

BIBLE SYNTHESIS III (Bible Survey)

Introduction to Song of Solomon (also called Canticles)

Dr. James M. Gray, former Superintendent of Moody Bible Institute, said, “Of all the books of the Old Testament I feel myself least competent to speak of the Canticles, or the Song of Solomon. I am not ignorant of what others have thought and written about the book, but personally I have not grasped its contents as in the case of some of the other books.”

—*Synthetic Bible Studies*, James M. Gray, Fleming H. Revell Company

“Nowhere in Scripture does the unspiritual mind tread upon ground so mysterious and incomprehensible as in this book, whereas saintly men and women throughout the ages have found it a source of pure and exquisite delight.”

—Introduction to the Song of Solomon in
The New Scofield Reference Bible, Oxford

“If one book of the Bible may be said to be more sacred than another, then the Song of Solomon is that book, the very Holy of Holies of Scripture.”

—*Exploring the Scriptures*, Phillips, Moody Monthly, Chicago

“The Jews have ever held Song of Solomon in the greatest esteem. They reckoned it amongst the holiest of books. They compared Proverbs to the outer court of the Temple, Ecclesiastes to the Holy Place, and the Song of Solomon to the Holiest of all.” [Although we quote this, we question Ecclesiastes, which speaks of “man under the sun,” as being considered as the Holy Place.] This man continues: “Jonathan Edwards, of revered memory, writes: ‘*The whole book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it ... and found, from time to time, an increased sweetness that would carry me away in my contemplation.*’ The fact is this, the most spiritually minded men the world has ever known have revelled in its pages.”

—*The Outlined Bible*, Robert Lee, London

1. Name of the Book:

“Song of Solomon” — “The song of songs, which is Solomon’s” — The idea is, “The song of songs which is *concerning* Solomon.” (See 1:4; 3:7-11; 8:11)

Also called “Canticles” which means “chant” (or “song”). It comes from the Latin word *canticulum*, “chant.”

The name “Song of Songs” (1:1) is a Hebrew idiom for “chiefest” or “superlative song” of that king’s 1,005 songs (I Kings 4:32). Notice the use of this kind of idiom in Genesis 9:25; Exodus 26:33; Ecclesiastes 1:2. It is a repetition of the noun in the genitive plural as a way of bringing out the special character as the best or most excellent.

2. Author:

The human author was Solomon — 1:1.

3. Date:

The date is about 965 B.C. [That would be early in his reign. Later he fell into immorality and idolatry with his many wives. [A few Bible students say the date is unknown — between 562 and 522 B.C. (Solomon reigned from 971 to 931 B.C.).] Another scholar: “About 970 B.C. Evidently in Solomon’s early reign.” (G. Coleman Luck).

4. Theme of Song of Solomon:

Love from a high and lofty standpoint. Scofield: The Beloved.

5. Key Terms:

Love (26 times — from 4 different Hebrew words); *Loves* (1 time); *Loveth* (5 times)
Beloved (32 Times)

6. Key Passages:

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

7. Purpose:

To express in the best possible way the union between Christ and His people.

(1) In a general sense to honor marriage and the joys of wedded love. The word “beloved” appears 32 times. It shows the love of the bridegroom for the bride.

(2) It shows Jehovah’s love for Israel, particularly His godly remnant (cf. Hos. 2:19-20).

Significant Old Testament passages relating to this:

Psalm 45:10-17

Isaiah 54:5-6

Jeremiah 2:2

Jeremiah 3:14

Jeremiah 31:32

Ezekiel 16:8

Hosea 2:14-23

(3) Song of Solomon represents Christ’s love for His Church. This was recognized by Christians from the very beginning. [Compare Ephesians 5:25-33.]

Significant passages relating to this:

Matthew 9:15 [See Matt. 22:2-14.]

John 3:29

II Corinthians 11:2

Revelation 19:7-9

—*Selected*

8. The Story in Brief:

- (1) Up there in the north country, in the mountain district of Ephraim (about 50 miles north of Jerusalem), King Solomon had a vineyard (8:11).
- (2) He let it out to keepers, to an Ephraimite family (8:11). The father was apparently dead, there was a mother and at least two sons (1:6), also there were two daughters, the Shulamite (6:13) and a little sister (8:8).
- (3) It would seem that the Shulamite was the “ugly duckling,” or the “Cinderella” of the family, naturally beautiful, but unnoticed. Her brothers were possibly half-brothers (1:6), “My mother’s children.” They put hard tasks on her (1:6). They denied her any privileges whatsoever, and made her keep the vineyards (1:6). They also committed to her care the lambs and kids of the flock (1:8). She worked hard and was in the sun from early to late. “Mine own vineyard have I not kept” (1:6), meaning that she had no opportunity to look after herself. She became very sunburned (1:5). One day a handsome stranger-shepherd came to the vineyard. It was Solomon disguised. When he gazed upon her, and she was embarrassed concerning her personal appearance and gives her explanation (1:6). Taking him for a shepherd, she asks about his flocks (1:7). He answers evasively (1:8), but also speaks loving words to her (1:8-10) and promises rich gifts for the future (1:11). He wins her heart and leaves with the promise that he will return some day. She dreams of him at night and sometimes thinks that he is near (3:1). Finally he does return in all his kingly splendor to make her his bride (3:6-7). He is a picture of Christ, who comes first as Shepherd and wins His bride. He will later return as King in all His glory, and then the marriage of the Lamb will be consummated.

“When He comes, the glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we’ll sing,
‘Hallelujah, what a Saviour!’”

—Adapted from H. A. Ironside

BIBLE SYNTHESIS III

(Bible Survey)

Outline of Song of Solomon

1. The Bride in the Bridegroom's Palace Rejoices in His Love and Meditates on Their First Meeting and Separation — 1:1 — 3:5
2. The Bride Sees the Bridegroom Coming in His Glory and Responds to His Invitation to Accompany Him — 3:6 — 4:16
3. The Bride Sleeps and Is Separated from the Bridegroom for a Time but at Last Finds Him — 5:1 — 6:3
4. They Express Their Tender Love for Each Other —
— 6:4 — 8:14

—G. Coleman Luck, *The Bible Book By Book*, 1955, Moody Press, Chicago

Note:

Two books are recommended as being excellent for a devotional study of the Song of Solomon:

Union and Communion, by J. Hudson Taylor, Moody Press, Chicago

Song of Songs, by Watchman Nee, Christian Literature Crusade