

SongOfSolomon 20-02-06a

Good evening. Welcome to the Thursday night Bible class at Grace and Truth. We're continuing our study of the Song of Solomon.

And let me say at the outset that there is the promised outline available on the GTBC website. If you go to the Song of Solomon audio archives page, the very top line is a link to a PDF copy of the notes I'll be referring to this evening. It's one page.

You can maybe pull it up to look at or possibly get a printout, but I'll apologize in advance for the haste. I'll have a little bit smoother copy when I converted it to PDF. Some of the tabs jumped.

And so the spacing is not as elegant as my English major nature would like it to be, but you'll get the drift and you can see the chiasmic structure there. So again, go to the gtbcweb.org website, look at the Old Testament studies on the lower left, you'll see Song of Solomon, click that. And our audio files for the series thus far will be listed, but right at the top, you'll see something along the lines of Song of Solomon outline as a link.

If you click that, the PDF should appear in your browser and you can follow along with that. It is a great help in understanding my understanding of the book. So I give you fair warning to be, give you a chance to pull that down here in the next few minutes, or you can wait and get it later and just struggle along as people have for thousands of years with just their Bible and their two ears.

But we are going to pick up this very fascinating study. And so let's take a moment to pause and focus and ask God's blessing and cultivate the ministry of God's Holy Spirit as we prepare to get started. Shall we pray? Father, we are so grateful for the nourishment that you provide for our souls.

It is easy to have our attention deflected. There are so many sources of information and deflection and distraction and occupation with the details of life. We find that events and conditions all around the world are funneled into our consciousness, almost every waking moment.

But it is such a great blessing to set all of that aside and to look at the eternal truth we find in your word, to see the power that it brings into our souls in the hands of the Holy Spirit, to lift us above the fray and above the mundane, the earthly, the temporal, and to allow us to lift our eyes to the hills from whence comes our strength, to remember that you have assigned us a purpose and a destiny, that we represent the Lord Jesus Christ physically on this earth, even as he represents us before your throne in heaven. We pray that as we look at these sections of your word this evening, that the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts in a way that is effective and will be transformative as we think about our commitments, our relationships, the call that we have to integrity and to honor in all the different areas of our life. Pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, you will remember that we have the book before us that has so often been characterized as something of a salacious nature, a sort of scintillating piece of literature dealing with the rather intimate details of physical love. And married or not, it's kind of tough to work through if you're just saying, well, God wants us to know all about the variety of options that pertain for a husband and wife once they have entered into their marital bliss.

However, in looking at the context of scripture in general and this book in particular, we've already seen in preceding weeks that there is a higher purpose and there is a much more developed and substantive message in the book. And it's my goal to help us to see that. And someone wouldn't mind handing me a copy of my own outline there.

It'll save me using up the one of many screens I have before me. Thank you. And hopefully you've been able to find a copy of this from the church website.

If not, I'll try to use my whiteboard in the sky to make it clear enough to follow. You might be listening to this recording at some future time driving down the and don't be grabbing your phone and try to pull the thing up on the screen and drive and read at the same time. But there is a very interesting structure, it seems to me.

I will issue a disclaimer at the beginning. This outline, this approach to the book is entirely my own and whatever its weaknesses and shortcomings, you can blame me. None of this can be found anywhere that I have looked.

But I believe based on our previous studies and looking at the way God has inspired authors to use structure, particularly chiasmic structure in the Old Testament, to organize and emphasize truth, that in my humble opinion is the key to unlocking the treasure that is in this particular book. So as I mentioned a few times now, this book is manifestly told from a woman's point of view. We will call her the Shulamite, since that's what the book calls her.

This is a story about her love affair, her betrothal, her marriage to King Solomon, the real deal, the actual king. And although the book has been thought to not contain a plot or movement, I think by close observation, we find that there is actually a significant movement from the beginning to the end of the book. And the heart of it and the key to it is found in the center of this chiasm that I've attempted to draw out for you in the one page outline.

But this Shulamite princess begins in the rapturous mode that so many love affairs begin with. It is the infatuation, I can't think about anything else mode. It's a wonderful phase.

If it lasted too long, I think it would kill most of us. It's kind of like ecstatic experiences. It's great to experience ecstasy, but you can't live there.

We're just not built for that and we wouldn't get anything done. The English literature from Shakespearean days onward often portrayed the lovesick Swain, leaning up against a tree,

worthless to everybody and everything because all he can do is daydream about his beloved wherever she may be and the faint heart never won fair maiden and so on. But it is a wonderful blessing to experience that initial wonderful connection with this person of the opposite gender when it is a God-blessed meeting and a God-blessed union.

There's just nothing like it. It's one of those blessings like many others. I personally think there's no blessing like being able to go in at first hand with your own set of tools and dig and excavate in the Word of God.

Not everybody gets to do that. Not everyone gets married. Not everyone experiences an ongoing marriage of tremendous satisfaction and fulfillment.

There are many rocks and shoals and that does not take away from the message of this book. The message transcends the relationship that is used to figure and portray and communicate that message. So if you're not yet married, if you're no longer married, if you're waiting to resume the bliss of your marriage, if some of these things are yet future or maybe in the past, fear not.

It doesn't take the book off the table any more than if you're not an Israelite wandering in the wilderness, the Old Testament is meaningless to you. Not so. This is simply a goblet.

It's a bowl, a conveyance for divine truth that is applicable and pertinent for every single one of us. We observe, we interpret, the application may come in a completely different area than marriage per se. So people who say, well, this is a love book and if you're not a love bird then look elsewhere for spiritual sustenance, I personally think they kind of missed it.

And to justify that, I want to again survey the movement of this book and point out the indications of where the situation changes. We've seen the beginning of this in some detail. I'm not going to go into depth.

If you want to review some of the preceding portions of our study, the infatuation phase is to be found in chapter one. If you look at your outline, this is part A and B. You will see that of the 13 songs that I think, or 13 major sections I should say, that comprise the book, each section may have two or three songs in it. That's why this book is the song of songs.

The Shulamite will present a song. We just have the lyric. I don't know if it was ever set to music or not, but these are psalms in the sense of poetic expressions of sentiment or feeling.

And so in part A here, you see the Shulamite and we have notices of the surroundings. What is the setting for the giving forth of this expression of feeling? So she begins in public and she says to anyone who might be listening, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. And then she more or less turns to Solomon and begins addressing him in the second person singular.

Your love is better than wine because of the fragrance of your good ointments. Your name is ointment poured forth. Therefore the virgins love you.

Draw me away. We will run after you. And she sort of teasingly, I think uses this plural because she's a bit giddy with the royal personage and the plurality of this high noble setting.

And then the setting changes in the end of verse four to the king's chambers. And you see that in the second part of her song here. Solomon says, we will be glad and rejoice in you.

And if you look at your text note, the you there is feminine singular. So this is Solomon saying, we, the royal king person will rejoice in you. And then she responds by saying, we, i.e. I the Shulamite will remember your love more than wine.

And this goes back to what she said up in verse two, your love is better than wine. We, I will remember your love more than wine. So this, it's a wonderful mutual expression of appreciation, of love, of romantic infatuation.

It's great stuff. She says, we will remember your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.

And again, she's talking about they, the plurality of women already in the royal harem. Uh, she is, is joining a group of ladies who preceded her. And she says, you know, they all think well of Solomon and their right to do so.

And speaking of the plurality of predecessors, she now addresses them and says, you know, I may come from a different place than you. I may look different than you, but I've got my qualities and, uh, there are reasons for this. And, and, uh, so Solomon then is going to reply in this same first section in verses eight through 11.

She prompts it when she says, tell me, oh, you, whom I love, where do you feed your flock? Where do you make it rest at noon? Why should I be as one who, uh, wanders off by the flocks of your companions? And so then he replies and says, I compare you, my love to a filly among Pharaoh's chariots. Um, your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver.

And he says, yes, there may be other horses in the stable, but, but you're like a standout filly amongst them. And so his, this is the idea of reassuring that she's something special. She's something new and different.

And don't worry about all of these that have gone before. So then the setting changes and this tells us that we're starting a new section. And that is in chapter one, verse 12.

If you look at your outline there. So part a, the Shulamite spoke, Solomon spoke. Now the Shulamite is going to speak again, but she spoke in public.

And then they went to the King's chambers and, uh, had this exchange. She spoke, he spoke. Now the setting changes.

The King is at his table. And so the Shulamite holds forth and says, the King, the King is at his table. He doesn't say we are at the King's table.

So the King is there surrounded by all kinds of other individuals. And the very statement implies a bit of separation. They're not sitting together.

Um, while the King is at his table, uh, there are these fragrances. Uh, my beloved is, uh, uh, a cluster of, of, uh, these Cyprian grapes in the vineyards of Engedi. And, uh, she says, I know he's got to go do his King thing and leave me behind, but that's okay.

And, uh, so then I think she is reminiscing about things that he has said during their courtship. So you have a quotation from Solomon here, beginning, uh, in, in verse 15, again, in verse 17. And again, in chapter two, verse two, and I've got that marked in your part B there after the Shulamite expresses her, uh, appreciation.

Then she remembers him expressing his appreciation. You're fair. My love, you are fair.

You have dove's eyes. Uh, and she responds and says, Oh, you know, let's not talk about me. Let's talk about you.

You are handsome, my beloved and pleasant. And, uh, our, our, our bed is green. And then he says, well, the beams of our houses are seated on our rafters at first, just a typical man thing to say, you want to talk about the house? Let me tell you how it's built.

Um, and then she says, I'm the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley's very significant claim. This has often been quoted in connection with the Lord Jesus. They've got a whole song.

He's the Lily of the Valley, the fairest of 10,000 of my soul and so on. This is where it comes from, but this is the Shulamite and she has confidence here. She's remembering the expressions of Solomon's love.

He has brought her to his chambers. Uh, they have shared the marital bed and she's it's all roses at this point. And she says, I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley's.

And this is the third time she remembers something Solomon said in two, two. Uh, he basically says to her, you're like a Lily among the thorns. So is my love among the daughters.

Again, reassurance going back to that theme in chapter one, that yes, you've come to a palace full of Queens and concubines, but you're their thorns compared to you. You're, uh, really something special. And she says, well, you are like an apple tree among the trees of the woods.

Now this is in verse three, and we're going to see this apple tree motif occur again on the other side of the chiasm. So you might just make a little note there like an apple tree among the trees of the woods. So is my beloved among the sons.

I sat down in his shade with great delight. Notice I sat down in his shade. So where is she? She is under the apple tree.

Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else, but me says Shlomo. And so this is the idea that, that this love of his life, this one and only the Lily among the thorns is in the shade. You know, remember that song? It must be cold there in my shadow.

You are the wind beneath my wings or my version. You are the air beneath my armpits. Uh, but you know, it must be cold there in my shadow because I'm so great.

And you've just been a faithful dog tray there next to me without sharing the glory. It's one of the most arrogant songs I've ever heard. But anyway, in the shade of the tree, that's the idea here.

Keep that in mind. I sat down in his shade with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste, the benefits of nearness. And in my view, that's all that's going on here.

It's, I think, I think there's almost a, um, there's almost a deflection. Sometimes you hide something in plain sight or you, you put a distraction that will take shallow people off the trail. And I think it's easy for people to start reading all kinds of innuendos and double entendres and things into this language when there is a far more cogent and significant actual message here.

She is in Solomon's shade and she enjoys the nearness and she enjoys the benefit. If you've ever picked up a nice, fresh, sweet apple that just dropped from the tree, that's, that is some good fruit eaten right there. No middlemen, no cold storage, no insecticides.

If you've ever been near an apple tree that had really good apples and just picked one of those things and, and you're sitting in the shade eating it, that's, that's a rare rural blessing. Then, uh, you see in chapter two, verse seven, and I think in your New King James, it says the Shulamite starts talking to the daughters of Jerusalem back up in verse four. But I don't think so.

I think she's, she could be, but she could also just be talking to herself. We know for sure that she talks to them beginning at verse seven, and that's how I've arranged it in the outline. So she speaks all the way from chapter one, verse 12, all the way through chapter two, verse six.

And she says, she's talking about these apples of enjoyment that she enjoys in his shade. What are they? He brings me to the, uh, house of wine. His banner over me is love.

Uh, and by the way, that is the house of wine. I can't remember if I mentioned that or not, but when it says banqueting house, this is Beit Yayan. Yayan is almost directly the root from where we get the word wine.

Uh, sounds almost the same, but this is, uh, Beit Yayan, the house of wine and his banner over me is love. Sustain me with cakes of raisins. Refresh me with apples for I am lovesick.

And this in the early stage of her being brought to the, to the house of wine, but the house of wine is a, is a place where there are a lot of people and the King is at his table and the King is, is up there with all of these other individuals. She begins to feel this distance, the, the court life that much has been made of this in a lot of, um, you know, mini series and such about the Queens and Kings and the, um, all of the Peyton Place types of shenanigans that supposedly go on, you know, in the affairs of state and the, between the all of the plotting and maneuvering for power and the rest of it. And as she begins to come into contact with all of the rest of what goes on under the shade of the apple tree, she says, you know, I just want Solomon.

I just want to enjoy our intimacy and, and the, the shared value that was expressed in the first chapter. She says, uh, I need some, I need some raisins and I need, I need some of those apples. Uh, the apples are when you're near the tree, certainly in the ancient world.

So she says, I enjoyed being in the shade right under the tree and enjoying those apples. Where are they now? I'm starting to be lovesick. Why? Apple a day keeps the doctor away.

Bring me some apples. And you know, those wonderful, uh, Cyprian grapes that were talked about earlier. Well, I'll even take a mashed cake of those.

Uh, it's real interesting that word for raising cakes. I, I'm not going to go into it, but if you want something to do sometime, if you look that up, it's actually the word for a foundation and something that is pressed down and made solid. These things must've been kind of like hockey pucks, sort of a raisin jerky or something that, that would being dried would last a long time, but it's not the same as the verdant grapes off the vine.

This is what you get when the, when you're not near the grapes and there's a lack of apples when you're no longer close to the tree. So what's the point here already by the end of the first set here, the AB set, you begin to see distance setting in between the Shulamite and Solomon. She's lovesick.

This is not doctor, doctor, you know, what's wrong with me? That old rock song, uh, or I've got the, you know, rocking pneumonia and the boogie flu. This, this is a loss of wellbeing due to separation. So if you are following on the outline, you'll see that we've come to point C here.

And this, that pair is, is marked off by her comment to the daughters of Jerusalem in chapter two, verse seven, I charge you O daughters of Jerusalem. You get the idea that this song is by a woman for women. This is like a woman's advice book to other women.

She doesn't say, Oh, young men, make sure you do this and that, or, Oh, King, don't let your heart go here or there. She says, daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you. And we begin to see the, some of the purpose of the book emerge here.

This is a woman who has experienced this roller coaster ride. And she says, ladies, let me give

you some advice. I charge you by the gazelles, by the does of the field.

We talked about that last time, the does and gazelles have speed of flight as their primary means of escaping danger, harm and death, right? Does and gazelles are notable for their ability to flee a dangerous situation. And she says, ladies, I charge you by the does and gazelles. If you know what's good for you, be alert and be ready to run.

Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases. We're going to do a little bit of analysis on it later. Just note it for now.

She says, be careful what you start, be careful what you encourage. Now, any lady, young, medium or old who finds herself in a, in a dating situation, a contact with the opposite gender, with prospect of romance, what is the warning here? Be careful about starting down a path that may be difficult to impossible to escape. Take a lesson from the does and the gazelles.

You don't wait until the leopard has its teeth sunk into your ankle before you start trying to run at the first sign of all is not well. That's the time to make some distance. And at the first sign that all is not well, that's the time to start being very alert and ready to create some distance and some separation and some non availability.

That's her first warning. And that closes this first section, this AB section. So then we pick up in with the Shulamite in verse eight of chapter two, and we know that we've started a new section because once again, the setting has changed.

If you notice on the outline, she starts the first A section in public and later in the King's chambers. There's a transition from, you know, draw me away. Let's get away from the crowd.

I want some alone time. I want some quality time with you by yourself. And so they go to the King's chambers, but it isn't long in part B there before there, the King is at his table and she's not, she's been brought to the house of wine, but she's not at the table.

So she warns the daughters of Jerusalem. Now we have another setting change in verse eight, the voice of my beloved, he's coming from the mountains. He's coming upon the hills.

He's like a gazelle or stag. He stands behind our wall. He is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice.

Notice the separation has become even greater. He's been clear over the hill, but she hears the sound of his return. She doesn't know where he's been, but it's been at a great distance from her.

So the King is coming from the hills. And so now we get a quote from Solomon and she quotes him. She says, my beloved, this is Solomon spoke and said to me, once he, once he got back, he's been gone.

He says, rise up my love, my fair one, and come away for low. The winter is past. The rain is over and gone.

The flowers are on the earth. The time of singing has come. The voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

You've heard that quoted many a time, but the idea here is, well, I was called away by bad conditions, bad weather, but springtime has returned. Come to me, my love, my fair one, because, uh, all of that necessity for traveling is over. Uh, I know I was gone, but I'm back now.

Here I am. Let's, uh, enjoy the fig trees and the vines with tender grapes. Uh, notice, you know, she says, uh, I'd be happy with a raisin cake or, or somebody bring me an apple.

He says, look, we've got, uh, green figs and vines are producing tender grapes. You don't have to live on the, the pressed raisin cakes anymore. Uh, rise up my love, my fair one, and come away.

Oh, my dove and the cliffs of the rock and the secret places of the cliff. Let me see your face. Let me hear your voice for your voice is sweet.

Your face is lovely. A lot of flattery here. And then, uh, your new King James says her brothers, but they do that because they're trying to account for this shift into the plural, but he's harking back to their sort of love game of talking to each other in the plural, I think, and this is still Solomon talking.

And he says, catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines for our vines have tender grapes. And he says all of this, uh, uncertainty and, and worry and, uh, gossip that you might've heard around the edges that I'm really not dedicated to you, that you're not my new rose amongst the thorns. Um, catch those little foxes there.

They're spoiling the tender grapes come back and we'll enjoy our wonderful Cyprian grapes. So I, in my view, Solomon is still talking in verse 15. He's just using that same plural they played with in the first chapter.

So the scene shifts now again, and the Shulamite says, my beloved is mine. And I am his, he feeds among the lilies. My beloved is mine.

And I, his, he feeds among the lilies. See where it says his flock doesn't say his flock says he feeds among the lilies. And I think, you know, people are trying to maintain a sense of delicacy or something here.

And, and I think it's, it's off the mark to begin with, because she's not talking about anything physical. Remember, she is the rose of Sharon. She is the lily of the valley.

She's that unique lily, right? So if he's feeding among the lilies, what does that mean? He's got

more than one lily. She's not the only lily amongst thorns. He's where has he been over the hill? She says, you know, I'm, I'm my beloveds and he's mine, but he's been out nosing around the lilies.

He's been out, you know, looking for sustenance in other lilies. And so what does she say in verse 17, until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved and be like a gazelle or like a young stag upon the mountains of Bethar. Remember when she talked about the gazelle and the stag in verse nine, the voice of my beloved is coming toward me.

And that thrilled her heart until he started giving excuses for where he had been. And she says, you know, you've been elsewhere, but she says, there are shadows here. You know, what would make these shadows flee away if you'd be as fleet as a gazelle and a stag and, and come back in my direction and, and stay.

So she says, these shadows are not going to flee. So long as you're over the hill feeding among the lilies. I thought this was going to be a new and special unique relationship that, that we were going to have and, you know, forsaking all others and cleaving to your wife type of thing, which he could have and should have done.

It doesn't matter if you've made mistakes in the past. If, if you realize, okay, this is of God, this is the queen. And for this reason, a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, the two or one flesh.

You're it. All the rest of these gals are wall decorations at this point, but no, he keeps going over the hills out of sight. He keeps going to the lily fields.

And she says, now the shadows have set in return, be as quick coming back to me as, as you can. So that's song C. Now we have another shift of, uh, location shift of setting. And that tells us we have a new section starting.

And this is section D in chapter three, verse one. And this is by night on her bed by night on her bed. She's been talking to Solomon, but she's it's night.

She's in her bed and alone. I sought the one I love. I sought him, but I did not find him.

I will rise and go about the city in the streets and the squares. I will seek the one I love. He's not where he ought to be.

And so she's got to go out and look for him. The watchman who go about the city found me. I said, have you seen the one I love scarcely had I passed by them.

When I found the one I love, I held him and would not let him go until I had brought him to the house of my mother and into the chamber of her who conceived me. Now could read all kinds of things into this if you choose. But the idea here, I think is that she is reminding Solomon that a

wife becomes a mother and a mother produces children.

The true queen, the genuine wife is going to do the same thing the Shulamites mother did, which is bear children. And so when she grabs him and says, Hey, part of the deal was we were going to have a marriage. And in the ancient world, that was the natural outcome that we talked about in the whole survey of marriage from the beginning to the end of the Bible, how in the Old Testament, the idea of procreation was inherent in marriage.

Barren women were sad and would make their appeal to God like Hannah and Sarah and others that you can point to. Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar and Jephthah's daughter who wept for her virginity because she was going to be a perpetual virgin and never have the chance to be a wife and mother. And so when she says, I held him and would not let him go until I had brought him to the house of my mother.

You would think, well, why not the house of the father? Why the house of the mother? Because the mother is the one who has born children. This young lady isn't going to have the chance to bear children if her husband is never home. And so she brings him there conceptually, she brings him there.

Hey, you know, if you're off expending all remaining amongst the lilies, how am I ever going to be anything but a token queen? How will I ever be the mother of your children? So I took him to the house of my mother and into the chamber of her who conceived me. Conception is supposed to be the result here. How did the scene start? She's in her bed alone.

How does it end? She's talking about, look, people conceive when there's a father around so that the wife becomes a mother. This, I think, is the central idea. And look at verse 5 now, because once again, just as at the end of the first set, A, B, if you look up at that top there, you see A, B, and the last thing before the dotted line says, to the daughters of Jerusalem, the D-O-J there.

Remember that warning by the does and the gazelles? Well, here's the marker at the end of the second set, to the daughters of Jerusalem, chapter 3, verse 5, I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases, until it can commit, until it can fulfill that commitment. It's easy to make a commitment and then run from it or disregard it or fall away from it or get tired of it. But she issues the very same warning.

I think you can see so far that we've got a pretty clear structure here of the beginning of a new section or a new song noted by a change in location, a change in venue, and the A, B, and the C, D have been marked by turning to the daughters of Jerusalem. This is one of the main purposes of the book, is a warning letter to young ladies about what can happen if you allow someone to get interested before they're ready. That's not a real elegant way of putting it, and we'll refine that a bit later on.

But it's time for us to pause here and take our break. And as we do so, you might just review the rest of this outline if you have it before you. If you don't have it before you, see if you can get it during the break.

And see if you can spot the structural markers that have set off these sections. Take a look at the first and last verses, the little notes that I've put on there. I apologize for the weird tabs in a couple of places, but I'll clean it up and repost it for next time.

But what is the conclusion we can draw from this? Marriage is a species of commitment. It is two people entering into covenant. And what is the nature of the warning that we've seen at the end of the A, B section and the end of the C, D section? I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, what's the warning? Do not stir up nor awaken love, i.e. someone's desire to avail themselves of whatever you've got until it pleases.

So whatever it pleases means there is a warning about garnering undue interest, entering into undue intimacy when warning bells are gently ringing in the breeze. More about that when we continue. Let's pause here and take a break.