

Singing The Song of Songs



Jim Raddin

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Jim Raddin

J H Raddin LLC
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With great thanksgiving
To my Lord Jesus Christ
And to those who have served Him in my life,
Most notably my dear wife Janie,
My Altogether Beautiful One.
She also Sings the Song of Songs with Him,
And she shares her Singing with me.

Jim Raddin

San Antonio and Rockport, Texas

August 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In all your ways acknowledge Him... Proverbs 3:6

I do acknowledge Him. I do not claim any ability to follow, but I acknowledge the One who has chosen to draw near, and His ability to make of us New Creations, not at a distance, but **in Him**. The text of the Song of Songs in the Bible only draws us to hear and sing the ever-new and eternal Song of Songs He gives to each of us individually.

I also hasten to prominently acknowledge Janie, my wife of 54 years, and many others whom God has used in my life to draw me deeper into the intimate relationship with Him that causes my heart to Sing.

Scripture sections quoted in the text are rendered in italics and are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless noted. When you see an ellipsis (“...”) in a quote, it denotes an omitted word or section. You may want to go back and see what’s there. Read this book with an open Bible, in the translation He chooses for you.

I express my deep appreciation to Christian brothers and sisters who have taken the time to read through my draft copy. My books have come about more frequently than I had originally expected, so I have tried to spread the draft-reading tasks around to some extent. Of course, Janie always goes first. Others for this volume include my cousin, Reverend David Raddin of Jackson, Mississippi and our friends, Ms. Janie Jones and Ms. Emily Fox of San Antonio, Texas.

The picture on the cover is one I took recently in Rockport while on a morning walk with Janie. I was hearing music from the Song of Songs.

Jim Raddin
San Antonio and Rockport, Texas
August, 2021

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“...Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”
Song of Songs 2:10 (KJV)

The Song of Songs may be the least familiar book in the Bible. The Song is just different from the rest, probably more so even than the book of the Revelation. It is harder to discern what is going on or what point is being made. It is full of the most physically intimate language in all of scripture. Many would not expect such erotic language to even be found in the Bible.

What is the Song of Songs about? Well, it is basically an intimate Love Song sung by two lovers who are overwhelmingly in love. The principal singers are a Great King, whose name means “Peace”, and an unnamed woman whom the King has chosen as His Beloved. They sing to each other and about each other, joined occasionally by a kind of chorus providing intermittent commentary. That’s about it.

I first read the Song as a young Christian when I recognized I needed to read through the entire Bible. At the time, I recall not knowing quite what to make of it, but that remains true today, and not just for the Song. None of the Bible is there just for me to make something out of it. It is all there for Him to draw near, touch my heart and make someone new out of me.

I do not propose to explain the Song of Songs here, or even to attempt some kind of study guide. The Song is not here for us to study or figure out. I have realized, in my own experience in Him, that the Song is intended to be sung. And it is not intended to be sung alone or just among ourselves. Love Songs don’t work that way.

Why do I now set out to write a book about the Song of Songs? The answer is simple. I now can hear Christ singing over me here, and He calls me to join in with Him.

The name “Song of Songs” means there is no greater song, just like the name “King of Kings” means there is no greater king. The Song of Songs is perhaps more commonly known as the Song of Solomon, whose name actually does mean “Peace”, as in “Shalom”. It is less commonly known as the Canticle of Canticles. You can read all kinds of odd things about the book. You can read that many “scholars” question the idea that Solomon could have written it, based on their analysis of its content and its language. Their questions therefore begin with the short first verse, which simply says, *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s*.

You can read “scholarly” opinions that the Song is not consistent with the rest of the Bible, and not just because of the erotic sexual language. They say that the book centers only on intimate desire and intimate delight between a man and a woman. They say the book never refers to God at all and that it is devoid of any real theological content.

You can read all kinds of things. Or you can turn to the Song of Songs and hear the King of Kings (the Prince of Peace) singing over the one He loves. He invites each of us to respond and join in, because we each are that very beloved one, made lovely because of His completed work on the Cross and in the Resurrection.

For me, the Song is not a document to be read and studied. It is not there to be taught and understood by scholars. It is not there to serve as the basis of a systematic, rational theology. “Theology” means the study of God, but God does not reveal Himself to me so that I might study Him, or understand Him, or even obey Him to the best of my meager ability. God reveals Himself that I might know Him, experience delight in Him, and be changed into His Likeness as He delights over me.

The Song of Songs is not composed of rhyming words on a page or physical notes producing vibrations in our eardrums, but it is here to be Sung, as only the King of Kings can Sing it. As He does, and as we respond, we are enabled to join the Singing and enter a spiritual reality of inexpressible delight. The Song is not limited to the words we read on the page. It is a Song above all songs as He is a King above all kings. Don’t try to read it or sing it alone. Simply let Him have His Way with you where you are. You will find that the words keep changing. They are always new and just for you, but the King who Sings over you remains recognizably the same.

Personally, I have heard in the Song some of the most delightful words I've ever known, even in its Biblical text. The words quoted at the very beginning of this chapter rank right up there. They are words that thrill me every time I hear them addressed to me. I long to hear them spoken urgently by Him in the immediate moment when He calls me Home with Him. If there is to be a tombstone for me, those are the words I want to have engraved there. If there is to be a funeral service for me, those are the words, along with their context, I want to have read there.

*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*
Revelation 21:2

CHAPTER 2

WHY THE EXPLICIT SEXUAL CONTENT?

*May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For your love is better than wine.*
Song of Songs 1:2

The Song of Songs wastes no time getting to it and neither shall we. Right at the outset, let's consider this obvious question because many are taken aback at the language, particularly as it gets more specific. Why indeed?

Why should the language of physical sexuality and erotic desire be a part of God's word to us? I cannot analyze that question from an academic perspective. All I have to share is the spiritual perspective I have found in singing the Song in Him.

But first, consider something of the character of the creation: *...for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made...* (Romans 1:20). The creation reveals God. Consider also how He chose to make us as the pinnacle of that creation. *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* (Genesis 1:27). God intended the man and the woman to be capable of joining together in an intimate relationship from which new life could spring. That is supposed to tell us something of our God.

Some readers of the Bible are less than happy with the notion that Adam was created first and Eve was taken out of Adam as described in Genesis 2, but, as He tells us, it is the very reason why the intimate, life-producing relationship between a man and a woman is to be. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.* (Genesis 2:24). Even this verse in Genesis borders on the erotic, but that is the way new life is brought forth. Once again, the nature and character of His creation is supposed to tell us something about our God and so it does. Consider with me some aspects of how it does just that.

The Bible tells us that Jesus the Christ is a kind of new and far superior version of Adam. Indeed, we needed a New Adam, because the old one sinned and brought death into the world. *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* (I Corinthians 15:22). *So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ...Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.* (I Corinthians 15: 45 and 49).

When we receive Him, we are indeed born again. We are New Creations in Christ. *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come. Now all these things are from God...* (II Corinthians 5:17-18).

Eve was to become one flesh with Adam after she was made by God from Adam. We become one spirit with Christ after we are made anew by God out of Christ. The comparison is far more precise than I initially thought.

Eve was made by God from a rib taken from Adam's chest. Genesis 2:21 tells us that God closed up the wound. Do these facts allow you a deeper appreciation for the spear wound in Christ's chest as described in the Gospel of John 19:31-37? The Blood and Water that came forth are the materials for the making of New Creatures both in Christ and of Christ. The wound in His chest was not closed as Adam's was. The wound remained open, so that Doubting Thomas could be invited to insert his hand into it, as recorded in John 20:24-29. The wound still remains open so that you and I can be recreated out of His Own Shed Blood and His Living Water.

As a physician, during my internship in general surgery, I had occasion to participate in a procedure to remove a rib from an anesthetized patient. As I recall, I was the one who closed the wound. The rib was to be used as an implanted strut graft in the patient's spine. It was destined to grow in a new place. You may be surprised to learn that a removed rib actually will also grow back again in its original location, to some extent, so long as its outer periosteum layer is left intact. The creation often tells us of the Creator in surprising detail. You may be sure that I thought about Genesis 2 at the time I closed that wound. I have appreciated much more over the years since.

The intimate physical union of a man and a woman, capable of producing new physical life, should picture for us the intimate Spiritual union of Christ with physical men and women which produces the new Spiritual life of the New Creature in Christ. It is that simple. We should not be surprised that the language of intimate physical desire is used here to point to the intimate Spiritual love affair Christ woos us into with Him.

I fondly recall the feelings welling up in me as I fell in love with my wife Janie over 55 years ago. I came to think of her consistently, whether we were together or apart. I still do, only more so. I am profoundly convinced that the same is happening in her. Spend some time in Ephesians chapter 5. You will find that the relationship of marriage is described from the point of view of the wife and from the point of view of the husband. Surprisingly perhaps to modern ears, the passage does not describe an equal relationship at all. In fact it describes a radically unequal one from the two perspectives. Each party sees the other as being overwhelmingly more important than they see themselves. Wives, for example, should submit themselves entirely to their husbands. Husbands, correspondingly, should love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. That means going to the Cross.

One of the sad aspects of “modern” marriage is the common attempt to make the relationship equal. That can produce a doomed relationship in which neither party is willing to go more than halfway.

It is noteworthy that Ephesians 5 speaks of the intimate marriage relationship of a man and a woman but concludes in verse 32 that, *This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.* Ephesians 5 is doing much the same thing as we see in the Song of Songs. The intimate marriage relationship of a man and a woman is used as a way of pointing us to our Spiritual relationship in Christ. I am to submit entirely to the One who gives Himself entirely to me.

The language and joyful imagery of the intimate, personal love between a man and a woman in the Song offers me a picture of the overwhelming Spiritual desire that Christ has for me and, in response, I for Him.

God has designed us in such a way that the intimate physical union between a man and a woman has the potential to bring forth profound pleasure for both participants. Even when a separate new life is not produced by the union, new life may be produced within the relationship through the shared experience. That happens most fully when the character of the relationship approaches the highest and best God has designed it to be.

I think that God's ideal is rarely realized across this world. At the lowest extreme, God's highest and best can be perverted rather than sought. Selfish desire, lust, exploitation, and even violence can be substituted for the life-giving, loving and joyful relationship He has designed our bodies to allow.

The intense Spiritual relationship we are offered with Christ is inexpressibly beyond even the most ideal physical and emotional love relationship between humans, but we can catch sight of some remarkable things as we consider the comparison. One example is the startling observation that Christ's desire to touch me precedes and enables my desire after Him. I am awakened to the intensity of His desire to be with me, and I begin seeking the comfort of His Presence, not just out of my own needs, but in response to His expressed desire to enjoy Spiritual intimacy with me.

...I saw a Lamb standing, as if slain...
Revelation 5:6

*Crown Him the Lord of love; behold His hands and side,
rich wounds yet visible above, in beauty glorified...*
"Crown Him with many Crowns"
Matthew Bridges 1851

*"Father, I desire that they also whom you have given Me,
be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory
which you have given Me, for You loved Me
before the foundation of the world."*
John 17:24

*It was for this that He called you through our gospel,
that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
II Thessalonians 2:13-14

CHAPTER 3

DISCERNING THE VOICES: THE KING

*“How beautiful you are, my darling,
how beautiful you are!”*
Song of Songs 4:1

Before we turn to the words of the Song of Songs, let’s briefly discuss the voices we hear in its singing. Although His voice is not heard as the first one in the text, the true initiator of the Song is clearly the Lover, the King, the One who has chosen His Beloved as His Bride. Let’s look to Him first.

The Solomon we probably think of, when we read the first verse of the Song, is the Solomon who was the son of King David, the one who followed David as king over Israel and Judah. Was that the Solomon who wrote the Song of Solomon? Did a transcriptionist put pen to scroll for him? Did someone, claiming to be Solomon, write it later? Was it a group effort emerging over many years? How might we determine the identity of the author with complete certainty, and why should we care?

There are actually three unusual books in the Bible claiming to be by Solomon. You can read the first verse in Proverbs, in Ecclesiastes and in the Song of Songs and see the attribution. “Scholars” may dispute, in whole or in part, the claims contained in those verses. Other writings not in the Bible are also attributed to Solomon, including many more proverbs and songs.

In addition to the three books, there are also two Psalms whose titles appear to attribute authorship to Solomon in many of our Bible versions. Psalm 127 is one. Among other things, it tells us that we cannot be “do-it-yourself” Christians. The Lord must build the house. Psalm 72 also appears to say that Solomon wrote it, but its last verse may give an alternate potential interpretation that the Psalm is **about** Solomon instead of **by** him. That last verse simply says, *The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.* (v. 20), so Psalm 72 sounds very much like the last Psalm of David, speaking of a very different King Solomon who was yet to come.

The physical Solomon was the king in charge of building the first Temple as a place for the Very Presence of God among His People. The Temple had been promised to David, and he had made preparations for building it, but God made clear that it would not be built by a warrior stained by the blood of others. The task was passed to Solomon, a man named for peace.

The fact is that neither man appeared to be qualified to build any temple or to write any part of the Word of God. We should not be surprised. It is not people who do His work, but our God is the One who does the work in us.

You can't consider Solomon without first considering David. David was a man who sinned greatly. He committed adultery with the wife of a loyal soldier who was off fighting the wars for King David. When the woman became pregnant, David had the man killed in an attempt to hide his guilt. David's actions don't befit one whose name means "Beloved", but God still loved him, as He has loved me.

What a life-giving testimony it is to me that God chooses flawed people to speak His Word! David received God's revelation and was made, ever more surely, a man after God's Own Heart (Acts 13:22). Read in Psalm 51 the depths of David's repentance under God's conviction: *Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight...* (Psalm 51:4).

David apparently wrote about half the Psalms. Psalms are basically songs, for praying or for singing, but you don't typically hear of the singular "Song of David" like you do the Song of Solomon. There could be several viable candidates one might nominate for that singular title among the many Psalms of David.

While David wrote many of the Psalms, he was generally singing Someone Else's words. He came to understand this before he died. You can read what he said in II Samuel 23:1-7, which sounds almost like a further Psalm from him. In this passage, as he was about to die, he says this: *The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.* (v.2). He was telling the truth. Take one easy example. Long before Jesus spoke the famous words from the Cross, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* (Matthew 27:46), David began Psalm 22 with the words, *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* I don't believe Christ was quoting David. I believe David was quoting Christ. His Word was truly on David's tongue.

Christ's words continue through the entire Psalm 22, which forms a strikingly precise picture of the Cross, right down to His thirst, the piercing of His hands and feet, and my salvation to be gained by it. Read it!

The Psalms have been called the Prayer Book of Christ, and well they should be. The Psalms of David can be words for David, and for us, only because they are first The Words of Christ. That's true even when we might least expect it, as in David's abject confession of his ugly sin and his deep repentance in Psalm 51. Very surprisingly, David's tearful words of confession of his own guilt were also spoken just as surely by Jesus, because Christ took upon Himself the guilt of all my sin and confessed it as His Own. I'm still learning of the pain that caused Him, but Psalm 51 also speaks of the joy that was set before Him beyond the Cross (See also Hebrews 12:1-3). That joy included His Joy over my salvation. Psalm 51 is well worth reading here too.

Christ also assures me that a few of His Words in the Psalms are not words for me to sing at all. For example, Christ sang all by Himself those first few words of Psalm 22 about being forsaken. They were only for Him, because Hebrews 13:5 tells me clearly that He will never forsake me. I hear Him Sing of the price He paid for that promise.

Could Christ's Words also have been on Solomon's tongue for the Song just as surely as they were on David's tongue for the Psalms? Let's consider.

Solomon was a man who also sinned greatly. Both David and Solomon had been warned against this, hundreds of years before either man was born, but they both ignored God's warning. Remarkably, while the Children of Israel were still in the wilderness, God had warned Moses that the people would eventually desire to be like the other nations and choose to set a king over themselves after they came into the Promised Land. That is precisely what happened, as I Samuel 8 records. The king was specifically warned in advance not to multiply riches and wives to himself or else his heart would turn away. You can read all about this in Deuteronomy 17:14 -20. The warning was ignored by both men. They each had riches and multiple wives.

Solomon was a son of one of David's wives, the very same Bathsheba with whom David had committed adultery, but from a later pregnancy. Solomon accumulated greater riches and apparently far more wives than did David. Predictably, Solomon's heart was eventually turned away through all those wives, all the way to idolatry. Both men were guilty of sin, but the Bible only records abject repentance and a plea for cleansing by David. Solomon, at least from all we read of him, died unrepentant with his heart turned away from God and under God's punishment. That makes him an odd candidate to sing God's Word. You can see I Kings 11:1-13 for the sordid details.

Solomon was given greater wisdom than any other human, but wisdom is no protectant from sin. Even Solomon's wisdom seemed to understand this, if you agree that Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.* (Proverbs 3:5-6). Would that he had heeded his own words! I hope he eventually did.

Could Solomon have written the Song earlier in his life, before his heart was turned? The Bible does say Solomon wrote 1005 songs. But regardless of who put pen to scroll, do you suppose the Song of Solomon might instead be the literal words of a different King Solomon than David's physical son?

The name of David's son Solomon means "Peaceful". The word derives from a word you have heard. "Shalom" means "Peace". The son of King David was literally the "Prince of Peace", so Jesus and Solomon actually shared a name. In fact, there is much more. Consider just a few examples.

Jesus was called the "Son of David" many times in the New Testament because He is, while also being the Son of God. Examples in Matthew include 1:1, 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30-31, 21:9, and 22:41-46. Jesus, not Solomon, was the fulfillment of the righteous King to come after David.

Consider the prophecy of the coming Prince of Peace in Isaiah, written long after the old King Solomon was dead. *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us: and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace**. There shall be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.* Isaiah 9:6-7. (Emphasis added)

As I have discussed in an earlier book on Christ in the Old Testament, it is worthwhile to look again at Psalm 72, the Psalm by, or more likely about, Solomon. Look at the descriptions of the king's son. You will find that it cannot be, in any way, a description of David's physical son by Bathsheba. Read it yourself. There is no need for any scholarly explanation. Those words cannot be about the old Solomon. Those words can refer only to Jesus the Christ, the Coming, Eternal King. A good ending prayer for David, the Beloved, speaking of the New Solomon to come!

I do not know who put pen to paper to write out the Song of Solomon, but I am certain that the words are Christ's Own. They were not intended for one of the secular Solomon's 700 wives or 300 mistresses. These cannot be words of that Solomon directed to, or exchanged with, one of his many lovers who led him astray. When I hear the voice of the King in the Song of Solomon, I discern the Voice of My Jesus singing specifically over me. The only King who can sing the Song of Songs is the King of Kings!

Allow me to suggest an alternative to you that I have never heard before. It was given to me in the night watches. Could it be that Solomon did in fact hear and write down the words of the Song of Songs, perhaps earlier in his life? I am convinced that it would have also been in the night watches. I am also convinced that the words he would have been singing in his own voice were not the words to be sung by the King but, rather, Solomon was singing the words to be sung by the Beloved. He was hearing Words sung to him by a far greater King Solomon. He would have been hearing the King of Kings expressing His Love for a needy man. How tragic that he ended up choosing his own way and allowing his heart to be turned back to himself! How I pray fervently that before he drew his last breath, he returned to sing the words of the Beloved once more. May we each hear and sing with great joy!

*What is this coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and frankincense...?*
Song of Songs 3:6 (See also Matthew 2:11!!)

CHAPTER 4

DISCERNING THE VOICES II: THE BRIDE

*“He has brought me to his banquet hall,
And his banner over me is love.”*

Song of Songs 2:4

When My Jesus sings the Song over me, the voice that I discern, welling up out of me in response, is none other than the voice of His Beloved. It is not a voice that I was physically born with, but it is surely a voice that I am born again with. I learn it anew as we sing.

When I first heard words like those in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, I thought surely the voice of the King’s Beloved could not possibly be my voice. “He **has** brought me to his banquet hall”?? Surely that could not be referring to **me**! Not **now**! Isn’t that something I might hope for in the future? But then He begins showing me the awesome completeness of His work in me on the Cross and in the Resurrection. He shows me Himself.

As we Sing, I begin to experience the settled reality of the relationship He has created with me in Him right now. Hear this from Ephesians: *But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), and **raised us up with Him** and **seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus**. ...**now in Christ Jesus** you who formerly were far off **have been brought near** by the blood of Christ.* (Ephesians 2:4-6 and 13, emphases added.) He is the God of Now. I am His Beloved, from the foundation of the world, now, and forever.

It does not depend upon me; not upon who I am or what I have done. It depends on Him and Who He Is. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.* (John 3:16). Many have heard that before, some without appreciating the difference between really believing **in** Him and simply believing that He exists somewhere and does some good things for us.

The Bible says:

*I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me and heard my cry.
He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay,
and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.*

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;
Many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord.

Psalm 40:1-3 (Emphasis added.)

I cannot come up with His New Song on my own. He must put it in my mouth and in my heart if I am to sing it.

His voice and mine are not voices singing repeated words in stanzas like The Old Rugged Cross. We don't sing the written Song of Songs beginning with 1:1 and going through 8:14 over and over. The song is always new; always fresh. Often, I find that there are words I don't recognize. More often, there are no words at all, but there is singing. Neither is there a repeated tune. Usually, there is not what I would describe as notes or a melody, but there is music, of a kind I have never before known. I experience the Song as new in each experience. His music, like His mercy, is new every morning. (See Lamentations 3:21-26.) More on all this in a later chapter of this book.

We are often called to sing unto the Lord a new song. Examples can be found in the first verses of Psalms 96, 98, and 149 as well as in Isaiah 42:10. Some of the old songs, the old sacred music and hymns, are lovely, as are some of the newer praise songs. I have sometimes found some of them to accompany portions of my worship. But His New Song, the ever new one He puts in my heart in response as He sings over me! Now that constitutes my prayer, my worship, and my praise. He gives voice to His Beloved, and He convinces me that His Beloved is really me.

*I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.*
Psalm 104:33

CHAPTER 5

DISCERNING THE VOICES III: THE CHOIR

*“Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women?
Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?”*

Song of Songs 6:1

A very small part of the Song of Songs is written to be sung by unnamed participants other than the King and the Beloved. The quote above is one example. Some have referred to these singers as a chorus. Some Bible translations do not add any comment. Others separately label the three parts as in a script or music score. The New International Version assigns the labels of “Lover”, “Beloved” and “Friends”. I will just call them the Choir. Who might they be? I believe the Choir is a different one for each of us.

For me, the Choir is composed of those who have been given some part in drawing me to, or encouraging me in, my experience with the King of Kings. Allow me to mention a few examples.

My experience in the Song is a separate and intimate one with my Lord, but it also involves the participation of others. The music may include other voices, some only vaguely familiar, but others are clearly recognizable. Most prominent for me is the recognizable voice of my wife Janie. She participates with me in the King’s music, even in the night watches when she is asleep; even in the night watches when we both are asleep.

I have also discerned the voices of my mother and my maternal grandmother in the Choir. They both left this earth many decades ago, but they both had important roles in drawing me to my Savior. I have the distinct impression that they still do fulfill that role for me. They both were involved in giving me more than just physical life. There are other voices I hear in the Choir including, I expect, some who may find this book in their hands someday. Others have died, but, for me, they are still discernably singing with Him.

For me, the Choir is composed of more than just people. Think in your heart about it! Have you not found those experiences with Him in which the elements of His Creation spoke up loudly as a part of His Singing, just to you? Have you not heard Him with the accompaniment of the wind in the trees or the waves breaking on the rocks? Elijah clearly heard His Still Voice in I Kings 19, after rock-breaking wind as a prelude. Have you not heard His Voice alongside the singing of birds or the night sounds of the cicadas? I have even experienced His Singing combined with the silent accompanying music of a quiet sunset, a moonrise over the water, or a canopy of stars on a clear night far away from city lights. Listen to the Choir singing with you as you sing with Him!

You might not have the time to do it right now, but you should look again at David's "prelude" to the Song of Songs, sung in response to the King of Kings, in Psalm 8 and Psalm 19. Also read another Psalmist's words of prelude in Psalm 148. There is even a short paraphrase of the Song of Songs, written by the sons of Korah, in much the same style, in Psalm 45! Come to think of it, maybe you **do** have time to read these four short Psalms, **now**!

*For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace:
the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*
Isaiah 55:12, KJV

*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare if thou hast understanding.
Who hast laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
...Or who laid the corner stone thereof;
When the morning stars sang together,
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*
Job 38:4-7, KJV

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses
surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance
and the sin which so easily entangles us,
and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...*
Hebrews 12:1

CHAPTER 6

HEARING AND SINGING

*The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;
And His song will be with me in the night,
A prayer to the God of my life.*
Psalm 42:10

The Song of Songs is unlike any other song. Why should I expect it to be similar if it is indeed the Song of all songs? I don't just memorize the words of the Song and repeat them over and over. I don't just hear the King of Kings again and again reciting the words I find in the Book. The Song of Songs is a Living Experience with the King of Kings.

Hearing and singing the Song of Songs is the highest form of praying I have ever known. Our text above tells me so.

Prayer has been a changing experience for me over the years. In the earliest form, I "said my prayers", usually at my parents' prompting. I recall typically beginning with, "Now I lay me down to sleep...". Sometimes, I would say, "God is great. God is good. And we thank Him for our food. Amen." Occasionally I would add in a request or two like, "God bless Mommy. God bless Daddy.", whatever that meant.

Over the years, I began repeating the Lord's Prayer or recited a Psalm. I generated longer lists of requests, usually when I was scared or when I wanted something badly. I eventually became aware of "prayer requests" and "prayer lists" but I was not exactly sure how to deal with those. I heard people say that "Our prayers go out" to somebody or other, but I did not understand how to send my prayers to various destinations. Prayers were something I simply said, out loud or silently to myself, when the occasion arose. Prayers were, for the most part, requests, mostly on my own behalf but occasionally for people close to me. I also listened to someone else while they were "leading in prayer". If somebody asked me to say the prayer, I fumbled for what I hoped would be appropriately innocuous words.

The first time I actually prayed, instead of “saying a prayer”, was the night I met the Lord in May 1954. I was alone in bed with the lights off. I was nine years old. I felt myself reaching out but I wasn’t moving my arms. He was, indeed, standing at my personal, internal door, knocking. Suddenly, I knew I was not alone. He was no longer a distant God out there. He had become, for me, The God In Here. He was present and I was experiencing prayer, for the first time. I have become convinced that His direct involvement is the only way genuine prayer can really happen for me.

I do not remember what words were spoken by either of us in those moments, if any words were employed at all, but He was here. I heard Him and I knew that He was hearing, and even formulating, my response to Him. For me, indeed, that’s the only way genuine prayer can really happen.

As I look back over the last 67 years since that experience, I have progressively come to recognize that, during that first night in 1954, I was beginning to hear and sing the Song of Songs. I have never heard anything approaching the Song sung by any earthly choir. Earthly music of the highest order does not bear the slightest resemblance. I only hear the Song of Songs from the King of Kings. I have never sung it by myself. I only sing it with the King of Kings, and only with the response He generates by His Spirit within the Spirit of the New Creature He has made me to be. That response is a heart cry that He transforms into accordance with His Will.

Prayer of this sort does not attempt to work my will on God. I may confess my own will, but participating in the Song transforms my will into His. That transformation is entirely His Doing.

I readily admit that my initial experience in 1954 has not been consistently maintained. I have very often lapsed back into my old self. I have turned again and again to my own doings and found myself alone, sometimes for extended periods. But, again and again, He calls me back into fellowship. Each time, He is recognizably the same God I met that night. So is the Singing, because the Singing is the substance of my experience with Him. The Song only grows in its beauty and intensity. He wakes me at night into a Song that has been going on all along, even when I was unaware and unresponsive. He Sings over me through the night watches.

We shall see a passage from Zephaniah quoted at the end of this chapter that speaks of the Lord rejoicing over us with singing. Some translations choose other words for the Hebrew word, “rinnah”, which literally means “a ringing cry”. It is variously translated as a “cry”, “joyful shouting”, “joyful singing” or just “singing”. Whichever way you may take the translations, it remains clear that our Lord is active in the process of joy over us. Unless He is active in rejoicing over me, whether it be by singing or by shouts of joy, there is no way for me to truly be rejoicing in Him by myself. That brings us to the subject of worship and praise.

Worship and praise are not just relatives of prayer, they **are** prayer. Thus far I have talked in this chapter of genuine prayer being an experience generated by the Spirit of God in which He not only provides the stimulus, but He also formulates the acceptable response. God is involved in it all. I am coming to understand that worship and praise occur in the same way. I cannot just gin up the emotion and enthusiasm to worship God on my own initiative. I cannot do it in response to a worship leader imploring, “Get excited, people!”. God must draw near. He inhabits the praises of His people, as we read in Psalm 22:3, especially in the KJV.

Worship and praise are not “do it yourself”. Nothing about the Christian experience is within our ability to accomplish. We can’t even repent on our own. He first convinces me of the depth of my sin by showing me Himself. Take a look at Hebrews 13:20-21: *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, **working in us** that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.* (Emphasis added.)

I am not going overboard with mysticism here. Jesus made it plain to the woman at the well in John 4:24: “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.*” (It is worth reading the passage from 4:1-26.) He makes it more plain to us as He abides in us and we abide in Him, as described in John 15:1-5. That passage ends with the words, “...*apart from Me you can do nothing.*” I think He means it.

We can enjoy singing praise and worship songs in a church service, but it is possible to sing those songs and enjoy the emotional content without engaging in worship of the Eternal God. I know. I have done it.

We can pray prayers and conclude them with the words “I pray in Jesus’ Name. Amen.”. “In His Name” actually means we are standing in His Place and speaking by His Express Authority, but we may not have the slightest idea whether or not we really have been speaking His Words back to Him. I know. I have done that too. I have done it often.

But when I hear Him singing His Song over me! When I respond only as He enables! Then I experience Him, in Spirit and in Truth, in ways that are well-pleasing in His sight and overwhelming in my own. He is the One working in me. I hear Him Sing, and then we begin again to Sing together. How could I possibly settle for anything less?

*The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty;
He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy;
He will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.
Zephaniah 3:17 (KJV)*

*I will sing of the lovingkindness of the Lord forever...
How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!
O Lord they walk in the light of Your countenance.
In your name they rejoice all the day,
And by your righteousness they are exalted.
For You are the glory of their strength,
And by Your favor our horn is exalted.
Psalm 89:1-17 (Emphasis added.)*

*... be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another
in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
always giving thanks in all things in the name of
our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father
Ephesians 5:18-20 (Emphasis added.)*

CHAPTER 7

ALTOGETHER BEAUTIFUL

*“You are altogether beautiful, my darling,
And there is no blemish in you.”*
Song of Songs 4:7

In this chapter and the next few, let’s look at some of the words in the Biblical text of the Song of Songs. As discussed before, I do not find the words to be simply repeated over and over in the Singing like we do with the words of Amazing Grace. But as I read the text of the Song in the book, a few parts sound remarkably familiar and are consistent with my living experience in the Song with my Lord. Other parts of the text have been truly surprising. Some can be frankly confusing, and I have even laid some aside for a time. The Singing, however, keeps drawing me away from the attempt to simply understand words and ideas about a God out there. Instead, I find myself being drawn deeply into a personal knowledge of the King who loves me, right here and now.

It is fundamentally silly to attempt to understand God. Wouldn’t it be dreadful to have a God you could understand? Would it not be sad to have a God that you could comprehend well enough to write out a definitive statement of faith, accurately describing who He is and how everything is supposed to work? I can’t even understand the wife I love! I don’t see how I could love her more if I did.

That being said, let’s look at a few selections from the text, not to “understand” but to consider how He is turning me away from the words and directly to Himself. Take the text quoted above as an example. These are words spoken by the King to His Beloved, but they do not, at first blush, sound like words that the King of Kings could truthfully say to me today. As I look at myself, I don’t feel altogether beautiful, and I am well aware of quite a few blemishes. I have a sneaking hunch that I have more blemishes of which I am unaware.

What gives here? How could He possibly be addressing those words to me, right now?

I am learning that the King of Kings is addressing those words, not to the old me, but to the New Creature He has made me to be. He is introducing me to the fullness of the completed work of the Cross and the Resurrection. I cannot say those words to myself, but I need to hear them frequently from Him, so that what is true in His Eyes becomes accessible to my experience.

We keep saying and thinking that we are “only human” and that we will never achieve perfection. Our experience keeps proving to us how true that really is. We will, in fact, never achieve perfection **out of ourselves**. But how dare we conclude that the King of Kings is only capable of doing an imperfect work in us!

I’m learning that, even though **I** don’t do perfection, He can do it in us. That’s why the Bible says, *Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass*. (I Thessalonians 5:24). That is why Hebrews 13:21 says that He is working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, as we saw in the last chapter. I cannot even work in me that which is well-pleasing in my own sight, much less in His! What He works in me is pleasing in His sight and certainly both pleasing and constantly surprising in my own. He woos us into living in Him as He sings His Love Song over us. We respond with what He causes to well up out of the New Creature He has made us to be.

Once again, ... *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God...* (II Corinthians 5:17-18). In God’s Eyes, how many of the old, imperfect things have failed to pass away? How many of them did He not put to death on the Cross when we were crucified with Christ? (Galatians 2:20). How many of the new things given to us from God were fashioned by Him imperfectly? Hear Him Sing the answer to you! The text at the beginning of this chapter may say the answer to our brains, but He sings it to our newly created hearts, so that we may really know Him. He has remade us to be altogether beautiful, so that we may truly be His Intimate Darling. He has removed, and continues to remove, all our former blemishes as far from us as the east is from the west. Else how could He abide in us?

Why do we so consistently and obstinately choose to live beneath our God-breathed privileges? Why do we keep doing CPR on our old, lifeless selves? Why do we keep singing our own, old songs all alone with each other?

Let's take a look at what, for me, is an even more difficult example from Song of Songs 1:5-6. These appear to be the words of the Beloved Bride addressed not to the King but to others: *"I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not stare at me because I am swarthy (or black), for the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me caretaker of the vineyards, but I have not taken care of my own vineyard."*

I never have heard a sermon preached on this text. I do not propose to produce an expository study on it here either. In that sense, it is much like a number of references you could select out of the Song, or out of the Bible in general. What does it mean? Why is it here? It is common for some people to say they believe every word in the Bible and they believe all the words are the inspired words of God. That is all well and good, but what are you going to do with these ones?

Some people might start by fiddling around with the translation. A fair number of words can come out very differently indeed depending on which translation you choose. A fair number of people opt for the notion of relying on every word only in the way they appear in the original text. I have yet to meet any of those people who have read all the words directly from the original text. I haven't even met one who can show me where that "Original Text" can be found. So, again, what are we going to do?

I have often looked with some care at a "difficult" text in several translations, but I usually can't choose a single translation as the "right" one. I also have referred to texts in the original languages, in this case Hebrew, with additional reference to Hebrew dictionaries, since I am not fluent in Hebrew. Occasionally, I consult a commentary, but I can't think of a time when I have done a comparative study of ten or twenty commentaries to try to establish a consensus. Typically, there is too much variation among them, but some can help, especially if it is just understanding that you seek. More and more, however, I find myself longing just to **know Him**, rather than to know things about Him, or even interesting things about the text.

The Bible can indeed be the Word of God to me, but only if God is the One who speaks it to me. It is a Living Word when He speaks it, and especially so when He Sings It. My heart comes alive.

So, let's look now at our "difficult" text, first starting into a typical analytic approach, grappling with the words using typical reference resources. Then we'll consider an experience with God directly within these words. Please do not misunderstand me here. I am not suggesting that the words and their meanings should be ignored as we seek Him. Neither am I suggesting that God cannot be moving in our spirits as He turns our minds to careful study. I just know that in my own efforts, I have frequently gotten bogged down in my mental exercises and have lost my grounding in the One I seek. I can start hearing only my own mind, along with some "reliable authorities", and my heart can remain untouched. Let's take a look.

The Hebrew word near the beginning of Song of Songs 1:5 is "shachor", typically defined and translated as "black". It appears six times in the Bible: twice in Leviticus 13 (having to do with black hair), twice in Zechariah 6 (having to do with the black horses pulling the second chariot) and one other time in the Song (in 5:11, describing the King's hair as being black as a raven). The related Hebrew word in the Song 1:6 is "shechorchoreth", typically defined as "blackish", but translated in the NASB as "swarthy".

You will find various renderings of both these words depending on which translation or dictionary you pick up, including "black", "dark", "swarthy", and "dusky". You will even find "sun-blackened" and "deeply tanned". "Dark" may be the most popular, especially in the more modern versions.

Some would detect racial overtones here. That might even seem appropriate for one of the foreign brides of the Solomon who followed immediately after King David. Kedar, for example, was a grandson of Abraham through Ishmael and the father of one of the northern Arabian kingdoms. His name ("Qedar") denotes dusky or dark-skinned. However, the text here suggests a different explanation. No familial relationship with Kedar is implied here for the Bride, and the dark-skinned, Beloved Bride states that her dark skin derives from sun exposure (verse 6).

Others equate the blackness to the notion of guilt. They would see a soul made dark by exposure to this world and succumbing to its temptations.

Whatever negative attributes may pertain to the darkness of the Bride, she still claims to be lovely. She is black like the tents of Kedar, but lovely as the curtains of Solomon. My sense here, at least, is that her loveliness, regardless of her color, is not by her doing, but rather the work of the King of Kings.

The part in v. 6 about the angry brothers of the Beloved Bride and about her vineyard responsibilities is just as difficult to sort out. The Hebrew “kerem” simply means “vineyard” and that is the way it seems to be fairly consistently translated. You can indeed find a parenthetical alternative in the Amplified Bible, which compiles usages from multiple translations. The Amplified suggests “my complexion” as an alternative for “my own vineyard”. That does not help me, because it seems like a stretch to attribute the anger of her brothers to the Bride’s supposed failure to wear a sunhat.

The upshot, for me, is that there seems to be no clear, analytical way to uniquely explain what is going on in these two verses or to derive any sure, certain message from them. You could surely talk around them if you were required to lead a study on the text. You could philosophize about some possibilities or suggest some derivative ideas, but a single, precise interpretation would probably seem to be a force fit. That may be why I have never heard a sermon on these two verses. It may be why people tend to shy away from the Song of Songs in general. So, the answer to our analytical efforts comes right back to the same question. What are we to do with this?

The answer I am being given has been surprising to me. I am coming to recognize that the written scripture is not just a subject for my mental analysis and understanding. The written scripture, in whichever translation, is not even the final authority that I have been told. God is! Preachers have waved Bibles at me and told me that “It’s all in the book!”. It’s not. It’s all in Him! God uses His written word as a part of His direct revelation of Himself to me, but He is Spirit and He is only discerned spiritually. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, but He is always new. I will never comprehend His inexhaustible completeness. He must wield His Word in me.

I used to think that I could sort out the meaning of a Biblical text and that was that. I could take it to the bank and make use of it when needed. But God's Direct Word is a Living Word! He wields it in a Living Way. Have you not found that He gives some particular passages new and different substance when you are in the depths of despair than He does when you meet Him on the mountaintop? The substance is not the meaning of the words. The Substance is Him! When I hear Him Sing His Word to my heart, and when I respond as He enables, despair is transformed into a very lofty place indeed, even when my external circumstances are not alleviated.

Let's return to that "difficult" two verses. What do I do with them? Or, more properly, what does He do with me? As I recall, although I have read those verses multiple times, I had not heard them from Him until quite recently. I had set them aside until He brought them forth in the night watches. Perhaps you may remember my concluding paragraph about David and Bathsheba's Solomon in chapter 3 of this book. Those were the night watches that began to open something of these words to me.

My own experience with my Lord has not been describable in words. He does not just share words, ideas and concepts. He shares Himself. I can't just relate what He says and what it all means, because the relationship involves far more than information transfer. Within the relationship, however, new meaning can be called forth by His Presence and transmitted on through my spirit to my mind in sharable ways. Allow me to illustrate.

I awoke in the night to the words of the Beloved in those two verses coming forth, but I was not reciting them and neither was my Lord. Instead, they appeared to be sung by a member of the choir. They came mingled somehow with other words that were more familiar to me. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.* The mingled words transitioned from an arm's length sense to a close-up sense. *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for **You** are with me.* It was no longer "The Lord" at a distance. "He" had become "**You**"! The words were unmistakably coming from a Beloved. It became clear that they were being spoken by the one whose very name means "Beloved". It was David, the sweet psalmist, the shepherd with a Shepherd, speaking from the choir the Words that are his from the Lord. It is fitting that he should speak them. David too had allowed Himself to be darkened through his experience in the world.

I remember no vineyard for David. He had a sheepcote instead. As the youngest brother, he was given the responsibility for the sheep, but he later strayed from his greater responsibility. Even some of David's own children were angry with him. But God redeemed him and made him lovely, as He has me.

Other voices from the choir join in. I am convinced that a particularly surprising voice comes from another Beloved participant. I don't yet know his name, but God does. He would have been Solomon's older brother, by the same mother, had he lived. I understand the voice to be that of the son born of the adulterous relationship between David and Bathsheba. He died before he was named. David had sought for God to preserve the child's life but He did not. You may remember that, after the child's death, David said of him, *I will go to him but he will not return to me.* (in II Samuel 12:23). By God's grace, David certainly did go to him, when David went to **Him**. I have the distinct impression that they are now singing together that which the Lord brings forth for them and for me. When I meet that child, I do not expect that he will be complaining about having missed anything.

There are far more voices of the Beloved in the choir than I have been able to sort out. They may even include Solomon himself, as I discussed at the end of our chapter 3. Solomon was also deeply darkened by his experiences in the world. Solomon had three other brothers by the same mother, and multiple half-brothers by the same father, some of whom were very angry with him. And Solomon even had his own vineyard! You can read about it in the Song 8:11-12. How I pray that Solomon was brought back from his falling away so that he might, even now, be singing the part of the Beloved in response to the King of Kings!

I can only say that I now hear music from those two "difficult" verses sung clearly in the night watches as a part of His Word to me and even for me. As the music swells, the King of Kings enables my voice to join in with His and with His Choir. All difficulty fades. I know His Presence. I experience being His Beloved and He being mine. And my heart Sings.

I was asleep but my heart was awake. A voice! My beloved was knocking...
Song of Songs 5:2 (As He appears in the night watches.)
(Also see Revelation 3:20)

CHAPTER 8

THE KING IS HERE!

*On my bed night after night
I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him but did not find him. Song of Songs 3:1*

There are two passages in the Song wherein the Beloved cannot seem to find her Lover, the King. The first passage is found in the Song 3:1-3, the opening verse of which appears as this chapter's opening text quoted immediately above. She is seeking Him but not finding Him. As soon as she asks the watchmen if any of them have seen Him, she turns, and there He is.

The second passage starts in the Song 5:2, the verse which appears at the very end of our previous chapter. She hears Him at the door late at night, but she hesitates before finally getting out of bed to open to His knocking. He seems to be gone by the time she gets there. Again she searches, but this time the watchmen attack her. It is into the sixth chapter before she knows where He is and is reassured of His love.

Some of us might be so familiar with this type of experience that we might well wish that it had only happened to us twice! Where is God when we need Him? We might be better off asking, "When do I not need Him?"

My experience with my Lord in the Song has made it clear to me that, in this kind of experience, He is not the one who has left. I am the one who has turned away. He is the one who woos me back. I am not the one who has found the Lord. He has found me, and drawn me. The King is here! He is the one who keeps drawing me back to Him. He is the one who says *I will never desert you nor will I forsake you* (Hebrews 13:5, and see Joshua 1:5). He is the one who says, *...seek, and you will find...* (Matthew 7:7).

Look again at the Song 5:2, the verse discussed above. Even when I am asleep, I hear His voice, because my heart (my spirit) is awake. But if I start listening only to my mind, I search in vain for my King.

Look at the passage again. The Beloved hears her King's voice, in her awake heart, even while asleep. The rest of her awakens, but then she hesitates. She seems to tune out her own heart, and His clear voice, before she even gets to the door. I have done that!

God is not capricious. He does not play hide-and-seek on me. I am encouraged to behold Him as He stands at my door and knocks. I am enabled to behold Him because He extends to me the Revelation of Jesus Christ. He is not the one who withholds Himself from me. I am the one who may be distracted, turn away, and fail to recognize the Presence of the King who never leaves me. He never forsakes me.

The promise of God not to leave isn't given to the world in general. Once again, this promise is extended to the New Creature He has fashioned me to be. He never promised not to leave those who have never invited Him in. John 1:12 tells us, "*But **as many as received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe **in His name**...*" (Emphasis added). (It is worth reading verses 10 to 13 here for context.)

God's Word is clear that the God of Salvation is also a God of Judgment. Matthew 7:13 and 14 indicate clearly that relatively few will experience His Salvation: *Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.* This remains true despite God's postponement of the day of judgment, as described in II Peter 3:7-9, because He does not wish *for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*. It remains true despite God's open invitation in Revelation 22:17: *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.* Only the few will sing the Song of Songs with the King of Kings, but they will add up to more than I can number. (Revelation 7:9-10, and on to the end of Revelation 7).

The truth of His Word regarding those who reject Him is abundantly apparent as we look around this world. Some would bemoan the ugliness of people's inhumanity to one another. The reality is simply the outworking of the true humanity of people who are separated from their God.

You need not look far. What passes for entertainment, in television, movies, and music, is rife with the ugliness of violence and sinful behavior. Sin is glorified in celebrations of “pride” among those who choose their own way. What “matters” is what people choose to see of themselves. God does not “matter” to them. The King is here, but the world chooses to turn away.

Recent surveys in the United States reportedly indicate decreases in church membership and belief in God, but such surveys still seem to me likely to overestimate the proportion of the population who participate in a living experience in Him. There are churches whose leaders are participants in a living experience in Christ, but there can be other churches led by those who are just going through the motions. There can be members of both kinds of churches who are participating in a living experience in Christ but, sadly, many could just be going through the motions too. And, to be sure, simple belief that a god exists does not equate to a living relationship with Christ.

Some of our “churches” have become just commercial places of entertainment. They can have comfortable facilities, attractive music, encouraging speakers, and pleasant activities, but they may have little to do with The Church, the Body of Christ. They can be just legal, non-profit corporations, led by professional claimants to Christ. The larger non-profits may still become highly profitable for their professionals, especially when supplemented by lucrative book deals and other marketable materials. The “feel good” books and sermons seem to sell best, especially with slick marketing. The King is here, but even the churches can turn that invitation away.

The King is here indeed, and the invitation to know Him is open. It is not up to us to find Him. He has found us. He has known us from before the foundation of the world. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.* (Revelation 3:20). I must open my door and draw near to the One who has drawn near to me. *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...* (James 4:8). I don’t have to travel far. The completion of the closure together is a mutual activity, but He is the one who has come all the way to me. There is not the slightest reason for me to hesitate or look away from Him.

There are many who may offer invitations to participate with a church. Only the King of Kings offers the invitation to know Him personally by His Spirit. Even when others are involved, He is the One who offers that invitation personally by His Spirit. Hear His Voice!

It is not uncommon to hear of people coming across some attractive promise in scripture and “claiming” it for themselves. I have tried to do that too on occasion. But I have found that, for me, His Promise must be personally extended, by His Spirit to mine, if it is to become part of my experience in Him. For me, the verse appended at the end of our last chapter again describes how His Promise is often initiated. *I was asleep but my heart was awake. A voice! My beloved...* The King of Kings is here, and His Voice is singing! I want to be the one to answer immediately with the response He enables.

“... lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:20

(A definitive Word from the King of Kings to His Beloved)

CHAPTER 9

SHARING THE SONG

*“How beautiful you are, my darling! How beautiful you are!
Your eyes are like doves.”*

*“How handsome you are, my beloved, and so pleasant!
Indeed, our couch is luxuriant!”*

Song of Songs 1:15-16

The Song of Songs is essentially the experience of an intimate duet. It is the experience of two voices singing a love song to each other and with each other. In some parts, it seems almost like nobody else exists. There is much privacy and delight about it. The relationship calls forth the language of sexual love between a man and a woman, because God indeed reveals something of Himself in His Creation of male and female in His Image.

He always Sings the lead part and He enables my response and participation. There are also parts in which the choir takes part, as we have already discussed. At least for me, in my living experience of the Song, there are recognizable members of the choir who also have their own intimate relationship with the King of Kings. But there is much more. He even makes my private, intimate duet with Him shareable with some others.

Our Song is not shareable in every sense of the word, because I am not the one who does the sharing or makes the sharing decision. Years ago, I thought I had a license to share as a witness to Christ. I thought I could go after whomever I wanted and offer them the choice of salvation in Him. He has convinced me otherwise. The King is the only One who makes the invitation to Sing with Him. He may involve me in the process. He may involve others in the process. He may orchestrate circumstances to initiate the process. But He is the One who extends the invitation, and He does it to each one Personally. He is the One who offers to Sing with each one whom He calls. And He orchestrates the sharing with whomever He chooses.

How could such an intimate Love Song, intended for just the two of us, be shared with others without losing the intimacy? I suppose it is because He is the King of Kings.

It remains true that He graciously shares His Song with me alone. The Song He Sings with me is uniquely our own. He and I Sing it together. For me, it is the Song of Songs and He is my King of Kings. But, He has also shared a unique Song with my wife Janie. I am sure it is just for her. I am convinced that, for her, it is the Song of Songs and He is intimately her King of Kings. By His Amazing Grace, our Songs become shared without losing any of the individual intimacy. We are given the inestimable privilege of Singing together, whether we are physically together or apart, whether asleep or awake, whether here on this earth or not. However, as Janie and I Sing together with Him, it does not transform into a trio! We each are singing our intimate Song with Him, but, by His Spirit, He causes our Songs to be shared as two blended duets. We share together His sharing of Himself with each of us. That is part of the intimate experience in the Body of Christ.

The experience is not restricted to Janie and Jim. We have been invited into what the Bible calls a “fellowship”. It is described for us in the First Letter of John 1:1-7. (Read it.) The Greek word “koinonia” here literally means “participation” or “sharing”. When we participate in Him, He shares that participation among us. It is the Church with a capital “C”. It is both the Bride of Christ and the Body of Christ. As a bride becomes one flesh with her husband, the Church becomes one Spirit with Christ. The personal delight of bridal intimacy with the King is maintained for each participant, but we delight in Him together in a way the world does not know. I Sing with some of you who will hold this little book in your hands, and many others who will not. The Church is made up of Christ Himself and the ones who Sing the Song of Songs with the King of Kings at His personal invitation.

Much of the world casts about singing songs of their own devising or songs composed by others. Some can be love songs or sad songs or funny songs or even church songs. Some people cannot come up with any song at all and live lives devoid of music. Even in the world’s churches, those seeking meaning in their lives may only be offered encouraging words and entertainment. They may sing about counting their blessings, but, for some, Jesus the Christ may not even make it onto the list. We must not just sit there, performing rituals, laboring under rules and regulations, and considering “statements of faith” composed by others. We must not miss out on the intimate Delight Part. The Delight Part is Christ in you.

Because of His great love for us, made accessible through the Cross and the Resurrection, we are all invited to the intimate Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Won't you join in? Christ, the King of Kings, is Here, and His Music is already amazing.

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed **you were called in one body**; and be thankful.*

*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,
with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another
with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

Colossians 3:15-17 (Emphasis added.)

CHAPTER 10

HURRY, MY BELOVED!

*“Hurry, my beloved,
And be like a gazelle or a young stag
On the mountains of spices.” Song of Songs 8:14*

This last verse of the Song sounds remarkably like the last two verses of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. *He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. **Come Lord Jesus.** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.* (Revelation 22:20-21, emphasis added). Come quickly! And not just for me.

The Greek word for “quickly” in this passage is “tachu”, from which we get the words “tachometer” and “tachycardia”. However the sense of the word is not “immediately” but, rather, “with no unnecessary delay”.

The Greek word for “amen” is “amen”. “Amen” literally means “truly”, “assuredly”, “certain”, and, at the end of a statement, it can mean “so let it be”. The word is used in the New Testament Greek far more often than generally realized. You may recall many statements of “Truly I say to you...” or in KJV “Verily, verily, I say unto you...”. It is the same word: “amen”. He is truly coming quickly. He is coming with no unnecessary delay, most assuredly and for certain. So let it be, for sure.

The Hebrew word for “hurry” at the end of the Song is “barach” meaning “to go through” or “flee”. It is usually translated using some form of “flee”, as in *Or where can I flee from Your presence?* in Psalm 139:7. It does indeed convey some sense of haste.

There are those who say that they want to go to heaven when they die, but that they aren’t in any hurry. They don’t generally plan to flee there today. There are those who believe Jesus will come again for us someday, to carry us through to heaven. Some may even say He is coming soon. But they may not be thinking about this very minute, or in the next fraction of a second. Why not? What important plans do you currently have that could merit a request for Him to delay?

Consider further what is meant by, “with no **unnecessary** delay”. For me, the delay of His return thus far has been a very necessary one. The purpose of His delay is made clear in II Peter 3: 7-9, which we have previously discussed in our chapter 8. (You might want to look that up again.) We *...regard the patience of our Lord as salvation...*, as stated further along in II Peter 3:15. Up to this moment, the King has delayed His return in order to invite others to move from death into Life and to Sing with Him forever. I remain eternally thankful that He has held off, at least through 1954, so that I might respond to His invitation to join in. I rejoice too over those who have come to experience His Grace since then, including my two children. I feel a sense of great urgency in this remaining time for those who still sing alone.

There may also be those who say that they look forward to their initial meeting with Christ at His Coming. They then expect to be carried up to join with Him in heaven. But God’s Word is very clear that those who are to be with Him in Glory are those who are already with Him when He returns. He is coming to claim those who are already His Own, those who have beheld Him standing at the door and who have invited Him in to abide.

Furthermore, if you know Him, you are already in Christ. While we occupy these physical bodies, He has now *...raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...* (from Ephesians 2:4-7, but read the whole passage). Also, take a look at Colossians 3:1-4. *...For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

Those passages are so overwhelming that they may raise a question in some minds as to why we should be in any hurry at all for His return, if we are already seated with Christ in the heavenly places! I find that it does not raise any question in my spirit. There is too much theorizing and too many efforts to understand when it comes to the details of God’s Gracious Provision for us. *...But just as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.*(I Corinthians 2:9-10) Don’t try to figure Him out. Just Sing with Him!

He abides in me. I abide in Him. I am seated with Him in the heavenly places, and yet He is coming for me here to take me home. These things do not seem reconcilable. But why would I have any expectation to rationalize His doings in my meager mind? *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts,”* (Isaiah 55:8-9). I simply know that, as I Sing with Him, even while I am in this temporary earthly house, I ...*groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven...* (II Corinthians 5:1-9. The whole passage is worth reading.). It is glorious to know Him **now**, but He will show me the greater Glory of knowing Him **Now**!

So come, Lord Jesus! Hurry! Let us flee away together! It may be something like an elopement, in which the ceremony has already been had.

*Listen! My Beloved! Behold, he is coming,
climbing on the mountains, leaping on the hills!
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Behold, he is standing behind our wall,
He is looking through the windows,
He is peering through the lattice.
My beloved responded and said to me,
“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along.
For behold, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers have already appeared in the land;
The time has arrived for **singing**,
and the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land.
The fig tree has ripened its figs,
and the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance.
Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along!”*
Song of Songs 2:8-13
(Emphasis indicating NASB marginal translation.)

My Love! My Fairest One! Take my hand! Just Now! I am ready!

Books by Jim Raddin

Experiencing the Holy Days (2017)

Recognizing Christ in the Old Testament (2019)

Beholding Christ, Just Now (2020)

Singing the Song of Songs (2021)

All the books are available for free download or for you to print-your-own at:

drjimraddin.com

I have never sold any of the books, but links are available on the website to the commercial sources I have used for print-on-demand copies to give away. You will only pay for their cost of printing, but some do have minimum order quantities.

The Song of Songs is a relatively unfamiliar book of the Bible. It can even seem out of place to find an intimate Love Song deep in the Old Testament, but Christ is making it mine. The Song is really just an invitation and a preliminary introduction to the intimate relationship Christ desires to have with each of us. I am no longer stuck with just the words on the page. He invites me to know and love Him as He Sings His ever-new Song to the New Creature He has made me to be. As He does so, my heart Sings with Him!

... *“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along.”* Song of Songs 2:10



Dr. Jim Raddin is a Christian. He and his wife Janie celebrated their 54th anniversary in June 2021. They have two children, six grandchildren, and one greatgrandchild.

Jim retired from the US Air Force as a Colonel in 1988 after 20 years of active duty, first as an aeronautical engineer and then as a physician and flight surgeon. He did research in impact protection, including participation as a volunteer subject in his own experimental impact tests. His last assignment was as vice commander of the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks AFB, Texas.

Jim holds two degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). His Bachelor's was in Aeronautics and Astronautics in 1967 and his Master's was in Management in 1983 as a Sloan Fellow at the MIT Sloan School. In between, he earned his MD degree in 1975 from the University of New Mexico School of Medicine in Albuquerque. He did a straight surgery internship and was later board certified in Aerospace Medicine.

After retiring from the USAF, Jim was a consultant in impact injury causation and impact protection for over 20 years with Biodynamic Research Corporation in San Antonio, Texas. His clients included both aircraft and automotive manufacturers and NASCAR. He retired again in 2010. Jim and Janie make their home in San Antonio with part-time in Rockport, Texas.

This book derives from years of Bible teaching and a growing experience in Jesus Christ. It is not a commercial endeavor. None have been sold. Anyone can download it free of charge from drjimraddin.com and print it for your own use or to give away. You will also find links there to sources for print-on-demand copies available solely for the cost of printing.