

Intro To Song Of Solomon – Mack Tomlinson

Solomon's longest song, known as the Song of Solomon or the Song of Songs, is somewhat of a neglected book. Though it is fragrant with the themes of love and desire, its poetic nature and changing, complex dialogue causes many to fail to benefit from it as God intends. In recent years, the Song of Solomon has been popularly interpreted as being primarily a book about marital romance. It is not intended, so 21st century marriage seminar leaders argue, to teach a picture of the romance between Christ and the church, but rather, the correct interpretation and meaning of the book is to show romance and passion in marriage; this, they say, is the only proper historical interpretation of the book. It is a picture of sacred romance between a man and wife, a manual on marital passion and sexual fulfillment that will keep a marriage alive and enjoyable if the couple will apply its principles and teaching. Is such an interpretation valid?

Those who teach this argue that the early church fathers, beginning with Origen, began to "spiritualize" the text of Scripture further than was intended. They do not find Christ and the church here; they say the message of Christ and the church is not in the book. That this was never the intent of Solomon. What was intended was Solomon showing the love of a man and wife for each other. But Origen and other the early fathers brought a "new" and allegorical interpretation upon Scripture that was never intended. So all believers throughout church history who view the Song of Songs as portraying Christ and His bride are wrong completely to ever see Jesus in this book, according to this view.

What should we think of this? In light of the very popular seminars and conferences being held nationally that are causing thousands of professing believers to be very excited about Solomon's book of sexuality and pleasure, it is important to re-think how we view the Song of Solomon. It all comes down to our hermeneutic-- that is, what rules of biblical interpretation we bring to the book. Among other things, we can never isolate a single verse, single passage or even a single book of the Bible from the rest of Scripture to come up with a valid interpretation of truth. We have not time or space here to address biblical hermeneutics, but we know that one of the primary principles of interpretation that must govern all Scripture, is that it all must point us to Christ. And it is interesting indeed that Jesus Himself, presumably a safe and accurate interpreter of Scripture (!) gives us a glimpse into how we ought to see the entire Bible in Luke 24.

After his resurrection, Jesus draws near to the two on the Emmaus Road as they walk and talk of those things which had happened recently in Jerusalem. After coming along side and listening to these two disciples, one of which was Cleopas, Jesus begins to speak to them. Luke 24:27 gives an amazing statement of this discussion: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded in ALL (emphasis mine) the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Note what the verse does NOT say. It does not say that He expounded only from the books of Moses, which we call the Pentateuch. It says He began there and expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. This means nothing less than that He began with the first five books of the Bible and proceeded through to the end, expounding what each book taught concerning Himself. As he was speaking to the two disciples there, did He come to the

Song of Solomon and say, "O, here's an exception; all of the Old Testament speaks of me, except the Song of Solomon; it does not teach about me, but all the rest of the Scriptures do." No, "He expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

So Jesus' own hermeneutic, if you would call it that, says that all the Old Testament is teaching us about Himself. Remember-- Jesus did not just interpret Scripture; He was the giver of it all, speaking all of it fully about Himself. That settles it for me personally. So if a contemporary marriage communicator says Solomon's Song of Songs is not about Christ, but rather about romance in marriage, I prefer to take Christ's teaching about it. But there is more than that as far as interpretation goes. The truths spoken of in the book about the bridegroom, who is called a king, can only properly be applied to Christ Himself. The descriptions in the book won't fit anyone except Him. It would be ludicrous to apply them to a fallen, sinful married man, even the best of husbands. There has never lived a human husband who can be described like Solomon describes the bridegroom in this book. There is perfection only in the one Solomon speaks of, and it would be dangerous at best, to apply it to anyone except to the one perfect Bridegroom.

So taking this as a basis, we have every obligation and privilege to view the Song of Solomon as teaching us about Christ-- that He is the Bridegroom, the King, and the Beloved Male pictured in this song of love. This also, by the way, has been the accepted historical view straight through since the early centuries of the church, that Song of Solomon is about Christ, not a human love story. In some future Daily Thoughts, we will share some from this exceptionally wonderful song that Solomon wrote under inspiration. It is called "the Song of Songs". Even though Solomon wrote 300 proverbs and 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32), this song stands out as the "Song of Songs", the song of ALL songs that he wrote. When one examines its content and message, they do not have to wonder why it is spoken of in this way, especially set apart from the other 1004 songs of Solomon. It is a love song-- that is the only way to view it; a song between the Bridegroom and His bride; there's no mistaking that. It unfolds the glorious theme of mutual communion of love more than any other book in the Bible.

The entire theme of the book is a passionate, red-hot, pursuing love between Him and her-- between Him and every believer-- between Him and you. This is all about a love relationship that can be compared to no other earthly love affair or relationship. Throughout the inspired song, we are given major truths that show the realities that exist between Him and His own beloved ones: 1. The Bridegroom's view of His bride; 2. His passionate and pursuing love of her; 3. His heart toward her at all times; 4. The bride's active and engaging love for her Lover; 5. The mutual pursuit of each other in intimate love; 6. The deep and exhilarating enjoyment of that mutual love regularly experienced.

These truths govern the complete message of the book. This love story is a love pursuit-- a revealing of each other to the other and a giving of one another's love to the other consistently. James Durham, the 17th century Puritan, says: "Here is the mutual love, union, and communion between Christ and His people, and their mutual conduct toward each other." In that statement, Durham gives us the entire purpose of the Song of Solomon-- to draw

every believer into a deeper, exciting, enjoyable, and passionate experience of the love of Jesus Christ and to increase his/her passionate love for Him... to be continued.