit, He does not call her His spouse. It was this term which He used when saying that she ravished His heart (**4:9**).

b) She says "I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?"

This is an area of distorted spiritual values. She places a greater pre-eminence on the feelings of her own personal cleansing and holiness than in obeying the King. She has become "super-spiritual" where her sanctification is subjective instead of objective. Her greatest holiness at this point is to be in obedience to the King and co-operate with Him implicitly in the deliverance of the captives and the overthrow of the enemy's stronghold. The apex of her spiritual experience has been to go with the King to the top of Lebanon where He calls her "His spouse", showing her total commitment to his will. Now she wishes to avoid that level of challenge and conflict and feels that getting involved in the needs of humanity will be a

degrading and defiling experience. She wants to be "clean" from such contact and remote from the ministry of rescuing the perishing. The unreality of her religious situation is expressed in her artificial or hot-house holiness, rather than applied holiness which is the motivation of the Son of God - **Phil. 2:5-8**, and shows us that He willingly accepted this degradation and loss of reputation in order to redeem humanity. He did not come to be an example of purity by being aloof and remote from defiled people. He ate with publicans and sinners (**Matt. 9:10-11**) and came to seek and save those that were lost (**Luke 19:10**). True holiness cannot be expressed unless that purity is applied to those who do not possess it. Evangelism is more than the propagation of the gospel. It is the expression of a heart so touched by the holiness of God that it cannot rest until it has reached out in life to love others also.

The scripture shows the unreality of the Bride's selfish, introverted holiness. **Isaiah. 52:7** declares, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace". The Bride is anxious about her feet being defiled, but the King's opinion is that they will never be more beautiful than when they are on top of Lebanon where her world vision is clear and where she is bringing good tidings of salvation. In other words, she is resisting the call to His ministry of reaching the lost. He wants her in touch with the real world instead of cloistered away from human needs and lost souls.

"My beloved put his hand to the latch of the door, and my heart was moved for him."

The King is not easily deterred in His quest to bring the Bride out of her protective state. He had previously called her and knocked on the door (**verse 2**), but now He attempts to open the door. It was locked. She had reacted so much to the calling to His ministry that she attempted to make her retreat from it irrevocable and permanent. His hand appears through the hole of the door - in this Eastern culture most doors had the locks on the inside and a hole for the hand so the owner could insert his hand and turn the key from the inside.

Since Solomon is a picture of Christ, his hand shown through the hole in the door is representation of the "nail-scarred hand" of Jesus. He seeks to motivate the Bride to come out from behind her locked door by causing her to remember His sufferings for her. This is the reason why Jesus commanded His Church to regularly partake of communion - the remembrance of His broken body and shed blood. Memory is a powerful aid to faith and the Bride is stirred by this remembrance of the Lord's sacrifice and sufferings. She says "my heart yearned for him". Note: **2 Pet. 1:13 & 3:1, Deut. 8:2, Lk. 22:19**

Once a heart has been touched by God there will always be an area in which it is sensitive to His presence. It is not possible to totally close our door against Him. There is a hole in the door for His hand to be seen.

It was this reminder of Jesus' suffering that broke the hardness of Thomas' heart, and caused him to cry out, "my Lord and my God" - **John 20:27-28**.

5:5 "I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock."

The Bride is so moved by the reminder of the King's love for her that she arises from her retreat to open the door for Him, and in doing so finds that the handle is now covered by myrrh. It was the custom in ancient times for one visiting the lady he was courting to leave His specially mixed ointment on the lock if she was not home or would not open to him.

The King is stressing the work of the cross continually throughout this period of the Bride's retreat from involvement in His ministry.

He knows that unless she sees His work for her and accepts that work of the cross in her own life at this stage, she will not be restored to an effective relationship with Him.

Note that since **chapter 5:1** He has referred to "gathering His myrrh" (the sufferings of the cross), "the drops of the night" (Gethsemane), his hands (nail-scarred), and myrrh on the handles of the lock. Now that myrrh is on her hands and she cannot any longer put off the dealing with her self-life which occasioned her retreat from Lebanon. The King's strategy has been to get her back in touch with her previous commitment to live a "crucified life". (4:6) "Until the day break I will get me to the mountain of myrrh". Only in this state will she learn the complete and instant obedience He seeks from her.

5:6 "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. My soul failed when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer."

Earlier in their relationship the King was prepared to wait for her to respond. Now that she has matured and learned much more the King expects her to respond immediately. It is the mark of her obedience and acceptance of His Lordship. He has withdrawn His presence to show her that she must develop instant obedience to His will.

The loss of His presence and the lack of His voice or receiving no response to prayer is often the Lord teaching His Bride to so value His presence that she will not take it for granted, expecting Him to be there when she is ready.

5:7 - "The watchmen that went about the city found me; they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me."

One decline leads to another. Her withdrawal from the King's will on Lebanon had led at first behind garden walls, then to locked doors, and now she is back in the city again (cp **ch. 3:3**). The city is the building of man. It represents all that is man-made in spiritual life and tends towards a settled experience and security. The watchmen are the "keepers of the walls". These walls have been a recurring problem for her. In trying to leave them for the second time those that are dedicated to the preservation of religion become her opponents. They smite her because she is "seeking" the King (**v. 6**). His re-aroused spiritual hunger is an embarrassment and indictment to them.

Much of the criticisms and opposition we find in pressing in to a closer relationship with the Lord comes from those who are settled and secure in religion and have little desire to seek the King.

They take her veil from her. It was the sign of her covering and submission unto the King. These religiously oriented watchmen declare her to be a hypocrite - though she is the Bride, she cannot find her Bridegroom, and they aggravate her anguish. They mock her for her failure to produce His presence or the fruits of their relationship. Her failure to respond immediately to the King led to her being exposed before the critical. In God's sovereign providence He may allow such bitter experiences to teach a life-long lesson to His Bride, thus motivating her to avoid any further rejection of His will.

5:8 "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick with love."

In her distress she calls upon the Daughters of Jerusalem to help her find the King again. She feels the need of those around her to build her relationship with Him again. This speaks of the assistance we receive in praying one for another that we may be restored (**James 5:16**). Previously she had been sick with love (**chapter 2:5**) and needed to be balanced by practical things. Now she is sick through love again, but this time it is because of the memory of what she once had and has now lost. Her attitudes are now desperate for restoration and her relationship with the King is much more important to her than any security she might enjoy.

She is at the point of praying the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous which avails much.

5:9 "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

Despite her recent decline from the King's will, the Daughters of Jerusalem recognise the great development in the Bride. They call her the fairest among women. Previously only the King had described her like this (**1:8**). The progress she has made has not been lost and though the keepers of the walls mock her and take her veil, yet that very exposure reveals her beauty to those who are beginning to open their lives to a greater spiritual appreciation. However since they have not experienced the transforming power of His love as the Bride has, they have no conception of how special the King is. They tend to devalue Him to the level of others. However, their first experience of His beauty was at her insistence (**3:10-11**) and now they see the practical outworking of that in her.

5:10- 16 "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is like the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are like the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washing with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

In this description of the King, the bride picks up where she had left off at Lebanon. Now she is ministering again and is portraying the glory of the Lord to the Daughters of Jerusalem.

In this a different process of restoration occurs. Her testimony of His glory results in their relationship being fully restored. At this stage of her development it is more important to be obedient - a "doer of the word", than to have a new experience. In **Chapter 4:1-5** the King had described the Bride and it had a holy and motivating effect on her, but now her description of Him changes her and restores His presence to her life. The confession of the Church is to be a Christ-centred one and the exaltation of Him will never fail to release His unique and life-changing presence.

The following descriptions of the King reveal various characteristics of the nature of Christ;

a) White and Ruddy - He is spotlessly sinless. His holiness is absolute and not relative. **Heb. 7:26**. This perfect "whiteness" of His character was seen under the examination He received on the Mount of Transfiguration when He was declared fit to be the world's sacrifice. **Matt. 17:2 &**

5. As a result of this perfect holiness Jesus was delivered from death - **Acts 2:24**. The "ruddy" colour speaks of His life. This life is related to His holiness and so the two colours "white and ruddy" are connected.

b) "The Chiefest among ten thousand" - This number and the colour white are both common to the descriptions of the Lord in **Daniel 7:9-14**, and **Rev. 1**. It speaks of Christ as the Glorified Lord. There is no one else in all of human history like Him. This is true in respect of His unqualified Holiness (white) and that fact that He is glorified and as a human being has been raised to the Father's Throne. **John 17:1 & 5, Phil. 2:5-11**.

c) "His head is as the most fine gold" - He was glorified in His humanity, but it must never be forgotten that He is also absolute Deity. In fact the scriptures reveal that He is the "fulness of the Godhead bodily". **Col. 2:9**.

d) "His locks are bushy and black as a raven" - There is no baldness in Him. There is no deterioration. The head speaks of the source of knowledge, i.e. the Brain. Christ is to us the source of all our spiritual knowledge. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" - **Col. 2:3**.

There are no grey hairs in Him. Hosea 7:9 says of Ephraim, "Grey hairs are here and there upon him, but he knoweth it not". Advancing age and decline had crept up on Ephraim unawares and made him unfit. Our Christ ever lives after the power of an endless life (**Heb. 7:16**), and is never affected by the passage of time. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. **Heb. 13:8**.

e) "Eyes of doves by rivers of water" - Both the "dove" and the "river" are symbols of the Holy Spirit, and Christ is the believer's source of the Spirit. However another meaning is apparent here.

i) The dove's eye speaks of "fixed field focus" which has previously been mentioned as a characteristic of the Bride. Now we see the unswerving vision of Christ for His people. Whenever the Bride has drawn back or detoured, His eye has been upon her and He maintains His vision of her restoration and ultimate victory.

ii) This vision leads Him to weep over her and intercede (**Heb. 7:25**). In the days of His earthly ministry His vision for His people led Him to weep over them (**Luke 19:41**). He is not indifferent to her frequent failures.

iii) These eyes are "washed with milk". He is the Eternal Word and milk speaks of the Word of God - **1 Pet. 2:2**. His vision of the Bride is not dependent on her frailty, and inability, but on His own promises. He is able to keep us from falling and present us faultless - **Jude v. 24**. He is able to sanctify us wholly - **1 Thess. 5:23**.

iv) His eyes are "fitly set" - This carried the thought of commitment as in marriage. In other words the King's eyes are fixed on the Bride even more deliberately than ever she has gazed on him with her "dove's eyes". He is totally committed to the Bride and even when she fails to achieve His high purpose for her at the first, He abides faithful to her - **2 Tim. 2:13**.

f) "His cheeks are as a bed of spices" - The depth of the Lord's commitment to His people is demonstrated in His suffering for us. **Is. 50:6, 52:14** show us the state of His cheeks. Yet though He became marred and ugly in his sufferings, this also made him beautiful to us. We love him

because He first loved us - **1 John 4:19**. Many spices are used as healing agents. It was the sufferings of Christ and the destruction of His flesh which has brought healing to us - **Isaiah. 53:5**. His horrendous humiliation has become the point of greatest beauty to us, as sweet flowers.

g) "His lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh" - Jesus never said anything negative about His death. It was always with the positive declaration, "I shall rise again". Even on the cross His dying words were triumphant - "It is finished". The lily speaks of resurrection life and the speech of Christ always had a quality about it that others could never duplicate. Even at the age of 12 he astounded the doctors of the law with His answers. His would-be captors declared, "Never spoke any man like this man". His towns people wondered at the gracious words that came from His mouth, and His disciples said "To whom else shall we go, you have the words of eternal life". His words contain life rather than mere information. **John 5:25** says, "The day is coming when they that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live".

With every message of His Resurrection life there is also the remembrance of His atoning death. His lips also drop sweet smelling myrrh - the symbol of His suffering and sacrificial death.

h) "His hands are as gold rings set with beryl" - Jesus said, "No man shall pluck (my sheep) out of my hand" (John 10:28). Gold rings speak of:

- i) The marriage covenant expressed in rings.
- ii) Gold is a type of Deity.

His covenant with His people is not dependent on the weaker party - the Bride, but on His never failing strength.

The beryl is a precious stone which is listed in both Daniel and Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God and occurs also in the New Jerusalem (**Rev. 21**) and in the Breastplate of the High Priest. He wore this Breastplate into the Holy of Holies to meet with God, and the Beryl teaches us that the covenant of Christ on our behalf is our promise of being transformed and translated into the very presence of God in heaven.

i) "His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires" - The seat of His affections - the centre of His being, is as ivory which is a product of life, but is harvested by the death of the animal which grows it. His love for the Bride has cost Him everything and has been borne out of pain. The reference to sapphires in **Exodus 24:10** shows them to be transparent. The King has no ulterior motive in His dealings with the Bride. At this point He has withdrawn from her (**5:6**), but this has one clear purpose - the motivating of the Bride to seek Him again and thus restore their relationship.

Sapphira of **Acts 5** (though her name means "sapphire") was far from transparent in her love for the Lord, and lied to the Holy Spirit. There is no deception or cover up with the King. He has one clear and transparent purpose and never deviates from it. This was His one plan from before the foundation of the world, and He revealed it clearly by prophecy before He even came.

j) "His legs are as pillars of marble" - The word "marble" is the same as that for "fine linen" (Heb. "shesh"). The support and foundation of Christ's life is His uncompromising righteousness which fine linen is a type of (**Rev. 19:8**). This righteousness is set up on sockets of

fine gold - which is a type of His Deity. Both His human and Divine natures perfectly complement each other and fit together. There is no disharmony between His human righteousness and His Godhead.

k) "His countenance is as Lebanon - excellent as the cedars" - His ministry is emphasised here to show the reason for His perfect humanity. The cedar is an almost incorruptible timber and stands for perfect human nature. Jesus did not come to merely save us and take us to heaven, but to change us and mature us so that we can enter into His ministry. He still intends the Bride to take up His Lebanon ministry and now in her description of Him, she sees it clearly.

l) "His mouth is most sweet" - Previously she had observed that His fruit was sweet to her taste (2:3). Now she realises the depth of His sufferings for her. He has tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). The Shulamite had said let Him kiss me ... for His love is better than wine, or natural stimulation. At that point she was experience orientated, but now through her revelation of the character and purpose of the King, she sees His love in a different and more mature way. Now everything is related to His death for the Church. This makes our love relationship with Him and the kisses of His mouth most sweet.

m) "He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and my friend."

In **Chapter 5:1** in the midst of her decline she recognised others as the King's friends or those doing His will. Now she is fully recovered and claims this relationship with Him again. The word says, "You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you" - **John 15:14**. This restored relationship is based both on her recommitment to His will and His preciousness to her. "He is altogether lovely." Never before had she shown this level of appreciation of Him, and in her witness to the Daughters of Jerusalem of His glory and exclusive place in her life, she is enabled to recover from her decline to take up the Lebanon ministry which she had so abruptly left. Her heart now is to win others to His love.

6:1 - "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee."

The Daughters of Jerusalem respond to her testimony of the King's redeeming work and perfect nature with a repeated desire to seek Him for themselves. Despite her up and down progress, she has had an effect on them since **Chapter 1:5**. Even in the earliest moments of her relationship with the King, it had been her intention to win others to a love relationship with the Lord - **1:3**, "draw me and we will run after thee".

The Daughters of Jerusalem repeat their description of her "thou fairest among women" and this shows that when we restore our relationship with the Lord others can see what He has seen all along (Note **1:8**).

6:2-3 "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies."

She answers the Daughters of Jerusalem by pointing them to the place where she had last seen Him. The garden of spices (**5:1**) was the last place He had been seen before He had knocked at her door. This time, however, He is gathering lilies instead of myrrh and spices. He is now looking for a forward move of faith in her life based on Resurrection Life. She now understands well the place of His sufferings and death seen in the myrrh and spice, but she cannot stay at this

point. She must go on to accomplish the things for which He suffered and died. We cannot live through the cross. This is designed to put to death the old nature, but new life depends on the Resurrection life of Christ alone. It is this which saves us (**Rom. 5:10**) and it is this which makes us a new creation. (**2 Cor. 5:15-17**).

She emphasises that she belongs to Him before she claims anything of Him. "I am my beloved's, and He is mine". The order is reversed from **chapter 2:6** where she selfishly claimed that He existed for her benefit first.

No sooner does she make this assertion of her love for Him and her re-ordered priorities than the King appears and speaks to her for the first time since He withdrew Himself (**5:6**).

6:4 "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners."

The descriptions of the King by the Bride and her self-effacement since **chapter 3:4** are expressions of her commitment to the King. She is beholding Him and in doing so is changed into His likeness - cp **2 Cor. 3:18**.

The temporary retreat from Lebanon was not because of her selfishness and rebellion as in **chapter 2**, but because of her inability to cope with the demands of His spiritual ministry. She had reacted and retreated rather than rebelled.

Her recovery has been brought about by glorifying the King to others and as a result she is totally transformed. The King's first words to her since she failed to respond to Him in **Chapter 5:2**, are "You are beautiful O my love". He has never used this description of her before. He has called her "fair", "the fairest among women", and "comely", but never "beautiful". There is a beauty gained in repentance and restoration that delights the King. Her failure was not final but became the motivation to overcome her weakness and fully do the King's will. This sort of recovery makes us beautiful to God. Peter failed terribly at Jesus' trial, but we note that unlike Judas, he went out and wept bitterly for his failure. **Mark 16:7** has the angel speaking to the women at the Tomb after Jesus' resurrection saying "tell His disciples and Peter". There was no rejection of Him, but delight in his repentant attitude. The King does not go into any recrimination of the Bride's failure. He doesn't link the history of her retreats, but only commends her. Once we recover, the memory of our failure is buried in His forgetfulness. The King likens the Bride's beauty to three things.

a) Beautiful as Tirzah - This was formerly one of the ancient Kings of Canaan's royal city. It has been transformed into Solomon's northern capital, and was the place of his residential palace there. It was transformed from its previous state by the presence of the King. He compares her beauty to the place of His abode and indicates how that beauty has been brought about. The Church is only beautiful as it is Christ's dwelling place. We are the Temple of God. A Holy Place relationship is our destiny.

b) Comely as Jerusalem - Besides also being a place where Solomon dwelt Jerusalem was the capital of His Government. The Bride has been restored to total immediate and unquestioning obedience to the King (cp 5:3), and is now under His rule. His laws are in her heart and mind (**Heb. 8:10**).

c) Terrible as an army with banners - The restoration of His Presence (Tirzah) and His Government (Jerusalem) result in the recovery of the ministry the King had led her into on Lebanon. Already she has been attempting to bring change to others, but now there is a full

realisation of what the King intends their relationship to accomplish. It is not just to bless her, but to prepare her and qualify her for the ministry Christ came to do.

For this purpose the Son of Man was manifested to destroy the works of the devil - **1 John 3:8**.

She is called to spiritual warfare and to enter into the overthrow of Satan with her Lord. Note. **Gen. 3:15 cp Romans 16:20**.

As an "army with banners" we see a further manifestation of the Lord in her. He revealed Himself to Israel as Jehovah Nissi - "the Lord our banner" (**Ex. 17**) in the battle with Amalek. He is dedicated to the overthrow of our enemies and this same determination is now seen in the Bride and this makes her beautiful to the King. Her loveliness and terribleness are linked.

6:5 (a) - "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me:"

Her re-established fixed field focus seen in **Chapter 5:10-16** has made an impact on the King, even as the insistent prayer of Jacob prevailed with God and produced a change of status with both God and man - **Gen. 32:24-32**.

6:5 (b)- 7 - "Thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof everyone beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks."

The King re-iterates His description of the Bride from **Chapter 4:1-2**. He goes back before Lebanon (**4:8**) to show that He has not changed His opinion of her, and to encourage her to go on. She has not lost what she had before. Her ministry has been recovered. The King is more intent on her achieving His purpose in her life and ministry than in condemning her for her weakness and failure.

a) Her hair, like a flock of goats, speaks of her consecration and the sacrificial way in which this consecration is effected in her life, and is associated with the Nazarite vow. While the King does not condemn her, she feels the need to re-consecrate herself to His will, whatever the cost. This act is part of the impact she has on Him.

b) She is also assimilating His word again. "Your teeth ... none of them is barren". It was His word in her which produced such changes in her previous recovery and resulted in her going with Him to Lebanon where she entered into His ministry against the power of darkness for the first time.

c) Her potential is once again showing - "a piece of pomegranate within your locks". The consecration of a re-iterated vow (her hair) reveals the life (pomegranate seeds) and the possibilities that exist in her now.

The King is emphasising that these things are basic to her ongoing relationship with Him and should never be discarded or despised. She will always need to be consecrated to His will, she will always need His word, and she will never successfully produce anything unless it is out of resurrection life.

6:8-9 - "There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the

choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines and they praised her."

The King immediately proceeds to declare the special status of the Bride as compared to those who have opted for a lesser level of relationship. In chapter 5:9 the Bride had been asked by the Daughters of Jerusalem for a reason for the fervour of her commitment to the King. What was so unique about Him that nothing else could interest her? It was her answers to this query which had resulted in the restoration of His presence and her return to His "Lebanon ministry". She had declared that He was the Chiefest among ten thousand. His response to her love and loyalty is to define her uniqueness also. She is no longer just the "fairest among women" in a general sense. The King begins to show how advanced she is in her seeking after Him. Despite her repeated failures, her dominant features from the beginning of their relationship are her inability to be satisfied with other things, her repentance and renewed seeking of the King's presence. He is her consuming passion.

The King commends her most recent and final restoration by the following comparisons:

a) "Threescore Queens" - In an Eastern culture the King kept a harem in which there were many women that he was married to. Solomon was no exception, having hundreds of wives and concubines. Some of these were political marriages arranged by neighbouring Kings to ensure peace with Solomon by marrying one of their daughters to him. **2 Chron. 8:11**. These were his queens who symbolise a certain category of relationship.

A queen is one who has a legal position and various legal rights because of her origins. Others may merely be concubines, but the queen asserts her elevated status to gain privileges. However, in this Eastern culture it was not necessary for there to be a love relationship with the King. In fact they may never consummate their marriage again after their wedding night. This does not effect the queen's privileged state, and in fact any love between her and the King is incidental to this. She would still hold her status if she did not love him at all, and never sought his presence. This status was guaranteed by two things.

- i) Her previous status as a princess - the daughter of a foreign and perhaps an enemy King.
- ii) Her marriage which elevated her to queenly status.

These things generated a state in which she was a receiver rather than a giver. By the sheer fact of birth she was in a position to be blessed whether she cultivated her relationship with the King or not.

In this respect the King refers to those who depend on their privileged positions more than their relationship with Him as being "threescore". This is the same number of "valiant men about King Solomon's bed" (**3:7**). One of the things to note in this was that there are sixty male ancestors of Jesus listed by comparing the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. Once again the thought of status through birth is emphasised. These men, for the most part, did not seek this unique place in history. By the accident of birth they became progenitors of Christ regardless of their faith or behaviour.

These things show us the motivations of the queens. They are those Christians who have only a legal relationship with the Lord. They are saved by the fact of the new birth, but do not go on to cultivate a love relationship with Him. In fact they are often selfishly motivated, using their privilege of birth to demand their "rights". This motivation is an expression that they are not fully

separated from their first origins as daughters of heathen Kings (John 8:44), where they learned to demand the satisfaction of their needs because of their exalted position.

b) "Fourscore concubines" - These are they who have only an occasional relationship with the King. They were those who were called to share a unique place with Him but in many cases they failed to live up to expectations. Their weak response to the King, the level of their ardour or a lack of personal preparation caused them to enter into the harem as those whose future was secure, but who might never be close to the King again.

Moses was fourscore years of age before he had a life changing meeting with God at the burning bush. Up to this point his relationship had been second-hand - merely a Hebrew heritage which he had attempted to fulfill in fleshly power.

c) "Virgins without number" - This group symbolises those who have never been drawn to a deep and intimate love with the King. They are the daughters of Jerusalem (cp **verse 9**). They admire the King and appreciate what He has done - Note **1:3**. The Bride has been attempting to draw them to the King and they have been impressed with the great development in her and call her "the fairest among women". So far, however, they have not yielded themselves unreservedly to the King's will.

This is perhaps the largest group within the Church. They enjoy the ointments and blessings of the King, and all the benefits of being a Christian, without ever coming under the total Lordship of Christ. They are still in control of themselves, immature, carnal, and are not able to bring forth fruit unto God - **Rom. 7:4**.

d) "The Bride is one" - The King knows the difference between those who use Him and those who love Him for Himself alone. The fact that the Bride is "one" does not speak of an exclusive state available only to a minority, but to the fact that not many press in to develop a deep love relationship with the King.

i) The King declares that she is undefiled - the act of giving ourselves to the King has in itself a cleansing effect. There is the expulsive power of a new affection that causes other interests and distractions to be sacrificed in order to draw close to Him.

ii) She is His dove - In this state of total consecration to the King's will there is a release of the Holy Spirit that is more than a momentary anointing. It is instead the fulness of a Spirit-filled life. **Acts 5:31** says that "He has given His Holy Spirit to them that obey Him".

iii) She is the only one of her mother. Jerusalem, which is from above, is the mother of us all - that is the fact of God's grace as opposed to the age of law and bondage from Sinai - **Gal. 4:24-26**. The product of the Bride relationship is the only purpose of God's grace. He never intended that there should be differing degrees of commitment. However, this in itself is part of grace. It cannot be legislated. There must be a willing and spontaneous response. The fact that the Bride so earnestly seeks the King justifies the use of grace to bring us to God rather than fear and regimentation. This freely given love by the Bride is the purpose of grace and is the "one" - the only thing, which can satisfy the King. Although the King recognises that there are many in His Kingdom who honour Him and even love Him to a degree, the Bride relationship is the "choice" one. Jesus said, "Many are called, but few are choice" - **Matt. 22:14**.

iv) She is a tremendous example to the virgins, concubines and queens. They all admire her and see in her the practical outworking of an unreserved love for the King. They never blessed her or praised her when she was demanding her rights or preserving her own blessings in **chapter 2**, but in giving her all she receives not only the love and admiration of the King, but also the joy of drawing the less committed ones. The King's commendation of her in reference to the inferior state of the queens, concubines and virgins shows that the full release of His blessing is only given out of response to our love for Christ. There is a special state of God's favour for those who do not draw back. Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away, but he gave His all to Isaac - who was the only one born of his mother - **Gen. 25:5-6**.

6:10 - "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

a) Her vision is as the morning. New light or revelation of the King's purpose is available to her as the new morning brings new light to a darkened world. Uncertainty is gone. She knows what He wants of her. This is the mature state spoken of in **Eph. 5:17, and 1 Cor. 14:20**.

b) "Fair as the moon" - speaks of her being able to reflect the King's character as the moon reflects the sun's light. When they see her they see the actions and attitudes of the King.

c) But she is more than a mere reflector. "She is clear as the sun". The actual and absolute life and light of the Son of God is in the Bride. She is no mere copy. The spiritual changes in her are real and dynamic. She has a self-generating power as the sun does, rather than only than a surface effect as the moon has. The power of the King's life in the Bride is making her to be a life generator instead of merely pointing the way to life.

d) It is the combination of these qualities which prepare the Bride and qualify her for her reason for being. She is now "terrible as an army with banners". Her high calling to go with the King to Lebanon (**4:8**) is fully restored. The preparation and development of the Bride is similar to that of Esther, who through extensive preparation to qualify her to be received by the King (**Esther 2:17**), was enabled to overthrow the strategy of the enemy-Haman, and to conduct effective warfare that brought total release to all her people. This exalted state of union with the King has made her a terror to the powers of darkness. Jehovah Nissi, the Lord our Banner, is revealed through her. **Is. 59:19** declares that "the glory of the Lord shall be seen from the rising of the sun" - the very process by which the Bride is manifesting the King's glory, and then the rest of the verse declares, "when the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall raise up a standard against Him".

This means that the Bride relationship enables the Lord to be revealed as the mighty conqueror and the enemy is destroyed. The Bride is as an army with banners.

6:11 - "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded."

a) The Bride takes up the narration again and refers to "nuts" for the first time. In fact there is only one other reference in the whole Bible to nuts (**Gen. 43:11**, where they were to be a present for Joseph a very clear type of Christ).

The nuts speak of a new level of the Word of God - the fruit is nourishing but is only obtained after the hard shell of the nut is broken. Previously the Word of God was as milk under her tongue (4:11), but now through the growth in her relationship with the King she is enabled to progress to a new and more difficult, but also more sustaining, dimension of the Word. This is the level of strong meat which the "virgins", the immature, cannot eat - **1 Cor. 3:1, Heb. 5:12-14.**

The hardness of the shell and the breaking process show us that at this level the Word of God doesn't come easily. It must be worked out in our lives in order to be valid. At this stage theories regarding spiritual life will not suffice. There must be real development and this comes about as the Word is proved in hard and difficult experiences.

Walking on Lebanon with the King doesn't mean that it is glory all the way. True "high places" ministry will also be worked out in the valleys of life, confronting raw human need and gaining fruit from these challenges and conflicts. Note the deliverance of the epileptic boy in Matthew 17, immediately after Jesus had been transfigured in glory on the mountain top.

b) "To see whether the vine flourished" - The Bride is now interested in things which the King had brought before her previously (2:13, 15). The vines are the source of the Holy Spirit, ie wine. In her disobedient state she did not respond to this aspect of spiritual power, but now she is reaching out for an abundant (or flourishing) level of the Holy Spirit. The marvellous thing about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us is that there is no ultimate state and no level of limitation. He has come in abundant measure and at various stages of our growth in grace there is a new release or a new dimension of the Holy Spirit. It is like Ezekiel's river (**Ezek. 47**) which gets deeper and broader everywhere it flows.

c) "Pomegranates budded" - Previously the King had said that her temples were like a piece of pomegranate (4:3), i.e., it was cut open revealing the seeds or potential in it. Now these pomegranates are budding. Her potential is being realised. There is actual growth and real progress is being made by the Bride. Her spiritual life is no longer a fancy or a farce.

The final restoration of the Bride's relationship with the King has resulted in a new vision and perception of spiritual things, a new release of the King's glory and dynamic life in her, an overthrow of the enemy, a new dimension of the Word of God, a new release of the Holy Spirit, and real growth in grace.

6:12 - "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib."

The King had been aware of the significant changes in the Bride, and so had the queens, concubines, and virgins. Now in seeing the "budding of the pomegranate", the bride also realises the dramatic alteration in her motives, desires and her state. She says, "Before I was aware (of it), my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib". Without realising what was taking place the Bride suddenly finds herself fulfilling the King's will. She had been unconscious of the major change taking place in her, but now recognises that her heart is totally altered. The "chariots of Amminadib" is more correctly translated "my people of a willing heart". This is the crux of her relationship. It is not based on external practices, but on true heart desire for the King. Note **Is. 29:13** - "this people honour me with their lips, but they have removed their heart from me". Amminadib was one of those who restored the Ark of the Covenant to its rightful place in the heart of the nation of Israel. He helped to bring it to Zion. He was one of the six Levites who carried it on their shoulders from the house of Obed-Edom - Note **1 Chron. 15: 10- 15.**

The Bride had been described by the King as both Tirzah - the place of His presence, and as Jerusalem - the place of His government or will. Both these things were achieved in David's time by the restoration of the Ark. In the bride's case, as with David, it was brought about by a willing heart. **Ps. 110:3** says, "your people will be willing in the day of your power".

The chariots speak of her swift progress made in this willing state.

6:13 - "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies."

a) The Daughters of Jerusalem are speaking again. The last time they had spoken (**6:1**) they were confused about the absence of the King and realised that her loss was compounded for them. Now they observe the tremendous changes in her through her restoration and find the King revealed in her life.

This is the first time in the whole Song that the term "Shulamite" has been used. It means "the peaceful one", or the "pacified one". The name Solomon means "peaceful". The Bride is manifesting the character of the King "as clear as the sun". Not only is it obvious to others that she is now like her Lord, but they are helped to discover Him for themselves by seeing Him in her. Jesus maintained this level of relationship and identification with the Father. He said, "He that has seen me has seen the Father" - **John 14: 9-11**. It is the destiny of His Church to be so indwelt by Him and so changed by His presence and our willing heart to do His will, that to see the Church is to see Him - bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh.

b) The King now takes up this request of the Daughters of Jerusalem, "What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies." (Note the question of the daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride in **5:9**.)

The phrase "two armies" refers to "Mahanaim" in **Genesis 32:2**, and the word "company" means "dance".

This passage refers to the absolute victory of the Church. These two armies were revealed at the time of Jacob's restoration to God and the change in his nature and name. Just as the Shulamite is used for the first time at this point of massive change in her life and relationship with the King, so Jacob's name was changed to Israel - "as a prince you have power with God and man".

Jacob was in terror of his meeting with Esau and although he had his own "army", he knew he needed more help. It was then that the angels of God the heavenly host, met him.

In our spiritual warfare we are not only protected by the rest of the believers in the Church, but have access to the heavenly host as well.

The act of dancing before the Lord, as David did at the restoration of the Presence of God (**1 Chron. 15**) is part of our spiritual warfare. It is an expression of faith in a battle won. Note Israel's dancing (**Ex. 15:20**) after the overthrow of Egypt, and also after the overthrow of Goliath (**1 Sam. 18:6**).

Elisha the prophet who received the double portion anointing was born at Abel Meholah, which means "the meadow of dancing".

This was one of the places where Gideon established his victory over the Midianites (**Judges 7:22**).

The daughters of Jerusalem see in the Bride the same characteristics as in the King. They see her victorious and rejoicing. She is not only living in the place of His presence; she herself is His abode.

Spiritual warfare is the climax of this song. It is the purpose of the bride's relationship with the King, and He has been attempting to bring her to it since **chapter 2:8-10**. For a time she responded in **chapter 4:8**, but now in this final restoration she has taken it up permanently and is terrible as an army with banners.

This process of entering into the King's ministry again, which began in **chapter 5:10**, culminates in **chapter 6:13**. She is never rebuked by the King again, since she started to seek Him with all her heart.

Spiritual warfare, or the King's ministry, is the dividing line between maturity and immaturity. She is now as "Tirzah", "Jerusalem", and "Mahanaim". This is the state of permanent change. She never retreats again.

7:1 - "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman."

a) "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter" - This speaks to us of the tremendous change that has taken place in her "walk". Since she began to lead others to Him, not only has her relationship with the King been restored, but it had added beauty to her life. Her feet are shod with the shoes of the gospel - **Eph. 6:15**. She is saying to Zion, "thy God reigneth" and her feet on the mountains of human need and bondage are "beautiful" - **Is. 52:7**.

She is called "prince's daughter", which symbolises the noble origin of the Bride. The Church has received the Spirit of Adoption (**Rom. 8:15**) and is not a refugee from the world system, but totally a child of God.

b) "the joints of your thighs are like jewels" - The thigh is the strongest muscle in the body and is used for lifting and carrying weight. It was this area of Jacob's life which was shrunken by God to make him dependent instead of an independent manipulator as he had been all his life. God put pressure on Jacob and turned his strength into weakness.

It is pressure that creates jewels in the natural world and it is the dealings of God, the pressure He allows in our lives, which produces the precious things of our lives.

It was this pressure in Paul that caused God's strength in him to be made perfect in weakness. Jacob's walk was changed by the pressure of God and a new beauty created in his life.

God's plan for our life is not haphazard. It is the work of a skilled workman. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" - **Eph. 2:10**. The difficult things He allows us to go through are designed to change us to make us precious in His sight. It was this workmanship manifested in Job's experience that caused him to come forth as fine gold (**Job 23:10**).

7:2 - "Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies."

a) "Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor" - This is a sign that she has been cut off from the old life.

Ezek. 16:4 points out that carnal Jerusalem had not had her navel cut, and was not separated from her heathen origins.

The cutting of our spiritual umbilical cord is by the cross of Christ - **Gal. 6:14**. Her navel, or the evident sign in the midst of her being of a past cutting off, is more than the act of water baptism. It is the constant expression of a crucified life. This is the difference between the new life in Christ and the Adamic life. Adam had no navel.

Her crucified life is never lacking the freshness of a relationship with God based on the Blood Atonement of Christ. The goblet of liquor is a reference to the cup of communion - the remembrance of Jesus' death. Paul declares that this "cup of blessing is the communion of the blood of Christ" - **1 Cor. 10:16**. There is a co-union with the Lord on the basis of His blood that nothing else will bring and in fact without the constant remembrance of His blood shed for us there can be no real approach to God. We are made nigh by the blood of Christ - **Eph. 2:13**.

b) "Thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies" - The "heap" refers to wheat that has been winnowed and the chaff removed. It speaks of the Word of God which had been to her milk under her tongue (**4:11**) when she was immature, and then as nuts or strong meat (**6:11**). It is not superficial in her life now, but is in the very centre of her being. Her whole life is now identified with the King's will and purpose. Her life revolves around His word.

Remember that her relationship had been restored by her vocal testimony of the King's glory. Now her belly is filled with His Word - Note **Prov. 18:20, and Matt. 4:4**.

The effect of being cut off from the world, keeping His blood atonement constantly before her, and being filled with His Word, results in more of His resurrection life being seen in her - "set about with lilies".

There must always be a balance between truth and life. It is possible to hold truth as mere facts without any resurrection life in them, and the result is dead orthodoxy.

However, in the Bride, the King's Word is alive and not just an historical record or decrepit creed. It is a result of His word in the midst of our being "that out of our belly flows the living water of the Holy Spirit" - **John 7:37-38**. This overflow is also an effect of the Lord's resurrection life.

7:3 - "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins"

In **chapter 4:5** they were said to be feeding. There is no reference to this now, showing that she has developed real maturity and is able to sustain others with her faith and love. She has been doing this with the daughters of Jerusalem in attempting to show them the glory of the King. In feeding others, she finds her own needs met. Note: **John 4:31-34**.

The breasts of the Bride are referred to five times in the last two chapters. Her faith and love are essential manifestations of both her maturity and her relationship with the King. She cannot any

longer receive the blessings to consume them on herself as she did in chapter 2. She must give them out to others and finds that she is sustained in doing so.

The need of balance in her faith and love is still stressed. "Thy breasts ... like twins". Love without faith is unproductive and tends to be blessing oriented or to go round in circles. Faith without love tends to aggression and hardness. Both are essential to the perfect operation of the other.

It is "faith that works by love" - **Gal. 5:6**. The fact that these two essential elements are identified as the breasts of the Bride also suggest that they are to be both prominent and attractive features of her life. The breasts are unique to women as faith and love are unique to the Bride. The world does not know real love or faith. These are aspects of the Church which make it different to all human institutions.

7:4 - "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon . which looketh toward Damascus."

a) "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory" - In **chapter 4:4** the King described her neck as being like the tower of David. The difference now is that her defence is from within rather than being external. The neck in scripture is a type of the human will. We can be stiffnecked in rebellion or have a bowed neck in bondage or the yielded neck of submission and obedience - cp **Matt. 11:29-30**.

Ivory is extremely hard, but it is the product of growth from within. Ivory tusks also represent a dead animal. We see in this that a crucified life (the navel) produces its own defence. She had tried to be defensive in **chapter 2:9**, but had lost everything. Now she has abdicated from the selfish control of her life and has yielded to the will of the Lord (belly as wheat).

Note that Solomon's throne was made of ivory (**1 Kings 10:18**). Her will yielded to His Lordship produces a tower of defence within her that doesn't depend on outward things, i.e. the shields of mighty men. If everyone forsakes her she will still be secure. It is possible to exercise our will by sheer human effort or determination. When her neck was mentioned before it preceded the reference to her breasts. Now that order is reversed. The stone tower of David represents her will operating deliberately to obey the King and defend her life. Now, however, the outgrowth of her love and faith produces the ivory tower which is much better.

b) "Thine eyes like the fishpools of Heshbon by the gate of Bathrabbim". - Heshbon means "stronghold" and was previously the capital of Sihon, King of the Amorites who fought against Israel. Sihon was defeated at Jahaz which means "trodden down" or "underfoot".

Twice before the Bride's eyes have been described as "doves eyes" - fixed on the King. Now they symbolise the vision of victory.

i) Heshbon was the place of conquest. It was an early example to Israel of God's ability to overthrow the strategy of the enemy.

ii) As a result, Israel's vision of the possibilities was increased.

iii) The city of Heshbon was a stronghold covering two mountains with a narrow entrance called the Gates of Bathrabbim. The two pools were the water supply of this stronghold which made it almost impregnable. Prov. 29:18 declares that vision is essential to effective defence.

The only time the word "fishpools" is used in the Bible is in this verse. The Hebrew word is "Berekah" and means "blessing". The Bride has the defence of a neck of ivory and the vision of victory.

Bathrabbim means "the daughter of a multitude" and shows us that the Bride is many, though she is one (6:9). This status is not for an exclusive minority. It is the will of God to bring all His people to the fulness of the stature of Christ - **Eph. 4:14** - "till we all come".

The vision of the possibilities which the Bride now has will assist the Lord in bringing this seemingly impossible thing to pass.

c) "Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon that looketh toward Damascus" her nose has never been mentioned before in the book. In the early part of the Song she had the insensitivity of a "flat nose". **Lev. 21** lists this condition as a disqualification from priesthood. If the olfactory sense was defective the priest could not fulfil his ministry. It speaks of a lack of spiritual perception or discernment.

Now the bride is filled with the Word and her vision is highly developed. With this has come an increase in her perception of spiritual things. Her nose is as the "tower of Lebanon". Once again the King's ministry is seen in her life (cp **4:8**). She is able to discern the evil powers which need to be exposed.

"Looks toward Damascus" - the first real battle in the New Testament was at Damascus. Saul went there with letters from the Chief Priest to hunt and destroy the Christians. Damascus is mentioned 13 times in Acts, and this is the Biblical number for rebellion. Her nose, as the tower of Lebanon, or ministry against the powers of darkness, is able to uncover the rebellion which Damascus stands for. All of these references are related to Saul's visit there, and his rebellion against the Lord. Ananias exercising true spiritual perception was able to bring Saul to freedom from this bondage, and solve the problem facing the young Church.

7:5 - "Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries."

a) "Thy head is like Carmel" - The Bride now has her mind in line with the King's. No longer is there a difference in their thinking (cp **Is. 55:8-9**). Carmel means "fruitful place" and parallels the description of the King's head (**5:11**) - "His head is bushy and black".

The unregenerate are given over to a reprobate mind and their thoughts are evil continually, **Gen. 6:5, Titus 1:5, and Rom. 1:28**, but the saints have the protection of the Helmet of Salvation (**Eph. 6:17**). Positionally, we have the mind of Christ. **1 Cor. 2:16** - All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in Him are available to us. **Col. 2:3**.

Progressively we need to have our mind renewed day by day - **Rom. 12:1, Phil. 4:7, Heb. 8:10, 10:16, Matt. 22:37**.

The mind is the area of creativity and hence, fruitfulness. The Bride is able to both discern good and evil with her nose of ivory, and head like Carmel.

Her mind now chooses the King's way for her, and this produces life and peace in her. **Rom. 8:6**. Note that it was on Carmel that Elijah called for Israel to choose God's way. Her fruitfulness is related to her decisions.

b) "Thine hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries." - Purple is the colour of royalty. The queens of **6:8** were those demanding their rights without maintaining a relationship. The Bride chose to give herself unreservedly and continually to the King. In doing so she does not lose her privileges. The queens demand their legal position and lose out, while the Bride surrenders and receives all that she was prepared to give up. She receives all her throne-rights. It is her hair, however, which is purple, and this refers to;

i) Her covering or submission to the King - **1 Cor. 11:15**.

ii) Her consecration - Samson's hair was the sign of his Nazarite consecration to God. While ever it was not tampered with, God honoured him.

It is the consecration of the Bride which holds the King captive in her tresses (galleries) so that her desire becomes his desire. She has achieved this level of privilege or "throne rights" by total submission and obedience. She conquers His heart by yielding to Him.

7:6 - "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!"

The King now finds His enjoyment in the Bride. She is no longer merely a subject of His Kingdom, but one who meets His own needs. The Church has this privilege and ability to satisfy God's heart by responding to His will and desires.

Previously she had sat down under His shadow with great delight (**2:3**), but now His heart is captivated by her consecration and surrender.

This statement by the King shows the growth of her commitment and the increase of their relationship.

He had said, "You have ravished my heart" (**4:9**), "How fair is thy love much better than wine" (**4:10**), "Thou art beautiful" (**6:4**). Now He emphasises the pleasure and delights that only the Bride, the one, the undefiled, can give to the King. The Church rarely understands the exalted place she has to bless God and delight Him. There is nothing else in all the world, including the angelic creation, which can satisfy His heart with love, worship, consecration and obedience as His Church can.

7: 7 - "This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes."

a) "Thy stature is like a palm tree" - The King acknowledges the growth of the Bride. She is tall and has grown to the fulness of the stature of Christ - **Eph. 4:13**. Her full maturity is expressed in her ability to take the strong meat of the Word and her acceptance of the King's Lebanon ministry. The first reference in scripture to the palm tree is in **Exodus 15:27** at Elim. There were 70 palms here. This number means the end of limitation. At other points in her experience she was not able to receive all the King wanted for her. She was not ready. He will not permit us to go on to perfection (or maturity) unless our foundations are in order. **Heb. 6:3**. Now the Bride has overcome her weakness and selfish motivations and is in a realm of no restraint. There will be no end to her fruit bearing - **Ps. 92:12-14**.

"Thy breasts are like clusters of grapes" - Twice before in this song grapes are referred to:

i) **2:13** - the symbol of new life after winter

ii) **2:15** - they were in jeopardy from the little foxes.

She is now mature and has gone past the place of self enjoyment of God's power. Jesus was tempted to use the power of the Holy Spirit for self-satisfaction - "turn these stones to bread", **Matt. 4**. The Bride has also moved beyond the insecurity of temptation symbolised by the little foxes destroying her experience with God. Now, due to her growth (stature as a palm tree) the grapes will not be wasted or spoiled. Her breasts, the place of faith and love in her, are also the way in which the Holy Spirit is disseminated through her to others. Not only does the Holy Spirit promote the development of her faith and love, but the expression of these vital and basic qualities actually causes a flow of the Holy Spirit to meet other people's needs.

7:8 - "I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs there of: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples."

a) "I will go up to the palm tree and take hold of the high branches thereof" - The King advises her that there is a new touch of God available at this level of maturity. Throughout our development there are special touches of God at each stage of obedience or overcoming.

Now that she has put her failures behind her and has grown to full stature, she received His touch again. He takes hold of the high branches. Her new level of progress is blessed by His specific empowering which the touch of His hand speaks of. In other words, there is an enabling of God for each new skill we develop and for each area of territory we gain for Him. Note **Joshua 1:3, cp verse 5**.

b) The King says "Now", or at this stage of high level development, "Your breasts shall be as clusters of the vine". During this period of restoration there has been a continual release of the King's power in her. The ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Church is not once only or static, but ever increasing. In the last verse her breasts were seen as clusters of grapes, but now a more inclusive term for the whole Church is seen. A bunch of grapes may be isolated from the vine and kept for one person's use alone, but now the King refers to her faith and love as belonging to the whole Church. She is not developing these qualities for herself. Her growth has brought with it added responsibility. The release of the Holy Spirit's power in her, through her faith and love, is for those who are less mature so that they also may grow to the fulness of Christ's stature.

c) "The smell of your nose is like apples" - Her nose was mentioned for the first time in **7:4** and refers to the spiritual perception of the Bride. Now it is said to be like the apples (or citron), spoken of in **chapter 2:3**. This was "His fruit" ... or the fruit of the Spirit. After her decline from Lebanon she had opted for fruit instead of gifts. Now she has come back to a full appreciation of her call to war and the power of the Holy Spirit. Her faith and love towards the King has brought her into a new dimension of the power of the Spirit. She is now able to achieve the proper balance between the fruit of the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit, and in fact her "perception" which falls within the category of gifts smells like the fruit. The Bride is exercising the power of God with the right motivation. Her perception is for the restoration and growth of those less developed in faith and love, rather than to be critical or judgemental.

7:9 - "And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."

The palate is the part of the mouth which helps to form the speech. Throughout the book there has been numerous references to the return of Christ **2:8**, "Behold he cometh"; **2:17 and 4:5**, "until the day break". This speech of the Bride is the call to those at ease in Zion to awake. Her

maturity and its resultant responsibility causes her to attempt to awaken others to the fact that the King is coming back and the time is short.

The reference to the best wine points us to Christ's Second Coming. At the marriage feast the best wine was kept till the last (**John 2:10**). Though all the blessings of the Church age are marvellous, nothing will compare with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Jesus said of the wine that He drank with His disciples, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom" - **Matt. 26:29**. Her palate, being like the best wine then, is the Second Coming message of the Bride, which causes those who are asleep to respond. Note **Matt. 25:5-6** - the virgins awoke and trimmed their lamps. Who makes the cry to awaken them? **Rev. 22:17** says that it is the Spirit and the Bride who announces the coming of the Lord.

7:10 - "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me."

Throughout the book the Bride has struggled with true self acceptance. Her self-image has been poor, and consequently her relationship with the King suffered. He has never changed His opinion of her since He countered her assertion that she was black. He said she was comely and clothed in righteousness. In **6:3** it was her acceptance of herself that was the last thing to happen before the King revealed Himself to her again. She still maintains the right order in their relationship by stating that she belongs to Him and exists for His benefit. In **chapter 2:6** her emphasis was that He was there for her benefit first, but this is a stage that is long gone. She has been delivered from selfishness.

However, this recently acquired sense of the power of her relationship with the King causes her to have a new level of confidence towards Him. This chapter has mentioned the development of her breasts three times, and now we see the practical expression of her love and faith towards Him. Her love is expressed in saying, "I belong to Him" and her faith is seen in saying, "His desire is towards me". In other words, the Bride is sure that He wants to answer her prayers. There is no doubt anymore. Note **1 John 5:14-15**. This confidence is of course built on her love for the King, rather than the self-motivated demands for privilege which the queens might indulge in.

7:11 - "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages."

a) This is the Bride speaking. The "beloved" is always the King in this book. The Bride's vision of victory with her eyes like the gates of Bathrabbim is fixed on conquest. She now has a world vision and wants to reach everyone with the King's love. Jesus said the field is the world - **Matt. 13:38**.

The King had tried to show her the world view from the top of Lebanon (**4:8**) but she was too immature to be able to receive it. She became parochial again and was a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Her eyes have been opened to both the possibilities and the need since then and she holds the same world view as the Lord - **John 3:16, Acts 1:8**.

b) She is not prepared to be restricted to one interest, but is reaching out to establish the King's presence and ministry in every place simultaneously. Villages is plural. She does not want to restrict Him to a favoured few. Jesus was impelled by the need to reach the "next towns also". **Mark 1:38, Matt. 9:35-38, Mark 6:6, Luke 8:1, 13:22**.

7:12 - "Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves."

a) "Let us get up early to the vineyards" - Since the Bride has entered into spiritual warfare and accepted the responsibility for the people of her generation, she is drawn by the need to grasp every opportunity. She must "redeem the time". No longer is she placing a premium on her own comfort (**2:9 and 3:1**). The King had challenged her to rise up from her comfort in **Chapter 5:5-6**. She did not respond then, but now that she is fully restored to the King and totally committed to His ministry, the Bride now feels the urgency of the time. She intends to use all the opportunities that present themselves. She knows that soon the day will be gone. Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work" - **John 9:4**.

b) The Bride has also developed a greater capacity for involvement in the work of the Lord. In Chapter 1:6 the vineyards had become a problem to her and caused her to neglect her own personal area of responsibility. She neglected her relationship with the King because of the pressure of working for Him. Now, through her maturity it is her relationship with Him that is producing the ability of conducting a wider ministry than she was previously capable of. Now the work is the product of her relationship rather than a hindrance. We must all work for God, but sometimes the work itself can become a substitute for really knowing the Lord. On the other hand, it is not possible to draw close to God without developing the desire and ability to be effective in His work.

c) "Let us see whether the vine flourish and the tender grapes appear" - The things which the King had been unable to entice her with in Chapter 2 are now her desires. Then she was uninterested in the growth of new life in the Church. Now it is her consuming passion. She is checking out the progress of others and of the Church as a whole, which is symbolised by the vine. This desire has been growing in her since her relationship with the King has been restored (cp **6:11**). When Paul and Barnabas established new churches, they had a desire to "visit the brethren and see how they do" (**Acts 15:36**).

d) "And the pomegranates bud forth" - The Bride, who has been described by the King as being like a piece of pomegranate revealing the potential of seeds, is concerned to see that there is a manifestation of life rather than structure alone in the Church. She has been sidetracked from the King before by walls and cities (**2:9, 3:2, 5:7**) and having learned her lesson, is anxious that the development she is responsible for in the vineyards is not inhibited by methods of men. She realises that unless life shoots forth, all the programmes are in vain.

e) The Bride says to the King, "there will I give thee my loves". She is able to show her love to the King in fulfilling His ministry. No longer is His work a substitute for His presence, but a joyful expression of her total commitment to Him.

7:13 - "The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved."

a) "The mandrakes give a smell" - These are first mentioned in the Bible in **Gen. 30:14-29** in the context of Rachel's barrenness and desire for children. Barrenness was considered a curse and the mandrakes were considered to be an aphrodisiac and an aid to conception. Rachel became so desperate for children that along with the use of the mandrakes she cried out to God, "Give me children or I die". In this the mandrakes spoken of here are associated with intercession to break the barrenness in the Church. The Bride has been expressing her deep desire to see growth and

fruit in the Church (7:12), and now she points out that such a move of God to bring forth a harvest (Reuben had the mandrakes in the wheat harvest), requires an intercession to break through. This level of prayer and desire is like a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord - like the cloud of incense that gave Him pleasure in the Tabernacle worship.

b) "At our gates are all manner of fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved" - The Bride is able to bring forth a variety of products of her relationship with the King. Those things she had developed early in her knowledge of Him have not been discarded, but also they have not inhibited the development of new skills and desires. Her ministry with its fruitfulness has become all rounded. With the obvious blessing of the King in her life causing her to overflow, she is able to enter His gates with Thanksgiving. **Ps. 100:4**

SECTION FIVE

LOVE'S OBJECTIVE REALISED

Chapter 8:1 - 8:14

This section of the Song is full of repetitions. Many other parts of the book are restated here. Her recoveries are also re-emphasised and applied, not only to the Bride, but to others less mature or less committed than she.

8:1 - "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised."

The Bride has felt the isolation of her love and worship to the King. Those outside the Church do not understand and tend to be critical of her public adoration of the Lord. In Oriental culture, public displays of affection between husband and wife were frowned on, but were acceptable between a brother and sister. The Bride asserts that if those who criticise her love for the King understood their common origin, they would not despise her. It is a clear revelation to her that the Church and Christ have come from the same source. He is the firstborn among many brethren - Note **Heb. 2:9-18**. She refers to his humanity, "my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother". Although Jesus is and was Almighty God, He became totally dependent as a babe. The Bride draws this ultimate act of His dependence on someone else to show the marvellous miracle of the love relationship with the King. Although He was so far above her, yet He was able to descend to her level in order to raise her to His throne. In **chapter 1:2** it was "Let Him kiss me". Now the revelation of His humanity and the way in which it has worked to redeem her, causes her to overflow with love, despite the despising she receives from those who have not comprehended the wonder of Christ's incarnation. If only people could understand that we receive the exact experience that Jesus did. He was "born again" into the human race, while we are "born again" into the family of God. There is an essential oneness in the nature and experiences of Christ and His Church.

8:2 - "I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate."

a) "I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me"- This statement is also found in **Chapter 3:4**. (The Septuagint version is identical.) The Church is said to be "the mother of us all" - **Gal. 4: 26**, and is also the "pillar & ground of the truth" - **1 Tim. 3:15**. The Bride, burning with both missionary zeal and her love for the King desires to bring Him into the areas of the Church that have not been totally open to Him - those satisfied to be saved, yet not desiring to go any further.

She acknowledges the constant need for the Word of God- "to be instructed", which leads us to understand that regardless of how much she has grown in the Lord, she will never be beyond the need of God's word to teach her.

b) "I would cause thee to drink spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate" - We have observed that the King finds His delight in the Bride. She is stimulating to Him. He here receives great joy at her fruitfulness and the fulness of spiritual life that is in her - i.e. the pomegranates. This wine produced from the pomegranate is the end product of her potential seen in the piece of pomegranate and its abundance of seeds first noted in **4:3**. The fruit has been fully developed in

her life and is now completely utilised. No part is wasted in the making of the wine, as there is no waste in a truly Spirit-filled life. It can make things of value out of the most difficult and inconvenient things in life.

**8:3 - "His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me"
This is another restatement from 2:6.**

a) The left hand speaks of the Holy Spirit sustaining or stimulating her mind. This organ is often suspected by Christians as being opposed to God. However it is not the faculty of mind which is anti-God, but the attitude it is often allowed to adopt. We are commanded by Jesus "to love the Lord our God ... with all of our mind ..." - **Matt. 22:37**.

b) The right hand teaches us that our love relationship with God is through the Son. Jesus is the Son of the right hand. He is seated at the right hand of the Father - **Acts 7:56, Ps. 16:10-11**. He is the fulfilment of the naming of Benjamin (**Gen. 35:18**). Rachel called him, "Son of my sorrow", but Jacob renamed him, "Son of my right hand". Jesus was both the man of sorrows (**Is. 53:3**) and the one at the Father's right hand.

Since the "right hand" is said to embrace the Bride, we see that not only our approach to God is through the Son (**John 14:6**), but also the worship and adoration we express to the Son of God is for the whole of the Godhead. In reverse the blessings of God are dispersed to us by the Son - Note **Acts 2:33**. All we know of God and receive of Him is through His Son alone.

This verse also speaks of the Bride being prepared for the culmination of her love relationship with the King. In the similar circumstance earlier in their relationship, she was "sick of love", and had to be sustained by natural things and consequently ended up establishing a wall which kept Him out.

8:4 - "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please."

The Daughters of Jerusalem are once again warned not to stir up love. In **2:7** and **3:5** this same charge was given, and we noted then that those who are immature or uncommitted are often more interested in sensation than sanctification.

This time, however, there is a difference in the charge, compared to the two previous occasions - the roes and hinds of the field are not mentioned. They speak of the insecurity that is associated with inexperience of spiritual things. Often there is a flow to press into the presence of the King. The Bride has overcome this. Her relationship is built on the confidence that comes from being assured of her acceptance with the King. Esther's fear of perishing gave way to confidence and boldness before the King when she knew the he had accepted her - **Esther 4:16 and 5:3**.

The Bride also is aware that the relationship she has with the King is by grace alone. It is not one on which she wishes to presume. The King is the one who holds the initiative - "until he please". The carnal and uncommitted Daughters of Jerusalem are prohibited from interfering in a relationship they do not understand. Despite their changes and their desire to seek the King (**6:1**), they are prone to despise the Bride for her open love for the King (**8:1**). Like Peter, they will act out of their carnal mind when there is a manifestation of God's glory beyond their comprehension - Note **Matt. 17:4-5**.

8:5 - "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee."

a) "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?"

i) This phrase was also used in **3:6**. The main difference is that previously there was no mention of the Bride. Only the King was seen coming out of the wilderness. She was hidden in the King, but now she is revealed. In her maturity she is brought to prominence. "Whoso humbleth himself shall be exalted" - **Luke 14:11**

ii) The Septuagint version says, "Who is this that cometh up all white". This is in direct contrast to the statement she made in chapter 1 - "I am black", which to a large extent, was the source of her fluctuating relationship with the King. Her whiteness is not now potential seen by the King, but actual holiness.

iii) She has come out of the wilderness, which speaks of probation and testing. In every life there are periods of God's examination and proving before we can go on to further responsibility. The wilderness is often associated with the number 40, which is representative of probation. Israel was tested 40 years. Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days tempted of the devil before He could go on with His ministry. Elijah went 40 days into the wilderness to Mount Horeb and then had a new meeting with God which resulted in a new ministry for Jesus and Elisha. The Bride is not now bordering on Egypt - the other side of the wilderness. She has come out of it. The probation is behind her. She is ready for the fulness of her ministry with the King.

iv) Notice how she comes out the wilderness - "leaning on her beloved". Her natural strength has been changed. She can no longer be independent of the King. Just as Jacob was changed for all time at Mahanaim when God touched his thigh, the Bride's independence is destroyed by her new meeting with the King. This has been the real struggle all the way through the book. She has wanted and needed His blessing, but she wanted her own way in it. Now she leans totally on Him. Notice that of all the disciples, only John, who leaned on Jesus' breast, did not say, "Lord is it I who will betray you?". He said, "Who is it?" He knew it couldn't be him. His close relationship and his sense of dependence on the Lord precluded that and in fact John was the only one who did not desert Jesus. He was at the Judgement in Annas' house, and also at the cross, until the Lord died.

b) "I raised thee up under the apple tree" - This verse is connected to both **chapter 2:3** which speaks of the apple tree compared to the other trees of the wood, **and 3:4** which tells us of "her mother's house and the chamber where she was conceived".

i) We have established that the "mother's house" or "Jerusalem from above ... the mother of us all" speaks of the Church. By one Spirit we are baptised into one body. We do not come to God as independent people, but immediately become part of that mystical union which is the Church.

ii) The King points out to His Bride that this membership of the Church is only possible because of Him. The Church does not exist independently of Christ. He is its head and without Him it cannot function. In fact it is His uniqueness among all the trees of the wood that makes new birth possible. If he had been like others, born in sin and shaped in

iniquity there would have been no redemption. It was right at this point of His uniqueness - Godhead and humanity joined in one person, that the Church came into existence, and it is also at this precise point that all of us are born again.

iii) Other translations of this verse say, "I awakened thee", instead of "raised". Most people do not realise what really happened to them at conversion until much later in their relationship with the King. As a result of the developing love between us and Christ, we are able to receive the revelation of His uniqueness (as the apple tree). We need growth in grace and spiritual understanding to fully comprehend our "roots" and our "destiny". This level of understanding prepares us for a strong public commitment to the Lord.

8:6-7 - "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is as strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned."

The King is speaking to the Bride and the terms He employs draw her attention to the way He has had her as a seal on His heart and His arm.

The High Priest wore the Breastplate carrying the jewel symbols and the names of the Tribes of Israel into the Presence of God. Christ also wore His love for us on His hands in the form of nail prints.

Now He calls for her to acknowledge Him in public, as He has shown His love for her.

In 8:1 she observed that her public show of affection would be misunderstood and she would be despised as David was despised in His public adoration of the Lord by Michal - **1 Chron. 15:29**.

Now the King encourages her to ignore the criticisms of the carnal, and to confess Him, not only in her heart, but in her public witness for Him as well. Let me be as a seal on your heart - this is the inner experience of the Holy Spirit that witnesses to us that we are the children of God - **Rom. 10:9, 8:16**. However, that inner sealing of our relationship needs public acknowledgement to make it valid. Note **Rom. 10:9** - "Confess with the mouth", and **Mark 8:38**.

The seals spoken of in this verse were those worn within the garment - the secret place - upon thine heart, and the public arm bracelet similar to our wedding ring.

i) The Bride releases the love that is as strong as death. Christ's love for us on the Cross overcame death for all time, and now she has that level of commitment which would lay down her life for Him.

That love has a consuming power - a most vehement flame. It burns up all the irrelevant things which could cause any blockage in her relationship with the King. That burning love is a jealous love - not in a possessive and selfish way, but one which is careful that nothing be allowed to intrude on her commitment to the King. Just as death cannot be held back when it comes for its prey, so the love of the Bride for the King will not accept second place in her life anymore.

One translation says "Ardent love is as retentive as the grave. The flashes thereof are flashes of fire. A very flame of the Lord."

Our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:19). The depth of the King's love expressed in total commitment to death for his loved ones is now in the Bride - a love that will not let her go.

iii) This level of love is also sustaining. Floods cannot quench it or drown it. These waters were mentioned by Jesus in Matt. 7:24-27 in the context of false miracle workers who sought to manifest power but were never in love with the King (verse 25-26), and He casts them out saying, "I never knew you". ("we were never intimately in love.") Those who have the death commitment kind of love that burns as a consuming jealous flame will never be overthrown by the storms of life. Their foundations are solid and not shifting sand.

iv) Luke 8:14 speaks of the seed among thorns being choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and no fruit is brought to perfection. True love for the King will never put mere possessions before Him, even all the substance of a house would never compare to this love.

The Bride's love is now both cherished inwardly and displayed outwardly, and has become a cleansing, excluding, consuming, sustaining force.

8:8 - "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?"

a) "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts" - In her total commitment to the King (8:2-7) and her new awareness of His uniqueness (8:5b), the Bride also develops an awareness of others in the Body of Christ who are undeveloped in their faith and love, and who cannot feed others. These people have the very basics of their spiritual life missing. They are saved but not growing, and the Bride recognises that unless the little sister starts to develop in faith and love she may lose what she already has. The scripture says, "from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" - **Luke 19:26**.

b) For the first time in the book the term "we" is used by the Bride in reference to the King and herself. This follows immediately after the new depth of love she adopts in verses 6 and 7. She is now totally identified with the King in His purpose to bring all His people to the fullness of the stature of the man Christ Jesus (i.e., till we all come - **Eph. 4:13**).

She is now praying according to the will of God - no longer petitioning in uncertain hope, but with the confidence that she is in the will of the King in asking for the little sister who has a common origin with the King and Bride but no development. Note **1 John 3:14, 5:14, 16**.

c) "What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" - God has a moment of truth and a time of challenge for everyone. There is a point where He will not allow maturity to proceed without challenging that immature one to respond and grow.

8:9 - "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar."

The King replies to the Bride regarding the little sister and He also uses the joint term "we". This shows that He expects the Bride herself to be involved in changing the immature state of undeveloped believers.

He says that if there is something in her life to work with, that together He and the Bride will be able to build a palace of silver on her.

a) This shows His intention for all believers to be the dwelling place of His presence rather than mere recipients of His blessings. The Bride herself has become a palace for the King's dwelling place, i.e. Tirzah (**6:4**).

b) Because of what has happened in the Bride she is now able to "disciple" others (**Matt. 28:20**) and to shorten the process with them. She has become a Trailblazer like those the King encouraged her to follow when she was undeveloped herself (**1:8**).

c) The little sister must learn to be secure in the Lord by depending on His redemptive work. This is what silver speaks of in scripture. Her own wall will never suffice. Perhaps one of the main reasons for immaturity in God's people is a lack of security in their salvation. They trust unsuccessfully in their own will power rather than in His redemptive work.

She must also have an openness to be developed - "If she be a door". If she is not closed to the dealings of the King, He and the Bride will be able to enclose her with the incorruptible nature of the King, of which the cedar boards speak. Jesus overcame temptation in His humanity and is able to enclose us so that we can be victorious also. **1 John 5:4**.

8:10 - "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour."

The Bride demonstrates to the little sister what is possible. Her faith and love are now like towers. She no longer needs a wall for security as she did in **2:9**. Her maturity is now so evident that the little sister is inspired to follow her example. **1 Cor. 11:1**. Previously her towers were:

a) her neck, built like the tower of David - her will determined to do the King's will.

b) her neck like a tower of ivory - her will-power sustained by life from within rather than mere determination.

c) her nose like the tower of Lebanon - her perception of Spiritual forces.

Now her faith and love are the high places of her life. Her vision, perception and defence are all products of the total commitment of her love for the King.

She says "I was in His sight as one that found favour".

Only those that operate in faith can please the Father - **Heb. 11:6**, but it is always faith which works by love - **Gal. 5:6**.

8:11 - "Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver."

a) "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon" - The location of this town is unknown but the name has two meanings:

i) "Lord of a multitude" - This speaks of the extent of the Bride (note **7:4**, "the daughters of a multitude"). The vineyards speak of the fruit that is to be brought forth in His Kingdom, cp **7:11-12**.

He desires "much fruit that will remain" - **John 15:1, 2, 5, 8, 16**.

The Bride is not a minority group, but the harvest of the Lord - a mighty multitude.

ii) "Possessor of abundance" - The Bride is His inheritance - **Eph. 1:18**. The fulness of the Church will glorify the Lord and cause Him to be admired - **2 Thess. 1:10**. He possesses the rich resources of His redeemed people.

b) "He let out the vineyard to keepers" - Note **Matt; 21.33-45**; Jesus said that God's vineyard was taken from the Jewish people and given to a nation (**1 Pet. 2:9**) bringing forth the fruits. The Church is charged with the responsibility of tending the vineyards of God and bringing forth "much fruit".

c) "Everyone for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver" - silver always speaks of redemption. No part of our ministry for Christ can function out of human effort. It must all start and finish in redemption.

The number 1000 in scripture is typical of Divine completeness and the Glory of God. The Church will finally be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle (**Eph. 5:27**), full and complete and having the glory of God **Rev. 21:11**. The goal of the Melchizedek priesthood of the New Testament Covenant is perfection - **Heb. 8:7, 7:11, 19**. The Bride has the responsibility of bringing others like the undeveloped little sister, and the carnal daughters of Jerusalem, to perfection and maturity. We are called to bring fruit to perfection (**Luke 8:14**) and to have fruit that is not lost (**John 15:16**). The Ascension Gift Ministries, as part of the Melchizedek Priesthood, exist to bring the Body of Christ to perfection or the fulness of the stature of the man Christ Jesus. In the parable of the Talents, differing degrees of success were acceptable based on the capacity of each one, and the opportunity he received. In this respect all the keepers have to bring 1000 pieces of silver. It speaks to us that everyone, regardless of position in the Church or station in life or calling in God, has the same responsibility to disciple others and cause them to grow in God. The Church is not an elite sacerdotal society. It is the priesthood of all believers.

The only other mention of 1000 pieces of silver in the Bible is in **Gen. 20:16**. Abimelech gave Abraham this price to "right the wrong I have done thee" (margin). There is a sense in which continuous redemption is occurring in our lives. The blood of Jesus cleanses us and keeps on cleansing - **1 John 1:7**. We are all like the little sister, built into a palace of silver. There is a continuous need for the redemptive process to work in us.

8:12 - "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."

a) "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me" - The Shulamite still has her own personal vineyard. In the last two chapters we have seen her launch into the King's Lebanon ministry with

a great vision for the vineyards in general. This is no longer to be at the expense of her personal relationship and responsibilities to the King. In **chapter 1:6** there was a conflict between the general ministry of the vineyards and her own. Her love for the King is now publicly declared and with such total commitment that she has kept on course regardless of the rest of her ministry for the King. Service never again becomes a substitute for love.

b) "Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand" - She recognises that she is only one of many fruit producers and the fact of her personal relationship with the King does not exempt her from bringing forth fruit herself. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were content to tell others what to do, but did not do it themselves. **Matt. 23:2**. There is no double standard in the Bride. She is personally producing what everyone else is expected to and seeks to bring her own vineyard to perfection. Paul was able to say of his life, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course" (**2 Tim. 4:7**). He had preached to others, but did not end up a castaway - **1 Cor. 9:27**.

c) "Those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred" - The Bride has a number of workers under her oversight. She is not just caring for immature people and catering to their needs, but building "little sisters" into palaces of silver and bringing them to maturity. Part of this process is to teach them to disciple others also - **2 Tim. 2:2**. 200 is used six times in scripture and is the number of insufficiency. Note **John 6:7**.

Many rewards are received in the ministry of the Church, such as recognition of the brethren, satisfaction in fruit produced, appointment to leadership, etc. However all of these are designed to only wet our appetite for further challenge and for the rewards that only the Lord can give at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

All earthly prestige is totally insufficient. The Bride's workers are to be blessed, but encouraged to go further and produce more for the King.

The number two hundred is used in respect of Achan (**Joshua 7:21**) and shows the insufficiency of money; of Absalom (**2 Sam. 14:26**) which speaks of the insufficiency of beauty; and of Micah (**Judges 7:14**) showing the insufficiency of religion.

Only the rewards that Christ will give will be satisfying and it was for this that Paul pressed forward - **2 Tim. 4:7. Phil. 3:8-14**.

8:13 - "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it."

a) "Thou that dwellest in the gardens" - This is plural and is the first time we are told where He dwells. Previously He had "come" into the gardens (**5:1, 6:2**). But now He dwells there. His permanent residence is where the Bride is bringing forth both her own personal fruit and caring for the vineyards (plural). However, this garden is not as **4:12** (walled). She is her own wall. Her maturity is her defence and there is no blockage between her and the King. Love and faith delight Him and protect her.

b) "The companions hearken to thy voice." - In chapter **1:7** they turned those seeking the King aside. They were building their own kingdom instead of the King's. Now the maturity of the Bride is having an effect on the little sisters and the daughters of Jerusalem and even the companions. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice" - **John 10:27**. This speaks of those who've been side-tracked by their own desires or caught up in apostate religion leaving their own kingdoms to build only His.

c) "Cause me to hear it". - The first time the voice of the King was mentioned she had disobeyed and retreated behind the wall (2:8). Now at the end of the Song she re-affirms her commitment to His voice and His commands. She is at His beck and call. The only qualification for continuing discipleship is to be currently hearing His voice.

8:14 - "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

In chapter 2:17 she had told Him to be on the mountains of separation. It was of no consequence to her that she would be bereft of His presence. Now it is the mountains of spices to which she refers and says that now the King will be seen on the consecration she has made to Him. She said "Until the day break I will get me to the mountains of myrrh and the hill of frankincense" (4:6). There will never be any end to the sacrifices of her life, her consecration of the cross and her worship of the King while she is ministering for Him. It was this act which had lifted her to Lebanon and she recognises that her whole ministry for the King must continue in this vein. There will be no more separation but His presence and His victory will be manifested on her "mountain of spices" - her myrrh and frankincense. The mountains (problems) are subdued by the King on the basis of her sacrifice and worship.

The book ends with the call that was made when her major decline began - "Make haste my beloved". Chapter 2:8 says "Behold He cometh". Both these statements are suggestions of the Second Coming of Christ to receive His Bride unto Himself and the prayer of the Bride at the end of the Song of Solomon is the same as the call of the Bride at the end of the **Book of Revelation (22:20)** - "Even so come Lord Jesus".