

Song of Solomon Notes 09.07.06

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Major Characters

Solomon is the male character: it is Solomon's song [1:1]; the male character is identified as the king [1:4]; Solomon is mentioned several times [3:7, 9, 11; the last of which describes him as the king on his wedding day]; and the female character talks of Solomon [8:11-12]. Solomon is identified here as the king [3:11]. We know that he is a Jew [2 Samuel 12:24] and apparently is saved [the same verse says "the Lord loved him"]. He is a man of good character [1:3], handsome and pleasant [1:16], ruddy and fit [5:10, 14], and sweet spoken [5:16]. Though not purposely implied by the author, the reader might conclude he was somewhat greedy, as indicated by the mention of sixty queens and eighty concubines [6:8].

The female character is not named, but she is a "Shulammite" [6:13], from Lebanon [4:8], and the daughter of a prince [7:1]. She apparently is a Jew, as she is referred to as a sister [4:9]; one assumes she is saved, but there is no clear indication, and Solomon was known to marry non-Jewish women [1 Kings 11:1]. She is beautiful [1:8], despite describing herself as swarthy, sunburned, and uncared for [1:6]. She is sweet spoken [4:11] and pure [6:9].

Purpose

The author is using poetic song to describe the ultimate example of the love that can exist between a man and a woman. In the Proverbs, Solomon dealt with many aspects of wisdom, including a few passages about love and wives in general, but here he gives his wisdom about this specific kind of love, in a form that accents its beauty and mystery.

The author describes love as romantic, as evidenced by the way Solomon romances his lady with tender words [4:7-15]. The author describes love as sensual, as evidenced by passages with sexual implications [4:16; 7:1-9]. The author describes love as pure, as evidenced by the characterization of both the man and the woman [1:3; 6:9]. The author describes love as deep, as evidenced by the woman being "lovesick" [2:5; 5:9], and love being "strong as death" [8:6] and more valuable than riches [8:7]. The author describes love as hot, as evidenced by the woman's injunction for her man to "hurry" [8:14] and her desperation to hear his voice [8:13]. The author describes love as leading to marriage [3:11].

Application

The application is to teach about the nature of true romantic love. This being on the surface a poetic song about a romantic relationship between a man and a woman, there is nothing literally in the text that would lead to any other application. To consider this as a metaphor for the love of Christ for the church requires, not only "spiritualizing" the text into allegory, but also ignoring the blatantly romantic and sensual aspects of the relationship described. This would not be consistent with sound hermeneutics. The application of teaching about the nature of true romantic love is a much needed aspect of Christian life that is not adequately dealt with in other scriptural books.