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*The
Altogether Lovely
Christ*

SONG OF SOLOMON
5:9-16

Charles L. Feinberg, Th.D., Ph.D.

THE ALTOGETHER LOVELY CHRIST

Song of Solomon 5:9-16

CHARLES L. FEINBERG, Th.D., Ph.D.

The Song of Solomon is one of the most misunderstood books in the Bible because of the abundance of Oriental imagery to be found in its pages. The natural man and the carnal man see very little in the book, but spiritual men and women of all ages have delighted in its message. If the book be taken literally, we have set before us the beauty and glories of wedded love. From a dispensational viewpoint, the relationship between the Lord and His people Israel is set forth. From the standpoint of redemption, the book pictures the unbreakable bond between Christ and the church. Viewed from the angle of its spiritual import, it declares the communion between the individual soul and the Lord. In this series of love lyrics we have an extended section from 5:2 through 8:5, which deals with the interruption of communion and its restoration. In this portion our passage, 5:9-16, is found.

This division of the Song of Solomon treats, first of all, of

THE DEMAND. 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 adjure us?” In the text of the Song, the Shulammitte, the bride, is seeking her beloved, because he has departed when she was indifferent to his pleadings. She was more concerned with her personal ease and comforts. Now she is so earnestly beseeching the daughters of Jerusalem to aid her in her search for him, that they are compelled to ask why she considers her beloved more important and more outstanding than any other loved one. So many would accord Christ the Beloved a place alongside other masters, teachers, and leaders of the world. They cannot tolerate the claims made for Him by His own. They

wonder, as did the daughters of Jerusalem relative to the Shulammite, what entitles Him to special consideration, devotion, and adoration. They ask wherein lies His pre-eminence above all others. They are not entirely clear as to the features wherein He excels. Men have been asking these questions through the years, and they will continue to do so.

It is told that a Hindu of rank was troubled in his conscience on the subject of a future state. He had heard of Christians, and longed to converse with them about their religion, and to know who Christ was. So he visited England, the Christian's land, supplied with introductions to some leading people. Being asked to a great dinner, he turned to his neighbor in the course of conversation, and said, "Can you tell me something about Christ, the founder of your religion?" "Hush," said his new acquaintance, "we do not speak of such things at dinner-parties." Later, he was invited to a large ball. Dancing with a young and fashionable lady, he took an opportunity of asking her who the founder of her religion, Jesus Christ, was. Again he was warned that a ball was no place to introduce such subjects. The Hindu thought, "These Christians in England are strange. They will not speak of their religion, nor inform me about Christ, their founder." If we claim Christ as our Beloved, the world is asking of us, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?"

In the next place, our passage sets forth

THE DESCRIPTION. 10-16a.

"My beloved is white and ruddy, The chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold; His locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks, Washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, As banks of sweet herbs: His lips are as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh. His hands are as rings of gold set with beryl: His body is as ivory work over-

laid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: Yea, he is altogether lovely."

The bride here gladly embraces the opportunity to speak forth the excellencies of her beloved. In a highly figurative description she tells of His beauties. In this portrayal the believing heart now can see the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is white, effulgent, glistening. See Luke 9:29 of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. She speaks first of His holiness. He is Light and in Him is no darkness whatsoever. I John 1:5. That He is ruddy brings out His love expressed in the shedding of His blood for sinners on Calvary. He is indeed the chiefest, One marked out by a banner, above and beyond all others. He is the banner conspicuous above hosts of thousands of warriors.

In the next six verses we have ten features outlined. The head as fine gold indicates the divine glory. All He thought and all He purposed were ultimately for the glory of God. In the black locks there is the strength of manhood. Note Psalm 102:27. Contrast the condition of Ephraim in Hosea 7:9. His eyes expressed the love and sorrow of the dove. Compare Hosea 11:8; Luke 13:34; and 19:41. There were gentleness, meekness, and purity as well. See Luke 22:61. The cheeks likened to a bed of spices denote fragrance. His lips were as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh, because they spoke only the truth of God (Isa. 50:4) and this was sweet to the needy heart (Psa. 45:2). Purity marked every expression that fell from His tender lips.

The hands, as rings of gold, carry out what the head commands as right to do, and conducive to the divine glory. Rings in Scripture are often seals of authority; here it is that of God. He did speak as One having authority. By the finger of God He did cast out demons. The body as of ivory work describes one statuesque in its symmetry and excellence. The sapphires remind of heavenly blue. Ivory also speaks of

purity. His life has been scrutinized with microscopes by critics, but they find no fault in Him. His legs denote steadfast strength (Isa. 63:1 ff.). The setting is of gold; there is a divine foundation to all the feet accomplished. Blessed were those feet which went about doing only good. The aspect like Lebanon with its cedars tells us of fragrance and durability. The cedars of Lebanon conveyed to them in that day what the Rock of Gibraltar does to us today in the way of firmness and incorruptibility.

When all has been said, it is His mouth that is most sweet. Even His enemies had to testify that never did a man speak as He did. Children came; fallen women were drawn to Him; and publicans and sinners crowded about Him. Someone has well said, "His perfection does not glitter, it glows." His humanity, sympathy, and humility were wonderful. His gentleness and tenderness were never weakness. His courage was never cruelty. Think of Him before the high priest, before Herod, or before Pilate. In all and through all He maintains, and He alone, His royal dignity. The best of men are only men at the best. He is infinitely more. Other men were outstanding for some special excellence — Moses for meekness, Job for patience, Daniel for steadfastness, Paul for zeal, and John for love, but Christ has every good quality, and to an infinite degree. Having exhausted her description, but not His excellences and beauties, she exclaims in her ecstasy, "He is altogether lovely." She gives up the task as beyond her. He beggars description. He is firmly rooted in her heart.

The account is told of a soldier in Napoleon's army who was wounded one day by a bullet which entered his breast above his heart; he was carried to the rear, and the surgeon was probing the wound with his knife. Finally, the man said, "An inch deeper, and you will find the emperor." So it is with the name of our Beloved in our hearts. Song of Solomon 1:3.

Finally, our text discloses

THE DECISION. 16b.

"This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Now the bride declares her personal testimony. It indicates a decision definitely made at some time in the past. It includes high appreciation of the loved one, appropriation ("my" twice), and open declaration and confession of him. Every trusting heart who is resting in Christ the Lord has come to the same conclusion. Who would care to disown Him? Shall we be ashamed to declare Him as ours?

The incident is told of an old Christian lady who had once known much of the Bible by heart. Age began to tell on her memory. Eventually only one precious portion stayed with her, 2 Timothy 1:12. By and by part of that slipped, and all she could say was, "That which I have committed unto him." At last, near death, her lips would move. She was repeating but one word, "Him . . . Him . . . Him." She had lost the whole Bible but one word. But she had the whole Bible in that one word.

Can you give a testimony similar to that of the Shulamite? Do you declare Christ the Beloved One of your soul, your Friend? When you do in humility and in the power of the Holy Spirit, there will be those, as the daughters of Jerusalem of that day, who will ask, "*Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither hath thy beloved turned him, That we may seek him with thee?*" (6:1).

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