



DAILY
B I B L E G U I D E

The Song of Solomon

Days 209-210 of a Yearly Bible Reading Program

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Daily Bible Reading Plan

Day	Passage	☒
Day 209	Song of Solomon 1-4	☐
Day 210	Song of Solomon 5-8	☐

Introduction to Hebrew Poetry

The books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations are all written as Hebrew poetry. There are of course other portions of Scripture that contain poetry, but these are almost entirely that. In modern English, we use patterns of rhymes and accents to add artistic beauty to our poetry. In ancient Hebrew there is no rhyme or rhythm. The way I like to describe it is that it rhymes ideas. Each verse is either a couplet or triplet of ideas and imagery that enhances the meaning.

Welcome to the Song of Solomon!

The Song of Solomon (sometimes called Canticles or Song of Songs) is I think the strangest book in the Bible. It is presented as a dramatic play in poetical form. To properly understand it you need to pay attention to who is speaking at the time. On the surface, it is a story of love between a man and his wife, as they meet and are joined in marriage. In this, it glorifies marriage and the joys of physical intimacy therein. It does have a deeper meaning, based on a typological or allegorical interpretation. This shows it to be a picture of the love of God, either as expressed as God to Israel or as Christ to the Church. This book is like a multifaceted gem that has beauty through multiple viewpoints. The book itself defies any attempt to add strict structure to it.

A few quick facts about Song of Solomon:

- The author is Solomon, as indicated in the first verse.
- It is believed that this was written around the time of Solomon's first marriage in 1017 B.C. to Naamah the Ammonite (mother of Rehoboam, I Kings 14:21)
- The key verse is 8:7 – “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”
- I think it best to read this book as a drama. The divisions between sections and speakers are not clearly marked, which is common with ancient dramas. This leads to many opinions about who is speaking in many passages. This often relies on Hebrew pronouns that are used to distinguish between masculine and feminine, singular and plural. I have tried to reflect these voice changes in our notes. There are three voices we will note: the Bride, the Groom, and the Chorus. The first two should be self-explanatory. The last represents the greater world outside of the couple, usually as the daughters of Jerusalem.
- A brief outline:
 - Introduction – 1:1
 - Act I – Love's Beginning
 - Scene 1 – The Wedding – 1:2-2:7
 - Scene 2 – Reminiscences of Courtship – 2:8-3:5
 - Scene 3 – Betrothal Day - 3:6-5:1
 - Act II – Love's Abiding
 - Scene 1 – Troubled Dreams – 5:2-6:3
 - Scene 2 – Praise of the Bride – 6:4-7:10
 - Scene 3 – Continuing in Love – 7:10-8:14

Chapter 1 Notes

In this chapter the Bride declares her love for the Groom as they are married.

vs. 1 – The title page for the drama, giving its title and author.

vs. 2-4a – The Bride confesses her love to the Groom. Her attention is consumed on him. The consummation of the marriage is in vs. 4 as she is taken to his chambers

vs. 4b – The last phrase of this verse is the Chorus speaking.

vs. 5-7 – The Bride considers herself unworthy of the love of such a great man who could have chosen from dozens of potential women. In vs. 5-6 she describes herself as being black, that is, darkly tanned. She is not used to the luxury of the palace and is well acquainted with the toils of life. The Groom is pictured as a shepherd in vs. 7, a fitting description of a king. The Bride asks where he takes his flock to rest in shade from the noonday sun. She longs to be with him in this restful time.

vs. 8-11 – The Groom responds. If the Bride wants to know where he rests with the flocks, she should come with him and feed the tender lambs. He then praises her beauty and promises wondrous gifts.

vs. 12-14 – The Bride compares the Groom to sweet perfumes.

vs. 15 – The Groom praises the beauty of the Bride.

vs. 16-17 – The Bride describes the setting of their marriage. The description of a green place to rest and the trees that cover them makes me think this is an outdoor setting, fitting for the imagery of shepherds that have been used. I think we may see here that the Bride is not enamored with a wealthy king in his splendor but would happily love and follow her beloved even if they were simple shepherds.

Chapter 2 Notes

In this chapter the Bride rejoices in married bliss and recalls their courtship.

vs. 1 – The Bride describes herself as one of the wildflowers of the plains. This is a statement of humility, saying she is but one of many beautiful women.

vs. 2 – The Groom responds that none can compare to the beauty of the Bride. Other women are thorny bushes compared to her.

vs. 3-7 – The Bride compares the Groom and his love to a fruit tree that refreshes her. She then compares the same to a great feast celebrating their love. She is held in his embrace and begs that they are not disturbed.

vs. 8-10a – The Bride continues speaking with a change of tone. She is recalling the day when the Groom took her from her home as his wife. She then recalls his invitation.

vs. 10b-14 – The Groom speaks in the memory of the Bride. He calls her to join him as his wife and enjoy the splendors of married life.

vs. 15-17 – The Bride speaks of duties or problems that keep her from instantly rushing to her beloved's side. Remember that she tends the vineyards (1:6) and she must deal with the problem of little foxes spoiling the vines before they can bring forth a harvest. This may represent a misunderstanding between the two. She declares her love for him and begs him to return at night.

Chapter 3 Notes

In this chapter the Bride continues to remember their courtship and then wedding.

vs. 1-5 – The Bride impatiently waits for her beloved to come for her at night as she requested in 2:17. He does not arrive and she goes out to seek him. She finds him, takes hold of him, and brings him to her home. She then begs the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb them as she did in 2:7. She then continues to reminisce.

vs. 6-11 – The Bride recalls the day her husband came to take her as his wife. This practice of a grand procession arriving at the bride's home and leading the couple to the groom's is well attested to in Scripture, as in Matthew 25:1-13. The Groom is Solomon in all the wealth and splendor his rank afforded him.

Chapter 4 Notes

In this chapter the Groom serenades the Bride of his love.

vs. 1-16a – The Groom speaks of the beauty of his Bride. Some of the comparisons may seem strange today, but this was surely swoon-worthy in its day.

vs. 16b – The Bride responds to the Groom's wooing of her and declares her eagerness to become his wife.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 209

One of the purposes of Song of Solomon is to show us an example of true love. Our world has a perverted sense of the term. The highest form of human love is committed love in a marriage between a man and a woman. There is no comparison to this. Inside of marriage the joys of intimacy are to be reserved and enjoyed. Such teachings abound in Scripture, but here we have it vividly displayed for us as an example to strive toward.

Hymn for Day 209

“Thou Shepherd of Israel” was written by Charles Wesley and first appeared in 1788 with no title, simply listed as “HYMN XCII”. It takes up the beautiful pictures from 1:7 and applies them to our relationship with Christ.

*Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine,
The joy and desire of my heart,
For closer communion I pine,
I long to reside where thou art:
The pasture I languish to find,
Where all who their Shepherd obey,
Are fed, on thy bosom reclin'd,
Are screen'd from the Heat of the day.*

*Ah! shew me that happiest place,
That place of thy people's abode,
Where saints in an extacy gaze,
And hang on a crucify'd God;
Thy love for a sinner declare,
Thy passion and death on the tree;
My spirit to Calvary bear,
To suffer and triumph with thee.*

*'Tis there with the lambs of thy flock,
There only I covet to rest,
To lie at the foot of the rock,
Or rise to be hid in thy breast:
'Tis there I would always abide,
And never a moment depart,
Conceal'd in the cleft of thy side,
Eternally held in thy heart.*

Chapter 5 Notes

In this chapter the Bride has a dream that troubles her.

vs. 1a – The Groom replies to the Bride's acceptance of his proposal in 4:16. The celebration and joy of the marriage is anticipated.

vs. 1b – The final phrase, "eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved", is by the Chorus. It is the community celebrating the marriage.

vs. 2-8 – The Bride now dreams of that day that the Groom has come for her. This turns into a nightmare as when she opens the door to meet him, he is not there. She searches in vain for him in the city. The watchmen abuse her. This is the point where most believe the dream ends as she calls the daughters of Jerusalem to aid in her search.

vs. 9 – The Chorus of the daughters of Jerusalem respond to the Bride's plea for aid in finding her love. They ask why her love was more important than any other.

vs. 10-16 – The Bride describes the handsomeness of her love.

Chapter 6 Notes

In this chapter the Groom and Chorus praise the Bride.

vs. 1 – The Chorus of the daughters of Jerusalem ask the Bride where the Groom could have gone.

vs. 2-3 – The Bride tells the daughters of Jerusalem that the Groom has gone to his garden. This is a place he frequents. She declares their mutual love.

vs. 4-9 – The Groom returns and finds his beloved. He speaks of her beauty again. He declares that among the numerous queens and princesses of this world that none compared to her. These all look up to her.

vs. 10 – The Chorus joins in the praise of the Bride.

vs. 11-12 – The Groom goes about his business but is overcome with desire for his Bride.

vs. 13a – The Chorus calls for the Bride to return to them so they may admire her. But she is departing to meet her Groom. The voice changes in the middle of this verse.

vs. 13b – The Groom responds to the chorus. The final phrase is difficult to translate. Some say it refers to a beautiful dance that showed the Bride's grace and beauty. I think John Gill mentions a better interpretation: "such an appearance as an army makes at the reception of their prince". That is when a company divides itself that their leader be received into their midst through the cleared path among them. This may speak of the people receiving her with great honor. But that is not her desire. She does not seek fame, only the love of the Groom.

Chapter 7 Notes

In this chapter the Groom woos his bride and she responds in devotion.

vs. 1-9 – The Groom woos his Bride by speaking of her beauty. Once again, some of the comparisons may seem strange today, but this was surely swoon-worthy in its day.

vs. 10-13 – The Bride declares their mutual love and devotion. She seeks to run away with her Royal Groom to a simple life they can simply enjoy together.

Chapter 8 Notes

In this chapter the happy couple unite in joy.

vs. 1-4 – The Bride declares her desire for an even closer bound than marriage. She wishes her husband could have been her little brother which she could have enjoyed all of her life. In vs. 3 she speaks of her desire for intimacy with the Groom and again charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb their peace.

vs. 5a – The first part of this verse is the Chorus responding to the Bride as they see her arrive with the Groom.

vs. 5b-7 – The Bride reminisces. The apple tree is an allusion to 2:3. She again declares her devotion to her husband.

vs. 8-9 – The Chorus speaks. Here it is the voice of the cruel brothers in 1:6. She is described as too homely to find a husband and they plot ways to entice a man to take her.

vs. 10-12 – The Bride counters the opinion of the Brothers. She was worthy of love and marriage. She speaks metaphorically of the vineyards of Solomon who leases them out for great gain. She compares these to her own vineyard, which now is Solomon's, and prays that it be more bountiful.

vs. 13 – The Groom asks for the Bride for to call for him that they may be together.

vs. 14 – The Bride calls for her beloved to quickly come to her.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 210

There is an old saying that “absence makes the heart grow fonder”. That is seen in this section of Song of Solomon as the Bride and Groom long for each other, even if parted only in a dream. Such love for our Savior should be ours. One day He will return for us. Our hearts should long for that day. We should be constantly looking and listening for His return.

Hymn for Day 210

Our hymn today is “Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned”, written by Samuel Stennett in 1787. The vivid descriptions of a believer’s love of Christ fit well the deeper meanings of such love in this book.

*Majestic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon the Savior’s brow;
His head with radiant glories crowned,
His lips with grace o’erflow,
His lips with grace o’erflow.*

*To Christ, the Lord, let every tongue
Its noblest tribute bring
When He’s the subject of the song,
Who can refuse to sing?
Who can refuse to sing?*

*Survey the beauties of His face,
And on His glories dwell;
Think of the wonders of His grace,
And all His triumphs tell,
And all His triumphs tell.*

*No mortal can with Him compare
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair
Who fill the heav’nly train,
Who fill the heav’nly train.*

*He saw me plunged in deep distress
And flew to my relief;
For me He bore the shameful cross
And carried all my grief,
And carried all my grief.*

*His hand a thousand blessings pours
Upon my guilty head:
His presence gilds my darkest hours,
And guards my sleeping bed,
And guards my sleeping bed.*

*To Him I owe my life and breath
And all the joys I have;
He makes me triumph over death
And saves me from the grave,
And saves me from the grave.*

*To Heav'n, the place of His abode,
He brings my weary feet;
Shows me the glories of my God,
And makes my joys complete,
And makes my joys complete.*

*Since from His bounty I receive
Such proofs of love divine,
Had I a thousand hearts to give,
Lord, they should all be Thine,
Lord, they should all be Thine.*