

# Song of Songs Explained & Applied 22

Ger de Koning



Most Beautiful Love Song



# **The Book of Song of Songs**

Explained and Applied



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Ger de Koning

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## **Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible**

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### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah  
Nah – Nahum  
Hab – Habakkuk  
Zep – Zephaniah  
Hag – Haggai  
Zec – Zechariah  
Mal – Malachi

### **New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew  
Mk – Gospel of Mark  
Lk – Gospel of Luke  
Jn – Gospel of John  
Acts – Acts of the Apostles  
Rom – Letter to the Romans  
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal – Letter to the Galatians  
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil – Letter to the Philippians  
Col – Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit – Letter to Titus  
Phlm – Letter to Philemon  
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam – Letter of James  
1Pet – First Letter of Peter  
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn – First Letter of John  
2Jn – Second Letter of John  
3Jn – Third Letter of John  
Jude – Letter of Jude  
Rev – Revelation

## **Explanation of General Format**

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS [ ]** are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

## **Word of Thanks**

The publication of this commentary on the book of Song of Songs is a good opportunity to express my great thanks to Jesus Christ, my Redeemer and Lord. In addition to my desire, He has also given me the opportunity to write a commentary about all the books of the Bible [in Dutch, my native language]. I see this as a great privilege and at the same time a great responsibility. It is up to the reader to examine the Scriptures to see if what is in the comments is in accordance with God's thoughts (Acts 17:11). For the good that the reader discovers in it, the Lord Jesus deserves all honor.

I am also grateful to the Lord for the many who have been used by Him to contribute a comment. It is impossible for me to mention the names of those from whom I have received help in writing a comment. I cannot imagine a commentary, that could be written without the help of others. This help included, for example, a comprehensive explanation that someone wrote, which helped me to understand the text better. It may also be someone who has pointed out a detail to me with a suggestion for improvement. I am also grateful to all those who over the years have made publication in book and digital form possible. This also applies to those who helped in the translation of a commentary in a certain language.

The Lord has arranged things in the church in such a way that the members need each other to perform the task He has given each member. He will reward everyone who has made a contribution, in whatever form. In mentioning names, I could just forget someone, but He doesn't forget one.

I would like to make one exception: my wife Willy. I am particularly grateful to the Lord for her contribution:

Dear Willy, you have received a great empathetic capacity from the Lord. You have an eye for the many details the Lord has given in life, which make life so colorful and meaningful. I don't have an eye like that, but you have shown it to me by being who you are in your relationship with; the Lord, with me, with our children, in-laws and grandchildren, fellow believers, the people in the area where we live and in many encounters elsewhere. In those ways, you have made numerous contributions for the

application of God's Word in daily life, so that I have been able to incorporate these in the comments. I thank the Lord from the bottom of my heart for the unity He has made of us in our differences.

Ger de Koning

Middelburg, June 2018

## **Foreword**

The basis for this commentary about the Song of Songs are addresses that I was able to give in the period 2009-2013 in Schmalkalden, Germany. A first proposal for a topic for the addresses was marriage and relationships. Since I prefer a book of the Bible for a topic, I suggested to share thoughts about the book of the Song of Songs. This Bible book is excellent for making applications on marriage and relationships.

I must honestly say that I found it quite a daring venture to give addresses about this Bible book. Song of Songs is a poetic book and I am not very poetic. When we read this book, we may think: 'Do we as husband and wife live together like this? Do we as husband and wife talk about and to each other as it happens in this book?' I love my wife dearly and try to make her see and hear that in my own way. But that is somewhat different from what is described in this book.

Yet we have these manifestations of love in God's Word. It therefore, has something to say to us. It is also true of this book of the Bible, that it is inspired by God because it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2Tim 3:16-17).

This book is about love relationships, about relationships between husband and wife. We can apply that to our marriage. Much of it can also be applied to our family, and also to our relationships with our fellow believers, our brothers and sisters. From what we read in this book about love, we can therefore learn a lot about the way we look at each other, how we see each other and what we say to each other, in short, how we deal with each other.

## Song of Songs

### **Introduction**

From Solomon we have three books in the Bible. Besides the book Song of Songs, he also wrote the Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes. In both books Solomon says something about a woman.

Solomon had a thousand wives (1Kgs 11:3), but the right wife, the wife with whom he could have a real relationship of love, was not there. He sought her 'under the sun', but had to come to the conclusion: "But I have not found a woman among all these" (Ecc 7:28). In Ecclesiastes life is only seen on a horizontal level. The preacher looks at and examines everything "under the sun" (Ecc 1:14). The conclusion of his research is that everything is vanity, empty. As long as a person seeks the fulfillment of his desires only under the sun – whether it be a woman or something else – his heart will find no true happiness. Solomon's search for true love is therefore unsuccessful in the book of Ecclesiastes.

But then we hear from his mouth in the Proverbs: "An excellent wife, who can find?" (Pro 31:10a). Proverbs is the book where God's light shines from the sanctuary on the way we go under the sun. In that book we hear something about what lives in Solomon's heart about the woman he is looking for, how she should be. The answer to the question remains open, but his search has gained meaning because he now finds himself in the light of the sanctuary. He now knows what kind of wife he is looking for.

In the Song of Songs he has found her. Song of Songs is as it were the holy of holies, where the origin lies of the intimate relationship between the groom and the bride. Solomon is so happy that he has found her, that he writes a song about her.

The book describes the development of the feelings of love between Solomon and a girl, his bride, for whom he conceived love. It is a declaration of love by Solomon at the beginning of a relationship he builds up with the girl.



Young lovers write to each other. Once you are married, you live together and do not write to each other anymore. When my wife and I were still engaged, I did write letters to my fiancée. Some time ago, when my wife and I were talking about our letter writing during our engagement, she said she would like to have another letter from me. We had been married at that time for almost thirty-four years. I wrote her a letter about what she has meant to me all the time we have been married as a wife, as the mother of our children and as the grandmother of our grandchildren. I gave it to her on the same day we had been married for thirty-four years.

Women long for such expressions. It is good that a man regularly tells his wife what she means to him. Let him do that in his own way. It is also good when a wife asks her husband what she means to him.

It can also be added that it is good to tell our children and grandchildren from time to time that we love them and how happy we are that they belong to the family. We can make them feel that love too, for example, by taking the little ones on our laps and reading to them. We can make the older children and grandchildren feel this by showing interest in their study or plans. These are expressions that we may need to learn, but it is important that we regularly “declare” our love to them.

But the declaration of love is not the only meaning of Song of Songs. In the prophetic application, we see in Solomon a picture of the Lord Jesus, and in the bride a picture of Jerusalem – or the faithful remnant – and that especially in the end time, that is the time of the great tribulation. That Solomon is a picture of the Lord Jesus is indicated by the Lord Himself when He says of Himself: “And behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Mt 12:42b).

In Song of Songs there are many things that make clear how the remnant as the bride and the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom are led to each other. This means that we have a lot of prophecy in this book. It tells us something about future events.

In addition to its literal and prophetic meaning, the book has a third meaning, which is its practical or spiritual application for us. We can apply the beautiful content of Song of Songs to our personal life of faith, to our relationship with the Lord Jesus. By extension, there are also applications to

the relationships in our marriages and families and the relationship with our fellow believers. In this commentary, the focus in the reflection on this 'song of love' is on these latter relationships.

# Song of Songs 1

## **Song 1:1 | The Song of Solomon**

| 1 *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.*

The first verse of the book shows that the Bible book Song of Songs was written by Solomon. Solomon has written more songs. We read that he even wrote “1,005” songs (1Kgs 4:32). Of all these songs – except perhaps Psalm 72 – as far as we know we do not have one in the Bible. But in the Song of Songs we have a long song by him in the Bible.

It is not just a song, a song of which only could be said it is a very good song. No, it is ‘the Song of Songs’, the highest song, the song that surpasses all other songs. In this song, the greatest Lover the world has ever known, sings of the most fervent love ever shown. In this song we hear the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking to the heart of His bride.

This song is so important to God, that He has incorporated it in His Word. It is His purpose that we will read this song with the greatest attention to get to know the feelings of His love for His people. If through this song our hearts begin to understand those feelings, it will help us express our love for Him.

## **Song 1:2 | Excellent Love**

| 2 *“May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!  
For your love is better than wine.*

The song starts suddenly. Without any introduction we suddenly hear how the girl, the bride, expresses her longing for the love of the groom. She comes straight to the point, because she is so full of his love. She knows that love: it is an excellent love.

The girl doesn’t say who she is talking about, of whom her heart is so full. She first speaks in general, “he”, not to anyone personally. She longs for the groom’s intimate declarations of love. The kiss is an expression of intimate, personal love (cf. 1Sam 20:41). That much the bride longs for the affection of the groom.

No one can kiss two people at the same time. A kiss is an expression for one person. It is the expression of a personal, intimate love. This desire goes far beyond the ordinary desire for a proof of love. It is for us the starting point of true spiritual growth. If this great longing for the love of the Lord Jesus is not there, we will not understand what Solomon means by this song.

In the prophetic sense of the word we see in the faithful remnant of Israel this attitude of intense desire for declarations of love from the Messiah, the Bridegroom. The question of the remnant, the bride, is always whether He will accept her. She indeed speaks to Him, but more often about Him to others. The Bridegroom always only speaks to her. We will see how He wants to convince her of His love for her.

When we read the book Song of Songs, we notice that the bride is constantly looking for confirmation. She does not doubt his love, but she doubts his love *for her*. She desperately desires proofs of love from the groom, which will give her the certainty that he has accepted her. We see in her desire an uncertainty that we often see in Psalms. There is no established, lasting relationship yet. There are still doubts. Sometimes we hear her say she knows she is loved, but a little later the doubts return.

The assurance of faith, the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and acceptance by God will only be known and enjoyed by the remnant when they see the Lord Jesus at His return to earth. Then He will free them from all doubt and show them His love in a perfect way and let them enjoy it in the coming millennial kingdom of peace.

The new testament church as a whole, as well as the individual believer of the church, is not in such a relationship of uncertainty to Christ. It is not a question for the church and the individual believers whether He will accept them, for they know that they have been accepted. They rest in the work that He once and forever accomplished on Calvary. That is something that the remnant has to be convinced of in the future.

Yet even in this time, a believer can live in uncertainty when it comes to know whether his sins are forgiven and he is a child of God. This is the case when the law is taken as the norm for Christian life. The law cannot be accomplished by any human being, not even if one tries – as is said – to

do it out of gratitude. Maybe that is the case in the life of one of the readers. Whoever has truly confessed his sins and believes God at His word that He forgives whosoever confesses his sins (1Jn 1:9), may know for sure that he is a child of God. Then there is no doubt.

In the second line of the verse the bride does turn to the groom. She has experienced the groom's love declarations. His declarations of love transcend all earthly joys, of which wine is a picture (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15a). She yearns for this excellent love, because earthly joy is nothing compared to his love (cf. Psa 4:7).

For this bride the love of the groom was better than wine. It goes without saying that these expressions of love in our relationships put everything that can be bought with money into the shade. There was a man whose wife had left him. She couldn't stand any longer to be with him. He had shouted it out to the Lord. When he told about it, he said: 'I don't know what I did wrong. I gave her everything she wanted.' In response, it was said that there is more than giving someone everything he or she wants. It is important that we reach the *heart*. You can't buy love, you can't just show your love through gifts. When I get something, the *heart* must become visible. Only then is love really better than wine. Then there is an inner joy.

Whoever has tasted that the Lord is kind (1Pet 2:3; Psa 34:8), knows that nothing 'tastes better' and will want to enjoy it more. The love of the Lord Jesus "surpasses knowledge" (Eph 3:19). Whoever desires more of earthly joy, than for His love has not yet understood and enjoyed His love.

In our relationship with our fellow brothers and sisters, proofs of love are also important. However, we must bear in mind that this must be done in a different way than in the marriage relationship and in a family context. There are brothers and sisters who yearn for a proof of love, so that their experience is that of being looked after, that attention is paid to them, that they are appreciated for who they are.

Nowadays, users of modern means of communication can also express or respond to their feelings via certain signs or icons. For young believers especially, traps lie here. Don't get carried away in sending or replying to messages that stimulate your feelings. Such messages transcend the boundaries given by God. Preserve your expressions of love for him or her

whom the Lord wants to give you or has given you. Expressions of love must always take place as God purposed them. In marriage and in the family, it happens in an intimate, tender way; in the mutual relationships between brothers and sisters, young and old, it happens in a sound, honorable way, without any ulterior motives.

### **Song 1:3 | An Oil Poured Forth**

3 *“Your oils have a pleasing fragrance,  
Your name is [like] purified oil;  
Therefore the maidens love you.*

The bride then talks about the ointment oils with which the groom was anointed. She smells it. She loves the smell of it; it still hangs, as it were, in the air. His love, which is better than wine, is surrounded by the scent of a mixture of ointments. Wine as a picture of earthly joy, is replaced by the smell of oil. The oil speaks of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27).

The work of the Holy Spirit has become perfectly visible in the Lord Jesus, of Whom we read “how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and [how] He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). He spread a wonderful fragrance around Himself in everything He said and did.

The fruit of the Spirit consists of nine parts (Gal 5:22-23). Those parts together are like this mixture of ointment oils. When we read in the Gospels how the Lord Jesus went His way on earth, we see all aspects of the fruit of the Spirit in His whole action. Each part is expressed perfectly and in complete harmony with the other parts in everything He says and does. For all who know and enjoy His love, each verse in the Gospels spreads a full, wonderful scent of Him.

The Father knows and enjoys in a perfect way the composition of this ointment oil, that is the fruit of the Spirit, in the life of His Son. We can only smell or notice the wonderful smell of it per part, because “we know in part” (1Cor 13:9a), that is, “piece by piece”, little by little. It is not possible for us to fully fathom the glory of the Lord Jesus in its depths, as it is written: “No one knows the Son except the Father” (Mt 11:27a).

The mystery of His Person, that He is perfect God and perfect Man, remains hidden from us. We should not try to understand this (cf. Exo 30:31-33). But we can be impressed by the perfection of its individual parts as we admire Him for all He has shown us of Himself.

The Lord Jesus is the Anointed One. Everything that flows out of Him, all oils spread a pleasant fragrance, both for God and for people. People do not spread that scent (Jer 48:11). A single misplaced word or an inappropriate comment can immediately spoil the atmosphere. This was never the case with the Lord Jesus. Sin is an aroma to death. The fragrance of Christ in the gospel leads to life or to death (2Cor 2:15-16a). What smell emanates from us?

Then the bride says: "Your name is [like] purified oil", or better: "Your name is as ointment poured forth" (Darby Translation). Isn't that beautiful? If I call the name of an animal, for example a lion, this is not just a name. When that name is mentioned, the image of the king of animals appears before our attention. When we think of the name of the Lord Jesus, what kind of image appears to our attention? His Name is an oil that is poured out, so that the whole expands and the surface is covered with oil. We can imagine that above this whole surface hangs a wonderful fragrance. In this way the knowledge of the name of the Lord Jesus will cover the earth, whereby each one knows another aspect or other aspects of that Name, and enjoys it and expresses his admiration for Him about it.

The pouring out also reminds us of the giving of His life, which He has poured out into death. That makes His name so great. Calling the name "Jesus", the name He received at His birth, gives as fragrance that He came to save His people from their sins (Mt 1:21). It is the Name for Whom every knee will bow (Phil 2:10). To help us enjoy the scent of that name a little more, Isaiah pours out as an 'oil stream' some of His names that give a wonderful scent: "For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; ... and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6).

His name is "Wonderful". Who can understand Who He is as God and Man in one person? Then His name is "Counselor", for with Him is counsel and wisdom. He knows what He does, He knows what needs to be

done. He knows our life. If we have questions and problems, we may ask Him for advice and He will give it (Psa 32:8). His name is also “Mighty God”. He not only says what we have to do, He not only shows us the way to go, but He also helps us to follow His advice. He oversees the whole, for He is the “Eternal Father”. His goal is to give us peace, for He is the “Prince of Peace”.

Do these names – and there are so many more names in Scripture, each with its own special scent – not give us, when we think about this, a pleasant scent, a scent in which we want to live as if in a pure atmosphere? If we live in that fragrance, it will be spiritually cling to our ‘clothes’, that is in our behavior. Everything in our life is permeated by it. Then the people around us will start to smell that smell as well. All around the believing, but carnal Jacob, hung the fragrance of the field. This was because he had put on the clothes of Esau (Gen 27:15-16,27). If we behave like the world, the fragrance of the world hangs around us. That should not be the case.

The name of the groom is all sweetness for the bride. But she also has an eye for the fact that the value of that name also attracts the love of others. She talks about “the maidens” who love him for the same reason as she does. In prophetic application we can think of the cities of Judah, who like Jerusalem will love the Messiah.

The lesson for us is that we need to be aware that our love for the Lord Jesus is shared by others. Love rejoices in the Object of love and enjoys it when others also have that love. “Maidens” is also translated as “virgins”. By this is meant women *and* men who keep themselves free from the world to live only for the Lord Jesus (Rev 14:1-5; cf. 2Cor 11:2; Jam 4:4). They want it because they love Him.

### **Song 1:4 | Brought Into the Chambers**

4 *“Draw me after you [and] let us run [together]!  
The king has brought me into his chambers.”  
“We will rejoice in you and be glad;  
We will extol your love more than wine.  
Rightly do they love you.”*



His love draws our hearts toward Him. The more we are engaged in His love for us, the more we will love Him. It makes no sense to be sitting in sackcloth and ashes regarding our lack of love for Him. It makes no sense in trying to stir up and intensify our love for Him. Instead, we must give up looking at ourselves and be engaged with Him. Thinking about our sluggishness and coldness does not help us to love Him more. If we notice slowness and coldness in our love for Him, we should confess it, and immediately afterward start thinking about His love for us. Then our hearts will get warm again. "We love, because He first loved us" (1Jn 4:19).

We feel that we are susceptible to things that take the place of our love for Him. That is why we feel the need for the fervent prayer, that He will draw us along with Him. This prayer is immediately followed by the heart's intention to run after Him. We see this for example in the life of Paul. He knows he has been laid hold of by the Lord Jesus and then he says he is pressing onward to lay hold on Him (Phil 3:12-14).

It is a personal desire to be drawn: "Draw me." But the desire to run and follow is a common desire, as we read here: "Let us run." The desire that one has to be open to the working of God's Spirit is the desire of more people. Paul 'pressed on' and those who love the Bridegroom 'run'. Known and experienced love encourages the greatest possible effort to know Him and to be with Him.

When the eye and the heart are so focused on Him, we realize that the initiative lies with Him. He must draw. So it is already at conversion. This is what the Lord Jesus also says: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (Jn 6:44a; cf. Jer 31:3; Hos 11:4). Thus we are rescued or drawn from the power of the world and of sins (Gal 1:3b-4). This does not take away the responsibility that calls on the sinner to turn back, but here we see God's side.

For the believer it is the same. He is called to follow Christ. Whoever takes that call seriously also feels the need for the Lord to work it in him. That the call is really taken seriously is evident from the conscious choice to run after Him as well. The life-giving work of the Spirit in us and our commitment as believers are in harmony (cf. Hos 6:1-3).

When the bride has expressed the wish to be drawn, followed by the firm intention to run after the groom, she immediately sees the final goal of the road before her. She knows that he will bring her “into his chambers”. She already sees herself there together with him. His chambers are the inner, hidden rooms of the king (Psa 91:1). It is a place of intimate proximity. Here she calls him “king” for the first time. The relationship of love in which she stands to him is also a relationship in which she acknowledges that he is her lord (cf. Psa 45:11).

It is the same for us. The Lord Jesus really must be our Lord before we can know Him as a loving Bridegroom. We also know that He went to the Father’s house to prepare a place for us there. He comes back to take us up and bring us there (Jn 14:1-3), but through His Spirit we are already connected with Him there.

The awareness of her beloved’s love for her and the acknowledgment of his lordship elicit from her lips a call to rejoice. In a relationship of love and authority, of authority exercised in perfect love, lies the greatest possible safety and security. This can only result in joy and happiness. This is also the case with us in our relationship with the Lord Jesus. There is a deep joy because we know and love Him, and even more because He knows and loves us.

He is the Object of our joy, we rejoice in Him. Happiness without Him or a happiness that has another source, is trivial happiness, that flames up like straw in the fire for a while and then extinguishes without having given any warmth. Christ is the inexhaustible Source of joy and happiness. He is a Source that cannot be affected by anything that would diminish or even eliminate joy. The joy found in Him cannot be influenced by changing circumstances.

In the Father’s house we will drink continuously from that Source, rejoicing in Him eternally in a perfect, undisturbed manner. Already now, on earth, we are allowed to rejoice again and again (Phil 4:4; 1Thes 5:16). In the Father’s house we will, as we already do on earth, constantly remember His excellent love. We will never forget that love, that love that is “better than wine”, that is, the joy that His love gives, goes far beyond all earthly joys. We will talk about that love with the Father and the Son and

with each other. That is fellowship that gives perfect joy: “And indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (1Jn 1:3b-4).

In the last line of the verse, the bride assures the groom that the maidens “rightly” love him. If we love the Lord Jesus, it is right to do this, for His love gives every reason to do so. It is also important that our expressions of love are sincere, not hypocritical, and without ulterior motives.

Our expressions of love are weak. But if they are sincere, they are appreciated by Him. The bride sees this here with the maidens and she testifies to it toward her groom. Do we also have an eye for it when something is done out of love for the Lord Jesus? Or do we rather, or perhaps even only, see the wrong thing in what another person does? We must learn to appreciate what is being done in sincerity and also express this as encouragement.

### **Song 1:5 | Black but Lovely**

5 *“I am black but lovely,  
O daughters of Jerusalem,  
Like the tents of Kedar,  
Like the curtains of Solomon.*

After the bride was brought into the king’s chambers in the previous verse, she says something about herself. The sense of this privileged place does not make her proud, but humble. In what she says here, she addresses the “daughters of Jerusalem”. We will hear about them more often. We will see that the daughters of Jerusalem also include believers who love Christ but do not have as burning a love for Him as the bride has. They are also unable to understand the relationship the bride has, precisely because they do not have that burning love and do not know that intimate relationship. It is as if the bride justifies herself to them about her relationship with the groom and explains who she is to him.

She says that she is “black” (cf. Lam 4:7-8). She says that she realizes who she is by nature. This is an important aspect of our relationship with the Lord Jesus. When we speak of the relationship of love in which we stand to the Lord Jesus, we also have to be deeply aware that we are “black” in ourselves, which is sinful. Sin is still in us. “If we say we have no sin, we

are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1Jn 1:8). This does not make us depressed or discouraged, but the acknowledgment of this will turn our eye to the Lord Jesus, Who through His work on the cross has destroyed the power of sin for all who believe (Rom 6:6).

The bride immediately hereafter says that she is "lovely". This is what she is in the eye of the groom. She knows that, despite the fact that she is looking for confirmation. We may know that through repentance and confession we have forgiveness of our sins. But beyond that, we may also know that God "has made us acceptable [as it also can be rendered] in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6).

Yet we may have moments or sometimes periods in our lives when this awareness is not so alive, that our feelings of gratitude have faded. Not that we have lost the assurance of our faith. That is not the case, but the danger is present, that our assurance makes us somewhat indifferent. We know it so well, that it doesn't amaze us anymore and that we don't wonder anymore about what the Lord Jesus did to and for us and how God sees us now. The first fire of love for the Lord Jesus is extinguished.

When the bride says "I am black", it expresses a deep conviction that each child of God must have. The words that immediately follow, "but lovely", do not take away this conviction, but only increase the wonder of being lovely. This means for us the awareness that God looks at us in His Son and that we are children of God.

If we understand both sides with our heart, we will remain fervent in our love for the Lord Jesus. If we forget one of both sides or place a disproportionate emphasis on one of both sides, our faith life loses its stability. We will, also depending on our character, fall into legalism on the one hand or carnal freedom and even liberality on the other hand.

Then the bride uses two comparisons, which are an illustration of what she has just said about herself. She is "like the tents of Kedar" and also "like the curtains of Solomon". Kedar is an area outside of Israel. It points to a place outside the blessing of God. The remnant that in the future, during the great tribulation, will have been driven out of the land and fled abroad, complains: "Woe is me, ... for I dwell among the tents of Kedar!" (Psa 120:5). Kedar's tents are black. So we also live on earth, in a world that

lies in evil, where it is black with sin. This includes the black of our sinful nature. But through faith we may know that sin within us has been judged by the judgment that Christ underwent on the cross.

As a result, we are clothed with the righteousness of God in Christ. We see that in the second comparison, that of “the curtains of Solomon”. We can think of the radiant white curtains in the palace of Solomon. We may know that we have put on Christ and that we have been made pleasant in Him before God.

When we think about what we were and what we have become now, we will say with the Psalmist: “Who remembered us in our low estate, for His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Psa 136:23). We owe it all to His lovingkindness. We will then be like Mary, who sang, when she was told that she would become the mother of the Lord Jesus: “My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant” (Lk 1:46-48a).

Just as the insignificant girl from Shulam, the shepherdess, became the object of the love of the great king Solomon, so it went with us. We were by nature corrupt, lost, unworthy, rebellious creatures, but we are now connected in the most intimate way with the almighty God, the eternal Son. We are the objects of His love and share in the consequences of His work. We share in His place in heaven, and we share in His reign over heaven and earth. Doesn’t it become, the longer we think about it and the better we get to know ourselves, an ever greater wonder?

There is another practical comment to be made about the fact that there is a relationship of love between a countryside girl and a powerful king. There is a huge difference between Solomon and the bride in education, wisdom and wealth. Yet they are attracted to each other and long for each other. Similarly, two young people may today be brought together by the Lord, although there are great social and intellectual differences between them. The question is whether there is real love, because real love transcends and bridges such differences. A *feeling* of love, infatuation, is not a basis. It is about Divine love, because only Divine love can refrain from things that would be an obstacle in all other cases.

## Song 1:6 | Accountability and Failure

6 *“Do not stare at me because I am swarthy,  
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.*

What the bride says in the previous verse about her being black, she says from her own feelings about it. It means the acknowledgment that she herself is sinful. That is an important consciousness. Now she talks again about her being “swarthy” or black, but this time she does so to *others*. She says the others shouldn’t blame her because she is black. Her frankness about her past must not lead to her being looked down on. She can’t do anything about being swarthy, since the cause is the hot rays of the sun. She was exposed to this because her brothers forced her to guard the vineyards. She asks for understanding and acceptance despite what she is.

One lesson for us is that we should not look down on others when they have told something of their past. Even worse is, when we throw at someone what a bad man he is, while he has repented of his sins and confessed them. We must look at each other in the way the Lord Jesus looks at us. We know that we are also swarthy, sinful in ourselves. It can happen that this blackness becomes visible again because someone sinned. Then we should talk about it, not with others, but with the person concerned.

Here however, it is a matter of reminding another person of his past subtly, or perhaps harshly, because the other person is bothering us. Then we ourselves do not live in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, in the awareness of our own sinfulness. When we forget what the Lord Jesus did *for us* on the cross, we also forget that He did so *for that other person*. We may and must say of *ourselves* that we are the foremost sinner, as Paul did (1Tim 1:15).

It is not about measuring the number of sins or the severity of them, but about the awareness of one’s own evil. No one knows better than myself of all my many and dirty sins, doesn’t it? If we are convinced of this, satan will not have the opportunity to take away our peace by reminding us of the sins we have committed.

There was a man who found it difficult to accept that his sins were gone. He kept staring at his sinfulness. Satan was successful with him by reminding him of his sins. He always thought: 'I'm so bad. My sins are so great.' He once talked about it with an evangelist. The evangelist said to the man, who was really in great need of conscience: 'But we have a great God, "for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). He throws all our sins behind His back (Isa 38:17). 'Yes', the man replied, 'but when He turns around, He sees them again.'

The evangelist then pointed out to him that the Bible also states that He throws all the sins "into the depths of the sea" (Mic 7:19). 'Yes', the man objected again, 'but it also says in the Scriptures that there will come a time when the sea will dry up, and then He will see the sins again.' Then the evangelist said: 'But it is also written that God will remember the sins no more' (Heb 8:12). Then the man gave in and found peace.

It is great to be aware of the fact that God remembers sins no more. This of course only applies if they have been confessed before Him with sincere repentance. He is the only One Who can consciously forget something. When we forget something, it is weakness, a limitation of our ability to remember things. We can say something like: 'I don't think about it anymore', but at the same time as we say this, we are thinking about it very consciously. But God is able to consciously not think about anything anymore, that He doesn't remember the sins and doesn't hold them up to us anymore, because they are gone.

So we can say the following:

1. God no longer holds our sins up to us, for He no longer thinks of them.
2. Satan has no right at all to point out our sins and make our conscience trouble, because before God our sins no longer exist.
3. In view of these two facts, we should not remind a child of God of his or her past, for everything about this has been arranged by God on the basis of the work of His Son on the cross.

After the Shulammitte asked that she be not blamed for her blackness, she explained how her brothers had treated her. It is as if she is motivating her question not to blame her for her blackness. It shows how sensible she

is for her surroundings. She feels misunderstood, both by the daughters of Jerusalem and by her brothers. She has a closer relationship with her brothers than with the daughters of Jerusalem. What they have done to her also hurts her more.

She doesn't call her brothers 'my father's sons', but "my mother's sons". That recalls the common position, that of *grace* (Gal 4:26-28). They share the position, but their practice is different. The brothers are not going through the same development as the bride.

She says of her brothers that they had become *angry* with her. She doesn't say why that was. One possibility may be that they were jealous of her, their simple sister, because of her close relationship with king Solomon. We see something similar with Joseph's brothers, who were also jealous because Joseph made Jacob's heart glad. The brothers of the Shulammite sent her away with a commission. These brothers apparently had the power to do so. The brothers are much stronger than the girl. They have forced her to take care of the vineyards.

We can make an application here regarding our families. In families with children, it can happen that some children have some kind of power over another child. It is good that parents keep an eye on *how* their children interact with each other. Do they accept each other or do they want to use each other? Is there anyone – perhaps the oldest or the strongest or the brightest – who manipulates another member of the family by abusing his or her force majeure to allow the other to do something that benefits him or her?

It is important that we as parents ensure that the children only receive their assignments from us as parents. Parents are responsible for what their children do for as long as they are dependent, until they can take care of themselves.

The above is also important in the church, which consists of stronger and weaker personalities. We must be careful that the stronger personalities do not rule over the weaker ones and determine what they do. That is why it is good to ask ourselves: How do I behave toward my brother or sister? Do I really serve them, without demanding or even manipulating them?



So the brothers have sent their sister away as a caretaker of the vineyards. How she carried out this task is not mentioned. She does say of herself that she has not taken care of her *own* vineyard. Here we see the case where someone is forced to do something and therefore fails to meet what should have happened first and foremost. An obligation to work for others may result in forgetting responsibility for one's own work.

In connection with the application to our families, we can learn here that we must give our children tasks that they can carry out, for which they have the strength and the capacities. We will therefore take into account a child's age and ability when we give him an assignment. The same applies to the church. Again, we should ask of someone only what he or she are capable of doing, which matches his or her talents and does not go beyond them.

It may happen that we are very busy – in our opinion, of course, with good things – but that our activities are at the expense of our first responsibility. For example, fathers should be fathers in the first place and not workaholics. They should not leave the responsibility of fatherhood to their wives. Mothers should be mothers, not career hunters. It is about setting the right priorities. The taking care of their own vineyard, their own family, must happen first. Our boss may ask a lot of us and if we are our own boss, we may ask a lot of ourselves. But that does not mean that we should neglect our family.

Someone once said that some of his children did not follow the Lord. He said he had had a period in his life during which he was completely absorbed in his work. Late in the evening he came home, slept, got up early and left again. He hardly saw his children, nor did his children see him. It was precisely at a time when these children were making important life decisions, when they needed their father's attention and conversation with him. He now regrets that very much. Let it be a warning for anyone who recognizes it.

What does it mean to take care of the "own vineyard"? It means that we have an area that has been given to us by the Lord Jesus to work for Him. His purpose is that we should produce fruit for Him in that area. The vineyard speaks of joy. He wants us to deal with what He has given us in

such a way that it makes Him happy. Families, but also churches, are areas where we all have a responsibility. If we are aware of this responsibility and meet it, it will rejoice both God's heart and ours.

It is important that we take care of that area. To take care of means that we have to do with an enemy. We must be constantly on our guard against his attacks. In the next chapter we read about foxes who are trying to spoil the vineyard, with the bride's question: "Catch the foxes for us" (Song 2:15). But here it is about the fact that we have a responsibility to *protect* our vineyard.

### **Song 1:7 | Where Do You Pasture the Flock?**

*7 "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves,  
Where do you pasture [your flock],  
Where do you make [it] lie down at noon?  
For why should I be like one who veils herself  
Beside the flocks of your companions?"*

Now the bride addresses the groom. She turns to him after her own failure in her work. This is what the Lord wants us to do when we have failed. Then we shouldn't give up in self-pity, but go to Him. She turns to the groom as someone whom she knows and deeply loves. The appeal of love is greater than the dejection caused by failure. Our failure can never be greater than the love of Christ. We should always bear this in mind.

Peter also experienced this. The Lord Jesus speaks of his failure in advance, but He says that He prayed for him that his faith might not fail (Lk 22:31-32). Whoever loves the Lord wholeheartedly is saddened by his own failures, but is also convinced of the love of the Lord Who never writes off a failing disciple, but always gives him a fresh chance.

The bride's failure brings her back to the one she loves so much to be in his company again. She realizes that she needs food and rest. It is exhausting to do work in which the Lord Jesus is not involved. When we experience that, we feel hunger and long for rest. This is the order: first food and then rest (cf. Eze 34:15). A hungry sheep will not rest until it has found something to satisfy its hunger.

Only the Lord Jesus can give us food that satisfies our spiritual hunger and gives us the strength to live in fellowship with Him and for Him. That food is in fact He Himself. We feed on Him when we read God's Word, because that speaks all about Him (Jn 5:39). Then we also get rest for our souls. It is important to start the day with food from the Word of God. When it is noon then, when the sun is at its hottest, i.e. when the circumstances of life become difficult (Mt 13:6,21), we will be able to continue our way in the power of this food (1Kgs 19:5-8).

Just a practical application. If we have lunch break at work around noon, what do we do? Are there possibilities to read something from the Word of God? Or are we constantly busy? I know of a representative who was always busy. He had to meet his target number of sales. He was busy with that. When he had visited some customers and it was time to have something to eat, he drove to a quiet place to eat his bread. As he ate his bread, he thought about how the conversations with the customers had gone that morning and how he would handle the following conversations instead of unwinding by reading something from the Word of God. It will not apply to everyone, not even to every break, but are we at the very least trying, if the possibilities are there, to use a break in this way?

To the bride the important point is to be at the place where *He* pastures the flock and where *He* makes it lie down at noon. She seeks the personal relationship with him. This is an important example for us. Nothing is more important than a personal and living relationship with the Lord Jesus. We belong to His flock, we are together with other believers who also follow Him, but we do not go up into the mass. If we are looking for the flock, it is to be with *Him*. We do not follow a group and do not derive our identity from it, but we follow Him with Whom each of us has an own relationship. The good Shepherd knows every sheep of His flock "by name" (Jn 10:3).

The bride doesn't want to get lost in the mass and walk around there like one who veils herself. She should take that place if she were to join 'the flocks of your companions', which are flocks other than his. With this she says that her personal relationship with him cannot run through others. We see an illustration of this in professing Christianity. Therein are companies of people who follow human leaders. These are leaders who are working for the Lord, but the sheep still gather around *themselves*. They

take the place of ‘mediator’ between the people of God and God Himself. Such leaders speak of ‘my church’, whereas only the Lord Jesus can say so.

We can only grow spiritually if we have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. If we listen to God’s Word, what is it saying to us? Is it important to us who says it and how it is said? Or are we really open to what God has to say to us? The norm of our judgment must be whether the things that are said strengthen our relationship with the Lord Jesus. The preacher disappears, but Christ remains.

We see this with the eunuch in Acts 8. The evangelist Philip taught him the Word of God and baptized him. Then Philip disappears. We do not read that the eunuch was sadly left behind because his teacher was gone now, but the contrary: he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39). Every preacher who has been called by the Lord to serve with God’s Word, does not want anything else than that the one he has served with God’s Word, goes his way with joy in fellowship with the Lord. We should not be content with men, whoever he is, but only with the Lord. That is what we can learn from the bride here.

### **Song 1:8 | Go Forth on the Trail of the Flock**

*8 “If you yourself do not know,  
Most beautiful among women,  
Go forth on the trail of the flock  
And pasture your young goats  
By the tents of the shepherds.*

The groom immediately answers the bride’s question, where he pastures the flock. His first words are: “If you yourself do not know.” Therein lies a soft reproach. It sounds like she could have known. If this gentle reproach could possibly be misunderstood by the bride and taken as rejection, his following words make it clear that there is no such thing. He calls her the “most beautiful among women”. That means that he tells her how special she is to him. Although he has to make her a gentle reproach, he appreciates that she comes to him with her question.

The Lord Jesus also sometimes has to reproach us gently for things we ask for, but for which we should have known the answer (cf. Jn 14:8-9; cf. Heb

5:11-14). At the same time, He appreciates that we come to Him with our questions and He answers them. He does not reject us.

We can apply this to the situation in which our children come to us with questions, including questions to which they should already know the answer. How do we react? Do we then react, for example, as follows: 'Why do you ask that, silly? I told you that already, didn't I?' A child may have forgotten something. If that is the case, we should not outcry against the child.

We must not forget that we ourselves are also constantly educated by the Lord. We are all at the school of life, both parents and children. The same can be said of young people in the church. How do we as elderly people deal with them? Do we have patience to explain certain things more often, as often as they need it?

The bride is told to follow the trail of the flock to see where he pastures the flock and makes it lay down. The word "follow" is literally "go out". So she gets the assignment to go out, to go outside to follow the trail. It means she was in a place she had to leave, where she didn't belong. There is distance between her and the groom. To get to him she must first leave the area where she is. She moved in a different world from the one in which he pastured the flock. When she leaves, she can follow others who belong to him.

The same applies to us. If, spiritually, we are in a place where we don't belong, where we miss the Lord Jesus, where He *can't* be, then we might ask Him where He is. Then He will tell us to leave that area. This can relate to the comfort with which we have surrounded ourselves. It can also mean that we have to let go of human traditions, because they stifle our faith life. It also means that we must leave a community that has become a human system, which means that not God's Word is decisive, but what people consider to be good (Heb 13:13).

Then He says we have to follow the sheep's trails. By 'the sheep' believers are meant (Jn 10:27; 21:17). The sheep in question are sheep that are in the truth about the church and live according to it. Many believers today are sheep, but they have no 'flock consciousness'. They have no idea that they belong to the one flock of the one Shepherd. This is shown by the fact that

they have no awareness of the church of Christ to which all believers belong. They believe that they should be a member of this or that church or group and they have no regard for the fact that there is for God only “one flock”, to which all true believers belong, with “one Shepherd”, the Lord Jesus (Jn 10:16).

The bride can follow the groom’s sheep by following the “trails” they left behind. The ‘trails’ are the foot prints of those who have gone out before. ‘Trails’ also speak of movement and progress. Anyone looking for this should follow the same path and take the same actions. So it is not about taking a new road, but about following ancient trails or paths (Jer 6:16) that have been there for a long time. They are there “from the beginning” (1Jn 1:1). We can think back to the truths of the church and its gathering, because these words “were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:17; cf. 2Pet 3:2).

It is about words that “were spoken beforehand”. This refers to the words of Scripture. We have everything we need in the Bible. There is no need to invent new things. When we have questions about coming together with the Lord, it is not about inventing something new. This does not mean that we could not *experience* the coming together in any other way. It is good to think about how our enthusiasm for the Lord can increase and how it can be expressed. Whoever desires to be with the Lord Jesus will make sure that being together around Him does not become a routine, but he will want to honor Him from the bottom of his heart time and again.

Sometimes it is predictable how a meeting, a prayer or a speech will go. Then the question is justified whether the Spirit can really work and make hearts fervent for Christ. If these predictable situations occur frequently, it will be good to pray the Lord together that He points out what we need to change to really experience His presence again. After all, we want to be with *Him*, don’t we?

To be truly with Him means to be impressed by Who He is. When something is read from the Word of God, we will be aware that God speaks. We will respond, either loud or in our hearts: ‘God speaks to me!’ We will be open to what He has to say. The Word will be alive and powerful for

us and work within us. In this way there is a living relationship with the Lord.

We all react differently to the Word. Older people do this differently from young people. Everyone does it in their own way. There is no particular language, a jargon that one must first know to thank the Lord or to ask Him anything. Any believer may speak to the Lord in the same way as he speaks to others. The intonation may also remain the same. We don't have to change our voice suddenly when we read something from God's Word or pray out loud.

Every believer, old or young, may be himself with the Lord. We are all unique to Him and to each other. Every child the Lord has given us in our families and every member of the church has his own development and must be given room for it. It is about a new enthusiasm in life with the Lord. This life develops on trails that have been there for a long time. The trails are fixed, because the Word is fixed.

The groom then gives the bride a task: she has to pasture her goats "near the shepherds' homes". She herself is a sheep that is put by the groom on the way of the other sheep, a way that leads to him. Here she is told that she has to do her work as a shepherdess of goats near the homes of his shepherds.

We can apply these houses to the local churches. There are the shepherds of the Lord Jesus who do their work as His under-shepherds (1Pet 5:1-4). All those who are looking for a new experience of their dealings with the Lord Jesus can learn of these shepherds how to live this out in the local church. It is about dealing with each other, accepting each other and learning from each other. The shepherds' homes are places where we are stimulated in our relationship with the Lord Jesus, where it is further developed or revived.

### **Song 1:9 | Mare Among the Chariots of Pharaoh**

9 *"To me, my darling, you are like  
My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.*

The groom calls the bride here for the first time "my darling" or "my friend". That applies to the confidential relationship between them. With

a friend you share intimate things that you don't share with everyone. This is only possible if there is an atmosphere of complete trust and security. The Lord Jesus also calls His disciples His friends and He connects His safekeeping and protection with it (Lk 12:4). He mentions elsewhere another condition to be called a "friend" by Him and to receive His intimate announcements: that is that the disciple *does* what He commands (Jn 15:14).

Then the groom compares his bride with a mare. At first hearing, this does not immediately sound flattering to us, Westerners, within a relationship of love. We don't easily hear a man say of his wife that she looks like a mare. The groom says so here. He adds that she is one among other mares and that they together are meant to pull the chariots of Pharaoh. So the mares came from Egypt (cf. 1Kgs 10:28; 2Chr 1:16; 9:28). They must have been beautiful and well-trained mares, real showpieces. They were used to pull the beautiful chariots of Pharaoh to show his majesty wherever they went.

As believers, we should all be such 'showpieces' of our Lord Jesus, carrying Him along in the 'chariots' of our life. We should show Him in our life, so that therein His majesty becomes visible and all the light of our lives falls upon *Him*. He says here that we are so for Him. This means He can glorify Himself through us. We know of ourselves that we realize this very weakly in our lives. Yet He sees in us the desire to glorify Him. We would like to show the people around us what He means to us, what He has become to us through His work on the cross. He freed us from the power of sin and bought us for Himself. We are now totally His.

As said, the groom speaks of mares in *plural*. We can imagine that it is important if there are several mares pulling a chariot, that these mares all run in the same gallop and at the same speed. It shows that not only individually, but also together we magnify the Lord Jesus. A common testimony has great power in the world. If everyone is personally full of the glory of the Lord Jesus, quarrels will not have the opportunity to mar this worthy testimony.

The mare obeys the reins of the master and she gives her strength in his service. Thus, the Holy Spirit, so to speak, wants to hold the reins of our



personal and communal life in His hands. Then the Lord Jesus sees in the lives of those who love Him that they are completely at His disposal to take Him where He wants to go. Thus we are useful for the Master. It is about giving our strength in His service, in dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the path He is showing us.

The result is a walk in peace and unity with others, just as the mares all kept pace. That is an impressive sight, just as the chariots of Pharaoh must have been beautiful floats, floats that reflected his greatness.

### **Song 1:10 | Cheeks and Neck of the Bride**

10 *"Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,  
Your neck with strings of beads."*

After comparing the stature of the bride with a mare of Pharaoh, the groom talks about the cheeks and neck of the bride. In the course of the book we hear him speak about several parts of her body. The bride, in turn, speaks several times about various parts of the body of the groom. Love sees not only the figure, but also the details. Each part of the body has charm. That charm is represented by comparing that part of the body, with jewelry or other things that bring brilliance in a special way, to the value or the meaning of that part of the body.

The first part of the body that the groom mentions are the cheeks. Cheeks have to do with reviling and mockery, and to undergo them without defending oneself (Isa 50:6; Mt 5:39). The groom sees that her brothers reviled her. The reviling does not tarnish her, but makes her all the more charming for him. The same goes for the reviling inflicted on believers for the sake of the Lord Jesus. That reviling is sweet to Him.

The reviling done to the bride is seen by the groom as surrounded by graceful "ornaments" or "ornamental chains". He places a frame around her reviling, as it were. With this he encourages her. In the same way, the apostle Peter encourages the faithful who are reviled for the name of Christ. He surrounds the reviling inflicted on them with a brilliance of glory: "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (1Pet 4:14). The reviling brings about the brilliance of the Spirit of glory.

Suffering “for the name of Christ” emphasizes the connection with Him. To be reviled for His Name is the direct consequence of coming out for Him in word and deed. The world sees in the believer the representative of Christ, Who Himself when He was on earth was the great Representative of God. Because of this He experienced: “And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me” (Psa 69:9b). This was no dishonor to Him and also for us it is no dishonor when we are reviled for His Name. Peter even says that we are “blessed” when it happens.

We can also compare the chains with prayer. We sometimes speak of a ‘prayer chain’. By this we mean that a number of believers agree to pray continuously for a certain cause, each committing himself to do so for a certain period of time, after which another continues for a certain period of time. The need for a ‘prayer chain’ is particularly felt in a time of reviling and oppression. Reviling or oppression that drives out into constant prayer is of special value to the Lord Jesus. Our lives should be a chain of prayer. We can only endure reviling if we are constantly praying (cf. Psa 109:4).

The neck speaks of rigidity, that is, of the sinner’s refusal to bow before God and acknowledge Him as God. It indicates unwillingness to serve God and the neighbor. When the wall around Jerusalem is rebuilt, we read of the nobles of Tekoa, as it literally is said in Hebrew: “They did not bring their necks to the work of their masters” (Neh 3:5). They did not want to serve. But the bride’s neck has bowed before the groom. She wants to be there for him. That’s why her neck is lovely now. Her neck is no longer a body part that radiates rigidity, but is of beauty and value.

The “strings of beads” or the pearls around her neck can be connected to what Solomon says to his son (Pro 1:8-9). He speaks of “the father’s instruction” and “your mother’s teaching” which are like a chain around the neck when listened to. For us who, through faith in the Lord Jesus, have become sons of God, it means that it will adorn us if we listen to exhortation and show willingness to learn. We then show that we no longer want to live for ourselves, but that we have bowed our necks to what God has to say.

The Lord Jesus appreciates it when we not only *say* that we love Him, but also show this *in practice* by listening to instruction and teaching. When we see someone living in accordance with the Word of God, we respect and appreciate it. A life in dependence on the Beloved is an ornament whose value is fully known by the Lord Jesus. It is a life that resembles His life. He always listened. Every morning His ear was open to His God and He received Divine instruction (Isa 50:4). His life was totally free from own will and therefore it was like beautiful strings of beads for the Father.

### **Song 1:11 | Ornaments for the Bride**

11 *"We will make for you ornaments of gold  
With beads of silver."*

Here we hear that the groom promises something to his bride. He showed her how valuable she is to him. In his description he made comparisons with valuable materials. She is already beautiful, but now he is going to add to what he found in and to her, ornaments or golden chains he made himself. Here we see his commitment to his bride.

However, he does not say in the singular 'I will ... make', but in the plural "we will make". Here we recognize in the speech of the groom the speech of the Lord Jesus. We listen to His purpose to make His bride even more beautiful. When the Lord Jesus speaks, we always hear the triune God speak (cf. Jn 3:11). The 'we' can be understood as a Divine plural: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are at work. They are decorating the bride with "golden chains". Gold speaks of divine glory. They are also busy applying "beads of silver" to the bride. Silver speaks of salvation and reconciliation and the price paid for it.

A chain is a series of separate links that together form the chain. The Holy Spirit decorates us with a beautiful golden chain when He says to us through Paul: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to [His] purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to become] conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called;

and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (Rom 8:28-30).

Do we see the chain?

Link 1: We are called according to His purpose.

Link 2: We are foreknown.

Link 3: We are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Link 4: We are called.

Link 5: We are justified.

Link 6: We are glorified.

Isn't that a beautiful chain? It is a series of blessings that is strung together like a chain and given to us by God. We can wear this ornament in our hearts and think about it in our hearts, so that we will increasingly appreciate and praise this gift. What He gives us is always something of Himself, of His glory. With that He clothes us and by that His glory is reflected by us.

We also see the beads of silver. We will never forget that all that God has given us, that whole chain of glories, is based on the redemption through the blood of Christ, His Son. Everything is connected with the work of redemption of Christ on the cross. Whatever glory 'that has been put on us' we admire, we will always see that that glory is also due to what Christ has done for us. We have done nothing, but we owe everything to Him.

### **Song 1:12 | The Nard of the Bride**

12 *"While the king was at his table,  
My perfume gave forth its fragrance.*

Here we hear the bride speak again. She responds to what her beloved has said in the preceding verses. She is at rest at the king's table. It is not just a table, but a festive table that is richly set with the tastiest flour and meat dishes (1Kgs 4:22-23). But the most special thing about this table is that the king himself is sitting on it. All the delicacies on the king's table would have no meaning if he were not at the table.

This scene points out to us the Lord Jesus and the fellowship with Him. A table speaks of *fellowship*. Here it is not so much about what is on the table, but about the fact that it is “His table”. Nor is this primarily an application to the Lord’s Table, where His Supper is celebrated. This happens when we meet as a church. But here, in picture, it is about experiencing the constant fellowship with the Lord Jesus. The fact that this is a continuous fellowship is expressed by the “round table”, as it literally says. What is round is without beginning and without end. The fellowship that we may experience with the Lord Jesus is, by its nature, eternal, because He is eternal.

When the bride comes to the king’s table, she has her own perfume, “my perfume” which literally is “my nard”, with her. “While” she is together with the king at his table, the smell of her nard fills the dining room. We automatically think of Mary of Bethany, of whom we read: “Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (Jn 12:3).

Spreading the scent of the perfume of nard is a picture of worship. We can understand that. Isn’t it an unprecedented privilege for us, who formerly had no part in anything and were on our way to hell, now are allowed to be ‘at the table’ with the Most High? He has delivered us from our misery and given us that high place of fellowship with Himself. We should always think about that. It is not for nothing that the Lord Jesus links the anointing by Mary to the preaching of the gospel (Mt 26:13). It shows that whoever is saved from his sins becomes a worshiper of God and of the Lord Jesus.

When we apply this to the coming together as a church at the Lord’s Table, what the bride and Mary have done is an encouragement for us to prepare for the meeting with Him (cf. Deu 16:16-17). Mary has saved for her nard. The cost of this ointment was three hundred denarii. Converted, this is roughly the annual salary of an employee – one denarius is a daily salary (Mt 20:2). Mary has long been busy preparing for her deed, which received so much appreciation from the Savior.

### **Song 1:13 | A Pouch of Myrrh**

13 *“My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh  
Which lies all night between my breasts.*

The bride spreads the fragrance of the nard in the presence of the king (verse 12), because he is her “beloved”. He is her all and all. This short verse 13 contains three times the words “me” or “my”, which makes her statements very personal. She describes what he is for her. He is primarily for her “a pouch of myrrh”. Myrrh is a pleasantly fragrant resin and can have a bitter, but also a sweet taste. Myrrh is extracted from different species of trees and is obtained by incisions in those trees. So the tree is injured. At high desert temperatures, the softened resin seeps out automatically. In the time of the Bible, myrrh was a symbol of suffering and death.

What the bride says applies to our connection with the Lord Jesus. Is not our worship – of which the nard speaks – raised in a special way when we think of His suffering and death? He is our “Beloved” because He first loved us with such a love that He surrendered Himself to death for us. He is “the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal 2:20b). When He hung on the cross, they tried to give Him “wine mixed with myrrh” (Mk 15:23). And Nicodemus brought Him after His death “a mixture of myrrh and aloes” to anoint His body (Jn 19:39).

The bride speaks of her groom as “a pouch of myrrh which lies all night between my breasts”. For us this means that the Lord Jesus in His suffering and death has a place of close proximity and intimacy in our hearts. Breasts are more often mentioned in the Bible. Like other parts of the body, they are openly spoken about, without any thought of sinful lust. The parts of the body mentioned are beautiful. They literally show God’s ‘creativity’, while we may also see a spiritual meaning in it. In the Bible breasts are a picture of spiritual maturity, of maturity in faith, through which one is able to pass on food to babies in faith.

The “breasts” (plural) also point to balance in the faith life, where we can think of faith on the one hand and love on the other. We find these two characteristics in “the breastplate of faith and love” (1Thes 5:8). The breastplate, which consists of faith and love, protects the breast, where the heart is. Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus that “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; [and] that you, being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:17). Christ dwells in our hearts and there we ponder with great gratitude His work in faith and love. We believe in this with all our heart

and place our full trust in it. Through His work for us we are also convinced of His complete love for us.

Unfortunately, it can happen that we no longer treasure Him in faith and love in our hearts, so that He no longer has that place of intimacy. This is the case if we give our love to the world and the things of the world. The apostle John warns not to love the world, for if this happens, there is no part in the Father's love (1Jn 2:15). One love excludes the other love.

In the mass of God's people, the opposite is found of what lives in the remnant, of which the bride is a picture. God says of His adulterous people: "Let her put away her harlotry from her face and her adultery from between her breasts" (Hos 2:2b). He notices with his own what is 'between the breasts'. What is in our hearts: love for the Lord Jesus or love for the world?

The answer to that question depends on our understanding of the words "all night" which the bride uses. The world is in the night because the Lord Jesus, the Light of the world, is not there. He is rejected by the world (Jn 1:5-10). We are in the world and therefore in the night, but it is a night that is almost gone (Rom 13:12a). "We are not of night" (1Thes 5:5b), and we may 'let the Lord Jesus spend the night between our breasts', that is, cherish Him as our greatest treasure. What a joy it must be for Him to be the most precious possession for His own who are in the world that has rejected Him.

### **Song 1:14 | A Cluster of Henna Blossoms**

14 *"My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms  
In the vineyards of Engedi."*

Again (verse 13) it sounds out of the bride's mouth: "My beloved is to me ...". She now adds to the previous comparison that of "a cluster of henna blossoms". In the previous comparison, that of a pouch of myrrh, we hear what the groom means to her heart, her inner self. The pouch of myrrh was not seen by anyone. The henna blossoms were used by Jewish girls to make a wreath of flowers and to decorate themselves with them.

Through the henna blossoms she shows others who the groom is for her. The flowers show what he is for her *outwardly*. They come from "the vine-

yards of Engedi". Vineyards and wine represent joy (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15a). Engedi means 'source of the goat'.

This verse depicts, together with the previous verse, that Christ is our 'Beloved' both internally and externally. We not only cherish Him in our hearts, but also visibly adorn ourselves with Him. We show in our surroundings that we are happy with Him. This will be noticeable by others in our behavior, in all our actions and words. When our heart is attuned to Him and He spends the night between our breasts like a pouch of myrrh, this must also become visible in our life.

We give expression to this joy in 'Engedi'. It is the name of a wilderness where David fled and hid from Saul (1Sam 24:1-2). In the wilderness of this world, we may take that special place. As has already been mentioned, Engedi means 'source of the goat'. This determines us with the work of the Lord Jesus as the sin offering. The goat is the animal of the sin offering par excellence (Lev 16:5). By becoming the sin offering, Christ worked atonement. This is also in line with a possible meaning of the word 'henna'. It has been assumed that this word has a root that means 'atonement', 'ransom', 'covering'.

Christ is the Source of atonement, the Source of life. He is the Source out of Whom all the things that give us joy in life in this wilderness of this world are constantly arising. If He is the Source for all things in our lives from Whom we draw what we need, we may personally say with the sons of Korah: "All my springs are in you" (Psa 87:7b). Our surroundings will perceive this in our lives, but above all it will be seen by our 'Beloved'.

### **Song 1:15 | How Beautiful You Are, My Darling**

15 *"How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are! Your eyes are [like] doves."*

The groom reacts to the expressions of the bride's love by praising her beauty. By saying twice "how beautiful you are" he emphasizes it. Sometimes this confirmation is necessary. This also applies to our relationship with the Lord. We may say to someone: 'You are beautiful to God as you are. He sees you in the Lord Jesus, the Beloved. In Him God has accepted you.'



The first time the groom praises the beauty of the bride to encourage her. He calls her again “my darling” (verse 9). The second time he says it because her “eyes are [like] doves”. He sees from her eyes, which are the mirror of the soul, that she only looks at him. Eyes indicate spiritual insight. She sees in him everything she needs.

Thus the Lord Jesus says to His disciples that they are surrounded by hostile people and therefore, among other things, they must be “innocent as doves” (Mt 10:16). Innocent has the meaning of ‘simple’, ‘unsuspecting’. The eye of the dove has only one direction of vision, it can only be focused on one thing, not on several things at the same time, because it cannot move. It indicates the firmness and determination of the gaze. That is also important for us. If we love the Lord Jesus, our eyes should not wander back and forth, but only look at Him.

The dove is a faithful bird. Often, we see two doves together. They always remain true to each other. Thus does the Lord see us, His bride. He tells us that He sees us as doves, who in their love will be faithful to Him and only want to look at Him. Even if we have to admit that our eyes so often look at other things, He knows our desire to really see no one except Him alone.

He knows we want to listen to the call “fixing our eyes on Jesus” (Heb 12:2). The word ‘fixing’ means to refrain from all other things and to keep the eye exclusively on one object. If this is found with us, if our heart goes out all alone to Him, then we are “beautiful” to Him. Our beauty to Him is determined by the direction of our eyes.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul also speaks of “the simplicity ... to Christ” (2Cor 11:3). He fears that the Corinthians will be led astray from this. Must it not be said of the church as a whole that this fear has proved to be justified? Her thoughts have not remained focused on Christ alone. The love toward the Lord Jesus is cooled. She has forgotten her connection with Him and has connected herself with the world. She has not remained a pure virgin. This is a great grief to the Lord Jesus.

Paul points out how that came about. It’s because the church didn’t have a good understanding of satan’s tricks, just as it was the case with Eve. Satan succeeded in turning Eve’s gaze away from God and directing it to what he proposed to her. Eve forgot what God had said and her thoughts were

deceived by what the serpent said. What should she have done? Simply hold on to what God had said. If we discover that the one Object is no longer enough to our eye, because our heart goes out to other things, let us confess it and return to our first love for Him.

### **Song 1:16 | You Are Handsome, My Beloved**

16 *"How handsome you are, my beloved, [and] so pleasant!*

*Indeed, our couch is luxuriant!*

Here the bride is speaking. The bride says to the groom, in response to what he said to her in the previous verse, that he is "handsome" and also that he is "so pleasant". Each time they tell each other what they feel and mean to each other. They speak the language of love.

What she says, is an exclamation of admiration. She is impressed by his stature, she finds him "handsome", engaging. When she sees him, she is deeply impressed by him. He surpasses everyone, he is her "beloved". But not only his stature enraptures her, he is also "so pleasant" in his dealings with her. In the way he approaches her and pays attention to her, he shows his respect for her. He treats her with love.

This brings her to an "indeed" and that in connection with rest. She comes to rest with him and he also with her. She doesn't speak about 'my' or 'your couch', but about "our couch". The place where their couch is located is "the green foliage" (which is a better rendering than 'luxuriant'). The bride sees herself with the groom in the freedom of the green field. "Green" speaks of freshness, of life and of peace (green is the color that gives peace to the eyes). 'Foliage' speaks of intimacy and seclusion, being alone with the beloved without others seeing them.

We can apply this to our love relationship as believers with the Lord Jesus. Before we knew Him, we saw "no [stately] form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (Isa 53:2b). But now we like to say to Him that He is beautiful, that He is our Beloved, yes, that He is so pleasant. He is impressive to us when we look at Him, when we read the Scriptures, and see Who He is and what He has done. And are we not also deeply impressed by the way He treats us?

In this relationship we have rest, while we know that the Lord Jesus also finds rest in this relationship. However, this is not an empty silence, but a rest that is fresh, in which something grows, in which life develops. It is not the rest of complacency, but of the satisfaction of a living relationship. We see that in the green foliage. When something is green, it grows. That is how it is with our love for the Lord Jesus. There is rest and growth at the same time. We are overwhelmed when we are determined by His unchanging love for us.

This is especially true when we are together as a church on Sunday. We want to worship God and the Lord Jesus and have fellowship with both of Them and remember what Christ has done for us as we celebrate the Lord's Supper. During that meeting there may be quiet moments. Then nothing audible happens. There is no singing, no reading, no thanksgiving expressed. That can mean two things. It may be that the hearts are full of adoration for the Lord. Then nothing is said, but the Holy Spirit has been able to direct the hearts so much to the Lord Jesus and His work that there is general adoration for Him. However, it can also be the case that the hearts are empty. Then we have nothing in our hearts for the Lord Jesus. We are not in the green foliage, but in a barren place.

Whether we come with full or empty hearts has to do with our daily life during the week. If our life is truly for the Lord and we are engaged with Him, learning from Him, and spiritually nourishing ourselves with the things He shows us of Himself in His Word, then we will come with full hearts. We also have the command not to come to the meeting 'empty-handed', which means for us: with empty hearts (Exo 23:15; 34:20; Deu 16:16).

We must all have something, not only the brothers, but also the sisters. We come together as a church. The brothers are the ones who express worship. It may be that a brother personally has nothing, but still says something, gives up a song or reads something from Scripture, or gives thanks, in which his heart is not so involved, but still expresses what is alive in the hearts of the sisters. Thus can the Lord work right through our weaknesses what is to His honor.

## **Song 1:17 | Cedars and Cypresses**

17 *"The beams of our houses are cedars,  
Our rafters, cypresses.*

The bride is still in the free and green field, which she compares in the verse above with "our couch". Now she compares the trees with building material for "our houses" and "our rafters". In the free green field, the bride sees herself surrounded by cedars. In it she recognizes beams for their houses. She sees the high cypresses as rafters that form the roof. She knows that being together with the groom has the protection and firmness of the cedars that surround her, while the cypresses are a protection against the heat of the sun.

It is remarkable that most of the woodwork in Solomon's temple was cedar and cypress timber (1Kgs 5:8,10). God considered these woods the most suitable for the construction of His house on earth. This reminds us that the description of the place where the bride is, speaks of God's sanctuary and of fellowship with Him.

Wood grows out of the earth. The woods speak of Christ Who "grew up ... like a root out of parched ground" (Isa 53:2) as the imperishable Man. It has been noted that cypresses were common in cemeteries in Judea. So they can be linked to death, so we can apply this to the death of Christ. What He has been in His life and death is the power of God's house and the certainty of the future. God found His rest in the temple that was made of this wood and that is also the place where the believer finds rest.

It is also remarkable that the bride does not speak about 'our house', but about 'our houses'. Therefore, the application does not only apply to God's house, the church, but also to the houses in which we live. The church is built on Christ as the Son of the living God and came into existence by His work on the cross. In the church we may think of the death of Christ and honor Him for it. But it is also important that Christ and His work is the foundation of our homes, our marriages, and our families. He must be at the heart of it.

We may ask ourselves whether we build our houses with the same materials as those used to build God's house. Everything in our houses that is connected with Christ and His work strengthens the building of the

church as God's houses. Everything we do or allow in our houses without Christ weakens God's house.

Do God's Word and prayer take the central place in our homes or are we only busy making our houses comfortable places to live in? It is God's purpose that our houses should also be *His* houses, where He can have fellowship with us on the basis of the death of His Son, just as He wants to have fellowship with us in His house, the church.

The prophet Haggai speaks clear language about this to God's earthly people (Hag 1:3-4). He tells us that we lose sight of the value of our own houses to God and make a wrong use of them if we lose sight of God's houses. Then "our houses" become only houses of people, in which He has no place. They are no longer houses in which we have fellowship with the Lord. And that is what the bride desires and in which she is an example to us.

## Song of Songs 2

### **Song 2:1-2 | The Bride: a Lily**

1 *"I am the rose of Sharon,  
The lily of the valleys."*

2 *"Like a lily among the thorns,  
So is my darling among the maidens."*

The bride says that she is "the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys" (verse 1). The rose and the lily are small field flowers. In this way, the bride expressed her smallness, which she emphasized by saying that she is a lily "of the valleys". The valley points to a place of humiliation. Sharon and the valley become places of safety and rest for God's people, who come from the great tribulation: "Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks, and the valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for My people who seek Me" (Isa 65:10).

In verse 2 the groom reacts to what the bride says in verse 1 of herself. He takes over the picture the bride uses and speaks of her as "a lily". That's how he sees her. And he sees her, this delicate wild flower, "among the thorns", so that her beauty is all the more apparent. She is like a diamond lying on a black cloth, making the brilliance of the diamond shine all the stronger.

Thorns, often called along with thistles, are a picture of sin (Gen 3:18). It is human nature, as it was made by the fall into sin. "The maidens" can be seen here as the daughters of apostate Israel (Hos 4:14; Eze 2:6). Thorns will no longer be there in the kingdom of peace (Eze 28:24). "Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up" (Isa 55:13). This is thanks to the Lord Jesus, Who has born the curse of sin.

The world is full of thorns and thistles and sighs under the consequences of the curse that rests on creation through sin (Rom 8:20-22). It is very painful to dwell here. Sometimes we feel it among each other that there are thorns and thistles. We too can hurt others.

Yet here we read that it is said: “As a lily among the thorns, so are you.” A lily is a flower that flowers only for a short time. The Lord Jesus says: “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is [alive] today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, [will He] not much more [clothe] you?” (Mt 6:28-30). We see here that the Lord compares the lilies in the field to the grass because of the short-lived glory they have. The lilies shine one day and are burned the next day in the furnace.

Despite its brevity, God clothed the lilies with a beauty that surpasses the glory of Solomon. The followers of the Lord Jesus receive a glory greater than that of Solomon, despite the fact that He must address them as ‘you of little faith’. The bride has the same great glory in the eyes of the groom, despite what she thinks of herself. The faithful remnant of Israel will be clothed by the Messiah with a glory coming from Himself (Eze 16:14).

The Lord Jesus sees His own in a world full of thorns and thistles. For Him they are like lilies. That may give us confidence in the short time we are on earth. He will give us everything we need. The care that He has for the faithful remnant in the end time, He now also has for us. We may be witnesses in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil 2:15) and especially in the midst of an apostate professing Christianity.

### Song 2:3 | My Beloved Is Like an Apple Tree

3 *“Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest,  
So is my beloved among the young men.  
In his shade I took great delight and sat down,  
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

The bride gives a testimony again of what the groom means to her. He compared her in the previous verse to “a lily among the thorns”. She now compares him to “an apple tree among the trees of the forest”. A tree is a picture of power (cf. Dan 4:10-14,20-26; Eze 17:24). The apple tree speaks of the Lord Jesus. The other trees represent the young men of the world,

impressive people, who also try to get the bride's attention and who want to seduce her to love them.

For those other trees she has no further attention, despite their impressive stature. Her longing goes out only to him, whom she calls "my beloved". There is no one who can be compared to him. He is and has everything she desires. She yearns strongly for him because of his shadow and his fruit, i.e. because of his protection and his food.

Under the apple tree there is rest in the first place: she wants to sit there (cf. Lk 10:39). It is a refuge from the heat: there is shade (Isa 25:4). There is also food of which the taste is good: the fruit is sweet (Psa 34:8). When the Lord Jesus gave food to the crowd, He first let them sit quietly (Mk 6:31,39-40). To receive something from Him, there must be rest. When we fly back and forth restlessly or are disturbed by all kinds of reports on the means of communication we have in our pockets or bags, we miss much of the food He gives us.

We must be close to Him to experience His shadow, His protection, and enjoy His fruit. If we stray from Him, if we are not close to Him, we miss His shadow. Christ is not simply a means to come into heaven, but in Him the joy of heaven comes down to fill our hearts and support us on our journey to heaven.

In God's Word, apples, the fruits of the apple tree, are compared to good words. In Proverbs 25 it says in visual language: "[Like] apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances" (Pro 25:11). The words themselves are of gold; the silver speaks of the way they are passed on. That is how the Lord Jesus speaks to us. Gold speaks of Divine glory. Silver refers to the price paid for salvation. When we sit in His shadow and want to eat of the fruit of the tree, it means that He speaks to us words of Divine glory, which are connected with salvation.

How beautiful it would be if we could speak *among ourselves* in the same way, words that bear witness to God's glory and words that we know are linked to salvation. Then we will not speak harsh words. Husbands are warned not to be embittered against their wives (Col 3:19). That will not happen when they speak good words, words that build up. To speak good words, we must first take them to us and eat them.



Jeremiah tells us how this can be done: “Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer 15:16). Isn’t that encouraging? When we talk to each other, let us use words that are good, that we want to eat, words that do us good spiritually and make and keep us healthy. The awareness that we have been called by God’s Name, that we have been named after His Name, will work that out within us.

So we can rightly say that the Lord Jesus Christ is ‘the apple tree’ for the believer. Let us sit in His shadow and eat of His fruit.

### **Song 2:4 | His Banner over Me Is Love**

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

The bride, after sitting in the shadow of the groom and enjoying what he is eating (verse 3), is brought by the groom into a fullness of joy. This is symbolically expressed by the “banquet hall”, or better “the house of wine” (Darby translation) in which he brings her. She rejoices in his love, which is like a banner over her. A banner represents victory. Where the banner is placed, the victory is achieved. Love overcomes the greatest fear and enmity.

The believer may know that the Lord Jesus brought him into the full joy of the fellowship with Him. As we have seen before (Song 1:2b), wine is a picture of joy. Here we see ourselves as believers brought into a house of joy. We did not enter that house in our own power and we did not invite ourselves to it. Christ has invited us. He brought us there; in His grace He gave us that place with Him. Through His work on the cross He opened the door of that house for us and carried us inside.

The Lord Jesus demonstrates this in the parable of the lost sheep found by the shepherd. He puts it on his shoulders rejoicing and brings it home. Then he calls together his friends and his neighbors and invites them to rejoice with him. It is a picture of the joy that is in heaven over one sinner who repents (Lk 15:5-7).

The same and even more impressive we see in the parable that the Lord Jesus tells about the prodigal son, also in Luke 15. When this son comes

home, his father brings him into his own house, the father's house, where there is an abundance of joy. A large meal is prepared there in an atmosphere of joy, which begins but never ends: "And they began to celebrate" (Lk 15:24). That starts here on earth, where we can already enjoy this feast as a foretaste of heaven, where we will continue this feast for all eternity.

The banner speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Victor and of His power (Exo 17:15; Isa 5:26; 11:10,12). He proved His love by dying for us and thereby freeing us from the fear of the devil: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (1Jn 4:18a).

The banner not only represents victory, but also of ownership. The area where a banner is located belongs to the person who placed the banner there. If we look up and see the banner, we see Him, the Victor, and we know His love. Then we are no longer afraid of any power that might snatch us out of His hand (Jn 10:28-29). The banner of His love is like a shawl in which He has completely wrapped us, making us feel His warmth and also protection and security. We may rest with joy in that love.

This combination of joy and love we also see in God. Through the work of His Son God can rejoice with joy over His people and be quiet or rest in His love (Zep 3:17). We are enabled to share in the feelings of God, because Christ has carried the judgment of God in our place. By doing so, He opened the door to the house of complete joy and love, to the house and the heart of the Father for us.

### **Song 2:5-6 | I Am Lovesick**

5 *"Sustain me with raisin cakes,  
Refresh me with apples,  
Because I am lovesick.*

6 *"Let his left hand be under my head  
And his right hand embrace me."*

The bride is overwhelmed by the banner of love of the groom over her (verse 4). She is even "lovesick" (verse 5). With this she says that she has the feeling that her heart succumbs under his love. Lovesick for us means merging into the perfect happiness of the consciousness of our Lord's love, where the heart still cannot grasp all that He has done for us. It is becom-

ing overwhelmed at the thought of all that the Lord has given and done, and will give and will do.

The bride wants to respond to his love, but is not able to. His love is so great, so impressive, that she succumbs to it. Therefore she asks him to strengthen her with “raisin cakes”. She wants to experience the full joy of his love. Raisin cakes are just like wine made from grapes. They speak of joy connected with power, a power that for the believer is found in God: “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10b).

For Jerusalem, the bride of the Messiah, the time will come when she will no longer strengthen herself with the raisin cakes of the idols (Hos 3:1), but with His raisin cakes. This will happen when the Lord Jesus returns as the true David to Jerusalem to reign there. We see that in picture as David brings the ark to Jerusalem. He then distributes “to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one” (2Sam 6:19).

We can learn from the bride that she does not do her best to experience that love and to express her joy about it. She wants to rejoice about his love, but is aware that she also depends on the groom for that. In some Christian groups it is only about joy. You have to be happy and express it loudly and also come up with all kinds of forms for it. Here we learn that the real experience of the love of the Lord Jesus overwhelms us and breaks us down. The reaction to this is not a beaten-up joy, but the question to the Lord to help us with His power and to answer His love.

And she requires not only reinforcement, but also refreshment. Not only strength is needed, but also consolation (cf. Psa 94:19). In her need for refreshment she asks for “apples”. We can see in this the question of a believer who has come impressed by the love of the Lord Jesus and who wants to be invigorated by His words. These are words for someone personally in his own specific circumstances. He is able to make the proverb come true that “[like] apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances” (Pro 25:11). Whoever knows the Lord Jesus and is overwhelmed by His love has a great longing for Him and wants to know Him better, especially in the circumstances in which he finds himself.

We need His support. We recognize this support in the bride's longing for the left and right arm of the groom in verse 6. This is a highlight in the book. After a period of trials and desires the moment of rest and security comes. There may be doubt and unrest if we do not experience the Lord. But He will convince us of His great love, which will make us long for Him.

The bride wishes to be in his arms. She mentions his two arms separately. His left arm is the arm that comes as it were from his heart, from his love – the heart is on the left. His right arm is the arm of his power (Isa 41:10; Psa 63:8). In his arms she is safe in all respects (cf. Deu 33:27). The fact that his left hand is under her head also means that he lifts her head to look at him. The fact that his right arm embraces her means that he keeps it protective around her.

We recognize this in the Lord Jesus. Whoever lives in an intimate relationship with Him will experience His love and power. It is not about strength in itself, but about strength that works in an intimate relationship. His love supports and protects. If we can experience His love and power in this way, perfect peace has come. This will be experienced by the believing remnant of Israel in the future, when after the great tribulation they will see on Him Whom they have pierced and at the same time will find complete peace in Him.

With this scene of rest, the third part of the first main part of the book ends. The two previous parts have also ended in the same way. The first part, Song of Songs 1:1-4, ends with the bride brought into the king's chambers (Song 1:4); the second part, Song of Songs 1:5-17, ends with the scene that the king and his bride are together (Song 1:17).

### **Song 2:7 | No Love Before the Appointed Time**

*7 "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you do not arouse or awaken [my] love  
Until she pleases."*

Verse 7 is a refrain we encounter three times in the book, here for the first time (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). It is about the special character of love, about

which the groom speaks to the “daughters of Jerusalem”. The daughters of Jerusalem represent believers who have a connection with the Lord Jesus, but do not live in the same close relationship with Him as the bride, and also have other thoughts about love. They try to manipulate and steer love through prescriptions. But this is not how love can be guided.

When love is enforced, there is no more rest in love. This is shown in the comparison with the “gazelles” and “hinds”. These are shy animals. If there is no danger, if everything is quiet around them, they move full of grace. However, as soon as they smell the slightest danger, they become nervous. Their rest is gone, and they are darting away. So it is with love.

Prophetically we can apply this to Jerusalem. It would be a forcing of love if the Lord Jesus returned now, for Jerusalem is not yet ready for it. She doesn’t know Him and doesn’t want to accept His love. First the city, that is to say the remnant, must go through the great tribulation. She will fervently long for His love and look forward to Him. Then love will be pleased to show herself to her and to embrace and protect her.

That’s how love always works. She has her own laws. Love should not be forced and she must not be aroused prematurely. That does not fit with love. Arousing or awakening love before it is time for love to express herself, means disturbing the rest of love. We can apply this to the relationship with our children. We have seen the arms of the groom, what they mean as expressions of love for the bride. How do our children think about our arms? Do we embrace our children, or are they afraid of it because they are arms with hands hitting them?

Love needs time and must be given time. Let us also be patient with our children and with our brothers and sisters when we see something in them that we may not like so much. Let us not intervene too quickly. Our young people need time to grow in their love for the Lord Jesus. We can block this growth by asking for proofs of their love, which they cannot (yet) give. Remarks such as “if you really love the Lord Jesus” or “if you really love me” can lead someone to an action we desire, while love is lacking in that action. That breaks off love.

The whole scene of verses 4-7 speaks of an atmosphere of love, of a love that cannot be forced. Real love needs time to develop. Older believers

and parents can make their contribution. They do so in accordance with the awareness of the patience that the Lord has also had with them. Do we realize how much patience the Lord has had with us?

### **Song 2:8 | The Beloved Is Coming**

*8 "Listen! My beloved!  
Behold, he is coming,  
Climbing on the mountains,  
Leaping on the hills!*

Here a new section begins. After the time of the first love in the previous section, a certain time of slackening has come in the bride's love. There is a distance between her and the groom. We probably recognize this when we look at our own lives. In the first time of our Christian life, we gave the Lord Jesus the first place. After that a time of cooling has come, the first love is somewhat eroded. Other things have come into our hearts, so that our love no longer goes out only to Him.

The bride wakes up as it were when she hears the voice of her beloved. She doesn't see him yet, but she recognizes his voice. Thus the Lord wants us to give Him our first love again, that is our one and only love. For this He uses His voice, that is His Word. When we read God's Word, we hear the voice of the Lord Jesus. And when we hear His voice, we also get an eye for Him again. We see this when the bride then says: "Behold, he is coming." Not only does she hear him, but now she also sees him.

She also sees how the groom comes. He comes "climbing on the mountains, leaping on the hills". In the mountains and hills we see a picture of the great and small difficulties in our life, as a result of which the Lord Jesus has disappeared from sight. Apart from His Word the Lord also uses difficulties and problems in our life to regain sight on Him. When His voice has again penetrated our heart, and our eyes have turned to His Person, we see that He is above the difficulties. For Him there are no such problems.

By introducing Himself to us in this way He wants to lift us up above our problems. The problems don't disappear, but He helps us to get out of it and not let us be controlled by it. We will gain that experience when we

cast all our care upon Him. If we do, we will find peace in the certainty that He is taking care of us. He invites us to bring to Him all worries and difficulties: “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you” (Psa 55:22a; 1Pet 5:7; Mt 6:25-30).

When we *cast* (there is power in that expression) our burden upon Him, He has taken them over from us and continues to take care of us. If we don’t do that, we will continue to walk around with our burden and will be so preoccupied by it that we have no eye for God. But He loves it to take care of us. That means that every detail of our life is close to His heart. He not only wants to be involved, he wants to take over all our needs from us. He brings us into trial and need, that we may learn to accept it from His hand and give it into His hand (Psa 10:14).

### Song 2:9 | The Beloved Seeks Cautious Rapprochement

9 *“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.*

The bride compares the groom to a gazelle and the young of a deer. Gazelles can walk over the mountains with great speed and grace (cf. 2Sam 2:18b; 1Chr 12:8). In the case of the stag or deer, who also jump easily over obstacles, there may be added the thought of joy (cf. Isa 35:6). Gazelles and deer are innocent animals. They are not carnivores, they are not hunting animals. These are clean animals, which could be eaten by the Israelites (Deu 12:15,22; 14:4-5; 15:22). Both animals are also known for being wary of danger and their immediate and swift flight as it presents itself.

This is how the bride sees her groom approaching. He approaches quickly and lets himself not be stopped by anything. At the same time, he remains cautious in his approach. In this way the Lord Jesus also comes to each one of His own, who turns to Him again after a period of weakening of love. He proceeds carefully to see if there is a real desire to live in fellowship with Him. He does not impose Himself and He does not force access.

We can learn from this how to approach someone whose life with the Lord has been put on hold. True love for our straying brother or sister will make us *quick* to help and at the same time we will do so with due *caution*. In these cases it is not about clear sins, but about signs that may indicate that someone no longer lives fully for the Lord. If we find that someone does not visit the meetings of the believer as often, it is good to pay attention to this and to inform why – without directly accusing anyone of being unfaithful.

That there is some reserve with the groom in his approach, we can conclude from the place where the bride is located. She says herself that the groom is “behind our wall”, the wall around her house. He has come closer and looks inside through the windows. She likes the fact that he is there, but there is still a wall between them. She calls it ‘our’ wall, but she only hid behind it and he is outside. It has more or less become her wall.

A wall is a picture of separation from the wrong in order to be dedicated to the Lord. If it is separation *without* the Lord, it has become isolation. We can withdraw so far into our isolation that we no longer allow the Lord to come to us. He does look inside and *is standing* behind the wall. He is not *sitting*, but is ready to take action when the bride is ready.

The Lord wants to use other believers to visit us at a time of spiritual decline. Maybe we let them into the house, but do we also let them into our *life*? Just when we are no longer full of the Lord and other things in our life have become important, we tend to maintain the wall around our heart. We do not want to expose ourselves or dare to be vulnerable, perhaps because we are afraid of being hurt again.

For example, we may have entrusted something to someone who we thought would keep it to himself, but he has told it all over the place. Then we don’t open our heart again, because we are afraid of another disappointment. That reaction is understandable. At the same time, it is good to be mindful of the danger of withdrawing completely into isolation. The Lord wishes to point this out with caution. He wants to have the first place in our life again and point out what prevents this.

To live in isolation is increasing in the world and among Christians. This is due to the growing individualism, through which also selfishness in-



creases. We want to have everything for ourselves and do everything for ourselves. Computers, internet, smartphones, all these devices carry the danger that we will completely withdraw into our own world. Our children grow up with it. They only need that one device to have fun. But also older believers may have a need for all kinds of things to keep up with the times. We are increasingly being seized by these devices, which are strongly 'I' oriented.

People no longer know how to deal with each other. It is a recognizable scene: people sit at the table eating together, but there is no mutual communication because there is a digital connection with the outside world. Each eats for himself and in the meantime is busy with his smartphone. If there is a message, it must be responded to immediately. We must be aware of these dangers! These devices are said to promote communication. But in reality, the real communication decreases and finally disappears completely. The device says you are important. People need *me*, they want to let *me* know something; and *I* think it is necessary to let people know what *I* think of a case.

The result is that we do not have time to quietly engage with the Word of God, attend church meetings, and help brothers and sisters. We just don't have time anymore. This risk is great because we are withdrawing from the fellowship of the saints and living in isolation. We live in such a way that the Lord cannot come to us. But He does try to come to us. He stands there, He looks through the window, that is in fact a barred window.

The bars give the impression that we are locked up in a prison. Are we locked up? We can be locked up in our own thoughts, in our life, in the plans we have and be a prisoner of them. But He looks through it. What plans do we have? What do we want? What is the purpose of our life? Is all this a prison for us? Can we think of nothing else? The Lord now stands before the window of our life and looks through the bars. He looks and He loves to come to us to give us satisfaction and true fulfillment of life.

### **Song 2:10 | Arise and Come Along**

10 *"My beloved responded and said to me,  
'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,*

| *And come along.*

The part of verses 10-13 begins and ends with the same words the groom speaks to the bride. He wants her to arise in her place of isolation, a place of rest in the sense of laziness, and come to him. The bride is still inside, behind the wall, and the groom is still outside. When he begins to speak, his speaking is an answer. He “responded” to her (verse 10). However, we do not read that she asked a question. This may mean that his answer is directed to the weakened feelings of her heart, which he knows.

He addresses her very personally. She knows, he says it “to me”. Now she hears not only his voice, but also what he says. There is no reproach from his mouth because she hides from him and he does not order her to show herself. The way he approaches her is full of tenderness and love. He asks her to arise.

He calls her “my darling, my beautiful one”. These are names in which he expresses the value she has for him. He wants to share the thoughts of his heart with her as his ‘darling’. That he calls her the ‘beautiful one’, indicates that he is full of admiration for her and that his heart is full of her. With these names he wants to speak to her heart and persuade her to come to him. Thus the Lord Jesus will tell the remnant of Israel how beautiful it is for Him. He calls Zion “the perfection of beauty” (Psa 50:2; Lam 2:15c; Eze 16:14).

In the same way, the Lord Jesus is busy with each of His own, who has lost sight of Him through circumstances. He says what value he or she has for Him (Isa 43:4-7). He chooses His words with care to make clear how much He cares about them. He fully means what He says. His words are not harsh, but pleasant, beneficent. They touch the heart and make it soft and willing to live with Him again.

The bride must start by rising. This is the beginning of every true conversion, whether it be the conversion of an unbeliever or the conversion of a believer. From the prodigal son in Luke 15 we also read that at some point he says he will get up and go to the father. Then we read that he gets up and goes (Lk 15:18-20).

For us it may also be the case that we have to *arise* from our circumstances, for example from our self-pity or from the excuses we bring forward to not completely surrender our lives to the Lord Jesus.

### **Song 2:11-12 | Winter Is Past, Singing Time Has Arrived**

11 *'For behold, the winter is past,  
The rain is over [and] gone.*

12 *'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.*

Prophetically, the bride is a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel. This remnant will pass through a time of great trial. The Lord Jesus speaks of “a great tribulation” (Mt 24:21). At that time God will provide a refuge for that remnant (Isa 26:20). The period of great tribulation comes to an end after three and a half years, because the Messiah causes the tribulation to stop. Then He comes to them and says that “the winter” of the great tribulation “is past” (verse 11). “The rain” time with its devastating torrential rains is also a picture of the great tribulation (Eze 13:11,13). That time “is over [and] gone”.

The groom assures the bride that the time of tormenting fear and impending suffering is really over. It has become spring. The groom then points this out to the bride (verse 12). Prophetically it means that the great tribulation with the cold of winter and the torrent of trials is over and gives way to the beautiful spring of the kingdom of peace (Isa 35:1-2,10). The Lord Jesus is the Man Who has been for the remnant a “shelter from the storm” (Isa 32:2). He will now be for them for a thousand years in the kingdom of peace the “King” who “will reign righteously” (Isa 32:1).

We may also experience a time in our life that the problems exceed our capacities; we are under pressure and lose sight of Him. The Lord then offers us to come back into our life. When He comes into our life, He can turn winter into spring and the flood of rain into mild rain. When winter, the time of trial, is past, there is room for a new floral splendor with a multicolored beauty. Beautiful flowers will appear. After the death of winter, the new life of spring appears.

This points to the resurrection of the believer, the transition from death to a new life. The groom points this out to the bride, because it seems she has no eye for it yet. She is reminded of the fruits of the resurrection. The groom stands on resurrection ground. Death has been conquered. Do we see the signs of recovery when the Lord Jesus comes to us in our circumstances? Wherever He comes, there is restoration and blessing.

Another application can be made to the situation in which our lives have become so superficial, that there is neither smell nor taste. Nobody sees anything of the fact that we know Christ. We complain bitterly. When our eye is then again turned to Christ, He will become visible again; for He is our new life. Then our life will show the beauty of flowers. Are we in our environment the 'flowers', do we radiate beauty and attractiveness? Flowers give fragrance, you can smell them, you can see them and touch them. Flowers brighten up the surroundings and make them more beautiful.

Paul thanks God for leading him and his associates "always ... in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place" (2Cor 2:14-15). It is God's purpose that our life spreads the scent of Christ. He is working on this. That is why we mean so much to Him. Our life is a new land, a new creation, in which He grows and takes care of these flowers.

The new life not only has a smell, it also has a sound. We got a voice to sing. Can we sing? Or can we only complain? James says: "Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises" (Jam 5:13b). When the Lord Jesus has come into our life, we have every reason to sing. We can even do everything singing if we let the Word of Christ dwell richly in us: "Admonishing one another with psalms [and] hymns [and] spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16). Are we still singing in our hearts before God? When we are full of problems, criticism and bitterness, singing is stilled. If the Lord Jesus is central to our life, we will praise Him daily.

Prophetically, there will come a moment for the remnant of Israel when the time for complaining is over and the time for singing has come. Spring is so beautiful and pleasant because it follows a period of darkness and cold. Because of the contrast with winter, spring is warmly welcomed. The flowers on the ground and the birds in the air also testify in their own way

that the whole creation has been renewed. They express a heavenly message of joy, peace and righteousness.

The “turtledove” is a picture of the faithful remnant (Psa 74:19) which, like the turtledove, knows the time of its arrival in the kingdom of peace (Jer 8:7). When the cooing of the turtledove is heard in “our land”, it means that the remnant of God’s people is back in the promised land. We as Christians must also understand the coming or presence of the right time to do something.

### **Song 2:13 | Again: Arise and Come Along!**

*13 ‘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!’”*

After winter, the time of trial, come the fruits. Besides the flowers that appear on the land (verse 12), we also see “the fig tree” and “the vines in blossom” (verse 13). The young figs show that it is spring and that summer is on tour (Mt 24:32). The fig tree represents righteousness. Adam and Eve, after their fall into sin, wanted to cover their nakedness before God with loin coverings of fig leaves (Gen 3:7). However, these homemade aprons are not a covering for God.

There is no self-righteousness whatsoever that counts for God as a covering for sin. Israel has tried to establish its own righteousness before God with the result that it has not submitted itself to the righteousness of God (Rom 10:3). The only righteousness that is valid for God is the righteousness which is worked through Christ on the cross and to which man gains part through faith (Rom 10:4). On the basis of faith in that righteousness, God’s people can enjoy the blessing before God in the coming kingdom of peace.

The result is joy. We see this in the picture of the flowering vines (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15a). A flowering vine has the promise of an abundant harvest of grapes, that means joy. The grapes are not there yet, but the scent is already smelled. So it is with the believer who has had a time of trial. He is no longer in need, there is deliverance and that can be seen in him. Peace

and rest have come in his life. It won't be long before he expresses his joy about it in an exuberant way. He will testify of how the Lord has redeemed him from his need and what a joy fills his heart for what the Lord has done.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews links to the discipline which God inflicts on believers the production of righteousness as a good fruit: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:11). Through discipline we are "trained", that is, we are trained in how to deal with it. By training we learn to control something. If we can thus accept discipline, if we know how to deal with it, then we will have a more intimate fellowship with God. The result will be that we enjoy more inner peace and show more justice in our lives.

The "peaceful fruit of righteousness" will soon be reality for Israel in the realm of peace, after the people have passed through the exercises of the great tribulation. God already wants to bring this fruit into our life through His education (Jn 15:2,8). The vine and fig tree *together* symbolize the time of the kingdom of peace, of which we in the reign of Solomon – the prince of peace and a picture of the Lord Jesus – have a foreshadowing (1Kgs 4:25).

After the description of spring with its wonderful evidence of new, fresh life in verses 11-13, the groom invites his bride to come to him again with the same words as in verse 10. He would like her to enjoy that spring. She can forget winter by accepting his invitation. After what he has shown her of spring, it can no longer be difficult for her to give up her backslidden existence and share her life with him.

The Lord Jesus presents to us the attraction of living with Him, so that we no longer let ourselves be controlled by circumstances that depress. He is committed to ensuring that it is not the 'wintery conditions' in which we sometimes find ourselves that determine the temperature of our spiritual life, but the mild temperature of 'spring life'. To this end, He points out to us the features of the new life, which He possesses and also wants to work in us.

## Song 2:14 | Seeing the Form and Hearing the Voice

14 *"O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the secret place of the steep pathway,  
Let me see your form,  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice is sweet,  
And your form is lovely."*

The groom uses different pictures each time to reach the bride and induce her to come to him. He now calls her "my dove" (verse 14). The dove is an animal known for its loyalty and attachment to its partner. The groom appeals to the bride in her loyalty and attachment to him. The remembrance of this may prompt her to leave her isolation and come to him.

He also mentions the place where she is differently than in verse 9. It is "in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the steep pathway". The place where she has withdrawn is a place where she wants to hide from the enemy. The groom tells her that she can emerge, because the enemy has disappeared just as winter has passed. She has hidden herself from the enemy, but at the same time from him.

In the same way, we too may have withdrawn into isolation for fear or other reasons. As a result we have also withdrawn from His presence. We are then not perfect in love, that is to say that the awareness of His love for us does not live for us. Perfect love drives out fear (1Jn 4:18). He wants us to turn our eye back to His love, so that we seek our protection from Him and not from anyone or anything else.

He wants to see the bride and hear her voice. Thus the Lord also wants us to come out of our hiding place and let Him hear our voice in praise and prayer. This is a wonderful invitation to go to Him boldly with all that is in our heart. He wants to see us as we are for Him and He wants us to know that and say that to Him. This can be a very short prayer or a very short thanksgiving as long as it is the sincere expression of the love of our heart.

We can make another application. The Lord wants to see the "form" of each of us personally, "your form", and not that of someone else. He wants to hear the "voice" of each of us personally, "your voice", and not the voice of someone else. When we speak to Him in prayer, we should not sudden-

ly start talking in a completely different tone, as I have heard someone do. The words we use must also be our own. Not parroting others or trying to be completely differently, because we want to be ‘original’. The Lord then sees another form.

Every believer who lives with the Lord has learned a lot from others, but he is not a copy of those other believers. It is not about trying to say it in a way that no one – we ourselves or anyone else – has ever said it before. It is about saying it in a way that the Lord has never heard of *us* before. We use the same words as before or words that someone else has used, but it comes from our heart in a more profound way.

The Lord does not only say that He wants to see our form and hear our voice. He says also why this is so: “Your voice is sweet, and your form is lovely.” This shows His desire for fellowship with us. We hear this desire in His voice. When we hear Him speak like this, can our heart then remain cold? When He speaks in this way to us to persuade us to come to Him, can we keep Him at a distance? He speaks so graciously to us to let us know how precious we are to Him and that He is so eager to hear from us how precious He is to us. Shall we let Him talk and ignore His loving attempts to conquer our heart? Shall we forget Him and continue our own life? What a disappointment and sorrow that would be for Him!

### **Song 2:15-17 | Catch the Little Foxes**

15 *“Catch the foxes for us,  
The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards,  
While our vineyards are in blossom.”*

16 *“My beloved is mine, and I am his;  
He pastures [his flock] among the lilies.*

17 *“Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away,  
Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle  
Or a young stag on the mountains of Bethel.”*

The groom tells the bride to catch “the foxes” and especially “the little foxes” (verse 15). She has to catch those little foxes “for us”, with which the groom indicates that she has to defuse them in view of their relationship. The foxes, also the small ones, destroy the vineyards, especially at a time



when “our vineyards” are in blossom. He uses the word “our” again, with which he emphasizes their relationship, here in connection with the joy it gives to belong together.

In the spiritual application we see in the blossoming vineyards the early fruits of joy through new spiritual life, which the believer has in his relationship with the Lord Jesus. When these fruits are spoiled by little foxes, joy in the Lord disappears and spiritual growth stops. Our joy and growth are nipped in the bud. The little foxes represent things in our lives that deprive us of the joy in the Lord. These are often small sins, which are justified by the reasoning that there is nothing wrong with them.

The Lord Jesus calls Herod “that fox” because of his cunning to thwart God’s work that the Lord is doing (Lk 13:31-32). False prophets are also called foxes (Eze 13:4). These foxes are big enemies that we have to eliminate, so that they cannot exert their pernicious influence. In the case of the fox Herod we can think of the pressure exerted on us not to devote ourselves to God’s work. In the case of the great foxes we can think of false prophets and of charismatic errors in which, for example, it is told that you do not have to be ill and that your faith is not right if you are or remain ill. If we know God’s Word, we will easily recognize these ‘great foxes’ and defuse them.

However, there are also the little foxes. These are not gross sins, but sometimes feelings of dissatisfaction that cannot be mentioned and that negatively affect our lives as Christians. These are the small irritations in the interrelationships. Our brother or sister says or does something we do not like so much. We react agitated and thereby make the atmosphere even more unpleasant. Irritations create an extremely unpleasant and eventually explosive atmosphere, which puts an end to all the joy that characterizes a good relationship.

The fathers in the families are told not to exasperate their children “so that they will not lose heart” (Col 3:21). This includes minor harassment, which makes a child despondent and thoroughly disrupts the relationship if not stopped. This also applies to relations in the church and in society. All these irritations have a direct effect on the relationship with the Lord Jesus, because it is disturbed by that. It is therefore important that minor

irritations are immediately judged before they become a major quarrel. As Solomon says in the book of Proverbs: “The beginning of strife is [like] letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out” (Pro 17:14).

The little foxes who disrupt the joy of fellowship with the Lord can also be little time robbers. How much time is lost doing useless things? They need not be bad things, but things to which we devote a great deal of attention, forgetting time. In our hobby or sport or other forms of pastime, which in themselves can be quite relaxing, we can go overboard and forget about time. The Lord Jesus seeks fellowship with us. Also our hobby or whatever it is, we may do in fellowship with Him. If we thank Him for what He gives us in this, we will catch the “little fox” that wants to prevent us from living in fellowship with Him.

What a loss it would be if the little foxes would prevent grapes from growing on the vines that blossom. Spiritually applied it means that the Lord is deprived of the joy of fellowship with His own. We are certainly also losers, but He suffers the most loss. For He has done everything possible to make fellowship with Him possible. It is our responsibility to eliminate everything that makes it impossible for Him to enjoy that fellowship with us.

In verses 16-17 we hear the bride’s reaction to all the groom’s efforts to persuade her to come to him. He pointed out to her that she must catch the little foxes so that she can no longer be stopped from being with him. A first effect of the expressions of his desire for her is that she becomes aware again that her beloved is hers and that she is his (verse 16). There is an inseparable bond between them. Love is the strongest bond that connects people.

It is remarkable, however, that she says these words to others and not to him. The answer she gives is also not the one the groom is waiting for. Her thoughts revolve around herself. Her love is still self-centered. The point is that he is hers, “mine”. What matters to her is what it brings her, not yet what she means to him. She still has to grow in her love and she does. We will see that later (Song 6:3; 7:10).

She relates his love to his person as the shepherd who pastures his flock (cf. Eze 34:11-15; Isa 40:11). The words ‘his flock’ are not in the original text and are therefore placed in square brackets. All emphasis therefore falls on

his shepherd's task, the fact that he pastures. He is not so much operating among the sheep, but "among the lilies", under which that special lily is located, his bride (verse 2). The bride knows she is one of his lilies. She emphasizes that. It is not about him, but about herself. She knows she belongs to the right company, but does not yet go out to him.

We see in verse 17 that the bride wants to wait a while. She wants to wait "until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away". This indicates that she is not yet fully convinced that winter is passed and spring has come. She still is in the dark of the night. When the day comes and the refreshing wind makes life pleasant, then she wants to come to him. If the shadows flee away first and she has a clear view of reality, then she will give herself to him. "Until" this moment comes, she prefers to stay in her cozy environment.

Similarly, in our life there may be circumstances in which we want to see improvement before we entrust ourselves entirely to the Lord and go to Him. We experience the cold of the trial of faith too much to accept that it is really over. There is a wait-and-see attitude. We want to see if the Lord really has brought a change in our circumstances. This shows that we have not yet learned that as soon as the Lord comes to us and we entrust ourselves to Him, this will bring about a tremendous change. As soon as we surrender to Him, the day has come in our life and we see everything clear again.

The bride tells the groom to leave. She still calls him "my beloved", but he needs to be kept at a distance until she feels able to join him. Until then, he can move freely "like a gazelle or a young stag". So she described him when he came to her in verse 9.

Because she is not ready to accept his loving invitation he can go as he came and return to the "mountains of Bether". These are the "cleaved mountains" – the meaning of the name "Bether" –, mountains in which a path has been made. She allows him a way without obstacles. But he is not interested in her wish that he will have an easy way, he wants a highway in her heart. He wants access to her heart, but she turns him down. The following chapter shows the reason for this.

The spiritual lesson is obvious. We may not say clearly to the Lord that He must leave, but we can behave in such a way that our attitude gives that message. He seeks fellowship with us, but we turn Him down because we have no time. Not now. It takes us too much effort to catch the little foxes. Then He does not impose Himself, but continues His way.

## Song of Songs 3

### **Song 3:1-2 | Sought but Not Found**

*1 "On my bed night after night I sought him  
Whom my soul loves;  
I sought him but did not find him.  
2 'I must arise now and go about the city;  
In the streets and in the squares  
I must seek him whom my soul loves.'  
I sought him but did not find him.*

We have seen that this book is primarily about the relationship between a man and a woman and that we can learn lessons from this for our own relationship in marriage and also about the relationship between a believer and the Lord Jesus. In both relationships it is about a connection that is characterized by love. The meaning is that we learn to know a love that is not bought or enforced, but the love of Someone, Who Himself is love. For God is love.

We are only able to love if we have received this love (1Jn 4:19). If there is no relationship with God and with the Lord Jesus, it is impossible to love. In this love story we find clues to our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus and the disturbing elements that prevent us from enjoying His love.

In the history of love we have ended up in a situation that in the relationship between the bride and the groom has come a distance. It is not the groom's fault, but the bride's fault. Her love is no longer so fervent. Maybe verse 1 gives a clue why. The bride has withdrawn and sought her rest. She lies on her bed, on her own bed, "my bed", which speaks of complacency.

The life of a believer can sometimes produce disappointments. There may be problems for which a solution has been sought but has not been found. Disappointed in the Lord, then one withdraws, just as the bride has also withdrawn. Although there may even be a certain indifference, it does not leave the Lord Jesus indifferent. He wants to fill our lives with His presence and give rest.

The groom's attempts to reawaken the bride's love do not seem to have been in vain, although she sent him away in the previous verse (Song 2:17). In the night she feels the lack of him. She starts looking for him. To get back into someone's life, the Lord Jesus uses situations in which someone is alone.

I once spoke to a group of young people about the gospel. Their reactions are different than when you speak to someone alone. They acknowledge that when they lie alone on their bed in the evening, they no longer have such a big mouth. You think about your life. It can be the beginning of a search for the meaning of life. God can speak to people "while they slumber in their beds" (Job 33:14-15).

Then the bride comes to the decision to get up (verse 2). That is where every true conversion begins. We see this with the youngest son in the parable that the Lord Jesus tells us. When he is with the swine, he comes to himself and says: "I will get up and go to my father." Then he gets up and comes to his father (Lk 15:18,20).

In the same way, as believers, we sometimes have to make a decision to deal vigorously with something in our lives that has distanced us from the Lord. So here the bride stands up and moves around in the city, through the streets and over the squares, in search of the one she loves dearly. But she doesn't find him in the city either.

She has searched and not found him. It is said here twice: at the end of verse 1, when she searched for him on her bed, and at the end of verse 2, after she searched for him in the city. Did not the Lord Jesus say: "Seek, and you will find" and "he who seeks find" (Mt 7:7-8)? Indeed, but He adds that there must be *knocking* and then it will be opened. In doing so, he points out that we have to seek with perseverance. We should not give up if we do not find Him directly.

It is good that we seek a restoration of the relationship with the Lord Jesus when we miss the relationship with Him. However, our search will be in vain if we search in the wrong places. We won't find Him if we take our ease. Nor do we find Him in the world, of which the city is a picture. The city speaks of a society of people. Cities are formed to establish a society without God. Cain is the first city builder (Gen 4:17b). When there has

come a distance between us and the Lord Jesus, when there is dissatisfaction, we no longer have a good view of His whereabouts.

There is a certain Demas in the Bible. At first he is a dedicated believer. Paul mentions him as one of his fellow workers (Col 4:14; Phlm 1:24). Then there seems to have come a moment when a separation has arisen between Demas and the Lord Jesus. His love for the Lord is cooled. Demas leaves Paul's company and leaves for the city. Paul must write with sorrow about him: "Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" (2Tim 4:10a).

It does not say that Demas is no longer a Christian and that he has openly said goodbye to the Lord. Perhaps he has chosen an honorable profession, but it has seized him completely. He travelled to Thessalonika. There is a sound church. However, that is not his interest. There he seeks the world and not the brothers and sisters.

The world is particularly attractive to young believers. John warns them especially when he says: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1Jn 2:15). The world does not only consist of all sorts of forms of debauchery, of lusts and desires. It is the world as it has become by the fall into sin of Adam, where people that live without taking God into account tell us what to do. This also includes the hardworking people who make careers or discoveries that improve the quality of life. They are highly regarded. But if God has no place in it, it is 'the world'.

### Song 3:3-5 | Sought and Found

3 *"The watchmen  
who make the rounds in the city found me,  
[And I said], 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'*  
4 *"Scarcely had I left them  
When I found him whom my soul loves;  
I held on to him and would not let him go  
Until I had brought him to my mother's house,  
And into the room of her who conceived me."*  
5 *"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,*

*By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you will not arouse or awaken [my] love  
Until she pleases."*

It is night when the bride leaves her bed and enters the city (verses 1-2), looking for the groom. She doesn't find the groom, but others, the watchmen of the city, find her (verse 3). She addresses them without any introduction. She doesn't mention a name, but asks the watchmen of the city if they 'have seen him whom her soul loves'.

After the bride has searched her groom in the wrong way and in the wrong place, she is now also looking for him with the wrong people. How can people who guard the city and have no connection with the groom answer her question? How can those who do not know him tell her where he is? We do not read that the watchmen answer.

We can apply this to believers with mental problems who go to unbelieving counsellors – psychologists and psychiatrists – and ask them for a solution. But how can they offer a solution? After all, these people have no living relationship with the Lord Jesus. They do not believe in Him. If that relationship is not there, the whole quest is in vain. And the emptiness grows.

The watchmen can also represent religious leaders, people who, in the eyes of people and also in their own eyes, have knowledge of the matter. They are the so-called caretakers of 'their' church, but they cannot help either. The general lesson we can learn here is: "Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation" (Psa 146:3).

In Mark 5, we read about "a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse" (Mk 5:25-26). The many doctors she has visited in the hope of healing have only increased her suffering, while she has invested her entire property to pay for that help. Instead of recovery there has been worsening. Finally, she goes to the Lord Jesus. She says: "If I just touch His garments, I will get well" (Mk 5:28). This means that it comes down to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is able to fill the void in our heart.

It seems that the bride in verse 4 has come out of town and there she finds her beloved. He can be found outside the city, in the field where he pas-



tures the flock between the lilies, as she said before (Song 2:16). She forgot that, so she searched in the wrong places and with the wrong people. Now that she is free from the wrong, she runs into his arms. She has found him.

So the Lord Jesus is not to be found in all kinds of man-made systems or with prominent spiritual leaders, but in the place of rejection. We can think of the cross of Calvary, which stood “outside the gate” of Jerusalem (Heb 13:12-13). There the Lord is pleased to be found. Whosoever is not prepared to find and follow Him there, at the place of rejection, will never find Him.

Efforts must be made to find Him there. But if one searches with longing and perseverance, trusting that He will let Himself be found, then He will let Himself be found. He has promised: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Mt 7:7-8; Jer 29:12-13; Isa 45:19).

The bride went out and left the city and all people behind. We can see this as escaping the hectic of life in the city with all its noise, being absorbed in all kinds of activities, without a moment of rest. The necessary and desired rest is found outside the city in the presence of the Lord. We all need those times of rest with the Lord.

Many are lived by social media and do not have one moment of rest because they think they should always be available. There should be an immediate response when a message comes in. Social media determine life. Imagine that I would miss something, I have to be constantly informed. In this way, rest is increasingly taken away from us.

Do we still have time to be alone with the Word of God and with the Lord Jesus? Only then will we find Him, not in the city, but outside the city. Then we get the strength to go back into the city to be a witness.

When she has found him, she holds on to him (Mt 28:9; Pro 3:18). She doesn't want to lose him again. She is very careful about that now. Together with him she goes to her mother's house. She goes back, so to speak, to the beginning of her existence, where her life began and she had her upbringing. If we have departed from the Lord, we must go back to the

beginning of our life with Him. We must remember our first encounters with Him, our first love for Him (Rev 2:4-5a).

The bride returns with her groom not only to her mother's house, but to the room of her, "who conceived" her. That is all the way back to the beginning, to the moment of the birth of the new life. It is as Israel must always do, after the people have been delivered from Egypt. Each year they have to celebrate the Passover as a reminder of the deliverance from Egypt.

So we can do this every Sunday, when we proclaim the Lord's death, remembering what He has done for us. But we must also think about it every day, not forgetting that we are redeemed and how it happened, and thank the Lord for redeeming us from our sins and eternal judgment.

Are we (still) grateful? Do we remember when and where our first real meeting with the Lord Jesus took place? Do we remember the joy and peace it has given us that the heavy burden of our sins has been taken away from us and that we have been born again and become children of God? When something drastic happens in the world, people are sometimes asked later where they were or what they were doing at that moment. They often remember that too. The turning from idols to God is the most profound event in the life of a person which he consciously experiences. Then the Lord Jesus with His love and authority enters his life and changes it completely. It gets a totally different perspective.

In verse 5 she addresses the same persons with the same words as in Song of Songs 2 (Song 2:7). It therefore sounds like a refrain. Yet it is not the same. Here, in Song of Songs 3, she speaks these words *after* the lost connection with the groom has been restored. So there is restoration of fellowship. Now that she has found him again and brought him into the room of her mother's house, she hangs the sign DO NOT DISTURB on the door, as it were. She let it be known that she does not want to let in any elements that could disturb her regained fellowship with him again.

Fellowship with the Lord Jesus is not a matter of speed. It takes time, even when the relationship is restored, to grow in it. Growing in faith should not be stimulated artificially. Thus, the use of loud, psychedelic music in a service works that the Beloved disappears. This is also the case with soft music that responds to the emotions. Fellowship with the Lord Jesus re-

quires rest and peace, not incitement. The Spirit of God is present and works in “a gentle blowing”, not in “a great and strong wind”, “an earthquake” or “a fire” (1Kgs 19:11-13). Love needs time to grow, even when cooled love is awakened again.

### **Song 3:6 | Who Is Coming Up From the Wilderness?**

*6 “Who is this coming up from the wilderness  
Like columns of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all scented powders of the merchant?”*

The answer to the question “who is this coming up from the wilderness” is simple. “This” is none other than the bride. Yet the question suggests that she is not immediately recognized. That has to do with her stay in the wilderness. The wilderness has changed her. She has become, as it were, a different person. In the spiritual application, the wilderness represents the world seen as the area God uses to test our faith. Through faith tests God wants to change us and make us more and more conform to the image of His Son.

In the prophetic application we can think here of the faithful remnant that is kept by God in the wilderness in the time of the great tribulation (Rev 12:13-17; cf. Hos 2:14-23). This time will bring about a change in the remnant that will make it a people with whom the Lord Jesus can dwell.

The believers individually and God’s people as a whole are compared here to “columns of smoke”. We see the ‘columns of smoke’ in Israel rising from the altar of burnt offering to God, as a soothing aroma to Him. Believers who have been tried by God and to whom He has been able to do His work are also pleasing to Him. In their lives He recognizes what is always perfectly present in the Lord Jesus: His own image.

Further we see that the bride is “perfumed with myrrh and frankincense”. That reminds us of the journey of the people of God through the wilderness, where the people are led by the cloud of God’s glory. This cloud has covered them and also the tabernacle. God wants to make His glory visible through all exercises through which a believer passes. That is what our stay in the wilderness is for.

The “myrrh and incense” by which she is perfumed, means that she comes in the fragrance of Christ (cf. 2Cor 2:15-16). ‘Myrrh’ symbolizes the suffering of the Lord Jesus, while ‘incense’ symbolizes His glories. Everything that is pleasing to God, He has found in His Son. He wants to work the same in His own, so that through their lives He is increasingly reminded of that of his Son. In the trials of our faith we experience the suffering of Christ, while we may also look forward to the glory that awaits us.

To the myrrh and incense are added “all scented powders of the merchant”, a mixture of scents by which the bride is also surrounded. It represents the many excellencies that are present in the Lord Jesus and have been expressed. Every word and every act is of great beauty and excellence. At the same time they flow together into a beautiful whole. Everything is in harmony with each other. There is no odor that dominates and destroys the other odors.

Paul presents these ‘scented powders’ to the believers in Colossae so that they will spread them around them. These fragrances are the features of Christ, which we as believers can exhibit and thus let others smell. He writes to them: “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things [put on] love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Col 3:12-14). These are some of the many excellencies of the new life that we as believers possess. That new life is Christ Himself. Often the exercises in the wilderness are needed to let others smell the excellent scent of Him.

The ‘scented powders’ are available from “the merchant”. This means that they are not available for free, but must be ‘bought’. A price has to be paid for it. That price is the giving up one’s own self and to put obedience and devotion in its place.

Certainly, every believer possesses these ‘scented powders’ through the new life. But putting them into practice is something else. They must, as Paul says, to be *put on*. That means we have to be busy with it by reading

and studying the Word of God. Then we see how they were expressed in the life of the Lord Jesus. The result is that they are also noticed in our life.

### **Song 3:7-8 | The Couch and the Mighty Man of Solomon**

7 *“Behold, it is the [traveling] couch of Solomon;*

*Sixty mighty men around it,*

*Of the mighty men of Israel.*

8 *“All of them are wielders of the sword,*

*Expert in war;*

*Each man has his sword at his side,*

*[Guarding] against the terrors of the night.*

In verse 7 is the answer to the question who she is who comes from the wilderness (verse 6). The answer is not ‘the bride’, but “the [traveling] couch of Solomon”. Here we see the rest of Solomon. This is a very different rest from the one in verse 1. There it is laziness. Here it is the rest or peace of Solomon, who became part of the bride. Solomon is the king of peace. This scene shows that the bride has found peace in the groom.

Thus, as new testament believers, our conscience may come to rest in the presence of God on the basis of the work of the true Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus. Through faith in Him we have peace with God (Rom 5:1). In that rest we may know that in the Beloved we are pleasing to God (Eph 1:6). A similar picture like the bride in Solomon’s couch can be seen in the two tablets of stone in the ark (Deu 10:1-5). This second pair of tablets also represents the believers, and the ark represents Christ.

The couch of Solomon in which he transports his bride, represents the rest of his victory. In that rest, the bride is united with him. He carries her on in that rest. He also ensures that this rest is protected for her sake. It is not just sixty soldiers, but “sixty mighty men” who have been carefully chosen from the “the mighty men of Israel”. It is a corps of excellent men. They have proven that they can wage war. With David there are thirty mighty men (2Sam 23:8-23), but Solomon has sixty.

Christ, the true Solomon, knows all the dangers through which His bride, His own, must pass. He leads her on in that rest. We have found rest for our hearts and conscience by going to Him with our sins (Mt 11:28). He

also wants to lead us through life in that rest, on our journey to Him. For this He tells us to take His yoke upon us. Then we find rest for our souls in our daily activities (Mt 11:29).

The rest acquired and obtained by Christ is attacked by the powers of darkness and must be defended (cf. Isa 27:3). He places the responsibility for the defense in the hands of His own, providing them with the right weapons to effectively eliminate the enemy. We see this in the picture of the sixty mighty men.

The sixty mighty men all know how to handle the sword and have it within reach (verse 8). In these mighty men we can see a picture of believers who, in the practice of life, protect and preserve the truths of faith. Every believer is called upon to be such a mighty man. It is our responsibility to protect what God has given us in His Word. We are all being called upon to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

For this every believer gets “the whole armor of God” at his disposal, which he must “put on” and “take up” (Eph 6:11-18). This also includes “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17b; Heb 4:12). With this, for example, a false teaching about the rest offered by the Lord Jesus can be dispelled – such as that that rest can be kept by keeping the law. It is about knowing God’s Word, by which we become adept at using it as a weapon of defense.

The sword is used here to defend us with it “against the terrors of the nights”. The night is dangerous. It represents the spiritual darkness in which we live. But “the night is almost gone, and the day is near” (Rom 13:12). The day begins when the Lord Jesus returns to earth. At the same time, we also see that darkness is increasing. There is increasing deception and satan is doing his utmost to keep us from following the Lord.

Only by holding on to the Word of God, holding that sword firmly in the hand or within reach at the hip, will we keep our spiritual rest and peace. The Lord Jesus gives the example when satan tempts Him in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11). He then uses the Word of God as a weapon and defeats satan, so that he finally drips off. If we deviate from the Word, we lose our peace. Therefore it is important that we read and study God’s Word.

**Song 3:9-10 | Solomon's Sedan Chair**

9 *"King Solomon has made for himself a sedan chair  
From the timber of Lebanon.  
10 "He made its posts of silver,  
Its back of gold  
[And] its seat of purple fabric,  
[With] its interior lovingly fitted out  
By the daughters of Jerusalem.*

The bride's attention is now on the *groom*. He has made a sedan chair for himself (verse 9), but uses it for the transportation and protection of his bride. Everything that is said about the sedan chair speaks of the person who made it. The bride in the sedan chair is constantly reminded of him during the journey through the night. It is also a demonstration against the enemy and that nothing can stop him. He is the mighty, invincible prince of peace.

The sedan chair speaks of the Lord Jesus Who is carried around by the believers and in Whom at the same time the believers know themselves safe and protected. Who He is to His own is seen in the materials. Not everything is seen by the people, because what is inside is seen only by God.

The first thing that is mentioned and seen of the sedan chair, is the durable wood of Lebanon. That wood is strong, it is durable and unbreakable. Wood grows out of the earth and it is often in Scripture a picture of the humanity of the Lord Jesus. He is "the fruit of the earth" (Isa 4:2; 53:2a; cf. Lk 23:31). Thus have men seen Him, and so do the believers know Him.

The Lord Jesus knows the dangers of life on earth from His own experience, for He was as Man on earth. He is therefore perfectly capable of protecting us from the terrors of the nights (verse 8). The same goes for the faithful remnant during the terrors of the great tribulation. He protects his own: "For He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," SO THAT WE CONFIDENTLY SAY, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"' (Heb 13:5b-6). This may be the language of the believer, in whatever time he lives.

Solomon made the posts of the sedan chair of *silver* (verse 10). Silver is a picture of the price of redemption (Exo 30:14-15; cf. 1Pet 1:18-19). Then we remember what the Lord Jesus did for us on the cross. That is the basis on which we are brought into this rest and through which He leads us on.

The back – or *floor*, as it also can be translated – is made of *gold*. Back or floor represents something that supports, that has carrying capacity. Gold represents the glory of God. We see this in the Lord Jesus Who carries and supports us. We see His glory in everything He does for us during our journey through the night with all its terrors. When we see Him in God's glory, those terrors do not affect us.

The seat of the sedan chair is *purple fabric*. Kings go dressed in red purple. Red purple speaks of royal dignity. The faithful remnant shares in the dignity of her Bridegroom, the Messiah. When He appears in royal dignity, they appear with Him. The believers of today also have that dignity. They are now a kingdom of priests and will reign in the kingdom of peace with Christ as kings (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

Finally, it is mentioned that “its interior” was “lovingly fitted out by the daughters of Jerusalem”. In the interior we see the atmosphere in which the bride finds herself, by which she is surrounded. That atmosphere is love. The daughters of Jerusalem have taken care of this.

This speaks of believers who love the Lord Jesus so much, who live so much for Him, that this love surrounds their whole life. Whatever they do, they do it out of love for the Lord Jesus. When you come into contact with them, you simply cannot escape experiencing that atmosphere, you undergo it, as it were. If there is that atmosphere of love around us, it means that we show what we are in Christ. As a result, we accept, complement and help each other in this.

The daughters of Jerusalem, who also love the groom, have decorated the interior of the sedan chair with their love. That is what he really rests on. The Lord Jesus is carried around by the love of all His own. In the light of love, the other materials acquire their true meaning. God forgets nothing done out of love for Him and His own (Heb 6:10).



### Song 3:11 | The Coronation on the Day of the Wedding

11 *"Go forth, O daughters of Zion,  
And gaze on King Solomon with the crown  
With which his mother has crowned him  
On the day of his wedding,  
And on the day of his gladness of heart."*

The daughters of Zion have lovingly clad the interior of Solomon's sedan chair. Now those who have created this atmosphere of love are called upon to go forth to "gaze on King Solomon with the crown". Those who are guided by love in their dealings with the Lord Jesus and His own are given to see His glory as the crowned King. For this they have to "go forth". It is the call that also sounds today in professing Christianity that has fallen asleep: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet [him]!" (Mt 25:6b; cf. Eph 5:14).

Love goes beyond being busy for Him. Martha serves the Lord out of love, and the Lord appreciates that too. But if it is only serving, the work becomes more important than the Person for Whom the work is done. There must come a moment when we "go forth", go out of our activities to meet Him, to see Him and admire Him in His glory.

The crown that Solomon wears is put on his head by "his mother". 'His mother' is a picture of Israel. It shows what the faithful remnant will do with the Messiah as He comes to them after the time of great tribulation. They will acknowledge Him as their King and in this way put the crown on Him. This shows their connection with Him. He is their King and Lord to Whom they bow down in adoration: "Then the King will desire your beauty. Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him" (Psa 45:11).

At the same time He is their Bridegroom. He is crowned "on the day of His wedding". The wedding refers to the union of the Lord Jesus as the Messiah with the remnant, or better, with the city of Jerusalem as His bride. The wedding determines us by the love between the Bridegroom and the bride. There is not only a relationship of authority but also a relationship of love. His love goes out to His earthly bride. Then there is no longer the aspect of "being busy" for Him in the foreground, but being there for Him. We see that in the last line of the verse. It is about "his gladness of heart".

When the Lord Jesus has introduced His earthly bride into His kingdom and she shares in His rest, His heart is full of joy. After the joy for Israel because of the redemption that He brought about through which He is in their midst as their King (Zep 3:14-17a), we read: "He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy" (Zep 3:17b).

The same goes for our relationship with the Lord Jesus. On earth, His kingdom is contemptuously rejected by men, which is expressed by crowning Him with a crown of thorns (Mt 27:29). But we acknowledge that He is rightly crowned with glory and honor by God (Heb 2:9). Our acknowledgment of His crowning can be seen as the coronation we perform. We bow down deeply before Him and place our whole life under His authority.

We give Him His crown and honor Him as our Lord when we dedicate our lives in every area to Him. That is as a father, as a mother, as a child, in society and as a member of God's church with the task He has given. 'The day of His coronation', the day we crown Him, is for us every day we live with our hearts directed to Him. Then we will not be primarily concerned with what we can do for Him, but with 'the joy of His heart'.

Let us fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross" (Heb 12:2a). While He accomplished His work on earth through the terrible suffering on the cross He looked over that work to the joy. That joy consists of seeing the great crowd of redeemed whom He has bought for God through His work (Rev 5:9). Among them is His heavenly bride, the believers of the church.

He has "gave Himself up for her" to possess her (Eph 5:25). He will rejoice in her forever. He has had her in His mind in completing His work. She is the "one pearl of great value", for which He has given up all things to possess that one (Mt 13:45-46). She already belongs to Him now, but is still on her way to Him. When she is with Him, the desires of His heart are perfectly fulfilled.

Are we looking forward to His coming because of the joy it means for Him?

## Song of Songs 4

### **Song 4:1 | The Bride Is Beautiful**

*1 "How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are!  
Your eyes are [like] doves behind your veil;  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Mount Gilead.*

This chapter begins with a description of the bride by the groom in all the beauty she has for him. For his description he zooms in, as it were, on seven body characteristics: her eyes, hair, teeth, lips, temples, neck and breasts. She is a bride worthy of him, a bride that fits him perfectly, because her beauty is the reflection of his own beauty. In verse 7, he even says of her: "There is no blemish in you."

It is a description of the future remnant of Israel, especially of the city of Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus will clothe Jerusalem with His glory (Eze 16:10-14). Also the heavenly Jerusalem will be beautiful because it has the glory of God: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev 21:10-11a).

The reason why this chapter is so beautiful is that through Solomon we hear the Lord Jesus speak about the value His church as His bride has for Him. He does not see us here in our practice, but He sees us in what we are for Him. There is a nice parallel to be drawn with what the Lord says to His disciples in Luke 22. First we read about the behavior of the disciples when reclined with Him to eat the Passover. He says that He has earnestly desired this (Lk 22:14-20). When they have celebrated the Passover, "there arose also a dispute among them [as to] which one of them was regarded to be greatest" (Lk 22:24).

But what do we read a few verses further on? There the Lord Jesus says to them: "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and

drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk 22:28-30). Who can understand that? The disciples have quarreled. The Lord knows them and knows how they are. Yet He says to them that they have remained faithful to Him. If we know ourselves a little, we can only say: 'Lord Jesus, we have been unfaithful to You so many times, we don't understand how You can say that.'

In the blessings of Balaam, who tried to curse the so often unfaithful people of God, we find the same thought. Through the Spirit of God Balaam lets us know how God thinks about His people. Then we hear no curse, but something completely different: "He has not observed misfortune in Jacob; nor has He seen trouble in Israel" (Num 23:21a). He says this while at the same time the Israelites were arguing in their tents. They disobeyed and revolted against God. Yet Balaam says that God sees no evil in Israel. It is incredible, but still true, because God's Word says so.

That is how God sees us. On the one hand, we know our responsibilities. We know that we often fail and are often unfaithful. On the other hand, as church we have a wonderful position for His heart and He tells us that here. We can also apply this to the individual believer who is brought to perfection in Christ through identification with Him. Christ describes what He made of him. It is the result of His grace and love.

We are called "beloved children" (Eph 5:1). God loves us. It is important for each of us to know deep inside that He loves us. This is also important in relation to our children. Parents love their children. They are often disobedient and do things we do not love. But that does not mean that we do not love the children. Love is always there, but not always shown in the same way. If they deserve punishment, we will give it, precisely because we love them.

It is also important that we occasionally say to our children: 'You are beautiful. You did that well. You are valuable. You have something very beautiful.' Do we ever say that to them? Do we sometimes say it to our wife? That is not flattery, but expressing appreciation to encourage each other.

Recently I spoke to a young man when we met at a supermarket. I hadn't seen him for a long time. I asked him: 'And, how is it with the Lord?' 'Oh, the Lord is doing well', he said. 'Yes, that's for sure', I replied, 'but how is

your life with the Lord?’ ‘That’s over, all over. I was in a church and I was handy with all kinds of heating. And that’s why the people there could use me. They said to me, You can do that well; you can help me.’ But he felt used. That was not love, that was self-love.

This is also important to us. What do we appreciate in each other? Is this really only for what he or she does for the Lord? Or is it about our own profit, the advantage we have from such a person? Brothers and sisters who are more practically minded have their value. We can let them know. They will feel whether it is real gratitude or whether selfish motives play a role. And the child we love, is it because we like it, because we hardly experience problems from it? Or do we love the child, simply and only because it is our child, with its good and also unpleasant characteristics?

It has everything to do with how we see ourselves in the light of the Lord, how He sees us. He says to everyone who belongs to His church: ‘You are beautiful and precious.’ He says of the faithful remnant: “Since you are precious in My sight, [since] you are honored and I love you” (Isa 43:4a). We may apply that to ourselves. He has proven how precious we are to Him by giving His life for us.

If we are aware of this, it will also be evident from the way we look at our brothers and sisters. He has also given His life for them. He also says to them that they are precious in His eyes. We must accept that and value it. It is not possible to really enjoy the love of God if we constantly argue with a brother or sister.

The first thing the groom describes of the bride are her eyes. He compares her eyes to “doves”. The doves explain the character of the bride’s eyes. The Lord Jesus speaks of being “innocent as doves” (Mt 10:16) and having a “clear” or “single” (Darby translation) eye (Mt 6:22). A single eye is an eye that focuses on only one object. The groom sees that the eye of his bride in sincerity is only on him.

The Holy Spirit is also compared to a dove. The Spirit will always direct the eyes of the believer to the one object of faith, namely Christ. He will give the believer insight into Who the Lord Jesus is for him. In addition, the dove has a strong bond with a partner. They always remain true to each other. The Lord Jesus also sees this characteristic in His own.

The groom sees her eyes, despite the fact that they are hidden behind her veil. It is precisely this veil that makes it clear that she is only for him. We see this with Rebekah who takes her veil and covers herself as soon as she meets Isaac (Gen 24:65). With this she indicates: 'From now on I am available only for you and no other man anymore.'

The fact that the groom then talks about the long hair of his bride, fits in beautifully with that. We read in 1 Corinthians 11 that the hair is given to the woman for "a covering" or "a veil" (1Cor 11:15 Darby translation). The long hair symbolizes the dedication and subjection of the wife to her husband. That is where also her strength lies. We see in Samson that he is strong as long as he has long hair.

The groom compares the bride's hair to "a flock of goats that have descended from Mount Gilead". It may be that a flock of black goats running down the mountain slopes is reminiscent of wavy hairlocks. A flock also speaks of unity and unanimity. Believers who are committed to the Lord Jesus and serve Him in submission also march in unity and unanimity.

The goat is also the special animal for the sin offering (Lev 4:23,28; 5:6; 16:5; 23:19). This reminds us that long hair indicates a dedication in which sin has no chance to break in. The believer who has long hair in spiritual application, bears in mind that the Lord Jesus suffered and died for his sins. He will want to keep himself pure to live only for his Lord and be pleasing to Him.

### **Song 4:2-3 | Teeth, Lips and Temples**

2 *"Your teeth are like a flock of [newly] shorn ewes  
Which have come up from [their] washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.*  
3 *"Your lips are like a scarlet thread,  
And your mouth is lovely.  
Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate  
Behind your veil.*

Then the groom speaks about her teeth, which he compares to "a flock of [newly] shorn ewes" (verse 2). The teeth are used to chew and take in

food. In a spiritual sense, we can say that the believer eats the words of the Lord Jesus. Jeremiah says: "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jer 15:16). With him we see that he loves to eat God's words because he has been called by God's name.

Teeth can also be misused. The apostle Paul warns the believers in the churches in Galatia of this. He sees that they want to reintroduce the law. If believers place themselves under the law again or impose it on others and the law is reintroduced into their lives in order to keep it, the result is that they devour each other. Paul is clear about this and says: "But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another" (cf. Gal 5:15; Psa 57:4; Joel 1:6).

The teeth are not compared here with lions, but with sheep. Sheep do not tear apart other animals, but docile they follow the Good Shepherd Who takes them to grassy meadows. A flock of sheep indicates grazing in green meadows and being able to distinguish between what is good food and what is not. A sheep is also a picture of Christ Himself in His tacit surrender to the will of God. This feature also characterizes the believer.

With newly shorn ewes it is clear that the wool has been shaved off. The spiritual meaning of shaving is that the believer judges everything that is of his sinful flesh and on which he boasts. It represents the judgment of what comes from its old nature. The leper to be cleansed had to shave off all his hair (Lev 14:8-9). Priests are not allowed to wear woolen clothes when entering the sanctuary (Eze 44:17).

The bride's food is characterized by purity. The bride feeds spiritually with the words of the groom. That makes her completely clean, as if she "comes up from washing". Water is the familiar picture of the Word of God (Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5). Reading the Word of God cleanses us of the defilement with which we are defiled as we go through the world. We cannot escape it. That is why it is important to read God's Word over and over again and to become pure in our thinking.

The result is also a balanced life of faith. This is seen in the "twins". It is remarkable that the first teeth a child gets appear in pairs. Sound teaching

from God's Word results in sound practice. There will be no bigotry about all sorts of truths and no exaggerated emphasis will be placed on practical Christian life. Both aspects must be in balance.

The result is spiritual fruit, on which we may think of when it says "not one among them has lost [or: is without] her young". Others are encouraged to live the same way. Timothy and Titus are encouraged to be examples to others (1Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7). Especially older men and women have the opportunity to be examples for the youth (Tit 2:2-5).

Then the groom speaks about her *lips* (verse 3). Lips form the words we speak and are therefore a picture of the language. Our *teeth* are the instruments to receive and grind food given by the Lord, and our *lips* are the means to express what we have received from Him. Her lips are compared to "a scarlet thread".

That reminds both of sin and of the deliverance from the judgment of sin. Isaiah speaks of "sins" that are "as scarlet", meaning that there is blood guilt on the people, but he also points out that they can become "white as snow" (Isa 1:18). The deliverance from judgment is seen in the history of Rahab. She should hang a scarlet thread from the window of her house on the wall of Jericho (Jos 2:18a). This scarlet thread is the sign of her deliverance from the judgment that comes on Jericho.

The picture here is that the believer uses words that make clear his deliverance from the power of sin. This is reflected in the speaking by the mouth of words that are "lovely". In her words, her royal dignity resounds. Scarlet is also the clothing of kings (cf. Mt 27:28-29). The bride does not use vulgar or dirty language, but words that are good, while her lips are under the authority of the king.

One of the contrasts between our life in sin and our life as Christians is the language or words we use. In the words we used to speak, there was nothing from and for God. Our mouth was at the service of our own corrupt heart as we roared: "With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" (Psa 12:4). This applies not only to the boasters, but also to highly civilized language users. There is nothing from and for God.

The believer does not boast in himself, but in the Lord. He makes this heard, for his heart and mouth are full of Christ and His work of love on



the cross. He will not restrain his lips (Psa 40:9) from honoring Him, but “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Heb 13:15).

Also related to this is the “slice of a pomegranate” which the groom must think of when he sees her “temples”. The temples are the side of the head, behind the eyes. These are the weak spots in the skull. The pomegranate indicates a fullness of life in the many seeds it contains. Each seed is juicy, sweet and red. The fact that there is a slice of a pomegranate indicates that this fullness is visible to the groom.

Pomegranates can also be seen on the hems of the upper garment of the high priest (Exo 28:33-35). Here we see that the fullness of life is the result of the Lord Jesus’ service as High Priest in the sanctuary. He lives by the power of an imperishable life and is able to completely save those who approach God through Him (Heb 7:15-17,24-25). The fruit He Himself produces in the sanctuary, He sees with the bride.

We can connect the temples with our thoughts. Nobody sees our thoughts, but the Lord Jesus sees them. All the hidden thoughts of everyone are for Him an open book (Heb 4:12-13). Of the believers He presupposes – in the picture we have here before us – that their thoughts go out to Him and that they say to Him with David: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer” (Psa 19:14).

The thoughts are connected to the veil here. In verse 1 the veil is also mentioned. There we saw that it is a picture of dedication and separation to the Lord Jesus. Here we see that the thought life is full of Him, precisely because there is no other important person for the believer than He alone. The Lord Jesus sees the believer as one who is seeking the things above and sets his mind on the things above, where He is (Col 3:2-3).

The “meditation” is “pleasing” (Psa 104:34), both to the believer and to Him. The believer meditates in His law, which is His word, day and night (Psa 1:2; 119:97,148). He meditates on all His works (Psa 77:12). He meditates on His precepts (Psa 119:15,78). He meditates on His wonders (Psa 119:27). He meditates on His statutes (Psa 119:48). He meditates on His testimonies (Psa 119:99). He meditates on all His doings (Psa 143:5). All

these meditations are at the same time a protection against satan's attacks on his weak, wandering thoughts.

### **Song 4:4-5 | Neck and Breasts**

*4 "Your neck is like the tower of David,  
Built with rows of stones  
On which are hung a thousand shields,  
All the round shields of the mighty men.  
5 "Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle  
Which feed among the lilies.*

The neck (verse 4) is a symbol of man's will, which is naturally rigid and obstinate (Isa 3:16; 48:4). But this can change by bowing the neck before God. Jerusalem has proved to be stubborn (2Chr 30:8), but has bowed the neck under the discipline of God. Now the neck is an ornament of strength and victory, which is expressed in the comparison to "the tower of David". In it, not one's own strength, but the strength of God becomes apparent.

A neck like a tower indicates steadfastness and a lifted gaze. It is not a power of its own or a haughty gaze. The steadfastness is that of faith in God, and the gaze that is lifted up is directed toward Him. There is spiritual maturity that no longer seeks strength in itself, but has found everything in Christ. By this the temptations of the world and the temptations of satan can be resisted.

The tower is not just any tower. It is 'the tower of David', the tower that David built or the tower that came into his possession. It is a defense work in times of war. The bride has now become like a bulwark against any hostile attack. She looks like David. The tower has been David's refuge in times of need. He who is spiritually mature realizes that there is battle and that there is no strength for that battle in himself, but that all strength and protection are to be found in God (Psa 61:4).

This is not the end of the description of the tower. On the tower "are hung a thousand shields". It emphasizes that someone who has bowed before God has abundant protection. Whoever is powerful in knowing and doing the will of the Lord, will experience difficult times and great resistance. In

order not to give in to the pressure of the enemy, it is important to make a decision of the will not to bow the neck to the difficulties and resistance and to do only the will of God. Those who do, have an inner protection as “thousand shields” belonging to “mighty men”. Those who bow before God behave like mighty men.

The groom ends his description of the bride with her “two breasts”, which he compares to “two fawns” (verse 5). Breasts are a picture of spiritual maturity and the ability to pass on food to little children. The fawns seem to allude to this. Fawns drink from their mother’s milk. The milk that is passed on by the breasts speaks of the Word of God through which believers can grow spiritually (1Pet 2:2).

It is beautiful when believers grow in such a way that they not only personally live with the Lord, but are also able to help others by giving them balanced teaching. This is expressed in the picture of “the twins of a gazelle”. The original word means ‘two young deer born from the same mother’. They are identical in size, one is not bigger than the other.

It’s about a balanced life. Doctrine and life must be in balance. Young believers, but also the elderly, are in danger of falling into extremes. Then some are one-sidedly concerned with doctrine and others one-sidedly concerned with practice. We must not set these two sides of religious life against each other, but develop them side by side.

The task of adult believers in the education of young believers is to give them room for spiritual growth and to give them directions that stimulate their personal faith life. The danger of the older believer is to instruct young believers in such a way that they meet their own preferences. The older believer who is spiritually mature, balanced in his faith, will follow the advice for education: “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Pro 22:6a).

The training must be in accordance with “the way he should go”, i.e. he must be raised in accordance with his qualities and abilities. These must be formed in such a way that he becomes useful to God. There must be an insight into the individuality of the newly converted person with which the upbringing must be in tune. Nothing impossible should be demanded,

but tasks should be given that are appropriate to gender, age, mental capacity and abilities.

It is mainly about giving instructions for the direction of the path the child should go. It is about “the way *he* should go”, *his* way of life and the purpose of *his* life. His life path is not so much determined by his talent and abilities, but more by the choices he makes. The spiritual parent will teach him to make the right choices, choices that will bring and keep him on a path of dedication to God (cf. Gen 18:19a). In the book of Proverbs there are only two ways a child can go, that is either the way of the wise and the righteous or the way of the fool and the wicked.

“Feed among the lilies” indicates the appropriate environment where the bride is. The lily indicates delicate, breakable, fragile beauty. We can apply this to a sensitive conscience. He who really wants to live in a sound spiritual balance will exercise himself “to maintain always a blameless conscience [both] before God and before men” (Acts 24:16). Doctrine and life can only come to a sound and balanced development if the conscience is clear, if there is nothing that makes it restless.

Prophetically, what the groom says of the bride’s breasts points to the future of Jerusalem. When the city has returned to the LORD, it will become a source of blessing for all the earth: ““Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her; be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her, that you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts, that you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom.” For thus says the LORD, “Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees”” (Isa 66:10-12).

### **Song 4:6 | The Mountain of Myrrh and the Hill of Frankincense**

6 “Until the cool of the day  
When the shadows flee away,  
I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh  
And to the hill of frankincense.

It is not clear who is speaking in this verse. It may be that the bride here responds to the description the groom has given of her in the previous

verses. It may also be that the groom is still speaking. There is something to be said for both views. We will first look at it from the bride's perspective. She says as it were that she is overwhelmed by it that she means so much to him. She has to deal with all that. She feels limited in her ability to let it come to her. She cannot comprehend it all.

The time she needs to think about everything the groom has said about her lasts "until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away". That indicates that it is not yet day. There are still shadows present. It indicates that she still sees dimly. Thus it is written of us that we "now see in a mirror, dimly" and that we "know in part" (1Cor 13:12). 'Dimly' means 'in a riddle'. It is not yet all perfectly clear. The perfect knowledge has not yet come.

That is why she goes "to mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense". We have read about myrrh and incense before (Song 3:6). Here in Song of Songs 4 we read about a mountain of myrrh and a hill of frankincense, which indicates a large quantity and also a level higher than the ground. Myrrh speaks of the suffering of the Lord Jesus. Frankincense speaks of the sweet scent that the Lord Jesus is for His God. To us it means that we think about the bitterness of Christ's suffering and the sweetness of His loveliness. He underwent the suffering for us in order to save us from our sins. By this He was able to put his loveliness upon us, and we are taken now into favor before God (Eph 1:6 Darby translation; cf. Eze 16:14).

It is good to be busy with this when we are impressed by the love the Lord Jesus has for us. We can do this in particular when we, as a church, proclaim His death at His Table. Or should it to be said to us that we are not able to watch only for an hour with Him? We must learn to walk in the light of the cross. That desire will be there and will grow as we hear Him speak about us like here.

Are we taking the time to think about how He sees us? We may say to Him full of amazement that He said: 'This is how I see you.' If we accept this in all humility and with great gratitude we honor Him with it. It is a false humility that says that the gift is too great to accept. Whoever accepts it because He gives it, will also ask Him to indicate everything in his life that

is not in accordance with it. He wants to change that in order to live the way He wants to.

As said, it may also be that the words of this verse are still spoken by the groom. The meaning of the cool of the day, the shadows, the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense remain the same, but are now seen from his perspective. As long as it is not yet day and there is still the shadow of the night, the Lord Jesus is for His own in heaven. He is there because of His suffering – of which the myrrh speaks – on earth and His loveliness before God.

That He is on the mountain of myrrh means that He is our High Priest with God. He is a High Priest Who can sympathize with us while we are still in trials on earth (Heb 4:15; cf. Mt 14:23-24). The hill of frankincense reminds us of being His pleasure to the Father and that we are made pleasant in Him. On the basis of this He is our Advocate with the Father (1Jn 2:1).

He will be there until the full day has come. The full day, without shadows, comes when He comes from heaven to establish righteousness on earth. Then He will shine as “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). There is no cloud causing any darkening (2Sam 23:4). This will also be experienced by the faithful remnant of Israel when it enters into the peace of the kingdom of peace after the intense trials of the great tribulation. This is not yet the case, as we see in the following verses, but we do see in faith the full result of Christ’s work, both of His work on the cross and of His work now in heaven.

### **Song 4:7-8 | Perfect Beauty and Testing**

7 *“You are altogether beautiful, my darling,  
And there is no blemish in you.*  
8 *“[Come] with me from Lebanon, [my] bride,  
May you come with me from Lebanon.  
Journey down from the summit of Amana,  
From the summit of Senir and Hermon,  
From the dens of lions,  
From the mountains of leopards.*

In verse 7, the groom speaks to the bride, by which we think of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. He praises her impeccable beauty. He has already said that she is beautiful. Now the groom says that she is “altogether beautiful” and that there is “no blemish” in her. That cannot but be the result of his special care for her. Here we see the picture of the believer who is perfect in Christ. Christ accomplished the work on the cross and He continues to take care of His own. That is what the previous verses have shown. Here we see the result.

As for the church, we see that Christ cleanses His bride in His love “by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (Eph 5:26-27). For this purpose He is now for the individual believer and for the church as a whole in heaven. There He is committed to us. He looks thereby at the end result.

The same goes for the earthly bride, Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the perfection of beauty (Psa 50:2; cf. Num 23:21a). It will be the beauty that the LORD has laid upon her. That is the result of His going to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. The bride has occupied herself with this and has therefore, spiritually applied, penetrated deeper into the mystery of the cross and the resurrection.

When we are spiritually on the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, we are in the company of the Lord Jesus. We are then in the spirit in the heavenly places, where as to our position we are also placed in Christ (Eph 1:3). Knowing that we are there in Christ is something else than to experience that. As we are busy with Him, with what He has done and does for us, He tells us who we are for Him and we experience fellowship with Him.

However, we cannot always stay in the spirit in the heavenly places. We then hear Him ask us to come with Him from the height down to the life of every day (verse 8). He insists that she go with Him by saying ‘come’ to her twice.

Lebanon is a symbol of stability, of what is unshakeable. Amana means ‘support’ or ‘confirmation’. One of the meanings of ‘Senir’ is armor. Hermon means, among other things, ‘inaccessible’. These different names of

the mountains where the bride is, but also where the lions and leopards hide, can be applied to our position in the heavenly places.

At the place where we enjoy heavenly blessings we also have to deal with demonic powers, of which the lions and leopards are a picture. These spiritual powers of evil want to attack us to make it impossible for us to enjoy the blessing. But they will not succeed if we spiritually link the meaning of the names of the mountains to what we have become in Christ.

On earth, too, the Lord is our protection. This may encourage and motivate us to do our daily activities with and for Him. We know the occasions of enjoying the love of the Lord Jesus. Then we live, so to speak, 'on top of the mountain', in heavenly spheres. But daily life also requires our attention, and that is what the Lord is looking at, while at the same time saying that He also leads us in this. We may come with Him and descend.

It is precisely the letter to the Ephesians, where our blessings in Christ are displayed in the heavenly places, that also speaks of our daily life. We read about our responsibilities in society, in marriage and family and in the church. The Lord Jesus wants us to learn to have fellowship with Him in this too. His presence in and involvement with our earthly circumstances give them a heavenly radiance. His joy about this is great and at the same time it is a testimony in the world.

Prophetically God has said that He will send lions and leopards among His people because of their unfaithfulness (Jer 5:6; Hab 1:8). The places where they have been, are places where lions and leopards hide and lurk on their prey. Both beasts are characteristic of the beast coming up out of the sea, the symbol of the Roman empire that will be restored (Rev 13:1-8). The beast will try to devour the remnant, but God will hide them in the place He has prepared for them (Rev 12:13-17).

The reference of the groom to Lebanon has to do with the residence-place of the faithful remnant during the great tribulation, the time of trial and hiding. Prophetically, the remnant here is outside the land (Psa 42:6-7). The Lord Jesus asks them to come to Him. After He has spoken to the heart of His own about the beauty He Himself has worked into them, He says that they may come to Him. They no longer need to remain in the circumstances in which they find themselves.



**Song 4:9-10 | The Appreciation of the Groom**

9 *"You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, [my] bride;  
 You have made my heart beat faster with a single [glance] of your eyes,  
 With a single strand of your necklace.  
 10 "How beautiful is your love, my sister, [my] bride!  
 How much better is your love than wine,  
 And the fragrance of your oils  
 Than all [kinds] of spices!"*

The heart of the groom is full of love for his bride. His heart is always full of love for her. But now he says to her that she has "made" his "heart beat faster" or has "conquered" his heart, which is the better rendering (verse 9). Something has been done by her that has gently overwhelmed him, something that has deeply touched his heart. He even says it twice in this verse, which indicates how intense he experiences this. Before he says this the second time, he addresses her as "my sister, [my] bride". In verse 8 he called her 'bride' for the first time. Now he calls her 'my sister' for the first time, emphasizing her relationship with him.

The relationship between the Lord Jesus and His own is one of love, but also one of kinship. It is even so that He first made us related to Himself before a relationship of love could arise. He, the eternal Son, has done this by becoming Man and connecting us to Himself through His work of salvation. As we read in the letter to the Hebrews: "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:14-15). Because of this, a relationship has arisen between him and us and He calls us "brethren" (Jn 20:17; Heb 2:11).

If we understand this well, we will have no choice but to look at Him with admiration and love. And that is what He notices. Just as the groom sees from the bride's eyes that she is completely full of him, so the Lord Jesus sees from our eyes that we only have an eye for Him. That conquers His heart. It seems so less, only "a single [glance] of your eyes", but it says it all.

It's about our eyes, what we are looking at. Are we looking only at Him? He would like 'eye contact' with us (cf. Gen 24:63-64). His eye is constantly upon us (Psa 32:8). It touches Him deeply when our eye is clear (Mt 6:22), that is, it is directed at nothing and no one but Him. If our eyes are on Him, we will live our lives entirely for Him.

Then the following connects to what the groom sees with her and through which she has conquered his heart. He sees "one strand", or "one link" of her "necklace". In the book of Proverbs the necklace is a decoration that symbolizes the father's education and the mother's teachings (Pro 1:8-9). Some links of the necklace are "kindness and truth" (Pro 3:3). The groom has an eye for all links and is delighted. The fact that he speaks of one link that has conquered his heart makes it clear that he has an eye for each link separately. Every detail of her decoration touches him.

So it is with the Lord Jesus in His attention to us. If we submit to the teaching from His Word, we conquer His heart with it. That we submit to His Word is evident when we act according to His Word when He points out something to us through His Word. It is only one link at a time, whereby all links together form an adornment. His heart is conquered by it when we do the least of all His commandments for Him. He appreciates this in a special way: "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others [to do] the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:19).

The bride said at the beginning of the book that the groom's love is better than wine (Song 1:2). Here the groom expresses himself more strongly (verse 10). He says 'how much' better her love is. The groom's appreciation of love has always been greater than that of the bride. So it is with the Lord. He knows how to fully appreciate our love, while we often appreciate His love so little. That He so appreciates our love is because it is God's love, that is His own love, which He poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). However weak we sometimes show it to Him in our practice, He knows its nature and appreciates it.

With the fragrance of the oils it is the same as with the wine. Again, the bride first praised the fragrant oils that are from the groom (Song 1:3). The

groom uses her words and expresses himself more strongly: the smell of her oils is much better “than all [kinds] of spices”. It is not so much about the oil, but about its smell. The fragrance contains all the rich and varied characteristics of that anointing. Fragrance is invisible and can only be discovered by smelling.

The oil, as we have seen before, is a picture of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27). In addition to pouring out the love of God into our hearts, He also has come to dwell in our hearts and bodies (2Cor 1:22; Gal 4:6; 1Cor 6:19). From our hearts we can spread through our bodies a fragrance that is smelled with joy by the Lord Jesus. Our love for the Lord Jesus is worked in us by the Spirit – the oil refers to this – and for Him it is much better “than all [kinds] of spices”.

In the same way we can experience that someone has a certain spiritual radiation that we cannot describe. A person’s presence can radiate a benevolent rest even before that person has said or done anything special. The whole performance makes you feel accepted and safe, without that person consciously drawing attention to himself. Such an action is worked out by the Spirit and reminds us of the Lord Jesus. It is the fruit of a life of obedience to the Holy Spirit. It goes far beyond everything the world contains.

In the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit was able to do everything to glorify God. The whole life of the Lord on earth has been a lovely fragrance for God. Now the Lord Jesus says this – in picture – to the believer. The believer who lives a life shaped by God’s Spirit gives Christ great joy. He expresses His appreciation for this. When the love of God and the working of God’s Spirit are noticeable in a believer, the Lord Jesus finds His greatest satisfaction in it.

### **Song 4:11 | Lips, Tongue and Garments**

*11 “Your lips, [my] bride, drip honey;  
Honey and milk are under your tongue,  
And the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.*

The groom then speaks to her, whom he addresses again as “bride”, about her lips and what drips off of them. He says her lips “drip honey”. He notices what the bride says. What he sees makes clear to him what she has

been busy with, what she has eaten. Honey is not made in a quick process. The preparation of honey requires a lot of work and time.

Honeycomb (Darby translation) – this is the honey in the first line of the verse – does not flow like a stream of water, but drips slowly, drop by drop. Honeycomb is also the pure, as yet unprocessed honey. There is no flood of words over the bride's lips, but words that are sweet and building up. She does not speak impulsively, but thoughtfully. When people speak, their speech can resemble a waterfall of words. Such a waterfall has no depth, there was no consideration. James does not say for nothing: "But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak" (Jam 1:19).

This is also and especially true in marriage, in the conversation between husband and wife. The husband sometimes tends to talk fast and a lot and fills in everything already. He knows exactly what his wife thinks, that's at least what he thinks. Then communication comes to a standstill. The woman then says: I don't have to say anything anymore, because you've already filled in everything. The man may think he won the discussion, but he lost his wife as a conversation partner. It is precisely the man who must learn to listen and learn to listen well, and not think that he already knows everything and can say how the matter works. Listening carefully first, and only then speaking is important.

What the groom observes in the bride shows in picture a believer who for a long time, in fellowship with the Lord, diligently searches the Scriptures and collects persistent and patient food from them. The Word of God is for him "sweeter ... than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Psa 19:10b) and "a joy and the delight" of his heart (Jer 15:16). Our language shows that we appreciate the Word and have taken it into our hearts. Everything that comes over our lips and speaks of the Lord Jesus is sweet to those who hear it; it strengthens them (Pro 16:24). The Lord Jesus notices this and appreciates it.

The groom also sees what is under her tongue. Under her tongue are "honey and milk". This means that all the blessing of the promised land (Exo 3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3) is there. Honey gives strength when tired from the daily struggle (1Sam 14:27-29). Honey is the sweetness that, for example, flows from good family relationships. Honey was not allowed to be used in the

grain offering (Lev 2:11). The good relationships in itself should not have a limiting effect on the service toward God (Mk 3:32-35). Milk is what the young, delicate life builds up.

She has a stock of it under her tongue. The stock she has built up makes her suitable for distribution to those who need it. She keeps it hidden, she is not someone who throws everything out, but only uses it when it suits her. It is a hidden place, under her tongue, as it were ready for immediate use.

In the application we can say that the believer who has enjoyed the blessings of the heavenly land, which are for him the heavenly places, will not show them off. He will know when and to whom he can say something about it. Paul knew that he could nothing say about this to the believers in Corinth. They were carnal, they did not have the right mind to hear about it. The believers in Ephesus were different. He could tell them a lot about this.

The groom also speaks about the fragrance of the bride's garments. Garments speak of what people see of us, of our behavior. Engaging with God's Word will affect our attitude of life. We will be a pleasant fragrance for others in our environment when dealing with them. If God's Word is our daily food, it will become visible in our way of life.

Fragrance, as mentioned earlier, is not visible, but is experienced. The bride has the fragrance of Lebanon, of the height. The groom notices that she shows heaven in her actions and behavior. Thus the atmosphere of heaven will be noticed with us.

As already has been remarked, it is precisely the letter to the Ephesians, which shows us the blessing of the heavenly land, that contains important directions for our life. In Ephesians 1-3 the blessings are presented and in Ephesians 4-6 is told how we should live in accordance with them. Husband and wife in marriage are addressed, as are parents and children, and employers and employees. It is a joy for the Lord Jesus when, in our daily way of life, the fragrance of heaven, the fragrance of Himself, is present in the various relationships in which we find ourselves.

What the groom says also has a prophetic meaning. As we have seen before, the relationship between the groom and the bride in Song of Songs is primarily a picture of the relationship between the Messiah Jesus and

the faithful remnant or Jerusalem in the end time. Here we see that the remnant will have “the fragrance of Lebanon” when it has returned to God and been restored in its relationship with the Messiah.

The remnant will be clothed with “garments of salvation” and God will wrap them with “a robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10). From those garments will come a wonderful fragrance that also hangs on Lebanon. Lebanon is a picture of stability. What characterizes the remnant will characterize it throughout the realm of peace, for a thousand years. The guarantee of that is that it are the characteristics of God Himself. He gave it those garments with that fragrance.

### **Song 4:12 | A Garden Locked**

*12 “A garden locked is my sister, [my] bride,  
A rock garden locked, a spring sealed up.*

The groom now compares his bride to “a garden locked” and “a rock garden locked” or, better, “a source locked”, and “a spring sealed up”. That is to say, he sees her as exclusively for himself, as someone who is only open to him. She does not allow anyone else to approach her. Thus is she a refreshment for his heart. How much he appreciates this is reflected in the way he addresses her again: “My sister, [my] bride” (verse 12; verse 9).

This again gives a picture of how the Lord Jesus sees His own. He sees them as only for Him. Whoever loves Him wants to share his love with Him alone, and shuts himself off from other objects of love. This is also important in marriage. In it, husband and wife must be a closed garden, which means that they do not allow anyone else in their life to share their love.

When a married man or woman falls in love with someone else, they are no longer a closed garden and a closed and sealed source or fountain. One cause for this ‘opening up’ may be, for example, that the woman does not receive attention from her own husband and does receive that attention from another man. It may then happen that she ‘opens her garden’ to that other person and breaks the ‘seal of the fountain’. The man is guilty of it, but the woman has no excuse either. There is never an apology for opening up the ‘garden’.

In the book of Proverbs Solomon also speaks to his son about the wife as a source of joy for her husband (Pro 5:15-19). In a different approach, but with the same tenor, he warns his son not to go to another source, but to always be enraptured by her love (Pro 5:19). He tells him to be satisfied with his own wife. In his own house he has a source that can quench his thirst. By this he means his own wife. Thus, he will held "marriage in honor ..., and the [marriage] bed undefiled" (Heb 13:4a).

Solomon asks him the question, the answer to which is contained in the question: "Should your springs be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets?" (Pro 5:16). When the man leaves his house and his wife to go to a strange woman, he leaves his 'closed garden' and goes 'outside' to 'the water streams on the squares'. The sources that are outside, i.e. the woman who seduces him, are available to everyone. But the source of refreshment should only be his own wife. It should not be an option for his love to go out to a strange woman.

The spiritual application, as here in the Song of Songs, is that the Lord Jesus and He alone is sufficient for us. He loves us unconditionally and exclusively and also counts on our unconditional, exclusive love (2Cor 11:2). True satisfaction of every desire only can be found in Christ's love. As we grow older, our love for our wife will not diminish, but rather increase, just like our love for Christ.

If it's good, the life of the believer is like a garden in which the Lord Jesus wants to have fellowship with him. The closed fountain in the garden is a picture of the Word of God being pondered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The believer who is like a closed garden is one in whom the word of Christ, the word of the Beloved, dwells richly (Col 3:16).

We may well ask ourselves whether we are such a closed garden for the Lord Jesus. Is our life, is my life, all alone for Him? We will have to admit that it is not always the case, but is it our deepest desire that He experiences joy from our lives?

The believer is also like "a spring sealed up". What is sealed belongs to the one to whom the seal belongs. The believer is "sealed ... with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13; 2Cor 1:21-22) and belongs to the Lord Jesus. Through the Spirit he is firmly connected to Christ and will discover more

and more of the glory of Christ. After all, the Spirit came to earth to bear witness to Christ (Jn 16:13-14). From the sealed spring, living water flows through the teaching of the Spirit from the inside of the believer to refreshment of the Lord Jesus and his surroundings (Jn 7:37-39).

We can also be closed in the wrong way. This is the case when our life and the Christian community of which we are part are not governed by God's Word and God's Spirit, but by human traditions, by dead orthodoxy. We maintain rules for our own life and for others which do not come from Scripture itself, but from explanations of Scripture, which are by definition human work. Then we will no longer be open to the activity of the Holy Spirit. The appearance then becomes the yardstick by which spiritual life is measured. The inner life, the relationship with the Lord Jesus and the love for God's Word, is of no importance.

In Scripture, a court or garden is a place where God wants to have fellowship with man. We already see that in paradise (Gen 2:8). It is a garden made entirely by Him as a pleasure garden for Himself. In it are united the highest blessings of creation. Man may enjoy in it and of it together with Him. He comes to him for this "in the cool of the day" (Gen 3:8a).

Because of the fall into sin, nothing of the enjoyment of the garden remained for God. Man has not kept the garden closed, and has given up his fellowship with God. He has disobeyed his task to work and maintain the garden as a garden of lust for God (Gen 2:15). He did not refuse the devil access, but allowed him to enter and talk to him (Gen 3:1-6). At next 'gardens' we see the same picture. For example with Israel that God has made a vineyard for Himself (Isa 5:1-7). In it have come men who have cast Him out to own the vineyard themselves (Mt 21:33-39).

Yet today there is, and there will be in the future, a group of people who form for Him the garden that is exclusively for Him. We may be that as believers. That we are, if we open our lives to the working of God's Word and God's Spirit. The result is that our hearts and minds are turned to Christ. It is about *Him* in God's Word, and about *Him* it is with the work of the Spirit. Israel will be such a garden for Him in the future (Isa 51:3).



**Song 4:13-14 | The Decoration of the Garden**

13 *"Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates*

*With choice fruits, henna with nard plants,*

14 *Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,*

*With all the trees of frankincense,*

*Myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices.*

The garden has trees. The trees are not there for the wood, but to look at them. So are the flowers in the garden there to look at and enjoy the sight. So the bride is there for the groom. As a 'closed garden' (verse 12) the bride is fruitful to the groom. This is evident from the description he gives in these verses of her 'garden'. He lists what grows in the garden. He has an eye for each tree and for the "choice fruits" that grow in it, for "henna with nard plants", for "all the trees of frankincense" and for the "all the finest spices" that spread a pleasant aroma.

The groom starts by mentioning "your shoots" (verse 13). Shoots are the first visible signs of new life. He says that they are "an orchard" or "a paradise". This reminds us of the beginning of the Bible, of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:9). That paradise has been lost by sin. It also points forward to the situation in the realm of peace, which will be like paradise (Eze 47:12; Rev 22:1-2).

But for the Lord Jesus there is now also a paradise on earth and that is the life of the believer who lives only for Him. From that life an abundance of fruit emerges. There is not only life, there is also the fruit of life. This fruit He Himself cultivates through His Spirit. "From Me comes your fruit" (Hos 14:8d).

The groom mentions nine trees and plants that the garden produces and adorns and give it fragrance. With that his enumeration of the pleasantness of the garden is not complete. By speaking twice about "all" he indicates that there is much more he enjoys. It speaks of an abundance in which every thought of lack is absent, but which also cannot be described in its fullness. This is the best description of its fullness (cf. 2Cor 8:9; Col 1:9-11).

In the spiritual application, the connection with the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit is obvious (Gal 5:22-23a). What is pleasant in the garden of our life to Christ can only be worked by the Spirit within us if we are separated for

the Lord. Then the water of the Word can produce fruit in us that makes us a pleasure garden, a paradise to Him.

The “pomegranate with choice fruits” recall the hems of the high priest’s upper garment on which pomegranates hang alternating with bells (Exo 28:33-34). The testimony of the Holy Spirit (the bells) is connected to the fruit of the Holy Spirit (the pomegranates). That fruit comes through the watering of the Word and that is the result of the work of the Lord Jesus as High Priest. Everything in our life that is fruit for Him has been worked through Him Himself.

All other fruits and spices speak of Him, of Whom He is and what He has done. God enjoys it to the full. As this is present with us, He also enjoys us, because it reminds Him of the Lord Jesus. We are taken into favor in the Beloved. The Lord Jesus also enjoys it, because He recognizes Himself in us as those who fit Him, in whom He finds His joy.

It is not easy to discover the spiritual meaning of the trees and plants mentioned here. The “henna” is only mentioned here. In Song of Songs 1 the bride says that for her the groom is like “a cluster of henna blossoms” (Song 1:14). Here we see the origin of the henna blossoms. They grow in the garden that is separated for the groom. We see here that the believer’s appreciation of the Lord Jesus is in fact His work in him.

Also the “nard” (verse 14), which comes from the “nard plants”, is mentioned in Song of Songs 1. For an explanation see Song of Songs 1:12.

“Saffron” is found in the Bible only here. ‘Saffron is a spice derived from the flower of *Crocus sativus*, commonly known as the “saffron crocus”. The flowers possess a sweet, honey-like fragrance. [Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saffron>, where more can be read about this spice.]

Two of the components of the holy anointing oil, which consists of “the finest spices”, are “calamus and cinnamon”. In the description of the holy anointment are called “fragrant cinnamon” and “fragrant cane” (Exo 30:23). All the objects in the tabernacle are anointed with this holy anointing oil. The holy anointing oil represents the Holy Spirit, Who consecrates the believer and his whole life and service to God (1Jn 2:20,27). ‘The finest spices’, including calamus and cinnamon, refer to the glories of Christ, which are a pleasant fragrance to God. Where the Holy Spirit works in the

believer, it will spread a precious fragrance, which is also pleasing to God (cf. *Psa* 133:2).

The list is not exhaustive which is indicated by the groom by talking about “all the trees of frankincense”. These are trees that spread the scent of frankincense. In *Song of Songs* there is mention of “frankincense” (*Song* 3:6), the “hill of frankincense” (*Song* 4:6) and here of “trees of frankincense”. Frankincense is mentioned in connection with the sacrifices for the grain offering (*Lev* 2:1,2,15,16; *Neh* 13:5; *Jer* 17:26; 41:5). The grain offering speaks of the life of the Lord Jesus on earth. The added frankincense indicates how much His life has been a pleasant fragrance to God.

God recognizes this in the lives of those who live separated for Him. Christ works this out in their lives. He has glorified God in all aspects of His life. In His words, deeds and actions He has always shown God. This is present to a limited extent in the believers. But every time they say or do something that is to the glory of God, He smells the pleasant smell of the frankincense that is so characteristic of the life of His Son (*Eph* 5:1-2).

Something has already been said about the “myrrh” in the explanation of *Song of Songs* 1:12. “Aloe” is mentioned by Balaam in the blessing he pronounces on Israel. Under the guidance of God’s Spirit he sees the tents of Jacob and the dwellings of Israel “like aloes planted by the LORD” (*Num* 24:5-6). In his blessing Balaam does not speak about the practice of God’s people, but about the value that the people have for Him. We can apply this to God’s purpose with the life of each of His own on earth. We are, so to speak, planted by Him on earth to be a pleasant fragrance for Him.

These two spices are also used at the burying of the Lord Jesus. Nicodemus brings “a mixture of myrrh and aloes” (*Jn* 19:39). It is a tribute to Him after the accomplished work to glorify the Father. The myrrh looks back on His suffering, the aloe looks forward to His return to the earth. The world doesn’t see Him anymore, but He comes back. In connection with His return these spices are also called. Then His garments are fragrant with “myrrh and aloes [and] cassia” (*Psa* 45:8a).

Also the spices mentioned do not fully reflect what through the groom in the closed garden of the bride is present for him. It is a garden “with all the finest spices”. The glories of the Lord Jesus cannot be written down ex-

haustively. All that is present in Him, all His attributes and features, all of which are perfect in themselves, form a harmonious unity. The fragrances merge with each other and the total fragrance of it is incomparable.

In that total fragrance, every believer has his own scent, a certain quality of Christ that especially characterizes him. All believers together are needed to spread the full fragrance of Christ. This is what the Lord Jesus is working on in the 'garden' of each of His own. Let's open our garden to that work. What a wonderful fragrance will then be enjoyed by Him in all those gardens.

### **Song 4:15-16 | My Garden, His Garden**

15 "[You are] a garden spring,  
A well of fresh water,  
And streams [flowing] from Lebanon."  
16 "Awake, O north [wind],  
And come, [wind of] the south;  
Make my garden breathe out [fragrance],  
Let its spices be wafted abroad.  
May my beloved come into his garden  
And eat its choice fruits!"

The groom says to the bride full of delight: "[You are] a garden spring" (verse 15). He sees her as a spring that irrigates her own garden, but also passes on the water to other gardens. It is therefore "a well of fresh water" or "a well of living waters" (Darby translation). Living water flows, it moves on to other places to bring life. It is water "[flowing] from Lebanon". Here we see its origins. The water comes from the mountains, from the height.

A spring is a repository of water, not stagnant water, but living or flowing water. A spring speaks of depth; living water speaks of powerful and constantly flowing water. In the kingdom of peace there flows through Jerusalem "a river of the water of life" (Rev 22:1). The renewed Jerusalem can, in the context of verses 12-15 here in Song of Songs, be called a 'garden city'. The characteristic of a river is also that there is a constant flow of fresh water.

We recognize the description of the groom in the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The Lord Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman about water He wants to give her (Jn 4:10-14). The water He gives not only delivers from restless searching for peace, but gives much more. That water is a spring of joy that someone gets within himself and that he never loses.

That source within is connected with eternal life. By this the Lord refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit Whom He gives in the believer to be in him a fresh spring of Divine joy (Jn 7:38-39). The Holy Spirit is the gift that God gives us through His Son and through Whom we are able to enjoy everything that has been given to us in the Son. The Spirit of God makes the life of the believer fruitful and also makes him a blessing for his surroundings.

The streams come here from Lebanon. The Spirit comes from Him Who is on high, that is Christ. From the high He gave the Spirit (Jn 16:7). All spiritual refreshment and irrigation that flow into the life of the believer comes from the Spirit of life from the presence of the Lord Jesus for us with the Father in heaven.

Then the bride reacts to everything the groom has said of her as a garden in verses 12-15 (verse 16). The bride wants what the groom has given her to grow and develop further. She wants the fragrance of the spices of her garden to be wafted abroad, i.e. the abundance of fragrances can be smelled. This requires wind. She asks the north wind and the south wind to blow through her garden.

In both winds we see a picture of the working of the Spirit in the life of the believer. It is similar to the Spirit Who will blow through the valley of the very dry bones through which life comes (Eze 37:1-2,9-10). Spiritually, the bride asks for the cold of the north wind on the one hand and the heat of the south wind on the other.

The bride knows that regardless of whether the conditions are favorable or unfavorable, whether they are in season or out of season, those conditions serve to make the fragrance of the spices all the more wafted. Paul also speaks of these winds when he says he knows what it is to be humbled and also to live in prosperity. He also speaks about this when he says that he has learned the secret of being filled and going hungry. He knows both

abundance and suffering need (Phil 4:11-12). He is only concerned about the fragrance that comes from it, and that is the power of Christ through Whom he can do everything (Phil 4:13).

The cold that can enter our lives are the things we don't like, the difficulties and worries of life. The bride asks for it. Do we ask for it? The question is whether we are ready to agree with what James says: "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials" (Jam 1:2). We'll agree with what he says, but is it really so that we're happy when we're being tried?

We do not ask for problems, for a cold airflow in our lives. But do we really long that from our life more of fragrance is spread from and for Him? Then we ask Him to search and try us to see whether there is a hurtful way in us, something that hinders the spread of that fragrance, and whether He wants to lead us in the everlasting way (Psa 139:23-24).

There is a north wind in the life of the family in Bethany when Lazarus becomes ill and dies (Jn 11:1-3,17). The cold of death has come. But the Lord Jesus comes with the south wind when He raises Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:43). The Lord has already said that Lazarus' sickness is not to death, "but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it" (Jn 11:4). The painful or sad things that happen to us aim to spread the fragrance of the glory of God and the glorification of the Son of God.

Disappointments are also like the north wind. The two disciples who went to Emmaus experienced the north wind in their disappointment in the Lord (Lk 24:13-21). The reason for this lies in false expectations. We can have them too. We have our wishes and imaginations about what happens. If things go differently, they are disappointments. Then we speak about it, and the Lord comes to us and makes our hearts burning by opening the Scriptures for us (Lk 24:27,32). Then the south wind blows.

We can experience the cold north wind when we have a 'bad news talk' with the doctor. A friend and brother had such a talk. Investigation had shown that he might have colon cancer. Such a message puts the whole of life in a different light. It had driven him and his wife into the presence of the Lord. They live with Him, but that life with Him then took on a deeper meaning.

They shared their needs with the believers of the local church. It had led us all in the presence of the Lord and to intercession. This is the tremendous effect of the 'north wind' that blows through the life of a couple and a local church, enjoying the fragrance of fellowship with the Lord Jesus and with each other.

In his case, shortly thereafter, when the results of the examined piece of intestine were heard, the southern wind started to blow. No cancer cells were found. There was a large polyp that could be removed surgically. This message had made them and us as fellow believers very grateful to our God and Father. The fragrance of fellowship with one another and the glorification of God had blown through the church and beyond, to those who have no part in the faith in Christ, but to whom is testified of what God had done.

Do we wish to be a garden in which the Lord Jesus loves to come, because its fragrance is for Him? If we wish, we will say to Him: "May my beloved come into His garden and eat of its choice fruits!" It is striking that the bride in relation with the winds speaks of "my garden" and when she then invites her beloved to come to her, she speaks of "his garden". It is both true.

We do not often think that our life is a garden for Him, where He would like to be to enjoy the fruit of it, fruit He Himself cultivates. Whether we are such a garden for Him is apparent from the things we fill our time with. Just consider, for example, how much time is spent posting and reading nonsensical messages on social media, consuming films and all sorts of entertaining programs. What can we offer Him of these as the "choice fruits" of *His* garden to eat?

## Song of Songs 5

### Song 5:1 | The Groom in His Garden

*1 "I have come into my garden, my sister, [my] bride;  
I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam.  
I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;  
I have drunk my wine and my milk.  
Eat, friends;  
Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers."*

Here we see that the groom has accepted the invitation of the bride that she makes at the end of the previous chapter (Song 4:16b). He has come into his garden. In the same way the Lord Jesus gladly accepts our invitation to be clearly present in our life. He is always present in our life, but we don't always take into account His presence.

He desires that our life should be for Him as a garden full of fruit for Him. This is only so if we make our whole life available to Him. It is not only about being His property, but also about being aware of it. Otherwise, to our dismay, we will discover that He is not there, while we believe He is, as presented to us in the following verses.

But here He says: "I have come into my garden." Our garden is *His* garden. Our life is His. It belongs to Him. Therefore also all that is in that garden is His. We see that in the ever repeated "my" in this verse. He enjoys every fruit in His garden i.e. every fruit in our life that is for Him. This pleasure is great because it is enjoyed in the relationship of kinship and love.

This is evident from the way in which the groom addresses his beloved. He calls her again "my sister", underlining his relationship with her, and "my bride", underlining his love for her. He has previously called her so (Song 4:9-10). There it is about who she is for his heart. Here it is about what he receives from her, from her garden, which he enjoys.

In this way the Lord Jesus also speaks to us with whom He has connected Himself, both by becoming like us, yet without sin, and by declaring His



love to us. In that relationship He is present in our life to enjoy every fruit that is worked by Himself in our life through His Spirit.

It may be that weeds have to be weeded in our garden first, which limits or even prevents the growth of fruits for the Lord. For example, we must change our reading, listening and viewing behavior if this has a wrong influence on our thinking or takes up so much time that we do not get to bear fruit. Then we can invite the Lord Jesus into our garden, but He finds nothing or, even worse, He finds weeds or sinful habits there. When the weeds are removed, there is room for fruit for Him. Then He comes to take that fruit. He comes only when there are fruits and spices that satisfy Him.

The first fruit He has gathered is myrrh, “my myrrh”. Myrrh speaks of His suffering. When He comes to us, can we tell Him anything about His deep suffering for us? Together with the myrrh He also gathered His “balsam”, or, as it also can be rendered, “spices”. We literally see these spices at His burial (Lk 23:56; 24:1; Jn 19:40). His burial is, so to speak, surrounded by the fragrant aroma of His accomplished work.

The Lord Jesus also finds food and drink in His garden. He eats there “my honeycomb and my honey”. Honey speaks of the natural relationships between the believers among each other. When our natural relationships are good, it is worked through Him and gives Him joy. He rejoices when a man loves his wife and when children are obedient to their parents.

We can apply this further to all forms of authority that regulate the mutual relationships. Authority is outdated, as practice shows. We see it in the families, in society and in the church. If the God-given relationships of authority are exercised properly, it is a joy to the Lord Jesus. It is about authority exercised in love. A husband can show that by being there for his wife and not by claiming authority over her. It is about serving as the Lord Jesus served.

Finally, the Lord Jesus speaks – in picture – about drinking “my wine and my milk”. Wine is a picture of joy (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15a). He rejoices in the fellowship He has with us (1Jn 1:3b-4). Milk is a picture of the Word of God (1Pet 2:2). Fellowship that gives joy only comes about by engaging with God’s Word. This makes us white and clean as milk.

The Lord Jesus finds His full joy in what He can gather from our lives and eat and drink. These are all blessings He Himself has given us. Those blessings return to Him when we appreciate them. This is evident from our gratitude to Him for this.

And He is not alone in enjoying that fruit. He also invites others. There is not only the bride, but there are also the invitees to the wedding. In the future He will prepare a meal with fatty food not only for the remnant of His people, but also for the nations (Isa 25:6). The ‘friends’ are those who have a relationship with Him, but do not yet know the intimacy that the bride or the dedicated believer has. Prophetically, they are the other cities of Israel. They too will share in the joy of the kingdom of peace.

We may also apply this verse to the church when it meets on Sunday around Himself. Then He comes into His garden to enjoy what she has for Him. He doesn’t come to tell something, but to receive something. We may bring Him what He Himself has worked through His Spirit and His Word within us in what He has shown us of His Person in the preceding days.

It is primarily about remembering *Him*, not ourselves. The first thing He gathers is His myrrh. We may tell Him our grateful feelings about His suffering and death and let Him gather them. We often come to meetings to receive food from Him, but here we *give* Him food. “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see [it and] be satisfied” (Isa 53:11a).

Here a point in the book is reached that there is a complete fulfillment of desires, both with the bride and with the groom. The book could end here. But that’s not how it is, because that’s not how life is.

### **Song 5:2 | I Was Asleep but My Heart Was Awake**

2 *“I was asleep but my heart was awake.  
A voice! My beloved was knocking:  
‘Open to me, my sister, my darling,  
My dove, my perfect one!  
For my head is drenched with dew,  
My locks with the damp of the night.’*

With this verse a new part of the book begins. The previous part ended with the groom who came into the garden of the bride and rejoices about

everything there is in her garden. Now follows a part in which we see how the bride refuses the groom again, but later seeks for him and finds him again.

The bride has fallen asleep. She forgot the groom and doesn't seem to need his company. In the life of the believer, it may be that at some moment he is full of the Lord Jesus, but that he also has moments or periods when he is not fully focused on Him and his love is diminished. This change of love and its absence will also characterize the remnant.

When we are asleep, we need the call to awaken from sleep (Eph 5:14). The bride's heart is awake, but still she sleeps. She sleeps with respect to the groom, but she is awake to her surroundings. Her attention is no longer focused on him, but on everything else.

That is a situation that the groom does not want. He wants the undivided attention of his bride. He goes to work for that. He lets the bride hear that he is coming. She perceives it with her ears and knows it is him. She calls him "my beloved". Then she hears him knocking and asking to let him in. He addresses her with names that indicate what she means to him. In the same way the Lord tries to win our often cold or indifferent heart by telling us what we mean to Him.

He calls her "my sister," which indicated that there is a family relationship. For us it is there through the new life, the Divine nature, which has been given to us (2Pet 1:4; Jn 20:17). He also calls her "my darling" or "my friend", which indicates confidentiality, the sharing of secrets. The Lord Jesus calls us "friends" because He has made known to us everything He has heard from His Father. He introduced us into God's thoughts (Jn 15:14-15).

He then calls her "my dove". A dove is the picture of simplicity and affection toward him. For us, we must have an eye only for the Lord Jesus, which is worked through the presence of the Holy Spirit, Who is compared to a dove (Mt 10:16; 3:16).

Finally, he calls her "my perfect one". By this he means that she has reached the stage of maturity. Spiritually, it means that a believer knows his position in Christ. He knows that through the one sacrifice of Christ he is "perfect for all time" (Heb 10:14). Then he will also behave spiritually mature (Phil 3:15a). The fact that Christ addresses a 'sleeping' believer

with these names shows how lovingly He wants to awaken such a believer to live for Him again.

But the groom is not finished talking to her yet. He points not only to what she means to him, but also to what he does and has done for her. He spent the night outside, without a place to sleep. There he thought of her, with thoughts of blessing for her.

Thus it may be that the Lord Jesus is outside our life and we are inside in our safe, comfortable environment. There has come a separation that is unbearable to Him. He has none on the earth but His bride, the believers. If she no longer shows any interest in Him, He will do everything to re-awaken her love for Him.

To this end He shows what He endures for her. He wanders, as it were, lonely through the night. When He comes to her, He tells her what is on His head and His hairlocks as a result of His search for her. His search is not about her location, because He knows where she is. His search concerns her heart, for it is no longer directed at Him.

If we no longer give Him the only place in our lives, He presents Himself to us in His suffering at night. We can then think of the fears that overwhelmed Him in Gethsemane. There His head is “drenched with dew” and His hairlocks “with the damp of the night”. We know how He was in agony in Gethsemane, how His sweat fell down upon the ground “like drops of blood” (Lk 22:44).

His “head ... drenched with dew” reminds us that He always thought of His bride to start a new life with her. Dew announces a new day of refreshment. He thought about this in Gethsemane. His “locks [drenched] with the damp of the night” recalls His dedication – of which the locks speak – to her, to which the tears of suffering in the night are attached (Heb 5:7). That has kept Him busy in the garden.

Will this impressive approach work for His sleeping beloved? What does it do with us, who may also have fallen asleep?

### **Song 5:3 | Too Much Effort**

| 3 *“I have taken off my dress,*

*How can I put it on [again]?  
I have washed my feet,  
How can I dirty them [again]?*

The bride's reaction after all the groom has said to her in verse 2 is dismissive, shocking. She doesn't want to change her cozy place for the cold of the night. The groom's warm love leaves her untouched. She is mentally lazy and satisfied with her rest. Making an effort for the groom is too tiring. She is like the wise virgins who, like the foolish virgins, have fallen asleep while waiting for the bridegroom (Mt 25:5) or as the disciples who are unable to watch with the Lord (Lk 22:45).

Her excuse that she can't accept His invitation is that she has "taken off" her "dress". Clothing speaks of our behavior, of what is visible to others. Spiritually seen, her behavior speaks of a believer who is ashamed to stand up for the Lord Jesus and to testify openly of Him. There is nothing to see of the "garments of salvation" with which He has clothed her (Isa 61:10).

Another excuse she gives is that she has "washed" her "feet". This means spiritually speaking that a believer has cleansed himself from the pollution of the world and as a consequence also prefers to stay away from it. That is an attitude of isolation. This purity, which in itself is good, becomes an enemy.

This is what complacency about all we have received in Christ leads to. Then we think enough is enough and don't see challenges anymore. The willingness to face the fact that we need to change is the price of progress. Complacency results in the refusal to be motivated to a higher calling. Imagine, we were allowing the Lord Jesus back into our lives and giving Him authority over it again. That would mean that we would be deprived of the pleasure of our present rest. We must not think about it. What we also do not think about then, is that we are leaving the Lord outside in the cold of the night.

Do we still want to go out and identify ourselves with Him in His rejection? Do we still want to be with Him? Yes, on Sundays of course. But during the week? He does everything that we search for Him again to be with Him, also and especially in daily life.

Paul says that we would have to go out of the world if we do not want to have contact with all kinds of sinners and do not want to come into contact with the filth of the world (1Cor 5:10). But we are always dealing with sinners. The world defiles us without we are wanting that it happens. We can't do anything about colleagues swearing or telling dirty jokes. At school we sometimes have to look at wrong things or read books with sex and coarse language. All this defiles us.

But the Lord Jesus wants to cleanse us. The water of life, the Word of God, cleanses us as we read it. After our contact with the world we have to go home and read the Word of God. Then our thoughts are cleansed and we are filled again with the Lord Jesus and the things that speak of Him.

We might think: 'If we stay at home, nothing can happen to us.' But this does not improve the sinful flesh. We can retreat into a monastery, but we take our own flesh with us. The images of our heart defiles us. Everything that defiles us comes from our own heart, that is what it is all about. The Lord Jesus wants to speak to our heart.

With what have we locked off our lives so that He cannot come to us? Is the bolt perhaps our conviction that everything is good with us? We can be sure that we are in the right place and that we are doing things in the right way. In the church of Laodicea we see how this bolt works. They think they are great, but do not realize that they are blind and that the Lord Jesus is outside. The Lord then goes to work to remove that bolt. We see that in the next verse.

### **Song 5:4-6 | The Bolt Removed**

4 *"My beloved extended his hand through the opening,  
And my feelings were aroused for him.*

5 *"I arose to open to my beloved;  
And my hands dripped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,  
On the handles of the bolt.*

6 *"I opened to my beloved,  
But my beloved had turned away [and] had gone!  
My heart went out [to him] as he spoke.*

*I searched for him but I did not find him;*

*I called him but he did not answer me.*

In the previous verses we have seen that the bride has fallen asleep and is no longer paying attention to the groom. When the groom comes to her and wakes her up, she makes several excuses to stay in her cozy bedroom. The groom says who she is for him and what he has done for her. But the bride maintains: she doesn't want to get out of her easy position and follow the groom outside. She has locked her room for him with her apologies. We have seen the application this has for us in our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

In the verses we now have before us, we see that the groom, although he has been declined, continues to approach his bride. The bride sees her beloved extending his hand through the opening of the door (verse 4). She has locked the door for him. But he finds an opening in the room in which she has locked up herself. Through that opening he shows his hand. That touches her. It is the hand of her beloved, the hand that is busy for her. That hand wants to remove the bolt, so that the bride can come to him.

This reminds us of the hands of the Lord Jesus that He shows to His own when they are afraid together (Lk 24:39; Zec 13:6). It are the hands pierced for them. The Lord Jesus also knows how to find an opening in our lives to show us His pierced hand. If we see that hand, His hand, which was nailed to the cross for us, for me, it cannot leave us unmoved. It will make us, just like the bride, restless inside.

Seeing the groom's hand leads the bride to arise (verse 5). She wants to open the door for him. She takes the handle of the bolt. There appears to be myrrh on it. His hand has left that myrrh on it and it is now on her own hands and fingers. She comes into personal contact with it. It is myrrh in abundance, her hands "drip with myrrh". It is also "liquid myrrh", there is movement in it. She is – in picture – reminded of his suffering, to which the myrrh refers.

This is also what we need when our love for the Lord Jesus is weakened. We need the remembrance of His suffering, not superficially, but the deep experience of it. Once again, I have to understand very well what He has suffered for me personally. The myrrh must drip, as it were, from my

hands and fingers. This will lead me to commit myself once again entirely to Him and to give Him all my love.

We see in Peter that he denies the Lord as soon as he gets into trouble. This is because he fell asleep in Gethsemane. Then the Lord shows him His love by looking at Him – while He suffers. Thus He pours, as it were, the myrrh over His hands. Through this personal encounter with the Lord in His suffering, Peter repents.

Then the bride gets up to open (verse 6). When she opens the door to let him in, it turns out that it is no longer there. He is gone! Where is he? He has withdrawn. Why? He wants her to experience what her refusal to open up means to him. That is how it can be in our lives. When we finally come to open the door for Him and allow Him back into our lives, He suddenly cannot be found. Then we must learn that He also does this out of love for us, to teach us even more to realize Who He is. For He did not disappear forever, but He left to persuade us to seek Him.

The bride has suddenly come to life. She is suddenly full of action to look for Him. How did that come about? She says it: “My heart went out [to him] as he spoke.” His voice, his words, have worked that out in her. That’s how it goes with us. The words of the Lord Jesus “are spirit and are life” (Jn 6:63). He speaks living and life-giving words. Peter acknowledges this and therefore wants to go to none other than the Lord, for He has “words of eternal life” (Jn 6:67-69).

The bride goes out searching for him, but doesn’t find him. She calls, but he doesn’t answer. By leaving he tests her longing if she really wants to search for him. We also sometimes wonder why the Lord does not answer when we seek Him in prayer. One of the lessons He wants us to learn is that we ourselves cannot set the conditions for contact with Him. Sometimes God hides Himself from us, that is the feeling we have at least (cf. Lam 3:8,44), because we have hidden ourselves so often for Him. Sometimes God does not answer our calls, because so often we have not answered His speaking to us.

It is His love that acts this way, for He wants to work dedication and arouse love. Therefore the Lord also lets us go through exercises to see if we miss Him and seek Him. He then tries us to see if it really matters to us that we



want to have fellowship with Him. It is also possible that we only call to Him because we are in a bad situation. We want to be delivered from that and if God only just wants to do that. After that we can continue with our own life, in which He should not interfere too emphatically.

If we really want to live a life in fellowship with Him, we will not be disappointed if He does not answer immediately or answers in a different way than we imagine. Then we continue to trust that He has the best for us and we persevere in our search for Him. We see that here with the bride. She continues her search. This brings her into circumstances through which she testifies to who the groom is to her, as the following verses show. The Lord Jesus also wants to work this in us through situations in which we, to our feelings, have lost Him.

### **Song 5:7-9 | Searching For the Groom**

7 *"The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me,  
They struck me [and] wounded me;  
The guardsmen of the walls took away my shawl from me.*  
8 *"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
If you find my beloved,  
As to what you will tell him:  
For I am lovesick."*  
9 *"What kind of beloved is your beloved,  
O most beautiful among women?  
What kind of beloved is your beloved,  
That thus you adjure us?"*

The bride continues searching in the city (verse 7). There the watchmen make the rounds. So it is still night. She doesn't search for them, but they find her and act harshly against her. We have met the watchmen before (Song 3:1-3). There they are not as harshly in their actions as here. Now they wound the bride. When distance has come between the Lord and us, we sometimes have to make painful experiences. Then the Lord lets this happen to bring us back to Him.

Being struck and wounded, which literally happens to the bride here, can also happen on a figurative level, for example by making severe reproach-

es. Accusatory words can cut hard. They wound the soul, they hurt within. That happens when we are in a place where we do not belong. If the bride had immediately risen and had opened the groom, this would not have happened, then she would have been spared this suffering and shame.

The guardsmen also take her shawl or veil from her. The veil is a picture of complete dedication to the groom. The veil means: I am only for Him. But that is not true. It is her profession, but not her practice. Therefore, the veil must be removed. If there is hypocrisy in our life, the Lord must denounce it and take it away.

For example, we say that we only come together in the Name of the Lord Jesus. But it is hypocrisy if we still give our own interpretation to the meetings. Or we have our established habits from which it is not allowed to deviate. Then the Spirit of God cannot work and the veil must be removed. In this case, the veil is not a sign of dedication and surrender, but a kind of bolt. These kinds of bolts, which give the appearance of dedication, but in reality block the Lord's and the Spirit's access to our life, must be taken away.

If the Lord sometimes uses hard-handed methods for this, let us not blame the other who is used by the Lord for it. The 'guardsmen' who find us can be all kinds of people. Even though they are people who, like the guardsmen, have no idea what they are doing to us, it is still important to see the Lord's hand in them. He is busy bringing us back to a living relationship with Him.

We see the effect with the bride. She is not confused, but accepts the treatment she gets. She knows it is her own fault. That is where the return begins. She has come at a low point and is starting to make her way up.

We also see it with Samson. His long hair – the outward sign of his dedication and separation to God – was cut off and removed (Jdg 16:17-19). His eyes are gouged out and he grinds flour in the Philistine prison (Jdg 16:21). Deeper he could not sink. But then we read that the hair of his head began to grow again (Jdg 16:22). If we have become sincere and honest, that is a new beginning. Our first dedication was good at first, but gradually it became a cover, a bolt. When this is seen, the time has come for a new dedication. That is what the Lord wants to work with you and me.

From a prophetic point of view, this will happen to the remnant in the end time from the side of the antichrist and his followers. They will chastise the remnant, the bride, because she does not join them in following the antichrist. They are a means in God's hand for this, without realizing it themselves.

After this humiliating lesson, the bride does not take a defeatist attitude. She continues to search. She did not ask the guardsmen for help. She has no relation with them at all. They found her and engaged with her uninvited. This is different with "the daughters of Jerusalem" (verse 8). She turns to them and asks if they want to tell the groom that she is lovesick when they find him. In doing so, she indicates how much she desires his presence. She said that once before (Song 2:5), but there she is in the arms of the groom. Here she says it while she misses him and he had to leave her as a result of her own fault.

She is not ashamed of her weakness and asks for help in her search from those who do not have that intimate relationship with the groom (cf. Song 6:1). Acknowledgment of weakness does not take away anything from our beauty, but forces respect. If we have any self-knowledge, we are aware that we are only very weak in living out our privileges. We owe nothing to ourselves, but everything to the Lord.

The daughters of Jerusalem see a special beauty in the bride (verse 9). They address her with "o most beautiful among the women". We would say: she doesn't look like that. After all, she was taken firmly in hand by the guardsmen and wounded. The fact that the daughters of Jerusalem address her in this way is because she is full of the groom. That is noted.

If we are full of the Lord Jesus, all the things in our life that would otherwise stand out will disappear into the background. We can think of things we have done for which we are ashamed. But when we have truly confessed them and we are full of the Lord Jesus, the testimony of Him shines through everything. Instead of contempt, the question then arises as to what is special about Him of Whom our heart is so full, thus dwarfing every other love.

Her answer comes in the following verses. Therein the bride gives a description of the groom. She says wonderful things about him. This goes

beyond just saying what she has received from Him. She speaks of Himself, as He is. Her description of Him is the spiritual fruit of the trial she underwent as a result of leaving Him.

### **Song 5:10-11 | White and Red – Head and Hair**

*10 "My beloved is dazzling and ruddy,  
Outstanding among ten thousand.*

*11 "His head is [like] gold, pure gold;  
His locks are [like] clusters of dates  
[And] black as a raven.*

The daughters of Jerusalem asked the bride twice in verse 9: "What kind of beloved is your beloved?" They ask this question because they see how full the bride is of her groom. In verse 10, she begins an impressive description of him of whom her heart is so full. She doesn't have to search for words.

It is remarkable that every time the bride speaks about the groom, she does so to others. She testifies of who he is for her to her surroundings. When the groom speaks about the bride, he does so to her. He always assures her of the value she has for him and lets her know how much he rejoices in her. We may do the same with regard to Him of Whom our heart is full, realizing that His heart is full of us.

She starts by telling who her groom is. He is "my beloved" and He is "white [better than dazzling] and ruddy". We can apply this directly to the Lord Jesus, our 'Beloved'. First and foremost, He is white. This speaks of His absolute purity. He is the pure One and the holy One. The Lord Jesus was born of a sinful woman, Mary, but was not conceived by a sinful man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Therefore He is also "the holy Child" (Lk 1:35).

He is absolutely without sin. He never committed a sin, neither in deeds nor in words (1Pet 2:22). And not only that. He did not know sin (2Cor 5:21). It is so that in Him there is no sin (1Jn 3:5). No one could convict Him of sin (Jn 8:46a). The devil had nothing in Him, that is to say, no single lead (Jn 14:30). This cannot be said of the bride, nor of any human being. The bride has also acknowledged this. She has said of herself that she is dark

(Song 1:5-6). Only someone who wholeheartedly repeats this after her can have a relationship with Him.

Next is that he is red. Red is the color of the blood. The Lord Jesus has shed His blood to possess His bride. Only through His blood can the darkness of sin be washed away. This makes someone pure in the eyes of the holy God. The Lord Jesus is perfectly pure in His life and has never had anything to do with sin. The only time He has had to do with it is on the cross. There He was made sin by God for everyone who believes in Him. This is also the complete settlement of sin. The sins of the faithful sinner have been judged and forgiven forever and disposed of.

After this general, introductory description, the bride exclaims in delight that he stands out above everyone. If we are so full of our Lord, we can't cry out any other than this. He is "fairer than the sons of men" (Psa 45:2a). No one can be compared to Him. He is the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29). He is the Author Who brings many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). He is the true David who has slain his ten thousands (1Sam 18:7).

He is not only lifted up as a standard above Israel, but also above all nations (Isa 5:26; 11:10,12). His standard is the cross. There the victory has been achieved and the full result will soon be visible. We can already see that result in faith and praise Him for it.

From verse 11 onward the bride mentions ten characteristics of the groom. She describes him from head to toe. The description begins with his head (verse 11). That's like fine gold. It is clear that this is visual language. We can apply this again directly to the Lord Jesus. The head is a picture of wisdom and insight, and gold of Divine glory. His wisdom and understanding are Divine. So He is busy with His bride, but also with His creation. His headship also speaks of dominion. He is Head above all (1Cor 11:3; Col 1:15-17).

His thinking is always focused on God and full of doing His will. Further on in this chapter gold is also mentioned in connection with His hands and His feet (verses 14-15). It points out that the carrying out of God's thoughts in His works and His way is always Divinely perfect.

His curly hairlocks speak of His dedication and submission as Man to His God (cf. 1Cor 11:15). It is a feature of His being a Nazarite (Num 6:5). To a

man, having long hair is a dishonor (1Cor 11:14). His 'dishonor' is that He submits Himself completely to God and gives up His position as Head of creation.

The locks are black, not grey. It points out that the power of life is in Him and He is in the power of His life. The Hebrew word for 'black' is related to the word for 'youth'. The raven is an unclean bird (Lev 11:13,15). Thus the Lord Jesus is treated by the religious leaders of His people. But God gives the raven its food when its young cry to Him for help (Job 38:41). In this way the Lord Jesus has always expected and received everything from His God. This has given Him the strength to go His way to the glory of God.

### **Song 5:12-13 | Eyes, Cheeks and Lips**

*12 "His eyes are like doves  
Beside streams of water,  
Bathed in milk,  
[And] reposed in [their] setting.  
13 "His cheeks are like a bed of balsam,  
Banks of sweet-scented herbs;  
His lips are lilies  
Dripping with liquid myrrh.*

The bride continues her description of the groom with "his eyes" (verse 12). To see someone's eyes one has to be close to the person. The eyes are sometimes called 'the mirror of the soul'. If you look someone deep in the eyes, you can read a lot of what is going on in him, whether someone is happy or sad.

The bride compares his eyes to "doves" (cf. Song 1:15; 4:1). That means that his eyes are characterized by what characterizes doves. Doves have a "clear" or "single" (Darby translation) eye (Mt 6:22). A single eye is an eye that focuses on only one object. With the Lord Jesus we see this in perfection. His gaze was always directly ahead (Pro 4:25). Several times we read of Him that He lifted up His eyes to heaven (Jn 17:1; 11:41).

His eyes were always on the Father. He always had, so to speak, 'eye contact' with His Father. He never saw anything wrong and never looked in a wrong way. Eve did, so sin came into the world. The Lord Jesus has al-

ways been guided by His Father – by everything He said. This is indicated by “beside streams of water”. He lived by the Word of God (Mt 4:4). That Word was a refreshment for Him (Psa 110:7).

With that refreshment He also revives or restores others who are affected by sin. This is how He looked at Peter, after Peter has denied Him three times. This reminds Peter of the word the Lord has spoken to him. That breaks his heart, and the way to restoration has begun (Lk 22:61-62).

Still the bride is not finished with the description of the groom’s eyes. She sees his eyes “bathed in milk, [and] reposed in [their] setting”. She compares the eye white of the eye socket to milk. Milk is associated with the thought of abundance, purity, cleanness and healthy food. Israel is a land flowing with milk and honey. Milk is also a picture of the healthy food of God’s Word (1Pet 2:2).

The description “reposed in [their] setting” radiates tranquility. This gives a picture of the full fellowship of the Lord with His Father. His eyes do not wander, nor go back and forth nervously. His eyes are always on His Father. From the fellowship with the Father His eyes also go to His disciples (Lk 6:20) and to the crowds (Jn 6:5; Mt 14:14).

It is good to know the eyes of the Lord Jesus and to read in them what is in them for us. They are the eyes of doves, which also reminds us of the Holy Spirit, Who descended upon Him in the form of a dove. The Spirit gives His eyes a shine reminiscent of streams of water and a look reminiscent of the purity of milk. His eyes are for His own a source of sympathy.

After the eyes, the gaze is focused on His cheeks (verse 13). Then we remember that He gave His cheeks to those who plucked out His beard (Isa 50:6). For those who know Him, those cheeks are “like a bed of balsam, banks of sweet-scented herbs”. His reaction to the reprobate treatment inflicted upon Him is full of rest, like a bed. He has suffered silently. And what a pleasant fragrance ascended out of that rest up to God, like the fragrance of balsam. He Who was once despised as the defenseless One is therefore admired by God and His own.

The “banks” (of a river) speak of not being distracted, going one direction. The Lord Jesus did not let Himself be distracted from the way He had to go. He went all the way until all His work was accomplished. Herbs, like

spices, give a pleasant fragrance. His watchfulness, his constant attention to the Father, has been for the Father a fragrant aroma, a great joy for His heart.

Here the bride tells that she has seen that in the groom. Have we seen this in the Lord Jesus? We have to look at Him, that is, that we read the Word and think about Him. As we think about His life on earth, we will get to know more and more of His Person and start to admire Him more and more. We will bear witness to this to others.

The bride compares the lips of the groom with “lilies dripping with liquid myrrh”. We read of the Lord Jesus that upon His lips “grace is poured” (Psa 45:2). The lily is a picture of tenderness in a region of thorns (Song 2:1-2). The Lord Jesus spoke words of life and encouragement among a people compared to “thistles and thorns” (Eze 2:6).

In an unruly, pain causing world, He speaks words of grace. These words are not in the newspaper, but in God’s Word and in the hearts of those who have accepted His words. They have experienced, like the bride, that His words are not cheap words. They are steeped in the suffering that He wanted to undergo in order to be able to speak those words. This is what the “liquid myrrh” speaks of. There is testified of Him: “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks” (Jn 7:46). “And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips” (Lk 4:22a).

He can sympathize with our weaknesses because He suffered the same on earth as we did, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). We never knock on the door in vain if we want to tell Him our problems. When we come to Him with our need, He is open to us and we may experience that He understands us. Then he says: “Take courage” (Mt 9:2,22; 14:27; Mk 10:49; Jn 16:33; Acts 23:11). This is such a word of grace with which He comforts us with the comfort He knows from His own experience.

### **Song 5:14-16 | Hands, Abdomen, Legs, Appearance, Mouth**

14 *“His hands are rods of gold  
Set with beryl;  
His abdomen is carved ivory*



*Inlaid with sapphires.*

15 *"His legs are pillars of alabaster*

*Set on pedestals of pure gold;*

*His appearance is like Lebanon*

*Choice as the cedars.*

16 *"His mouth is [full of] sweetness.*

*And he is wholly desirable.*

*This is my beloved and this is my friend,*

*O daughters of Jerusalem."*

The bride continues with the hands of the groom (verse 14). Hereby we think of the Lord Jesus. His hands point to His works. The universe is the work of his hands (Psa 19:1; Isa 45:12; 66:1-2). The "rods [or: rings] of gold" remind us that everything He does carries His Divine attribute. Just as a ring is without end, so are His works without end. This all-powerful Creator is our Bridegroom, Who has connected us to Himself through His love.

His hands are nailed to the cross (Psa 22:16c). They are precious to anyone who is touched by them (Mt 8:3,15; 14:31). He has engraved the believers in the palms of His hands (Isa 49:16). What is engraved is impossible to remove. No one can snatch a child of God out of His hand (Jn 10:28).

It is added that they are "set with beryl". Beryl is a precious stone. Precious stones have a meaning. A possible meaning can be derived from the place they have on the breastplate of the high priest. The beryl or topaz is the first stone of the fourth row of precious stones (Exo 28:20; 39:13). We can draw a parallel with the fourth Gospel, the Gospel according to John. In that Gospel the glory of the Lord Jesus is presented as the Son of God.

We can also connect the beryl with the governmental ways of God. That stone is also mentioned in connection with the wheels of the throne chariot of God which Ezekiel sees (Eze 1:16; 10:9). The throne chariot symbolizes God's government in the world. He makes it clear that God leads everything to the goal He has set and that no one can change anything about it.

All "the works of his hands", all His actions in and with the world, "are truth and justice" (Psa 111:7). What applies to the world also applies to the

life of His own. God's plan with the world and with our life is that therein the Lord Jesus will be visible and glorified. It is a great privilege to see that.

"His abdomen" indicates His inner being. He is inwardly committed to us. His inner being is compared to "carved ivory". Ivory is mentioned in connection with the kingship of Solomon, the king of peace (1Kgs 10:22; 2Chr 9:21). Solomon has made "a great throne of ivory" (1Kgs 10:18; 2Chr 9:17). We can therefore connect ivory with the kingship of the Lord Jesus that He exercises in peace. His government excels in justice.

His government is not hard or insensitive, but full of sympathy for His subjects. He excels in this too. This is emphasized by the "sapphires" with which the ivory is covered. Sapphire is a precious stone which, like the beryl mentioned above, appears on the breastplate of the high priest. This stone is the second stone in the second row of the breastplate (Exo 28:18; 39:11). We can link this to the second Gospel, the Gospel according to Mark. This Gospel is that of the Servant, Who serves men full of compassion and does everything in obedience to His Sender.

We also see the sapphire, again like the beryl, in connection with the governmental ways of God. He is connected with the throne of God. In any case, it reminds Ezekiel of this (Eze 1:26; 10:1). The reign of God is exercised by the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man. God has given Him the power to do so. It is a great encouragement to know that He Who rules is our beloved Savior, Who has given His life for us.

Then "his legs" are described (verse 15). They look like "pillars of alabaster". Pillars support a building and indicate stability, like the two pillars of the temple, Jachin and Boaz (1Kgs 7:21). Alabaster is hard. It makes clear how rigid and immovable everything is with the Lord Jesus. The universe rests on Him and is therefore certain. There is nothing in the world and nothing in the church that is capable of shaking Him.

The pillars are "set on pedestals of pure gold". This indicates that God's glory is the foundation of His immovable dominion. The pedestals are reminiscent of His feet, of His way through the world. He went His way in God's power, without hesitation, without returning, without slowing down.

Everywhere He has left the traces of His glory. His walk on earth was perfectly Divine. God “does not take pleasure in the legs of a man” (Psa 147:10). But how different were His legs. He is perfectly stable, untouchable to all problems and all needs that may arise over His own. By looking at Him in this way we are encouraged to persevere in our way on earth.

The bride has described her groom from head to toe. She then takes a step back, as it were, and looks at his whole “appearance”. It looks “like Lebanon” and “the cedars” thereon (Psa 92:12; Isa 60:13). The view is overwhelming because of the immovability and beauty.

Just as cedars transcend all trees, so for us the Lord Jesus transcends all people. He is the glorified Man in heaven. This is a place the Father could give to Him and Him alone and not to anyone else. We see this when we see Him in His full glory, as far as it is perceptible to us. He is the only One Who has truly and fully deserved to be “crowned with glory and honor” (Heb 2:9).

And suddenly another thing is described of Him: “His mouth is [full of] sweetness” (verse 16). With the mouth, better: palate, the food is tasted. Everything that the Lord Jesus has tasted in His life on earth is mere sweetness. He has fed Himself with everything the Father said to Him. It was His food to do the will of His Father (Jn 4:34). He has tasted perfectly “that the Lord is merciful” (1Pet 2:3).

Everything about the Lord Jesus, He Himself, is “wholly desirable”. For those who love Him, there is nothing to discover in Him that is not desirable. It is not possible to describe His glory in full extend (cf. Jn 21:25). Everything about Him is overwhelming.

The “daughters of Jerusalem” have asked the bride what is so special about her groom (verse 9). She has given an impressive description of him. This confession is the result of the loving contact of the groom with his bride. The Lord Jesus is also working in our lives to persuade us to see much of Him and bear witness to that. In everything we learn about Him in glory and beauty, we may also say: This is my Beloved and this is my Friend. We experience Him close to us when we are engaged with Him in that way.

## Song of Songs 6

### **Song 6:1-3 | Where Is the Groom?**

1 *"Where has your beloved gone,*

*O most beautiful among women?*

*Where has your beloved turned,*

*That we may seek him with you?"*

2 *"My beloved has gone down to his garden,*

*To the beds of balsam,*

*To pasture [his flock] in the gardens*

*And gather lilies.*

3 *"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine,*

*He who pastures [his flock] among the lilies."*

After the bride described the groom in the way she has done, the daughters of Jerusalem confirm that she is the "most beautiful among women" (verse 1). The bride made them enthusiastic for him. After her impressive description of him, the daughters of Jerusalem ask if they can help to find him. Now the bride no longer asks the daughters of Jerusalem for help (Song 5:8), but it is the other way around. They ask her where her beloved has turned.

In a similar way, the disciples have tried to make Thomas enthusiastic about the Lord by telling him that they have seen Him (Jn 20:24-25a). Thus we can make others enthusiastic for Him by testifying of Him Who He is to us. If our testimony is real, it contains attracting or recruiting power.

When we talk enthusiastically about Him, the desire arises in others to seek Him too. This may be the result of Bible lectures or Bible studies in which He is central. We listen to what others say about Him. That encourages us to investigate more Who He is. He also likes to listen to it when believers speak about Him. He will then reveal Himself to them.

When the daughters of Jerusalem have asked the bride where her beloved has turned, the bride suddenly knows where he is (verse 2). He "has gone down to his garden". By this she means her heart, her life. He called her

“a closed garden” (Song 4:12). After a short period of her slackening love for him, as a result of which she has placed him outside her life, her heart is again only for him.

When we are full of the Lord, we also know where to find Him. Then our heart is like “beds of balsam”, a place of rest and sweetness for Him (cf. Song 5:13). He comes to enjoy what we are for Him. Although we sometimes shut Him away from our lives, He never really leaves us. Nor do we have to go far up in heaven or far down in the realm of the dead to seek Him. He is near us, in our mouth and in our heart (Deu 30:12-14). He can disappear from our interest. Then He withdraws from us, that we may feel the lack of Him. Thus, He brings us to confess our cooled love for Him.

The Lord Jesus not only pastures in “His garden”, which is in my life, but also “in the gardens”, which is in the lives of other believers who also love Him. For them He is also the center of their lives. That’s how our vision expands. We see not only our own life, but also that of others in connection with Him.

With all these believers He wants to “gather lilies”. He seeks fruit in the life of His own. He finds this fruit when the Holy Spirit can work in our life. He is only interested in the fruit of the Spirit, not in our achievements. The lilies he wants to collect do not indicate impressive deeds, but tenderness and vulnerability in the midst of a hard, thorny world (Song 2:1-2). These are features of Himself and He would like to collect them from the lives of His own.

The bride becomes aware again of her connection with him and his love for her (verse 3; cf. Song 2:16). What she says now goes beyond what she said in Song of Songs 2:16. There she first says that her beloved is hers. She is still ‘I’ oriented. But now she first says she belongs to him. She is focused on him. She has grown spiritually through experience.

A proof of spiritual growth is that what I have received is increasingly coming second, while what Christ has received is increasingly coming first. We think about the joy He can experience in our life when we live for Him. Then we are no longer busy with ourselves, but with Him. That does not mean that we are ungrateful for what we have received. The point is

that we do not dwell on the gifts, but that from the gifts we focus our eye on the Giver. That also gives a deeper satisfaction.

It is a sign of spiritual growth when we think about what we mean to the Lord Jesus instead of what He is to us. We are more focused on Him than on ourselves. The first finds its origin more in the feelings, the second more in the Person Who is the reason for those feelings. The question should not be ‘what can the other person do for me’, but ‘what can I mean for the other person?’ The Lord Jesus never thought of Himself. He has always thought of the pleasure of God and the well-being of His own.

If we know that we are His, it also means that we are completely for His responsibility. He takes full care of us. Whatever happens in our life, He is involved and helps us. When we know that He is ours, it means that He is at our side with all His love and all His possibilities. There is nothing in our life that is beyond His control.

Thus He pastures “in the midst of the lilies”. Here we have again ‘the lilies’. He is in the midst of these delicate flowers and He appreciates them. To Him we are like these flowers. We are tender, we are weak, incapable, and we have no power to do anything. But He “pastures” among them, that is, He finds that place of rest with them in a world that has no place for Him.

### **Song 6:4 | Beautiful, Lovely, Awesome**

4 “You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling,  
As lovely as Jerusalem,  
As awesome as an army with banners.

Here the groom is speaking again. Now that the bride has found him again, he tells again what she means to him. He has told her before that she is beautiful (Song 4:1). It is an encouragement for the bride to hear this again after the slackening of her love. We also need to hear from the mouth of the Lord Jesus what we mean to Him every time, especially after a period when our love for Him has been weak. This is how the Lord Jesus encourages the apostle Paul when he is in prison (Acts 23:11).

The practical lesson is that a man regularly tells his wife that she is beautiful. This should not only be said when she has dressed well for a particular

occasion. It's about being beautiful for who she is, being valued for her person with her own abilities. We must also say the same to our children and grandchildren personally. When a child or grandchild is called Emma, we say: 'You are the most beautiful Emma in the whole world!'

A mother called her son. She asked him: 'Where are you, what do you do?' The son later said: 'My mother is only interested in where I am or what I do. But she didn't ask me how I'm doing, how I feel.' He missed the interest in him as a person. This is also how we can deal with fellow believers. We do this if we are more interested in what they are doing than in what is going on inside them.

The fact that the groom calls her "my darling" or "my friend" is also a repetition. He has called her so several times already (Song 1:9,15; 2:2,10,13; 4:1,7; 5:2). With this he says that there may again be that confidential relationship that characterizes friendship. He can share with her the intimate thoughts of his heart. That is fellowship. It is a next step in the spiritual development in the unity between the groom and the bride.

The purpose of confidentiality is fellowship, growing in unity. For us it means that seeing the Lord Jesus transforms us into His image (2Cor 3:18). Christ wants to recognize His image in us, that He is formed in us (Gal 4:19). That is the result of fellowship, recognizing Himself in us. This can happen because He is our life.

With the words "beautiful", "lovely" and "awesome" the groom uses three pictures. The bride is beautiful "as Tirzah". Tirzah was the capital of the ten tribes realm before Omri made Samaria the capital (1Kgs 15:33; 16:23-24). Tirzah means, among other things, 'pleasure'. It must have been a beautiful city.

He then compared her loveliness to "Jerusalem", the capital of the two tribes realm. Jerusalem means 'the foundation of peace'. In both capitals we see the glory of all Israel when the twelve tribes are back in the land.

The bride is beautiful and lovely for the groom, but also awesome for those who want to do her harm. She is "as an army with banners" to resist the enemy.

After speaking to young people about sexuality with the history of Dinah as an example (Gen 34:1-4) two girls came to me. They looked beautiful. They asked what kind of evil it can be to go out, just like Dinah, and have certain friendships.

My answer was: 'Then you're on dangerous ground. Boys can come to you and they want 'something' with you. They are there for that. If you're there too, they think you want the same thing. 'Yes, it has happened before', one said, 'but I said no.' My reaction was: 'If a boy has had the occasion to ask you, it means you've already gone too far.' Such girls have not raised up the banners, the banner of the Lord Jesus' love (Song 2:4; 5:10), and are not awesome to the world, but are attractive to the world.

For us, it means that we do not give sin, which is an enemy, a chance to gain a place in our lives. We must take a clear stand against sin. This also applies to the local church. When sin is allowed to enter, the love for the Lord Jesus disappears.

In the bride is beauty and loveliness that attracts those who want to join her and at the same time there is a deterrent power and strength toward those who want to do her harm. It seems that many believers have lost both aspects. Because we have lost our holy character, people are no longer afraid of us. Because we have lost our lovely character, there is no longer any attraction with us.

### **Song 6:5-7 | The Bride Described Again**

*5 "Turn your eyes away from me,  
For they have confused me;  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Gilead.*

*6 "Your teeth are like a flock of ewes  
Which have come up from [their] washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.*

*7 "Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate  
Behind your veil.*



When we look at the Lord Jesus, when our eye is only on Him, it is as if our gaze is too much for Him (verse 5). When we are restored to fellowship with Him, our eyes are directed more on Him than before. They no longer roam away from Him to other objects. Then we see 'Jesus alone'. It is as if this confuses Him. Thus, He can be amazed about the faith of a Canaanite woman. She believes with perseverance in His power to heal her daughter. This elicits from Him the statement: "O woman, your faith is great" (Mt 15:28).

The groom is impressed by her renewed dedication. This leads him to describe her again because of what she means to him. He starts with "your hair", which is the symbol of her dedication. He sees the same dedication to and dependence on him he described earlier (Song 4:1b). It is a repetition, but he sees that the bride now experiences deeper what he says with it. This is also the case with the believer who, after a period of slackening in his relationship with the Lord, again comes to live in fellowship with Him.

Also what he says of the bride's teeth is a repetition (verse 6; Song 4:2), but also not meaningless. Here too, the groom assumes a deeper feeling of the bride. The first time it is about "a flock of [newly] shorn ewes". The emphasis is on 'new shorn'. It indicates a fresh beginning. Here it is about is a "flock of ewes", which indicates adulthood. It refers to the Lord Jesus observing a change that shows spiritual growth.

"Teeth" is about eating and grinding food so that it can be absorbed into the body. In a figurative sense, it is about the absorption and processing of spiritual food, as a result of which there is spiritual soundness. The "twins" indicate spiritual balance. The "young" indicate that the effect of balance in spiritual life will be fruit.

When we eat sound spiritual food, that is, when we read God's Word, we know when to say something to encourage or exhort. We also know when to spend time with our family and when to go somewhere. In every area of our life, we will see the responsibilities in the proper perspective and fulfill them. The one is not at the expense of the other.

The groom also spoke earlier about the bride's "temples" (verse 7; Song 4:3b). The temples refer to thinking, of thought life. This is "like a slice of

a pomegranate”, indicating abundant fruit. This fruit can be seen in her dedication, of which her “veil” speaks.

If there is dedication to the Lord, thinking of Him will fill our thought life. The Lord knows our thoughts. He “understands my thoughts from afar” (Psa 139:2). When two people love each other, they are always busy with each other in their thoughts. When love fades, also the thinking about each other fades away. This applies to our thinking of the Lord Jesus and also to our thinking of the husband or wife.

In my mind I always have to take into account what my wife thinks of something. Just as I stand before God, I stand before my wife. We are a unity. This also applies, for example, when the husband is at work and his wife at home. What the husband at work says to someone should be the same as if his wife was present. This is a protection of marriage and at the same time a deepening of it. In a relationship of love there are no secrets for each other.

### **Song 6:8-9 | She Is the Only One**

8 *“There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,  
And maidens without number;  
9 [But] my dove, my perfect one, is unique:  
She is her mother’s only [daughter];  
She is the pure [child] of the one who bore her.  
The maidens saw her and called her blessed,  
The queens and the concubines [also], and they praised her, [saying],*

The groom, Solomon, says in these verses how unique the bride is to him. He has seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1Kgs 11:3). Of them he mentions here a selection of “sixty queens and eighty concubines” (verse 8). They are probably more often in his environment than the other women. Then he also is surrounded by “maidens” in a quantity “without number”.

It is clear that Solomon literally goes against the institution of God, i.e. marriage as a union between one man and one woman (Gen 2:21-24). He also goes against the royal law (Deu 17:17). In this context, however, it is not about his wrong practice, but about the picture of a unique love. We

can see this in the same sense that the Lord compares His coming with the coming of a *thief*. The comparison does not concern the bad character of the thief, but the unexpected, sudden and unwanted arrival of the thief.

Spiritually, the lesson of these verses is that the Lord wants to have a very intimate fellowship with every believer, and that all His love is directed toward us. The church is a *whole*, but at the same time it consists of individual believers who each have their own relationship with their Lord. In that relationship not every believer stands in the same degree of affection toward Him. These differences are reflected in the queens, concubines and girls.

This is also the case with the various relationships of love for the Lord, which is experienced differently by every believer. The believers of whom this beloved girl is a picture live in the Spirit. Christ sees in them the characteristics of a “dove” (verse 9), a symbol of the Spirit. He sees a clear or simple eye in them, that is an eye that is only focused on Him. He also sees them as “perfect”, or that they are completely full of Him. Everything in their lives is about Him, they involve Him in all things.

Prophetically, in the one hundred and forty women and countless maidens, we can see the cities in the land to which the love of the Lord Jesus emanates. But one city transcends them all, and that is Jerusalem (cf. Pro 31:29). He has a special love for that city. Jerusalem is the only city because the Messiah is seen as born there (Psa 87:2-3,6; Zec 6:12). Jerusalem is “her mother’s only [daughter]”. The mother is Israel. All the cities of Israel and all the cities of the world will acknowledge this.

On that city He laid His glory and that makes her perfect (Eze 16:14). So it is with every individual believer who is fully committed to Him: such a person is an ‘only’ one for Him. He is surrounded by others who love Him, but she is unique, the only one. That she is ‘the only one’ is expressed twice in this verse. By doing so, He underlines how unique she is to Him.

She is also “the pure [child] of the one who bore her”. Jerusalem came into being through the faithfulness of God. For a long time the city has been unfaithful, not purely in her relationship to God. When the Messiah comes to the city and declares her to be His bride, she will be “the pure”, the pure

city. All her sins are put away. She has been cleansed by the judgment of evil and has become a city completely dedicated to Him.

All those who stand in a certain relationship to the Lord Jesus, but not in the way the bride stands in relation to Him, will recognize her in that relationship and praise her. In it we can see the twelve tribes and the cities that belong to them (cf. Neh 11:1-2).

Similarly, there is a certain admiration for dedicated believers among persons who do not have the same dedication. They love the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus loves them. However, they lack the complete surrender that characterizes other believers. We cannot measure this by activities, but by the degree of fellowship that someone has with the Lord Jesus.

We see this difference with Martha and Maria. With Martha her activities for the Lord are paramount, with Mary the Lord Himself is paramount (Lk 10:38-42). After Martha has acknowledged this, she serves the Lord because of Who He is (Jn 12:2). Thus, every believer can grow to become an “only one” for the Lord Jesus.

### **Song 6:10 | Who Is She?**

*10 ‘Who is this that grows like the dawn,  
As beautiful as the full moon,  
As pure as the sun,  
As awesome as an army with banners?’*

In this verse the Spirit speaks through a third person who asks a question about the bride. That may be the various groups of women from the previous verse. The question is: “Who is this” or “Who is she?” and is about the bride. The question has four parts, each of which draws attention to a particular aspect of her life with the groom. The different aspects represent different impressions the bride makes on the questioner.

The first aspect in her appearance is that she “grows like the dawn”. The dawn announces a new day or a new period. The experiences described above in the life of the bride in her relationship with the groom have led to a new period in her life. She has been restored in fellowship with the groom. That has changed and renewed her.

That's how it goes in our life. We may have had a period of fading or perhaps even living in sin. This has not gone unnoticed by people around us. Then the Lord Jesus has brought us to the acknowledgment of the wrong and restored us to fellowship with Him. Then we look different. People around us notice that too. They see that a new day has dawned in our lives, as it were.

The dawn or daybreak indicates the new beginning in the life of the believer who is again committed to the Lord (cf. Gen 32:24). The shadows have disappeared from his life and there is no darkness left in his relationship with the Lord. It is the start of life as a righteous person till the full day has come (Pro 4:18). That is the purpose of the believer's life. It is the manifestation of Christ and nothing else.

A restored believer is "beautiful as the full moon". The moon has no light in itself, but receives the light from the sun and passes it on. The believer still lives in the world, where it is night. In the darkness of the night, he may pass on the light of the Sun, that is Christ. In his life he may show the features of the Lord Jesus in the darkness of a world that only pursues its own fame and honor.

The light is also "as pure as the sun". The light of the sun transmitted by the moon does not lose any of its purity. The moon passes it on as it receives it. The light is 'pure' or glowing, meaning that it takes away or consumes what is wrong, which stands in the way of the purity of light. If, for example, an unclean thought arises, it is immediately judged.

Finally, a restored believer is also "awesome as an army with banners". He is in victory, symbolized by the banners. This causes awe to those who want to silence him, so that he does not testify anymore. The following story is a nice illustration of this.

A man arrested for his faith appears in court. The judge threatens that if he does not renounce his faith, he will take everything he possesses from him. The man 'raises his banners' and says: 'Then you need a long ladder, because everything I possess is stored in heaven.' The judge tries again. Even more threatening he says that he will take his life away from him, let him be killed. The man 'raises his banners' again and says: 'That is not possible, because my life is hidden in God with Christ.'

Such testimonies frighten the enemies, although they often don't show it. People like Lot, the worldly-minded man, don't cause awe. His defense against the men of Sodom to do no harm to his guests is answered by the threat to do harm to him (Gen 19:5-9). His testimony of the judgment that comes on Sodom is considered one of his jokes (Gen 19:14). Opposite to that we see Abraham, the heavenly man. He causes awe to the armies of various kings with an army of three hundred and eighteen men. He defeats those armies and delivers his cousin Lot (Gen 14:8-16).

Prophetically, the dawn indicates the coming of the Lord Jesus as "the sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2) to illuminate Jerusalem with His glory (Isa 60:1). When He appears, a new day, a new period, begins for Jerusalem. That new day is the time of the kingdom of peace, of which David prophetically speaks as "a morning without clouds" (2Sam 23:4). The shadows of death, the threats of death enemies, are gone. The shadow over the relationship with the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, has also disappeared. There is nothing left between Jerusalem and Him that causes separation.

The change this implies for Jerusalem is noticed by all nations. When Jerusalem was destroyed, the people asked: "Is this the city of which they said, 'The perfection of beauty, a joy to all the earth'?" (Lam 2:15b)? After her restoration she will again be the perfection of beauty and a joy to all the earth. This will also lead to surprise with the question: Who is she? Is this the city that had become a mess? God's restorative work will raise admiring questions because of the enormous change in her circumstances. Former disaster, now glory.

Just before the dawn, before the rising of the Sun of righteousness, we who belong to the church first see the morning star appear (2Pet 1:19; Rev 2:28; 22:16). We wait for Him as the rising of the morning star. We will not experience the dawn of the day for the people of God and for Jerusalem in particular on earth, but from heaven. Then the Lord Jesus comes with us, His heavenly bride, to the earth to reign with her. Then for Jerusalem and the remnant the time of glory begins.

Jerusalem will be "beautiful" "like the full moon". It is the full light of the moon. It is not primarily about the position of the moon, but about its brilliance. Then Israel will be clothed with the sun (Rev 12:1). Israel will have

the highest authority worldwide and spread blessing. The sun and moon are in the sky the witnesses of the faithfulness of God (Psa 89:36-37). There is nothing that darkens the sun, there is only heavenly light.

Jerusalem, the earthly bride, is also “as awesome as an army with banners” (cf. verse 4). There are still enemies at the beginning of the kingdom of peace. The Divine light that she will spread will make her strong in battle. God will give her the strength to defeat the remaining enemies (Zec 12:6).

### **Song 6:11-13 | The Groom Went Down**

11 *“I went down to the orchard of nut trees  
To see the blossoms of the valley,  
To see whether the vine had budded  
[Or] the pomegranates had bloomed.  
12 “Before I was aware, my soul set me  
[Over] the chariots of my noble people.”  
13 “Come back, come back, O Shulammitte;  
Come back, come back, that we may gaze at you!”  
“Why should you gaze at the Shulammitte,  
As at the dance of the two companies?”*

Here the groom is speaking again. He now compares his bride to “the orchard of nut trees” (verse 11), which also contains fruit trees. There he “went down”. This is always the way of the Lord Jesus when He comes to His people. He bows down to them, He comes to their level. He comes to them to see if there are any signs that the fruit can be eaten soon.

A nut can only be consumed when the shell is hard and can be broken. This must also be done with care, otherwise the fruit will be broken together with the shell. Sometimes believers live in such a shell. They close themselves off from their surroundings and take a tough stance toward the outside world. Care is needed to break through the shell and come to the fruit.

The Lord Jesus sees the fruit, we often only see the hard exterior. He does not come to orchard of nut trees to see if there is already fruit, but if there are signs that fruit is coming. He comes “to see the blossoms of the valley”. The blossoms indicate that fruit is coming, that the process of fruit

formation has begun. It happens in the valley, i.e. in the depth. This refers to deep, spiritual exercises that are necessary to come to bear fruit for Him (Heb 12:11).

We can also observe this in the lives of young people. With some we notice that they want to live with the Lord. The first signs of spiritual fruit appear. We hear that they tell problems at school at home, but also discuss them with the Lord themselves. They are present in the meetings of the believers and help with all kinds of activities.

Fruit bearing we cannot force. Even if we sometimes notice a 'shell', we don't have to want to break through it. Then the fruit is nipped in the bud and can be thrown away. Young believers are delicate plants, which we should accompany carefully. We can learn from the care of the Lord Jesus, from His careful looking to the process of growth.

Then we will not impose our ideas about growth on them, but as He descend to their level. We can do this simply by showing interest in their daily activities, their capacities, their plans. We can share with them how the Lord has shaped us and tell of His patience with us.

What the Lord Jesus then looks at is "whether the vine had budded". The vine speaks of joy. Are there indications in our life that we find our joy in the Lord? He looks at that. That joy is connected with fellowship with Him and with the Father (1Jn 1:3-4). When there are signs of fellowship with the Father and the Son, 'the vine buds'.

As a result, we see "the pomegranate had bloomed". This speaks of an abundance of fruit. That abundant fruit is worked by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23a). The Lord Jesus looks to see if the Holy Spirit can work. The work of the Spirit is seen everywhere where the Lord Jesus is the center. Then His features become visible in that life. That is what He is looking for, that is what He wants to work on.

Then we hear in verse 12, in response to His visit to the orchard of nuts, an exclamation of surprise. He says: "Before I was aware, my soul set me [over] the chariots of my noble people." The believer with whom the fruit is emerging for Him will give Him the place of honor in his life and will willingly serve him.



This spontaneous willingness is, as it were, a surprise to Him, something He did not count on. It is certainly the result of His own work in the heart of the believer. Yet He says it this way. With this he shows His great, joyful appreciation for the voluntarism to submit to His authority.

Prophetically, this describes an expectant descent from the Lord Jesus to His people. The reaction of His people happens to Him, so to speak, before He has any awareness of it. He did not see it coming, so to speak. The Lord Jesus says this as Man (cf. Mk 13:32). When He comes to His people, He finds a willing people driving Him around in honor.

We also see this in Psalm 110, where there is a willing people and a new dawn (Psa 110:2-3). Noble, or willing, is voluntary, unforced, as also in the voluntary sacrifices. It is not the whole people, but a remnant. So, even today, not all professing Christianity is dedicated to Him, but only those who really love Him.

This is a completely different people than He found at His first coming to earth. Then they did not want Him and He was rejected under the constant crying "crucify Him" (Mt 27:22-23). When He comes back, they will say: "BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!" (Mt 23:38-39; Psa 118:26).

A new part of the book begins with verse 13. The previous section ends in verse 12 with the arrival of the Bridegroom for Jerusalem and how the city receives Him. In verse 13 there is a call to Shulammite to come back. It is said four times. Here the bride is addressed with her name for the first time. This is now possible because she has grown in her relationship with the groom. That is why she can now be called that way. Shulam is related to Solomon. Both words have the meaning of 'peace'. Her name makes it clear that she suits him.

The daughters of Jerusalem ask her to come back so they can see what happened to her. Their interest in her has been aroused by the change they have noticed in her. They see the peace in which she now finds herself through her connection with the groom. They want to know more about that, to see more about how it came about.

It may also happen to us that people see that there is peace in our life, while there is discontent throughout the world. We can also apply this to

peace in a local church. One can ask us questions about this, how it is that we live with peace in our heart. They want to know more about that.

In verse 13b the groom responds to the call of the daughters of Jerusalem. He first asks why they should gaze at Shulammite, what makes them long to see her well. Why do they want that? He then answers by saying who she is: "A dance of two companies."

The answer shows that there are two aspects to her peace. The first is that of joy, which is expressed in the "dance". This dance is an expression of joy at the occasion of deliverance and victory (Exo 15:20; 1Sam 18:6). The second is that of unity between "two companies". Here we can think of the restoration of unity in the kingdom of peace between the two and the ten tribes who have lived divided for so long (Eze 37:16-28).

The complete restoration of the unity of the church will take place at the coming of the Lord Jesus. But even now, every restoration of unity is a testimony. It is to be desired that we also show more of this unity and that pure human divisions are made undone (cf. Psa 133:1).

## Song of Songs 7

### **Song 7:1 | The Work of the Hands of an Artist**

*1 "How beautiful are your feet in sandals,  
O prince's daughter!  
The curves of your hips are like jewels,  
The work of the hands of an artist.*

In verses 1-5 follows a new description of the bride. In the groom's earlier description of the bride (Song 4:1-14), he says what she means for him. There he starts the description with her head. This new description he starts with her feet, her way of walking. The first description is done from the point of view of love. The second is from the point of view of her public action, which is also seen by others.

The bride is described in the royal glory she possesses and which is perceived by others. Although she has received that glory of the groom, it is not clear whether the description comes from the mouth of the groom or from the mouth of the daughters of Jerusalem. Because of the public character of the description, it is quite conceivable that the testimony about her is given by the daughters of Jerusalem.

The name "prince's daughter" (cf. Psa 45:13), with which she is addressed, is in keeping with this public testimony. We hear no names like 'bride' and 'beloved' as in Song of Songs 4. It is not a description of the intimate love relationship between groom and bride, but of the formal connection between king and queen.

As said, the description begins with the feet. It is said that they are "beautiful". She stands out because of her elegant way of walking. There is no hurry, it radiates peace and dignity. She moves full of elegance. She takes her steps in her "sandals". Whoever goes into captivity goes barefoot (Isa 20:4; cf. 2Sam 15:30). The father gives the prodigal son "sandals on his feet" when he returns home (Lk 15:22).

In the spiritual sense, the description teaches about our "royal priesthood" (1Pet 2:9). We are not 'children of the King', but we do have royal dignity.

This means that, in addition to having a relationship of love with the Lord Jesus, we also have a testimony in the world. It is the desire of every believer who loves the Lord Jesus to also respond to what is said here of the bride. Can the Lord Jesus and the people around us give this testimony of us that is given here of the bride?

Our feet are said to be shod “with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). The meaning is not that we should be prepared to proclaim the gospel – however important that may be. It means that in our walk it is visible that we *live* from peace. We have peace in every circumstance in which God brings us. People see that we go our way with the peace of God in our hearts, even when it is difficult. This is only possible if we look at the Lord Jesus, Who is the example in this (Mt 11:25-30).

Then her “hips” are described. In the hips is the power for walking. After God has disrupted Jacob’s thigh or hip, he goes limping through life (Gen 32:25,31). There is talk of “the curves” of the bride’s hips. This indicates that there are no sharp or angular edges in her walk. We can sometimes be ‘angular’ or ‘sharp’. The Lord is working to remove those sharp sides. But He sees us as round.

Then the curves of the hips are compared to “jewels”. Her walk is graceful as a jewel. We don’t walk with long faces and heads hung low. If we have bent our necks before the Lord, it is seen in our walk. Then we listen to His directions and do His will (cf. Pro 3:21-22; 25:12). This is how He is seen in our lives, so that we will be a blessing to those with whom we come into contact. Sharp words will not be spoken and angular or uncontrolled action will not take place.

We do not have such elegant and graceful behavior by nature. It takes “the hands of an artist” to show this behavior. The Spirit of God is that Artist. The Spirit works this behavior in us as God’s workmanship, as a new creation. Own effort or all kinds of therapies for behavioral change are connected with the old man and always fail. It will only be possible if we give the Spirit the opportunity to guide our lives.

### **Song 7:2-3 | Navel, Belly and Breasts**

| 2 “Your navel is [like] a round goblet

*Which never lacks mixed wine;  
 Your belly is like a heap of wheat  
 Fenced about with lilies.  
 3 "Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
 Twins of a gazelle.*

The next part of the body is the “navel” (verse 2). The navel has to do with life, with its origins. The unborn child is fed in its mother’s womb through the umbilical cord. When a child is born, the navel cord is cut or cut off (cf. Eze 16:4). The navel is a lasting reminder of the original connection with the mother.

The bride is an independent woman. She is a new personality. From a prophetic point of view, we see here the faithful remnant of Israel, or Jerusalem, which has been revived by a wonder of God. This remnant itself is also “at the center of the world” or “the navel of the earth” (Eze 38:12). Everything that God promised old Israel, but that the people have lost through unfaithfulness, He gives to the new Israel. From there will come blessing and life for the whole earth. We see this in the temple stream that flows out of the temple in the kingdom of peace and spreads blessing (Eze 47:1-12).

The navel is compared here with “a round goblet which never lacks mixed wine”. A goblet can be seen as a picture of a person. A round goblet has no beginning and no end, it is endless. There are no angles or points. This is a picture of the new, eternal life given to us. There is no beginning and no end to that. We ourselves did not contribute anything to its creation.

An endless, unceasing joy is connected with this life. That is what the mixed wine speaks of. It is a joy that expresses itself in various ways. We can apply this to all kinds of relationships we have. In this way we can be a joy for our wife and children in our dealings with them. This also applies to our neighbors and colleagues. We pass on joy as we reveal the new, eternal life we possess.

The “belly” is closely connected to the navel. It is the place where new life is formed and where new life comes forth (Job 1:21; 3:10-11; 31:15; Ecc 5:14; 11:5). The belly also speaks of the inward parts, of feelings, and of the absorption of food (Hab 3:16; Rom 16:18; Jer 51:34; Eze 3:3; 1Cor 6:13; Phil

3:19; Rev 10:9-10). Her belly is compared to “a heap of wheat fenced about with lilies”. The wheat reminds us of the Lord Jesus. He compares Himself to a grain of wheat that has fallen into the earth and died, thereby bearing much fruit (Jn 12:24). From His death and resurrection came forth “a heap of wheat”.

This applies here to Israel in the future when all who are scattered in Israel are gathered together as “a heap of wheat” (Mt 13:24-30; 24:31). All Israel is then saved (Rom 11:26). That is the fruit of the work of Christ. The remnant has the features of Him from Whom they received life, just as every grain in the heap of wheat has the same features as that one grain of wheat from which they came.

This heap of wheat, this great harvest, is “fenced about with lilies”. The lilies are a picture of the remnant who experienced the tribulation in the land. These pictures increase the glory of the ‘prince’s daughter’, but above all of the Artist Who shaped her in this way.

The description of the breasts (verse 3) fits seamlessly with the description of the navel and belly. The breasts indicate adulthood, maturity. They also point to the ability to pass on to the newborn child the food she herself first took to herself. We have also seen this description in Song of Songs 4, which is given there by the groom (Song 4:5).

What was said there is also true here. Breasts are a picture of spiritual maturity and the ability to pass on food to little children. The “two fawns” seem to allude to this. Fawns drink from their mother’s milk. The milk that is passed on by the breasts speaks of the Word of God through which believers grow spiritually (1Pet 2:2).

There is also balance in the bride’s public appearance. This is expressed in the image of “twins of a gazelle”. The original word means ‘two young deer born from the same mother’. They are identical in size, one is not bigger than the other. Her life is in balance. Doctrine and life are in balance. She does not lapse into extremes. This is also important for us. We must not set these two sides of the life of faith against each other, but let them develop side by side. If so, we will go our way with the elegance of a gazelle.

Prophetically we see in the bride's performance as a daughter of the prince the performance of the new Israel in the kingdom of peace. Israel will be a blessing to all the nations of the earth in a lovely, elegant manner, like a gazelle, during the kingdom of peace. The peoples will be provided by her with what they need.

### **Song 7:4-6 | Neck, Eyes, Nose, Head and Hairlocks**

4 *"Your neck is like a tower of ivory,  
Your eyes [like] the pools in Heshbon  
By the gate of Bath-rabbim;  
Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon,  
Which faces toward Damascus.*  
5 *"Your head crowns you like Carmel,  
And the flowing locks of your head are like purple threads;  
[The] king is captivated by [your] tresses.*  
6 *"How beautiful and how delightful you are,  
[My] love, with [all] your charms!*

The description of her neck also fits her character as the prince's daughter (verse 4). She is no longer obstinate, reluctant to bow under the yoke of the Lord, but powerful in faith. Her neck is a paragon of beauty. Earlier, her neck has been compared to the tower of David (Song 4:4), a kind of weapon storage-place, which speaks of defensive power. Here her neck is compared to "a tower of ivory", which speaks of royal glory.

In the groom's description by the bride she compares his belly to carved ivory (Song 5:14). Ivory is mentioned in connection with the kingship of Solomon, king of peace (1Kgs 10:22; 2Chr 9:21). Solomon made "a great ivory throne" (1Kgs 10:18; 2Chr 9:17). We can therefore connect ivory with the kingship of Christ which He exercises in peace.

That the bride's neck is compared to a tower of ivory indicates that Jerusalem will share in the reign of the Lord Jesus. That is what the Lord says to His disciples: "And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28).

Now there is still rejection, but soon He will reign and then they may reign with Him. The throne and the twelve thrones speak of this. It is the throne of His glory, the throne which will be established on earth in the glory of the kingdom of peace, when “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9b). The thrones they will sit on relate to their government over Israel, that is to say their rule over Israel. They will be distributors of blessings for Israel.

Her eyes are not compared here to doves, as has happened before (Song 1:15; 4:1), but to the rest of the pure and quiet water of “the pools in Heshbon”. It is not water from the depths or from a fountain that springs up, but water that is open and pure before the light of the sky. Her eyes radiate the peace of God’s Word, of which the pools are a picture. Everywhere she looks, she sees purity, cleanliness, everything is in accordance with God’s Word. There is nothing that disturbs this peace, for everything bears the hallmark of the prince of peace.

The pools are located “by the gate of Bath-rabbim”, which means ‘daughter of many’. If everything is in accordance with God’s Word, there is no desolation or death anymore. The LORD will increase the men of the house of Israel “like a flock” (Eze 36:37-38; cf. Zec 8:4-5). A great multitude of redeemed people, which have been brought back to the land by the LORD, shall bear witness to the great redemption which He has brought about. This is the fulfillment of His Word.

The “nose”, which used to rise in pride to express contempt for the LORD (cf. Psalms 10:4; Eze 23:25), is now compared to “the tower of Lebanon”. The tower is a castle, a fortress and at the same time a lookout post for watchmen. The nose is to smell. It is said of the Messiah that “He will delight [or: His smell shall be] in the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:3), that is to say, the air which He breathes is permeated by the fear of the LORD. The same goes for the bride’s nose.

Everything that threatens this fear of the LORD, that pollutes the air, she smells. The big threat in the end time is Damascus, the capital of Syria. From her tower she looks down on it in the kingdom of peace. Syria, in the person of the king of the north, is the leader of Assyria, who will attack,



overwhelm and destroy Israel in the end time. This enemy is judged by Christ Himself (Dan 11:45).

We need to know our enemy and where he is. In recognizing the enemy, the sense of smell may be more important than seeing or hearing. Smell is not linked to words we hear or deeds we see, but to an inner discernment. That goes far beyond what we see or hear. It is about being able to distinguish between what is of God and what is not of God. Someone may look neat and what he says may sound good, but it may not smell well because there is no fear of God in it.

The description of the bride ends with the head and hair (verse 5). Her “head” is compared to “Carmel”. Carmel is the place where Elijah stood before God and gained victory over all that is evil (1Kgs 18:19-24,37-45). It is the place of mighty prayers and the blessing that follows. The fact that her head was like Carmel means that she was aware of the power of prayer. As a result, she has gained victories and received blessing. The blessing is that Jerusalem will be given “the majesty of Carmel” (Isa 35:2).

Her “flowing locks” has a purple color, which is the color of royal garment. That also fits her description as a prince’s daughter. By speaking of “flowing locks” the emphasis is on her long hair “as a glory to her” (1Cor 11:15). This speaks of the fact that her royal dignity also has the aspect of submission to the authority of the king and that she dedicates herself to him.

This aspect arouses such great admiration in him that it makes him a captive. It captivates him, all his attention goes out to that. The same it is with us when we show our royal dignity in our submission to the Lord Jesus and to each other.

Subservience is a special feature of our dignity. We show our submission to Him by being obedient to everything He says to us in His Word. When we submit out of love, it fascinates Him so much that He only pays attention to that. All other proofs of love result from this.

After listing the bride’s beauties in her public appearance as a prince’s daughter, the groom, in awe, exclaims that she is “beautiful” and “delightful” (verse 6; Song 1:15; 4:1; Psa 45:11a). He has that intimate relationship of love with her. He finds his full joy in her. Whatever he might desire, she

transcends everything. To him she is full of pleasure. Here he is not talking *about* her, but *to* her.

For the Lord Jesus, the bride, His earthly bride Jerusalem, is really everything. She is exceptionally beautiful and delightful to Him. She is beautiful in her appearance, she is delightful in her behavior. To Him she is the “sweetest”. His heart is full of her and goes out to her. She is His “love”, with all her “charms”. He enjoys every part of the city. There is nothing left that disturbs. Everything is perfectly in accordance with His desires. He describes in the following verses the full enjoyment He finds in her.

### **Song 7:7-9 | Stature, Breasts, Breath, Mouth and Lips**

7 *“Your stature is like a palm tree,  
And your breasts are [like its] clusters.  
8 “I said, ‘I will climb the palm tree,  
I will take hold of its fruit stalks.’  
Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,  
And the fragrance of your breath like apples,  
9 And your mouth like the best wine!”  
“It goes [down] smoothly for my beloved,  
Flowing gently [through] the lips of those who fall asleep.*

The groom sees the bride in her full stature like “a palm tree” (verse 7). The palm tree is the symbol of victory (Rev 7:9; Jn 12:13). The victory is achieved by the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Jerusalem stands as a result of this in the victorious power of salvation. All enemies have been defeated. He, the Messiah, has accepted Jerusalem again in His love and declares His love to her.

This also applies to us. Christ sees us as victors and so may we see ourselves. Through Him “we overwhelmingly conquer” or, as another translation renders, “we are more than victors” (Rom 8:37). The Lord says this to encourage us. It will not make us proud, but it will make us humble and grateful at the same time. We may share in the victory He has achieved. If we stand in it (Rom 5:2), it is a joy to Him. The result will be that we will grow in our faith trust in Him (Psa 92:12).

Her “breasts”, which transmit food, are a great, abundant joy for the groom (cf. Pro 5:19b). This is referred to as “clusters” of grapes. In the kingdom of peace Jerusalem will also pass on food and joy to others, the nations. They may “suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom” (Isa 66:10-11). This proves that Jerusalem has reached spiritual maturity.

We too are meant to grow spiritually and become spiritually mature. The stadium of our spiritual growth can be seen in the food we eat. If we have long been converted and are still drinking milk and not eating solid food, that is an unsound development. This lack of spiritual growth is blamed on the believing Hebrews (Heb 5:11-14). If we grow spiritually and eat solid food, we can pass on to others what we have enjoyed ourselves. That will bring great joy to them.

The groom has placed the bride in the victory, but he wants to share in the blessed consequences that this has for her. For that he wants to “climb the palm tree” (verse 8). Thus the Messiah of Jerusalem wants to hear what He means to her as the Conqueror in Whose power she has defeated all enemies. To “take hold of its fruit stalks” can be seen as an expression of His desire to taste the fruit of what she did, that is to hear from her what individual victories she has achieved in His power.

A believer who does not gain victories or grow spiritually is not a joy to the Lord’s heart. The Messiah wants to share in the joy of Jerusalem’s spiritual growth, which is indicated by the “breasts ... like clusters of the vine”. The emphasis here is on the joy of the Bridegroom. Her breasts are there for Him in the first place.

When Israel is about to take possession of the promised land, twelve men go to explore the land. When they return from their journey, they take from the fruit of the land as proof of the fertility of the land. A startling fruit of this is “a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two [men]” (Num 13:23).

The cluster of grapes is a picture of joy. Happiness is the result of fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other (1Jn 1:3-4). Happiness and fellowship belong together. The new testament believer does not possess earthly, material blessings, but heavenly, spiritual blessings (Eph

1:3). Anyone who, together with others – two men are needed to carry the cluster – occupies himself with the heavenly blessings, will have joy.

The “fragrance” of her “breath” shows that she has eaten from the apple tree. The apple tree is the groom (Song 2:3). The groom appreciates that she has done that. The apples represent the good words the groom has spoken (Pro 25:11). The way we speak and the topics we talk about betray what we have ‘eaten’. When we have eaten ‘apples’, our words and attitudes will be filled with the fragrance of fellowship with the Lord Jesus. We look like Him then. When we have eaten of the ‘fruits of Egypt’ (Num 11:5), another fragrance will hang around us.

What fragrance is around us? What we occupy ourselves with in the hidden and in our free time will be perceived by others. The fragrance we spread is determined by the things we absorb in our minds. Are we reading God’s Word, the words of the Lord Jesus, or do we feed on what the world offers in entertainment? Both fragrances are noticed by the people around us and especially by the Lord Jesus.

In verse 9a the groom speaks about her “mouth” or “palate”. The palate has to do with the taste, it tastes food. The groom is very enthusiastic about her taste, because what she eats tastes “like the best wine”. Jerusalem has tasted the “gracious words”, the “comforting words” (Zec 1:13) of the Messiah and has tasted therein that He is “good” (Psa 34:8). This is “for a joy and the delight” of her heart (Jer 15:16).

In verse 9b the bride begins to speak. It is as if she is interrupting him. Her answer is that the joy she has found in his words “goes [down] smoothly” back to him, her “beloved”. She owes her joy to none but him. Joy flows back to its origin, that is he himself. Similarly, the good, comforting words we speak are in reality the words of the Lord Jesus we pass on.

But she also mentions a group of people to whom the wine goes, not as a rich stream, but “flowing gently”. She thinks of “those who fall asleep”. She wants the lips of those who sleep to be touched by the wine. Even if it is gently, drop by drop, the effect cannot fail to be noticed. If the wine touches their lips, they will arise from their sleep and will also bear witness to that love.

Life is present in those asleep, but it is not seen. Those who sleep look like dead. When they are awakened, it becomes visible that they are alive. Prophetically, by the sleepers may be meant the ten tribes that have disappeared, that is, the tribes in the scattering. They are said to sleep in the dust, which means they are hidden therein (Dan 12:2).

The application to us we see in the words Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus. He says to them: “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Eph 5:14). The Christian who sleeps is disabled to testify of the glorified Lord. He needs to be awakened and get up. Then he will be happy again in Christ because the Holy Spirit can fill him with that joy (Eph 5:18). This will be evident from his speaking, thanking and submission (Eph 5:19-21), aspects which we also saw with the bride.

### **Song 7:10-11 | Go out with the Beloved**

10 *“I am my beloved’s,  
And his desire is for me.*

11 *“Come, my beloved, let us go out into the country,  
Let us spend the night in the villages.*

The bride is now aware of the special love of the groom. Earlier she said: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16a). That is at the beginning of her relationship of love. What she has received is in the foreground. In it we hear what is important for the newly converted, what he has received: forgiveness of sins, eternal life.

A little later the bride says: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” (Song 6:3a). She has grown in her relationship with her beloved. Here it is no longer in the foreground that he is hers, but that she is his. This can also be seen in the growth of someone who has been converted. Then it is no longer in the first place that the Lord Jesus is his, but that he belongs to the Lord Jesus, that he is His property (Rom 14:7-8). What still is important is what he has received: the Beloved is also his.

In verse 10 we now have before us, she says: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” Here it is all about who the bride is to the groom. In the spiritual growth of the believer then the stage has been reached that it is especially important who he is for Him. Then the awareness that *His*

thoughts and desires go out to us gives us the greatest joy. The proof of spiritual maturity is that the heart is no longer focused on one's own happiness, but on the happiness or joy of the Other.

This will also apply to Jerusalem in the future. The Lord Jesus delivers the city and He takes her to be His bride. She will become aware that His desire is for her. This awareness is overwhelming and gives the certainty of the inviolability of the new relationship. As long as *our* love for Him is the basis of our feelings, there is often uncertainty about the relationship with Him. The awareness that Christ loves us puts an end to all uncertainty about it.

Now that the bride has come to rest in her relationship with the groom, she wants to go out with him (verse 11). Now she does everything together with him. In verses 11-12 she says "let us" four times. As a practical point, I would like to make the following remark. It is important in marriage to keep in mind that men and women have and do everything together. This applies not only when they are together, but also when they are not together. When the man is at work and talking about the children, you can hear him talk about 'my children', while they are 'our children', the children both of his wife and of him.

The bride takes the initiative and says to the groom to go with her. She wants to "go out into the country" with him and "spend the night in the villages" with him. Herein we can see the desire to make others familiar with the love that is between them, so that the blessing of love can also be enjoyed in all places on earth where it is still night.

Going into the country means going to work with a view to the harvest. It is not about 'her' field, 'her' work, but about others. It concerns the whole country of the Lord's interests. They "go out". The bride leaves her 'comfort zone' and goes in search of people who long to hear of their love. Similarly, if we live in a close bond of love with the Lord Jesus, we will leave our 'comfort zone' to tell people in the world about our love for Him and His love for us.

That does not necessarily mean that we go to far away areas. Leaving our 'comfort zone' means that we take a clear stand toward the world about our relationship with the Lord Jesus, about Who He is for us. That happens

in “the country”, that is where we do our daily work. It will be seen in the way we do our work and also in the way we talk about Him.

We can do our work in a way that nobody notices us being a Christian. Then we avoid negative reactions and other inconveniences. But that is not what the believer who is full of the love of Christ does. Whoever is full of the love of Christ is controlled by that love to tell others about it (2Cor 5:14a). We may do the work of an evangelist in daily life in daily activities.

Staying the night in the villages determines us that after work in the country we take time for rest. Villages speak of a peaceful environment. The hectic city life is lacking there. During the rest there is time for fellowship with the Lord. This is necessary before the next day comes with new activities.

### **Song 7:12-13 | Fresh and Old Fruits**

*12 “Let us rise early [and go] to the vineyards;  
Let us see whether the vine has budded  
[And its] blossoms have opened,  
[And whether] the pomegranates have bloomed.  
There I will give you my love.  
13 “The mandrakes have given forth fragrance;  
And over our doors are all choice [fruits],  
Both new and old,  
Which I have saved up for you, my beloved.*

In verse 12 follows the third “let us”. After the night we do not sleep in. The bride wants to “rise early [and go] to the vineyards”. Here we can think of a service in the midst of God’s people. The vineyard is a picture of Israel, where God has done everything to make it fruitful (Isa 5:1-7). There are several ‘vineyards’ here. We can apply this to all work that happens for the Lord with the intention that He may receive fruit from it.

The vineyard is the area of care, of attention to the fruit. For that care and attention, the mind of a shepherd is necessary. In the beginning of the book Song of Songs the bride spoke about her ‘own vineyard’ (Song 1:6). This indicates that everyone has his own area, which is given to him by the Lord Jesus to work there for Him. In Song of Songs 1 she says that she has not

guarded her own vineyard. But she has learned in the meantime and now she can go out to other vineyards to discover fruit there.

The application is about people who do not yet have an insight into the glorious connection between God and His people. If we know and enjoy them ourselves, we want to tell others who are in churches and groups that know nothing about that. For example, that woman who had been visiting a particular church for fifty years and said that she had never heard a sermon about the rapture of the church. Or someone who said she had never heard about the true meaning of marriage as a picture of Christ and the church.

The Lord's purpose for us is to be so busy for Him in our own area that it makes Him happy. The vineyard speaks of joy. We can think of our families, the local church and society. These are all areas where we have a responsibility. In all these areas we may testify of our connection with the Lord Jesus and the joy He finds when we are doing everything for Him.

When we realize that, we will look "whether the vine has budded [and its] blossoms have opened" that is, whether new life is coming and the first signs of that new life are already visible. Shepherds in the church will take care to ensure that in the lives of young people there is a promise of a dedicated, Spirit-led life which the Lord Jesus rejoices in.

We will be careful in the local church to see if there are such promising young people who grow up to the glory of God (cf. Song 6:11). This is to help them in their spiritual growth, so that they can reach maturity. "Let us see" means that there is spiritual vision. It may also be about believers who have been weak for a while in their being a Christian, but now show signs of renewed interest in the things of the Lord.

There will also be a focus on "[whether] the pomegranates have bloomed". As noted in an earlier consideration of the pomegranate (Song 4:3), this fruit indicates a fullness of life because of the many seeds it contains. Each seed is juicy, sweet and red. The joy of which the vineyard speaks is part of the fruit of the Spirit. But there are more parts of that (Gal 5:22-23). It is about the fullness of the fruit of the Spirit becoming visible in our lives. That is what caring for the believers is all about.



The whole action of the bride shows that she is delivered from her self-centeredness. She wants to give Him her love. This is the result of the connection with Him and being busy for Him and with Him in His work. Then He is the center of all life with all its activities. This gives rise to a desire to let others share in it.

True service is not the result of obligations or because there is no one else to do the work, but of being engaged with Christ. If we are drawn to others, are concerned about their spiritual growth and want to be helpful in this, we give our love to the Lord Jesus. For the believer, life is not just about giving and taking, but only giving. God is the Giving God, and we may imitate Him therein.

Rachel, in her superstition, used “mandrakes” (‘love apples’) (verse 13) in her relationship with Jacob, because she believed it would relieve her of her barrenness (Gen 30:14-16). There is no such superstition with the bride. She mentions “the mandrakes” because of their fragrance. It points out that her relationship with the groom is profound and spreads a fragrance that anyone can smell.

The true, profound, mutual love between the Messiah and Jerusalem is a matter that provides others with “all choice [fruits]”. These fruits hang over the doors of the house of the groom and the bride. The house of Israel has doors through which people can enter the city. In the kingdom of peace, a visit to the city yields a ‘food package’ of all kinds of delicious fruits.

These are not, in the first place, literally edible fruits, but they are the fruits that the Spirit works and through which everyone is richly blessed. There is no greater blessing in a family imaginable than when its members live together in harmony and do everything in their power to make life as pleasant as possible. That will characterize the city.

What is enjoyed in the city, consists of “both new and old” fruits. It is about new experiences, such as the bride has gained in the recent great tribulation. These are also experiences the city has gained in the past from the faithfulness of God. These are the fruits that Jerusalem has saved up for Him and offers Him when He comes to her. We may also save up our

experiences for Him and offer them to Him when we are with Him. He will ask us about it (Mt 25:19-23).

The new experiences are connected with the old experiences the fathers have gained in their lives with LORD. They are old and new things (cf. Mt 13:52). Even old truths have to be made true over and over again. It must all come from a living relationship with Him.

Because of what we experience, old truths that we did know, acquire their true meaning through our experiences or deeper study of the Word. Then they will shine all the more. We see that meaning and radiance because we discover Him in His Word. If we seek Him, He cannot “escape notice” (Mk 7:24).

## Song of Songs 8

### **Song 8:1-4 | Instruction and Embracing**

1 *"Oh that you were like a brother to me  
Who nursed at my mother's breasts.  
[If] I found you outdoors, I would kiss you;  
No one would despise me, either.*

2 *"I would lead you [and] bring you  
Into the house of my mother, who used to instruct me;  
I would give you spiced wine to drink from the juice of my pomegranates.*

3 *"Let his left hand be under my head  
And his right hand embrace me."*

4 *"I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
Do not arouse or awaken [my] love  
Until she pleases."*

Here a new chapter begins, but verses 1-4 still belong to the previous section. We see this in the refrain of verse 4 that closes the section (cf. Song 2:7; 3:5). After the beautiful climax at the end of the previous chapter, we see that the situation of final and undisturbed happiness has not yet come. It is not yet the time of the kingdom of peace. This is evident from the last verse of the book, in which the bride expresses her longing for the groom's imminent arrival.

Love has experienced great growth. But there has been no wedding yet. They cannot yet openly appear as husband and wife. The bride longs for that time. This is how the remnant in the great tribulation will feel just before the coming of the Lord Jesus. They will long for Him.

It seems that the bride does not dare to openly express her relationship with the groom. Therefore she sighs, as it were, that the groom would be her brother, nursed by the same mother (verse 1). From a prophetic point of view this also is the case. The remnant of Jerusalem is the daughter of Israel (Eze 23:2-4). The Lord Jesus was also born of Israel according to the flesh (Rom 9:4-5).

We heard the groom call the bride “my sister” several times (Song 4:9,10,12; 5:1,2). Then he is her brother. She seems to have forgotten that. In any case, she is looking for him again, not so much as her groom, but as her brother. We can also see in this a proof of Jerusalem’s love for the Messiah. The city loves Him, here not in the first place because He is her King, but because of Who He Himself is in His family relationship with her. That is why she wants to have Him close by to give Him her love. This selfless love does not give rise to contempt.

Our selfless love for the Lord Jesus is often not understood by our surroundings. Sometimes we are also ashamed to show in no uncertain terms that we love Him. Yet others will not despise us if we show our relationship with Him in our lives by revealing His own features. When His love, His peace and His joy are visible in our lives, it is not despised. Perhaps we do not talk about our love for Him, but in our life it becomes visible that He is our life.

In her attachment to the groom the bride wants to take him to the house where her origin and where she is instructed (verse 2). To be in this house of instruction again, means that she wants her thinking to be corrected. This is also an important wish for us. We also need to receive the instruction of God’s Word again and again because we are easily influenced in our thinking by the world or to have our thinking corrected when we still think worldly.

“The house of my mother” recalls the roots of her existence. The new Israel, the faithful remnant, is based on the old promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. She wants to learn more about that. The connection that Jerusalem, the remnant, will have with the Messiah is based on the connection that God has had with Israel in the past. The faithful remnant of the future must be connected with Israel from the past as the people of God.

God will fulfill the promises He made to the old Israel, to the new Israel. He will do so on the basis of the work of the Messiah – the promised Offspring – on the cross. It is also important for us to know who our mother is. Our mother is the heavenly Jerusalem and Mount Zion, the mountain of grace (Gal 4:22-28; Heb 12:22).

We are connected with our heavenly Bridegroom only by grace and not by works of the law or by any of our own works. If we know this, we will also desire to be instructed by Him about our connection with Him and about the grace that underlies it. Grace gives that instruction (Tit 2:11-12). Grace gives us the necessary instruction to live as believers.

This instruction is a continuous learning process. This enables new people to honor God in their new walk in life. In this instruction it first becomes clear that the past has been dealt with. The instruction relates to the past, the present and the future.

An attitude of longing for instruction from Him is a joy to Him, which is expressed in the spiced wine. The spiced wine represents the joy that is aroused by the glories that can be found with Him. The believer offers those glories to the Lord Jesus. The juice of pomegranates that the believer offers the Lord Jesus speaks of the fruit that is pleasing to Him. It is a fruit that produces new fruit over and over again. It represents a life in which one fruit after another is produced for Him.

The result of the instruction is that the believer desires to be so close to Him again that he experiences His support and embrace (verse 3; cf. Song 2:6). The left side is the side of the heart. His left hand raises her head, reminding her that He loves her. The right side is the side of strength, honor, protection. The protection feels like an embrace, in love.

In verse 4 the refrain sounds for the third time. Love should not be forced to express herself prematurely. We should not force young believers to expressions of love they are not ready for. The Lord goes with them His way and will ensure that their love for Him will grow.

Love must be found among each other and for that we must be encouraged (Heb 10:24). We can encourage each other to love. We may not demand anything from anyone that is not (yet) there or for which it is not the right time. In dependence on the Lord, we must learn to know the time for this.

### **Song 8:5 | Coming Up From the Wilderness**

5 *"Who is this coming up from the wilderness  
Leaning on her beloved?"*  
*"Beneath the apple tree I awakened you;*

*There your mother was in labor with you,  
There she was in labor [and] gave you birth.*

Here the last section of the book begins. Here we find again the question *who* the bride is (cf. Song 3:6). She leans on her beloved as she comes up from the wilderness. For us, this means that the best way to go through the wilderness of the world is to lean on the Lord Jesus. We are all too inclined to rely on other means and not on Him. He helps us through the wilderness of this life and appears with us at the end of the wilderness journey. This is also a picture of the remnant, that leaning on Him comes out of the great tribulation. He picks up His bride Himself.

The bride comes out of the wilderness again, now not on a traveling coach as in Song of Songs 3 (Song 3:6-7), but “leaning on her beloved”. This refers to an open relationship. The wilderness is mentioned here for the last time in this book. It is no longer about her, but about the groom, the beloved on whom she leans. It is trusting love. We see here that he is her strength and she his beloved.

The experiences of the wilderness are behind her. She has learned to lean fully on him. It also means that he was with her in the wilderness. She is not only in his company, but is dependent on him, she leans on him. The wilderness journey is over. With her is weakness, with him is strength. Leaning is relying on the strength of someone else. We must learn to lean on the Lord Jesus all the way. The wilderness experiences in our life are over when we have learned to lean only on Him.

In the wilderness we are tested. We learn to know our weakness and to be dependent on Him. He also comes from the wilderness. This also applies to the faithful remnant that comes from the great tribulation. They cried out to the LORD, and He has delivered them out of their tribulation. They come out, leaning on Him. They will acknowledge that He leads them out of the wilderness, for they themselves have no strength to deliver themselves from it.

We need support because we do not have strength of our own to move forward. If we are aware of this, our environment will see that we do not rely on our own strength, but on Christ. Just as the bride leans on her beloved, so we rely on Him. Leaning you do against something of which you expect

it remains standing, you trust it to provide firmness and does not collapse. Christ never disappoints, He is the unshakable rock.

Israel has relied on Egypt. The LORD says that it is “the staff of this crushed reed”. Whoever leans on that, will not get the expected support, but pain (Isa 36:6). That’s how it goes with us if we trust in human wisdom and lean on it. Then we collapse and hurt ourselves, because that staff breaks. All relying on people not only disappoints, but causes suffering.

Israel has also relied on the law (Rom 2:17). They have relied on works of their own righteousness in order to gain the favor of God. But it led them to reject the Lord Jesus. The big change comes when they will see and confess that. That will be the work of the Spirit in their hearts. When they come out of the great tribulation, they will no longer rely on the law, but on Christ.

During His life on earth He Himself has been the great Example of trusting God. He has a word for those who fear the LORD, for He has done it perfectly. To them He says that if they go through darkness and have no light – which prophetically is seen in the great tribulation – they must then trust in the name of the LORD and rely on their God (Isa 50:10).

Then the groom speaks to the bride. He points out to her where the change she has undergone in the wilderness has begun. He tells her he has brought her back to life under the apple tree. The bride compares the groom again with an apple tree (Song 2:3). In the picture the bride, that is the remnant, Jerusalem, owes her life to Him. He has awakened that new life in her.

This has happened because of the pain, the contractions, of the great tribulation that has come upon the mother, Israel. In this way she entered the new life (Mt 24:8; Jer 30:6-7; Isa 66:7-9). She is born again, as it were. The dead Israel has come to new life.

He awakened her “under the apple tree” and made her His property. There she was born. Everything she has, she has from Him. All experiences are now behind, but they have not been forgotten. We will continue to be reminded to see Who *He* has been for us and what we have been and what we have become through Him. We will see this when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2Cor 5:10).

### Song 8:6-7 | Love Is As Strong As Death

6 *"Put me like a seal over your heart,  
Like a seal on your arm.*

*For love is as strong as death,  
Jealousy is as severe as Sheol;  
Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
The [very] flame of the LORD.*

7 *"Many waters cannot quench love,  
Nor will rivers overflow it;  
If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love,  
It would be utterly despised."*

The bride is deeply impressed by what the groom has done for her by giving her new life. She reacts to this by her desire to be attached to him like a seal (cf. Jer 22:24; Hag 2:23). We will also express this desire when we are impressed by all that the Lord Jesus has done in His love for us on the cross of Calvary. Then we want to experience His love deeper and richer.

We will say to Him that we want to be "like a seal" over His heart (verse 6). We know that we are firmly established with Him. The Holy Spirit is the seal, for we are sealed with Him. As a result, we know His ownership of our life (2Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13). Through the Spirit we are connected with Christ. This is a connection that cannot be broken. The Spirit is His seal, which says that we are His property forever. This certainty can never change.

But we also want to experience that. We want to feel His heart beating for us. The heart speaks of the feelings of love. We also want to feel as firm as a seal His strong arm carrying us. His arm speaks of strength and protection (Deu 33:27; Isa 40:10-11).

In the Old Testament there is no constant assurance in knowing an established relationship between the people and God. We may have that assurance, but we often lack the *experience* of it. The desire here is that love is experienced. He loves us and stands by us with His power. It begins with His heart, which is called first. Then follows inseparably connected to it His arm. His arm is always controlled by His heart.



Then follows an impressive description of the love of the groom. It is not clear who pronounces this description, the bride or the Spirit. It is clear that the bride and the Spirit correspond perfectly in this description.

Love is said to be “as strong as death”. Love and death are compared here. It is not about showing who is stronger, because that is not a question, for love is stronger than death. It is a comparison of what love is capable of and what death is capable of. Then there are similarities. Just as death overcomes every power and goes to all men, so does love.

Death, the grave, is unstoppable, it can be stopped by nothing. Unstoppable, insatiable it swallows people (Pro 30:15-16). No one can escape its grip. The same goes for the passion of love. Love always goes on, it always flows on; love knows no boundaries, it knows no beginning and no end. Love can be rejected, but then she goes new ways. She is unstoppable in her passion. Love goes to everyone and it goes to the end (Jn 13:1). With this love we have to do. That love has given herself for us (Jn 15:13).

The expressions of love are compared to “flashes of fire”, with “the [very] flame of the LORD”. It is an all-consuming love. Any other love disappears through it. This love sets us on fire. God seeks people who are on fire for Him, just as He Himself is on fire. This means that He judges everything that is not in accordance with His love. With this consuming zeal for the honor of His God, the Lord has cleansed the temple (Jn 2:15-17).

But through the jealousy of His love, the dimly burning wick, which is almost extinguished, can also become a flame again (Isa 42:2-3). He can do that with us if we don’t ‘flame’ for Him and our testimony is only dimly burning. His love cannot change by death. He has proven that. Love is sealed by His victory over death. It is an invincible love, for the greatest power is overcome by His love. Nothing can separate us from that love (Rom 8:35-39). With us, time and distance can cool love, but not with Him.

Another picture of love is the comparison to many waters that cannot extinguish or wash away the fire of love (verse 7). The waters can be applied to the waters of God’s judgment that have gone over the Lord Jesus (Psa 42:7; 69:1b-2). These waters have not been able to take away that love. The love of the Lord Jesus has endured judgment and has gloriously emerged from it.

The love of the Lord Jesus cannot be bought off either. Satan has tried it by offering Him “all the riches of his house”, that is the world and his glory (Lk 4:5-7). But the Lord has utterly despised him. He has just sold everything to possess that “one pearl of great value”, that is the church (Mt 13:45-46)!

Instead of enriching Himself at her expense, He acquired her for Himself at the expense of His own riches, yes, at the expense of Himself as property, because He loved her (2Cor 8:9). The Lord Jesus did not die for an ‘ideal’, but out of love for His bride. We can say with deep gratitude: “And the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal 2:20b).

### **Song 8:8-10 | The Bride and Her Sister**

*8 “We have a little sister,  
And she has no breasts;  
What shall we do for our sister  
On the day when she is spoken for?  
9 “If she is a wall,  
We will build on her a battlement of silver;  
But if she is a door,  
We will barricade her with planks of cedar.”  
10 “I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;  
Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.*

In this book we hear for the first time about a sister of the bride (verse 8). She talks about “we”, meaning herself and the groom who is also her brother. Her little sister was not yet an adult. She has “no breasts” yet, which means that she cannot pass on food herself. She is prophetically a picture of the ten tribes that are still scattered. Her question is what she and the groom will be able to do for her. She also wants to connect her with the groom.

This speaks figuratively of the desire to familiarize other believers who do not know many of the truths of the connection between the Lord Jesus and the church with these truths. With such believers there is no spiritual

maturity yet. We may talk about this with the Lord and ask Him what we can do.

Many are like that little sister, they have new life, but nothing to pass on. They are still too busy with themselves. It may be a newly converted person or someone who has fallen back into his old life and wants to return to the Lord. Or perhaps to someone who has not yet grown in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus through a wrong, one-sided preaching. It is a good desire to help others in those situations to regain a good view of the Lord Jesus. This is a work that requires a lot of patience.

The question is how the little sister is doing or, prophetically, how the ten tribes are doing (verse 9). The answer comes from the groom. A wall speaks of separation between the holy and the profane (Eze 42:20). The wall ensures that we are closed to the wrong and that the good is preserved. The question regarding the ten tribes is who among them is truly set apart for God and lives dedicated to Him.

If this is so with this sister, she can be told what her deliverance means, which is represented by the "battlement of silver". This must be made known to her by instruction. It must be made clear to her what the silver of salvation means (1Pet 1:18-19). She has the position, but not the practice that should follow from it.

A battlement is a defensive wall. The best defense against any enemy attack is to stand on the foundation of salvation. The justification by God's grace, by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus through His blood (Rom 3:24-25), gives the full assurance of salvation. That salvation must be worn like a helmet (Eph 6:17a). This protects our thoughts from the devil's whisperings that you can't be so sure.

If this sister is a door, there must be a bolt. If there is no bolt, she is open to wrong teachings. When they get entrance, it leads her away from the truth. Therefore, care must be taken to her. The planks of cedar must be fitted. Cedar wood is the covering of the temple, God's dwelling place in the Old Testament (1Kgs 6:9-10).

A believer who is open to wrong doctrine must be made aware that he belongs to God's dwelling place, the church, that he is a member of the church. Through teaching about the church, the meaning of belonging to

the church of God and the distinction between good and evil must be clarified.

The bride knows for herself that she is a wall (verse 10), that she is completely separated for the groom. That her “breasts were like towers” means that she has spiritually grown up. She is able to pass on food. She did so with a view to the spiritual vigilance, of which the towers speak. What we pass as truths, the teaching of the truth of God’s Word, makes us watchful for the enemy. His aim is to distort and remove the spiritual truths.

Whoever is spiritually mature and vigilant will find peace in the eyes of the Lord Jesus. It is a peace that is the result of complete surrender to Him. If a city is besieged by an enemy and surrenders, this results in peace and rest for the city and also service instead of destruction (cf. Deu 20:1-11).

He loves to see us so surrender to Him, hand ourselves over to Him, as it were. Then we find true peace. As long as we resist Him, we have no peace (Job 9:4b). We have peace when we have the desire to pass on spiritual food to our fellow believers and to make them aware of the dangers that exist.

Prophetically, it is about the peace of Jerusalem. For that peace we may pray (Psa 122:6-7). That is not a peace enforced by the nations, not even the peace enforced by Israel itself. That peace is unattainable. It is about the peace that Jerusalem or the remnant will find when it is in the arms of the Messiah after the great tribulation. He will then make a covenant of peace with Jerusalem. That peace will be lasting for thousand years (Eze 37:26).

### **Song 8:11-12 | Two Vineyards**

11 *“Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;  
He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers.  
Each one was to bring a thousand [shekels] of silver for its fruit.*  
12 *“My very own vineyard is at my disposal;  
The thousand [shekels] are for you, Solomon,  
And two hundred are for those who take care of its fruit.”*

The name “Solomon”, with which verse 11 begins, appears seven times in this book (Song 1:1,5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11,12). His name means ‘peace’. If there is peace (verse 10), it is possible to work from that peace. We have the task to

work in the vineyard. That is, we live with the peace of God in our hearts and are a joy for God in everything we do. A vineyard speaks of work and of joy. We may serve the Lord with joy (Psa 100:2a).

The vineyard of Solomon was at Baal-hamon, which means 'lord of a multitude'. It points to the reign of Christ as the Prince of Peace over many peoples and it recalls the promise to Abraham that in him "all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3b). In the last syllable of the name 'Abraham' the Hebrew word for 'multitude' can be heard. His name means 'father of a multitude'.

Christ has not only Israel as a vineyard, but also all nations. He entrusted the vineyard of the nations "to caretakers", that are the kings who rule over these nations. They will bring the proceeds of their fruits to the Messiah in Jerusalem in the kingdom of peace (Psa 72:1,10-11; cf. Isa 60:3,6-9). The thousand silver pieces as yield represent an enormous value (cf. Isa 7:23). This capital is brought as a tribute year after year, during the whole time of the kingdom of peace.

Our heavenly Solomon now also has a vineyard, the responsibility of which He has entrusted to us. It costs something to work in His vineyard. There is certainly a reward for the work, but here it is about what it costs us. We must *take care* of the vineyard and the fruit is for the Lord Jesus.

In verse 12 the bride talks about her own vineyard again. She spoke about this earlier. But then she was not faithful in taking care of it. As a result, she could not give fruit to the groom (Song 1:16). Now her vineyard is in order. She guards and cares for it, so she is also able to offer the proceeds to Solomon. What she has done is by his strength, but she offers the result herself.

The yield is also more than that of the vineyard of Solomon in verse 11. She has a thousand plus two hundred silver pieces, that is two hundred more than the vineyard of the nations has yielded. It shows that in the kingdom of peace the small vineyard of God's people will have a greater yield than the nations together.

She also lets others share in the proceeds. The two hundred are a double tenth. They are "for those who take care of its fruit". The caretakers of the fruit are a picture of those who care for the church, the elders or overseers.

Those “who govern well” should be “considered worthy of double honor” (1Tim 5:17).

In a general sense, it is God’s thought that we give both to God and to our neighbor. When we have received blessings, it is to give them back to the Lord *and* to share them with others. This applies both spiritually and physically (Deu 26:1-4,12-13; Heb 13:15-16).

### **Song 8:13-14 | Hurry**

13 *“O you who sit in the gardens,  
[My] companions are listening for your voice—  
Let me hear it!”*  
14 *“Hurry, my beloved,  
And be like a gazelle or a young stag  
On the mountains of spices.”*

Here Solomon speaks for the last time in this book (verse 13). The bride was in the wilderness, but now she is in “the gardens”, which are places of enjoyment. These are all the places where fruit is produced for the groom. There she lives, there she has found peace and rest, there she enjoys everything because everything speaks of him.

She speaks about everything she finds there to others who are also present, the “companions”. They hear her voice and heed it. She has something to say that is worth listening to. The groom doesn’t say she is not allowed to do that. But he would also like to hear the bride’s own voice, which means that she not only speaks about him to others, but that she speaks to *him*, that she addresses *him*. She may address others to give them her own blessings, which will be the case in the realm of peace, but the most important thing for him is that her love continues to go first and foremost to him.

This is how the Lord Jesus desires to hear our voice. Work for Him is important, speaking about Him to others is a command. He also then hears our voice. But He so desires to hear our voice, that we speak to Him. We may also apply this to our meetings or other opportunities when we speak of Him.

We may speak *about* Him, but let us also speak *to* Him. He wants to hear our voice, the voice of the brothers loud in thanksgiving and prayers, and the brothers and sisters together in singing and saying “Amen” and in thanksgiving in their hearts. Do we let Him hear our voice in thanksgiving when we have spoken about Him with others? He longs for it.

The whole Word of God is full of His glory. If we have seen little of that yet, it is because we have read little in God’s Word. That can change. We are given a new opportunity to get to know more of Him by redefining God’s Word as the central place in our lives.

We can also apply this to our prayer life. Do we speak to Him? Does He hear our voice? He longs for it. There are people who always talk, who produce a stream of words, without it making any difference to them whether others listen or not. That is not the way the believer speaks to the Lord. The believer speaks while He listens. He speaks to Him from fellowship with Him, from the fullness of the heart. In eternity we will do this in a perfect way.

The bride is speaking at the beginning of the book and she also speaks, in verse 14, the last words of this book. These are words that bear witness to the deep longing in her heart for the coming of her beloved. The association of bride and groom is not yet a fact. If he comes, it will be with the elegance of a gazelle and the joy of a stag. The mountains will be full of the fragrance of spices.

It is as if we are hearing the last words of the New Testament, where “the Spirit and the bride say, “Come”” (Rev 22:17a). The Lord Jesus replies: “Yes, I am coming quickly”, to which the bride, the church, responds with the words: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20). It is the spontaneous expression of longing for Himself, for His Person.

The mountains of difficulties are no obstacle for Him to come. When He comes, all difficulties will be overcome by Him, through which those mountains will be covered with spices. Over all the difficulties He overcomes, there will be the sweet fragrance of His excellence.

This applies to Jerusalem when He comes to her, and it applies to the church when He comes to her. It already applies to our personal faith life when He comes into our life and overcomes the difficulties. His victory for

us is not in the fact that He takes away the difficulties, but in the fact that He carries us through the difficulties to His goal: close fellowship with Him.

Is there any of the readers who are not yet looking forward to the Lord Jesus with longing, but would like to be there when He comes? The invitation to such a person still sounds: "And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Rev 22:17b).



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