## Two Lectures on the Song of Solomon.

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LECTURE 1. — [Cant. 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Cant.+1&t=DBY), Cant. 2.

GENERAL REMARKS

We are about to look at a book of scripture which, I suppose, has often exercised the minds of many of us. But it is remarkable that although modern thought might presume to speak lowly of such a book, there is no part of the Hebrew scriptures which has more distinct, positive authority. That is to say there is not a single ground-work of divine authority which it does not possess save one, perhaps, that might be brought up against it, and that is, that it is one of the very few books of the Bible which are not quoted in the New Testament. But there is not the very slightest ground for question on that score, and for this simple reason, — that, although it be not cited, the very ground-work of it is constantly before the mind of the Spirit of God. The first book of the New Testament most plainly alludes to the great thought of Canticles, that is, the bridal relation as the sign or symbol of Christ's special love to His people. For although, undoubtedly, we have in the New Testament the place of children and the Father's love; and although we have also the figure of the shepherd in his care for the sheep, still we see this very relationship taken up and used by the Holy Ghost as the peculiar figure of the nearness of love in which the Lord stands to ourselves. This, however, has exposed the book, I think, to be misunderstood.

In that haste which is at all times apt to characterise want of faith as well as want of spiritual intelligence, it has been taken for granted that the bride of the Canticles must be the same as the bride of which the apostle Paul speaks — the bride of which John speaks in the Revelation. But this in nowise follows; and I will endeavour to make this plain before I enter upon the book itself.

If we turn, then, to the Gospel of Matthew, we find that the first occasion in the New Testament where the bridal relation comes before us is in [Matthew 9](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+9&t=DBY), wherein the Lord is vindicating His disciples on the occasion of questions being raised by Pharisaic prejudices. Jesus said to the disciples of John, who identified themselves with the feeling of the Pharisees, "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Now, there we have a distinct allusion. But where do we hear of the bridegroom? It is supposed to be something thoroughly well known. He does not explain it. Where was the title of the "bridegroom" got from? Unquestionably from Canticles — the Song of Solomon. That is, we have here — not, it is true, a quotation, but we have what appears to me to be even stronger than a quotation. We have it as a distinctly recognised fact. We have it as a grand truth that was thoroughly familiar to the mind of the Jews, and mark, beloved friends, with the stamp of the Son of God upon it. For it is not, you observe, a title which the disciples of John use in speaking to Jesus, but it is the Lord Jesus who uses it to them. "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn," says He," as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."

Now, you will notice what singular beauty — and I need not say divine perfection — there is in these words. He does not speak of the bride. He simply speaks of the children of the bride-chamber. He knew right well that He was about to bring out another to fill the place as His bride. But here there is no reference at all; for at this time our Lord was being simply proposed to Israel. It was a question of whether the ancient people of God would receive Him. Had they received Him He would have been the bridegroom and they would have composed the bride. And it is plain, as I have said, that the Lord does not set this forth as something which He was making known for the first time, but as something which they ought to have been perfectly familiar with, and, of course, grounded upon the word of God. Where was it taken from? From the book of which I have read a few words this evening.

Well, if we turn again to a later part of this same Gospel of Matthew — to the parable of The Ten Virgins which is so justly familiar to the christian — what do we find there? We have the kingdom of heaven compared to ten virgins. It is not the bride, you observe, but virgins who went forth with their lamps to meet the bridegroom. Now, there can be no question whatever that the bridegroom is the Lord Jesus. It is plain that the bride is not the point in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. It is virgins who were going forth to meet the bridegroom. And where then do we find the bride? Solemn silence! In the first allusion where the Lord spoke of the bridegroom, there is no reference to the bride. It is the children of the bride-chamber, and not a word about the bride. Remarkable silence! The natural thing would have been to speak of the bride as well; and so natural is it that in some ancient copies — one of the most ancient copies — made of this very parable, the writer slipped into this mistake, for he represented the kingdom of heaven as likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet "the bridegroom and the bride." They have added the words "and the bride." I need not tell you that there is not the slightest authority for it.

Nay, what I want to show is the striking wisdom of the Lord in that He does not say a word about the bride. There is the bridegroom, and he is coming — because that is the point: he is coming. It is not a scene in heaven; this is not the point. But here we find the bridegroom coming, and these virgins are going out to meet him. *They*are not the bride of Christ which He is going to take to Himself; and the ten virgins could not be the figure of the bride.

It is quite plain, then, that the bride is unmentioned — unseen; and the reason to my mind is most solemn. The Lord perfectly well knew that the bride, whom their hearts were familiar with from the Old Testament imagery, was to be no bride yet — that the bride would be faithless — that the bride would refuse the Bridegroom for the time. The bride, therefore, doss not appear in either of His allusions. For He was not like one who had to learn. He was not one who did not know the truth: He was a divine person. It was all before Him. He might wait; but even when He did wait, and when it was too plain that He was thoroughly rejected by the Jews, and was now about to lay down His life as a sacrifice — not to come as a Bridegroom for the bride, but to lay down His life as a sacrifice for sinners — even then, in this striking parable at the very close there is not a word about the bride. From first to last the bride appears not.

Now that, to me, is most instructive; because one of the objects of the Gospel of Matthew is to show not more that He was the true and divine Messiah, Emmanuel, than that the true Emmanuel — the Messiah — would be rejected by Israel. Hence, therefore, there is a veil over Israel. How singular! He does not even name her. She would refuse Him. He does not say a word about her. He turns to that which was near to His own heart; not to guiltiness — the guilty unbelief of her that ought to have welcomed the returning Bridegroom, now present. He was the present Bridegroom even then, but He speaks of ourselves really, for it is the christian body, and, indeed, the professing christian body, that He means by the ten virgins. He does not refer to the Jewish remnant, as some people have fancied. There is nothing at all about the Jewish remnant in the ten virgins. The ten virgins are clearly christian professors who go forth to meet the Bridegroom. That is our position, and what characterises Christianity.

The Jew will remain where he is, and be blest of God where he is, when the day comes to bless the Jew. They never go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom will come to them when their heart is turned. There will be that turn of heart, and the veil will be taken away when it turns to the Lord — the heart of Israel, as we are told in [2 Corinthians 3](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+3&t=DBY). The Lord was clearly speaking here of those that go forth, and He is speaking of some foolish and some wise. When the Jewish remnant comes there will be none foolish. The wise shall understand, and they are the understanding ones — the Jewish remnant of the last days.

And what shows still more plainly that it is not the Jewish remnant is this. They have got oil in their vessels, whereas the Jews will have the Holy Ghost poured out upon them after their relationship with Christ is established. We have the Holy Ghost poured out when Christ went away. They will not have the Holy Ghost poured out upon them till Christ comes back again; so that the distinction, therefore, is perfectly plain. And see how all corroborates this, because they go to sleep. The Jewish remnant will never go to sleep. From the time that they are called they will pass through unequalled fires of tribulation. People do not go to sleep in times of tribulation, but in times of ease. That is what has come to pass in Christendom. There were times of ease, and people went to sleep; and that is what we find here — the Lord waking them up at the end. But, I repeat, the ten virgins portray Christendom, good and bad, wise and foolish, and not the Jewish body. The bride is nowhere seen. She is not even named. I have no doubt that the returning Bridegroom will take the bride after this; but the ten virgins are a totally different figure, and they are viewed here not as the bride, but as the cortège, as it were — the bridal procession — those that go forth to meet Him and go in with Him to the marriage. But then it is another who is the bride; and if you ask who that bride would be, if the bride were named at all, I answer, without hesitation, the bride of the Canticles — Jerusalem.

Now, we must not suppose, beloved friends, that it is anything strange that Jerusalem should have such a title attached to her. The Prophets take it up, and the Psalms too. [Psalm 45](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+45&t=DBY) refers most clearly to that Jewish bride. She is the queen. There are the virgins, her companions, but she is the queen. There are others to be blest in that bright day; but she is the one that is all glorious within. And we must not suppose that this is any derogation from the heavenly bride, the church, for I quite admit that the same persons who are the wise virgins in [Matthew 25](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25&t=DBY) do compose that heavenly bride. In short, we must remember that the bride is only a figure; and that as there is the church which has a nearer place than any of the others that are in heaven, so Jerusalem — or Zion if you will — will have a special place near to Messiah on the earth. The Lord's heart, surely, is large enough for both heaven and earth. He who is God as well as man — He who is the Head of the church as well as the Head of the Jew, loves, and will love, them both with the fullest and most fervent love. Consequently as in the Old Testament we have a bride who is clearly defined and most unquestionably not the church, so in the New Testament we have a bride that is fully brought out; and that bride is as clearly the church and not Jerusalem, as in the Old Testament it is Jerusalem and not the church.

This, I think, will help very considerably in understanding the Canticles. No person must suppose that this will make the Canticles less interesting. The first point, beloved friends, is always to consider not what we count interesting but to ask what is the truth — what is the mind of God. Now, I think that whenever we have God's mind as a settled certainty, there is nothing that is of deeper interest; and I need hardly say that if such will be the love of Christ — so great and so tender — towards His earthly bride, would it be a fair inference that Christ's love is less towards His heavenly bride? I should have thought the contrary, and therefore, that we were most entirely entitled to infer that the Lord's love is larger than we thought it was — that the Lord will have an object most dear to Him upon the earth in a special nearness to Him, as the Lord will surely have an object which is peculiarly near to Him in heaven. And if we belong to Christ at all now, such will be our relationship, and such we are entitled to know is our relationship at this time. This, I repeat, is not to take away scripture from our hearts, but it is to give us a true intelligence of scripture.

I might refer to the Gospel of John in order to carry forward the same proof with regard to the figure of the bridegroom and, consequently, of the earthly bride, — for the church was not yet revealed when the Lord spoke there, or when John the Baptist gave his testimony to Christ there; but I prefer to put it upon the words of Christ. John the Baptist, no doubt, bears the same stamp as the Lord Jesus does — I would not say of inspiration. No: I speak of Him as a divine person. He spoke the words of God, and John the Baptist gave here his testimony from God just as truly as if it had been God Himself speaking; but, still, we must always distinguish between one who is merely an instrument and one who is God's express image. Such was Jesus.

I do not wish to merely bring a number of texts as if it were making the truth stronger. I hope that I am addressing those who would be quite satisfied with one scripture if there were one scripture only. The man who requires twenty scriptures evidently does not believe one. The man who thinks that scripture is more certain because he multiplies the proofs has evidently no proper sense of its divine certitude. I take my stand, then, upon this, that the books of the Old Testament — Psalms and Prophets — are alluding, from time to time (I might say frequently), to the figure of the bride as that which Jerusalem is to fill in a day that is coming; and that the New Testament takes its stand on the lips of our Lord Himself sealing this great truth, the more important because Jerusalem was going to refuse Him, alas! How blessed His testimony! The Lord, however, although He does not speak of Jerusalem here as the bride, speaks of Himself as the Bridegroom. He did not fail in His love although she failed in hers.

That is the great truth which I draw from it; but, that truth is founded, I repeat, upon the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon, therefore, is evidently stamped with the fullest divine authority, and not merely because it is in the very heart, if I may say so, of the Bible — not merely because it was always undisputed — not merely because it was in the very earliest translation that was ever made of the scriptures. It is not like the Apocryphal Books or anything that could be questioned. That book was translated into the leading language of the Gentiles long before the coming of Christ; so that there can be no doubt whatever as to its full divine authority. And, further, it was familiarly understood at that time; so that our Lord could appeal to the prominent figure of that book which, I may say, envelopes the whole of it; for the whole book is devoted to the love between the Bridegroom and the bride. I know, of course, that Solomon was the author of it; and it has bean thought by many that Solomon was the subject of it. Whatever may be the historical circumstances which gave occasion to the book, that is a matter which has no particular claim to occupy our mind. What we find is, not the occasion which gave rise to it, but the truth of God in it — what the Holy Ghost meant for the edification of saints at all times, and, very especially, when this book will apply. For it bears another great stamp of divine truth about it, and it is this, of which I am persuaded, that the true bearing of the book is future — that it is not yet accomplished.

The Jews have regarded it as an historical allegory — and there they missed the mind of God — of the dealings of God with the Jewish people — that it was the love of Jehovah for Israel from the day when He brought her out of Egypt. They naturally applied the coming of the bride and the bridegroom out of the wilderness to God bringing His people out of the house of bondage, and taking them for His own people before the face of all the world.

But no, beloved brethren: it is evident that this is not at all the way of God's Spirit — to be writing a book, and a book at such a time, devoted to what was past, and what was even then passing into darkness and sin and ruin. Not so. The word of God has, in all its parts, a prophetic character stamped upon it as a whole. The Book of Genesis, even, has; and I particularly refer to that, because if anything might be supposed to look back at the past, surely it was Genesis. But Genesis could not close, and Genesis could not even make advance, without proving its divine scope, and withal the Spirit of God launching into the future. It might be in the form of type, of course: it might assume the character of prophecy; it does both. But I refer to it now to show that such, we may say, in a general way, is the character of all scripture. It looks onward to a bright day. It has its root in the past, no doubt. It firmly deals with the present; but its aspect is always to the future. And no wonder, because if it is grounded upon the ruin of the first man, it looks onward to the glory of the Second. That is what all scripture has for its great object and character.

Well, now, so has the Song of Solomon; and it is with reference to this that I will endeavour now to give a few suggestions, for I am only going to take it up in a general way. I do not profess to be acquainted with all the details of it; for I am really afraid to speak presumptuously, or in any way to take up the nice points which many persons raise whose inclination disposes them to what is commonly called allegorical interpretation. I repeat that I do not wish at all to expose myself to anything that is not of God. I wish to speak of what I know — what I most firmly believe — to be of God, and to speak, therefore, of the broad and deep characteristics of this wonderful book. But I think that the Lord may give sufficient to help the children of God to a larger view — a more correct understanding, and to have more than mere points of detail, which is never the most profitable way of looking at scripture. What we want is to have it as a whole. When we have got the general idea — the outline of the map — then we can begin to look at the details: but the details I must leave to those who think that it is their place to open them up. For my own part, I am content to give a few suggestions, at this present time, of a more general kind.

Now, there is one thing that I would draw your attention to. I have been proving that the Song refers to the earthly bride and not to the heavenly one. I will now give you the spiritual reasons of that. I have given you dogmatic proof drawn from the word of God; but I will now give you what I may call spiritual or moral reasons why the Song of Songs, although most instructive and helpful for our souls, nevertheless does not present as its object the proper relationship of the heavenly bride, but rather of the earthly one.

And the first great difference between them is this, which we must always hold fast in looking at the Song; *we*come in as the bride between the two comings of Christ. The Jews will not. They had the revelation that they were to be the bride before His first coming; but they refused Him; they rejected Him; they despised Him; and they never, therefore, took the place of being His bride when He did come. The Lord left them veiled in their own silence and hardness of unbelief. But not so when He comes again. Consequently, you observe, it follows from this that their taking up that relationship is purely and solely a matter of hope — purely and solely a prospective relationship. The bride here is not united to the bridegroom. I will give the reasons and the proof of this when we come to look at it; and it is of great moment, because many, from not seeing this, have interpreted the figures in what I must consider a very low and, I think, uncomely manner. The purity of the poem is perfect; but the purity of the poem is so much the more perfect because the bride is not yet in the relationship. You never find the language of this Song applied to the heavenly bride.

When we come to look at the heavenly bride we find that there is this very important difference — that we come into relationship with Christ after His first coming and before His second. The consequence is that we are in the most peculiar position that it is possible for souls upon earth to stand in: because we are now, by the Holy Ghost, united to Him. It is not exactly that the marriage has taken place in heaven, for that awaits the last member of the body of Christ; but, still, we are His body. We are in the very nearest possible relationship to Christ. We are viewed as really being members of His body — not that we shall be, but that we are.

That is not the case of the bride here at all. The bride in the Canticles — in the Song of Solomon — is awaiting His coming. There is nothing at all about His having come. There is no such thing as redemption, i.e., we never find redemption referred to here. We find no such thing as the power of the Holy Ghost baptising into one body, or anything that forms the great substratum of truth for the church of God. Nothing of that kind. You see we are in a present, known, settled relationship to Christ; and we know that His love is so completely ours that even when we go to heaven it is not that He will love us better, but that we shall enjoy it perfectly. But, I repeat, we are already His body; and He treats us as such. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; and this is the very thing which is used — this very figure — in addressing husbands and wives about their mutual relationship. It is plain, therefore, that the church stands in a very peculiar relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, and peculiar in this way — that there is a present establishment of relationship, and, consequently, a present sense of His love such as the Jewish bride could not have, till He actually comes. Then the relationship will be established between the Bridegroom and the bride — the earthly bride; but not before.

Now, unless this is seen, I think that we are apt to get harm from the Canticles. Let me refer to a proof which comes out — the exercises of heart through which the bride passes. She gets a vision of the bridegroom and he vanishes. She does not rise to open the door, and he is gone. Is that the case with the Lord? Does the Lord Jesus ever withdraw? Does the Lord ever hide His face from us? No, never. We may withdraw from Him; but that is not the point of the Canticles. The point there is that He withdraws. Now, I deny that that is the case in the dealings of Christ with the church or with the saint — with the individual. I deny that the Lord ever withdraws from the saint now: so that you see it becomes very important; because persons may take up the Canticles without seeing that there is a difference — that while there is a great deal which is common to us and to the Jewish bride, there is an essential difference, and this essential difference shows itself particularly in what I have now referred to. It is evident that we should be falsified in our relationship. We should be imputing to God's sovereignty (as people do in that case) what really is a matter of our own unbelief, thus throwing the blame upon Him instead of taking shame to ourselves — the sole cause and, indeed, the sole fact. For the bride's carelessness is, no doubt, the cause here.

But the truth is, there is no such establishment of relationship viewed in the Song of Solomon. It is entirely anticipative; therefore one sees that the idea of a kind of bringing before us the secrecy of the love of a relationship which was not yet established is all a mistake. It is not a question of publishing to other people what belongs to a relationship that is formed. No; there is a most mighty and worthy object in it. It is the Lord preparing her for the relationship. It is the Lord making known to her who might have thought that He could not love her and did not love her. It is the Lord who is acting in His own perfect grace to guilty Jerusalem, and letting Jerusalem know that He who wept for her will love her, — that He who shed not merely His tears but His blood for her — (for He died for that nation) — that that blessed Saviour will work by His own Spirit in their hearts to form and fit them for His love, but to form and fit them for loving Him by the perfectness of His love to them. This is the great object of the Canticles.

Accordingly, the whole beauty of it is the love which Christ expresses (not to her), and the love that Christ forms in her heart to Him before the relationship is established. With us it is a different thing. We are taken up as the poorest of sinners; we are converted; we are brought to God as children of God; and we wake up to find the wondrous fact that we are the body of Christ — that we are the bride of Christ — that we are now in the closest possible relationship to the Lord Jesus. Sovereign grace! Sovereign grace, and nothing else; whereas in the case of the bride of the Canticles it is another thing. They well knew that they ought to have been the bride. They well knew, from the Prophets — from the Psalms — that that was a place which they ought to have filled. 'Ah, but then we have sinned; we have refused Him; we have despised Him. Have not we sent Him away? Will He ever look upon us again?' That is the question, you see; and that question is answered by the Song of Solomon. There is the answer of the Lord — for it is the Lord; it is their own Jehovah, but it is their own Messiah.

And here I must explain a remarkable feature of it which has not always been noticed. Solomon wrote the Proverbs; Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes; Solomon wrote the Canticles — the Song of Solomon. In the Proverbs he uses "Jehovah," as a general rule. I am not aware that the term "God," as God, occurs more than once ([Prov. 25:2](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Prov.+25.2&t=DBY)) in the whole book of Proverbs; though we may compare also [Prov. 2:5](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Prov.+2.5&t=DBY), [17](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Prov+2.17&t=DBY); [Prov. 3:4](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Prov.+3.4&t=DBY); [Prov. 30:5](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Prov.+30.5&t=DBY), [9](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Prov+30.9&t=DBY). Thus, at any rate, we see it is not characteristic of that book. The characteristic term throughout Proverbs is "the LORD" — printed in our Bibles in small capitals — meaning "Jehovah"; and the reason is plain. It is the wisdom that Jehovah provides for a people in a settled relationship with Himself. Hence the term Jehovah is always used there.

The same writer wrote Ecclesiastes; and it is remarkable that "Jehovah" never occurs in Ecclesiastes. I do not know that it does. It is not the characteristic word. It is "God" that you find as a rule. I do not mean to say that you will never find "Jehovah" in it. I have not been looking for the purpose of refreshing my memory as to that. Possibly one might find the word in it. I cannot positively say; but I can say that it is not the characteristic word. But you must remember that the exception, as men say, proves the rule; and there is always a great force in an exception which proves the rule, because it is the very thing that brings out a striking truth so much the more plainly seeing that it is not the rule.

Well, now, you have another book of Solomon, and in that there is neither "Jehovah" nor "God." Surely there must be something very pointed that the same writer should do this, and the same writer not merely giving us something inspired and something that was not inspired. We read of Solomon having written — was it a thousand and five songs? He wrote a great many songs at any rate. Well, we have not got these songs that he wrote. We have the Canticles — this book. Even where writers were inspired, you see, God did not preserve all that they wrote, but only that which was essential to the plan and purpose of the Bible. The rest might be perfectly true and perfectly good; but whatever was a part of God's purpose in the Bible, and that only, did He preserve. For it was as much a part of God's mind that the Bible should be complete as that there should be nothing superfluous. The Bible is perfect. To have had one chapter more than was necessary for the purpose of God would have spoilt the Bible. There is not a word too much. But, on the other hand, there is not a word too little. There is nothing lost: God has preserved exactly what was needed.

But I daresay you have all heard of the foolishness of German infidelity. I am speaking now, I am sorry to say, of the infidelity of theologians. You have all heard, I suppose, of the ravages of that fearful thing; and that they apply their thoughts to the Bible in this way. They see "God" sometimes, and "Jehovah" at other times; and they judge from this that two different persons must have written the books! — two different authors — different objects — in different ages — different countries — different men. Look at the answer here. The same man wrote these books I have referred to. In one it is "Jehovah," in another it is '` God"; in the third it is neither the one nor the other. Why this? Why is it not here? The object is evident for the very same reason — that after giving the title "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's," the opening words are, "Let *him*kiss me." I need not tell you that it is infinitely better as it is, than anything which could have been suggested. Would it have been the same thing to say, "Let Jehovah kiss me"? Every renewed heart would repudiate such a thing. No; certainly not. It would be unbecoming. Would it be right to say, "Let God kiss me"? Clearly not. "Let HIM kiss me." How blessed!

[Canticles 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Canticles+1&t=DBY).

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine" (verse 2). Was He not Jehovah and God? To be sure He was; but He is man: He is their own Messiah. And thus we see the beauty of these words. It is the more striking, because, instead of Saying, "Let Messiah kiss me," she says what is more proper, more becoming. There was only one object. As she was His object, so He was her Object, for this is the point; and she does not require to say who. And indeed is not this its beauty? "Let *him*." It could not be mistaken. There might be ever so many in the world, but there was only One, and that was the One Whom she had so offended — Whom she had refused and rejected and despised. "Let HIM kiss me." That is her feeling; and was it not needless to say whom? There was no one in heaven or earth that she desired but Him. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." No doubt it is the expression of the most tender affection, but, still, that is the very thing. Could she not desire it? She did most ardently desire it; but there was the thought that she had lost it. She thought that it could not be. "Oh, if He were only to answer!" And here again, how beautiful! You see, the heart of Israel must turn, and the Lord stands to that. He means to bless Jerusalem; and He will bless. His own secret grace will work. But she must speak the word first, as He said (when rejected and bowing to the rejection here below) in the same Gospel that I have referred to the Gospel of Matthew — "till ye shall say." He left the house desolate and called it "Your house." It is no longer His "Father's house" ([John 2:16](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+2.16&t=DBY)), nor Jehovah's house ([Matt. 22:13](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matt.+22.13&t=DBY)); but, speaking of the temple, He says "Your house is left unto you desolate; and," He adds, "ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." There is the "He"; He is the One: He is coming in the name of Jehovah. But observe — it is still "Ye shall say." What! they — the Jews, who were then going to crucify Him? The very same. "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do"; and here it is answered. Here is the work of grace at length. How long they had waited for Him! But now the time — the set time to favour Zion is come — God's set time; and as His servants take pleasure in her stones, and as her dust, even, is precious in their eyes, so now her heart desires that what seemed to be the lost relationship should be the formed relationship. Oh, that she might have Him! But she had refused Him. This, then, is the opening word. It is the desire of her heart that the Messiah would show His love to her — He to Whom she had shown such contempt and hatred.

"For thy love is better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth." Here we see how evidently it is no question of Solomon, or of anything that may have historically given rise to it. There is none but one named — none but one who could fill up. A greater than Solomon is here. "Thy name," as she says, "is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee." Nothing can be more holy — nothing can be more pure — than the affection of her who thus breathes out her heart's desire — that He would only show His love to her. "Therefore do the virgins love thee." Whom does she refer to as "the virgins"? Those who were uncontaminated by the corruptions of that day. This "Song of the Canticles" supposes the heart of the godly in Israel — for they will be the true Israel: they will be the true bride when the day comes for this to be made good, at a time of excessive corruption and apostasy.

And this is the very thing which now she shows she values. There will be others having this very title. We see it in the Revelation. We find certain persons, for instance, in the 14th chapter of that closing book (where we have a scene of the last days after the church has gone — after the heavenly bride has been taken up to heaven — for God has not done with blessing), one hundred and forty-four thousand who are seen on Mount Zion; and how are they described? They are described as those who had not been defiled. They are described, therefore, just in the very way in which she describes — "Therefore do the virgins love thee." It is those that were not polluted by the idolatry and wickedness of that day; and her delight is that it was not merely herself — there will be others, too; Jerusalem — the godly among the Jews — will not be the only persons in that day. They will, I have no doubt, be very conspicuous, and the Lord will watch over them and bless them. Some of them will die even. Some of them will shed their blood for the truth's sake in that day. But it is quite evident that there are companions. It is clear that there are the upright — that there are those whom she calls "the virgins." She does not, therefore, describe to us what we know now. We do not talk in that way. It seems that the earthly bride could talk about the virgins, and talk about the upright outside herself. Why? Because the heavenly bride now comprises all the godly on the earth. The difference, therefore, you see, is very manifest. When that day comes there will be a special object, but not the only one; whereas new the heavenly bride consists of all that are Christ's. They all form one body. That is not the case then at all. I mention this for the express purpose of keeping our hearts clear as to the proper bearing of this wonderful book.

"Draw me: we will run after thee." Now, mark here again. "Draw *me:*we will run after thee." She in no way begrudged that others should be the objects of His love. She, no doubt, will have a special place; but she delights that others, who were uncontaminated by the wickedness of the world, should be precious in His eyes. And so they will be; but it was impossible for the church to say that. The church could not look on Jews or Mahommetans, or other people on the earth, and speak of them as the upright, or speak of them as the virgins who love the Lord Jesus; for, in point of fact, they are not upright and they do not love Him, and the whole state of things, you see, is different. It could not be.

But, I repeat, it will be a different thing when this is true. Accordingly, I think, this helps to give the true bearing of the Song of Solomon. In its proper application it looks at the heart of the Jewish bride turning to the Messiah-bridegroom before He comes — the heart prepared for it; so that it is a great mistake to suppose that the conversion of the Jew will be when Christ returns in glory. Not so. That will be the day when she will be received. It will be the day when the bridal relationship will be established. But that is not at all as yet. It is not yet that day. The day is yet to break. As we shall see, that day is not yet come. The shadows are to flee away; but all through the Song of Solomon the day-break is not yet; the shadows are still there. But the time is coming. She was perfectly conscious of this, and the Lord makes her conscious. It is Himself who lets her know that. As we shall find presently, the day is not come. She is preparing for Him and preparing for it. That is what we find here.

"Draw me," then, she says; "we will run after thee. The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee. We will remember thy love more than wine. The upright love thee." She is anticipating what she hopes, but she is not yet there. She is looking for it in the language of faith; but we must carefully remember that the bridal has not yet taken place. She is a designated bride. She is to become more and more distinct in saying that she is to be the bride and take the place of the bride, more and more laying hold of the word that she really is so. Still, the relationship is not yet consummated. That is what we find as the object of the book. It is the preparing of the bride for the consummation of the marriage.

Now she turns to another thing — herself. Here she has another tale to tell. "I am black," she says — the first word which she speaks about herself. "I am black, but comely." She is conscious of what the law has wrought. She does not deny the curse of the law; but her first word is her own shame. She owns, therefore, how little she is according to the One that she desires. He is all fair; but as for her, she is black, though, she can add, "comely." That is, she owns thoroughly her need of grace. She owns herself as entirely dependent upon the mercy of the Lord; and this at once connects itself with the language of the Psalms. There are two things that mark the godly in Israel that you will find in the Psalms. The first is, sense of the need of mercy; the next, clinging to righteousness — real integrity of heart. They take the place of integrity; but their grand confidence is in His mercy. You will find it continually. Mercy and righteousness are constantly brought together; but Israel's first word is mercy. God's first word in looking at them is their integrity, if I may say so; but their first word is His mercy. So here you have it. She describes herself as "black." She owns it. It is really integrity of heart; but still it is because of her confidence in His mercy that she is able to say, "I am black, but comely."

Take the 25th and 26th Psalms, and you will find exactly this very thing. In [Ps. 25](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ps.+25&t=DBY), the godly in that day own their sins; and what is the great word that they use about themselves? "Pardon mine iniquity" — why? — "for it is great." What a wonderful thing to say to God! They could not say it to man. If a criminal were to ask the judge who was trying him to pardon his iniquity because it was great, I need not say that the whole court would stare with amazement at the man's presumption. But what would be presumption to the world and before men, is exactly the confidence of faith. And that is precisely what God works in a soul that is converted — integrity of heart in owning, and in confessing, its sins; and so there is not merely a cleansing of the sins, but a cleansing from all unrighteousness. That is a different thing. There is clearly a work which is wrought in the soul. Guile is taken away from the soul. There is not the hiding of sin. There is integrity, but it is integrity produced by confidence in God's mercy. And what is it in the 25th Psalm which had given confidence in this mercy? Ah! think of it! What had preceded? [Psalm 22](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+22&t=DBY). There is an order in these things. We must not suppose that the Psalms are just tumbled into their places. They are put in their places by God just as much as they were written by God's inspiration. They might be written at ever so distant a time, and I do not at all suppose that they were written in the order in which they appear; but they are arranged — they are disposed — in an order which is as divine as the words that compose them. You could not change the order of a single Psalm without spoiling the truth. It would be like tearing a leaf out of a most beautiful plant which would leave a gap most sensible to any one who knew what the plant ought to be, or what it really was according to God's constitution of it.

Well, here, then, we see this very thing. The grace of God in giving Christ to suffer on the cross opens their heart to tell out their sins; and they can say, "For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." That is indeed the reason. The greatness of it, no doubt, requires such a sacrifice; but in the presence of such a sacrifice there is no asking for consideration because the sin was little, but, on the contrary, to pardon it because it was so great. Then in [Psalm 26](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+26&t=DBY) the very same Spirit of Christ which leads to confession of sin takes the ground of thorough integrity — takes the ground of hating to be in the congregation of the wicked, or to have anything to say to those who did not fear Jehovah — takes the ground of washing their hands in innocency, and so surrounding His altar. These things all go together.

So, then, she was "black, but comely"; but I do not doubt that the blackness refers to another thing, and that is not merely the blackness of failure — of shortcoming — of sin, but the blackness of suffering. And the Lord will feel it too. The Lord will say in that day, 'Jerusalem hath suffered double at the hand of the Lord for her sins. She has suffered too much. I will not allow her to suffer any more. She has suffered twice as much as she ought to have suffered.' The Lord will espouse the cause of poor guilty Jerusalem in that day, and will not permit that she shall suffer further. So, then, she owns that whether it was her own fault, or whether it was the cruel persecution that she had endured in the just chastening of her faults, such was her condition — black, but, by grace, she was comely. "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar" — which, I suppose, are the figure of the one, and the curtains of Solomon, with all their beauty, of the other. "Look not upon me, because I am black — because the sun hath looked upon me." There is what evidently confirms the idea that there was the scorching of affliction, as it seems to me, in this trial. "My mother's children were angry with me. They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Jerusalem had high thoughts. The Jews did take the place of being a guide to the blind, and a teacher of the ignorant. They ought to have been His witnesses: they were not. They ought to have looked after all the world for God. They ought to have been His great witness to every nation, tribe, and tongue; but, alas! the truth was that so far from accomplishing their relation to all the world, and being a blessing to every nation under the sun according to the word to Abraham that all the families of the earth should be blest, they did not keep their own vineyard. They did not preserve their own blessings. They did not fill up what the Lord required even as to their own ways before Him; still less were they a light to all the world.

This, then, I think, is what she now acknowledges. "Tell me, O thou" — now her heart turns after speaking to the daughters of Jerusalem, to the object of her affection — "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth," — for this is the great thing which comes out — "thou whom my soul loveth." She does love the Messiah, and the Spirit of God puts this language into her lips, and she will take it up in that day. She will make it her own. These affections will indeed be wrought in her. How gracious of the Lord! It is not her doing. It is her believing. It is not her assumption; it is His grace which gives her these most comfortable words — if I may refer to [Hosea 2:14](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+2.14&t=DBY), words which refer, I suppose, to somewhere about the same time. So she addresses herself to Him. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest" — she wants to find Him, — "where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Now we see that as she desired this relationship with Him and that He would show His love to her, so she desired to behave suitably to such a relationship. She had wandered long among the nations. She had gone after idols — gone a whoring after others, as the prophets so solemnly and sternly describe it, but so truly Now her heart was for Him alone — Him whom her soul loved.

And the answer comes. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock." That was the right thing. The point was now to be found following the ways of the word of God, "and go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock" — those who had trodden the path before — who were the sheep of Jehovah. "And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." Hold fast the testimony of the word of God — what God had given in His own word — those whom God had raised up to guide His flock here below. That is, she is told, in short, to cleave to His word before she knows that His heart is turned towards her — before she proves His love to her. But the answer comes from Himself. She acts upon it, no doubt. This is supposed. She is subject to the word now; and this wonderfully encouraging word comes from the Bridegroom.

"I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels — thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver." This appears to me to be the first word from the Bridegroom; but it does not yet reach to all that He will tell her. Yet she understands, and at once there is the answer of her own heart. "While the king sitteth at his table" — you see, she calls Him by the right name. She speaks of Him as the King. She is quite aware that that is the relationship. Is that the relationship of Christ to us? Do we speak of the King now? I have heard of such a title being given to Him. I believe that the practice is not yet extinct even among Christians, to speak of the Lord Jesus as our King. We used to sing — and I suppose we did not see much harm in it then — "Our Prophet, Priest, and King."

The Scriptures do not thus speak of Him to us. Scripture never calls him our King — not even the scripture in the Revelation which might appear to do so. There "King of saints" ought to be "King of the nations." There is no doubt of this whatever. But here she does not speak of Him as king of the nations, but "*the*king." In what relation does she look at Him? The King of God's people — the King of Israel. It is this which is evidently before her. "While the king sitteth at his table" — He is not yet come — "my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." She was quite aware that the Lord had been working in her own soul, and she does not in any way repudiate it. She can speak with a good conscience, and with her heart quite confident that there is what was the fruit of divine grace in her.

Now she speaks of what He was to her. "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." It is purely a question of her affection. It is not at all anything which one would feel to be unsuitable if it were a mere question of the actual, established relationship. The relationship is not yet established. It is not yet come. But there is the expression *of*her perfect delight in such a one that loves her. "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire" — or of cyprus berries, more probably, — "in the vineyards of Engedi."

Observe now, how this expression of love to Him draws out an answer from the Lord! "Behold, thou art fair, my love." It is not that He is come, for He is not yet come: but there is the word which God provides that she shall know — that as truly as her heart takes up these words, and expresses its affection to the Messiah, so truly God gives her to know that such is His affection towards her. What does He say about her? What grace! It is not "I love thee," but, "Behold, thou art fair, my love." It is what the eye of love sees in her, though, perhaps, no other eye in the world sees it. I believe that at this time there will be what is most godly wrought in the remnant. I believe that they will be really suffering, too, — suffering for their faith: but this is His language, and how blessed it is! What a different thing it would be from any other mouth than His! "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair: thou hast doves' eyes" — the expression, of course, of the modesty of her that was to be His bride. and her answer is, "Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir." That is, it is not some mere tent which might be taken down. She looks for a settled habitation when the King comes and owns her as His own. She looks for all to be in that established relationship which shall be for the glory of God here below. And so it will be.

[Canticles 2](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Canticles+2&t=DBY).

And in this next chapter — on which I may say a few words before I close this evening — we have, "I am the rose" — or narcissus, most probably — not exactly the rose. It occurs only in two passages of Scripture; and, although it would be rather a shock to some feelings to hear it, I suppose that in both places — in the present instance and also where it is said, "The desert shall blossom as the rose," — it seems to be rather the narcissus than the rose. However that may be, it is of no great consequence; but I think it is more appropriate, because it is what she says herself. Now, the rose being pre-eminently the flower of beauty and fragrance, I do not think that that is exactly the language which she would adopt. If He had called her so I could understand it; but the narcissus not being in any measure comparable to the rose, one can understand that she does not pretend to be more than she was: so she speaks of herself as 'a rose, or narcissus, of Sharon — a lily of the valley.' She takes a humble place. It is not in some conspicuous place as yet. She is going to be in the place of glory by and by: but she was only, as far as that went, a lily of the valleys. I think that this confirms the thought that it is not 'the rose of Sharon' — a very conspicuous object, but one of a more recluse or retired character.

Then comes His answer, "as the lily among thorns" — for He takes up her word about the lily — "the lily among *thorns" —*that is what He compares others to. And so she is surrounded by that which is utterly opposed and hateful to Him and that which is to be given to the burning when He comes. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." That is the answer of the Bridegroom; and this is her word as she continues. "As the apple tree " — or citron tree, rather, the finest of all these trees, which the apple tree might not be, but — " As the citron tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons; comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." Yet this does not mean that He was come. It is simply the love which He had shown her — the grace which He had shown her — her sense of His love to her even now, though she desired all that should be according to His word.

And now comes in an important key-note for understanding Solomon's song. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." This occurs several times in the song, and I think it is the perfect answer to those who suppose that the song is merely a number of little songs put together without any particular order. Not so. There is perfect order, and not only continuity but progress. It will be found that this charge is given three times. There is one a little like it which we might consider a fourth, but not strictly so. It occurs in this second chapter; also in the third chapter; and again in the last chapter — the eighth chapter; so that it is clear from this, that there is a very designed order. And this also helps to confirm another thing which I referred to, and that is that the Lord is viewed here as not yet married to her. It is, I think, the Bridegroom and the bride elect. The term 'bride' is, of course, used: but we must not suppose that the marriage had yet been consummated. Not so. She is waiting for the establishment of the relationship. She has the sense of it, the grace of the Lord in deigning to look upon her, and, of course, her heart desires it. "I charge you," then, she says, "O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field" — referring to them, I suppose, as being the most sensitive of all animals as to noise — the most easily disturbed. She draws attention to her desire, therefore, that nothing should disturb Him — that He should rest in that love which He designed for her. For it is a sweet and wondrous thought that the Lord means to rest in His love for Jerusalem. I am now referring to the last chapter in Zephaniah, and my object in referring to it is to show the hidden links which connect this Song of Solomon with the rest of the word of God. I have referred to the Psalms: I now refer to this in the Prophets. The mind of the Holy Ghost is one. He is to rest in His love; and, as to whom does He use that expression? To us? No, to Jerusalem. You will find this clearly enough in [Zephaniah 3](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zephaniah+3&t=DBY).

What follows? "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh" — but He is not yet come: He is coming. That is what she knows. "Behold! he cometh." There might be mountains and hills between; but what is that to Him? "He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart." Therefore, difficulties are nothing. "Behold, he standeth behind our wall: he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice." It is her heart, I presume, which here thus anticipates His coming, so much so as even to hear His voice. Not only does she say, "The voice of my beloved," but she gives His words "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love," — for this is meant to fill her heart with confidence in His love — "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past" — the long winter of Israel — "the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth: the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs" — you see the parable of the fig tree here which the Lord refers to in the 24th of Matthew: so here — "and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." And so He calls upon her then to let Him hear her voice. Such was His thought of her and desire — that she might know His love to her. "Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." He desires also the removal of that which would hinder. He wished to see the fruits in His garden; because if He comes to His own, it is not only that He has got His own people, but His own scene — His own place; and He is looking to all being suitable to His coming by and by. So He warns — "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.

And now comes out another key-word of Solomon's Song. "My beloved is mine." This is her answer. "My beloved is mine." That is the first thought. She applies it to her soul. It is not yet the marriage; but it is His voice, and He has comforted her — given her confidence in His love. "My beloved is mine," she says, "and I am his." She enters into it. It is the preparation of her heart for the bridal. "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." It is not yet, I repeat, that He has taken His place upon the throne. He feeds among the lilies. "Until the day break." It is not yet the day shining; therefore, the day is not yet come. It is not "the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings "; that is yet to come "Until the day break," she says, "and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bether"

But here I stop for the present. If the Lord will, I hope to resume, and take, at any rate, a general view of this wonderful little book of God.

LECTURE 2 — [Cant. 3 - 8](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Cant.+3+-+8&t=DBY)

We now find ourselves in the great body of the Song, and the object of the Spirit of God, as I understand, in this portion is to show us the necessary exercises of heart through which the bride must pass in order to be spiritually fitted for the Lord Jesus, — the King in His coming glory.

You will see at once that there is a very sensible difference from our position. The proper exercises of the Christian's heart begin when we are already in settled relationship with the Lord Jesus. It is not so with the Jew. In our case it is sovereign grace both of the deepest and of the highest character, because it is Christ on high in the presence of God — not merely the King, not merely on earth, however exalted, but in a new and heavenly glory, altogether above the expectations and hopes formed by Old Testament revelation. It is also of the deepest character, because it is no question of a people that had been previously chosen, and that had been the object of the dealings of God through ages, and blest because of God's love to their father Abraham.

Nothing of this appears in the dealing with the church of God. For there it is purely and solely grace acting in view of Christ in God's presence, and expressly also gathering persons entirely irrespective of any previous connection with God whatsoever. Now it is not so with the Jew. He is loved, as we are told, even now — loved for the fathers' sake. They are enemies, as we know, because of the gospel, but loved for the fathers' sake. Now there we see the ground. Although they will be obliged to own that they have lost everything, and that blessing must be on the score of mercy alone, yet there *was*that ground. We can plead nothing of the kind. We really have nothing save what grace confers upon us, and confers all, fresh, and pure, and simple, from Christ, and for Christ. There may be exercises of heart in a person who is not yet brought into the proper Christian standing, and there may be a putting one's self under law. There may be a pointing out of our utter weakness. There may be discoveries of this kind, but they are not what I may call the normal exercises of a Christian's heart. They are very wholesome exercises of a heart that is not yet at rest; but a Christian, in the proper sense of the term, means one who is not merely born of God, and who is just clinging to God's mercy and goodness, but a Christian is a person who is at rest. A Christian is a person who is in peace with God. There may be Christians in a very abnormal state, but we have nothing to do with that in thinking of a Christian. We may have very much to do with it in looking at a particular soul — in getting that soul into a true and healthy condition; but if we talk about a Christian we must think about him according to the mind of God. If he is not according to that mind, one must seek to remove the hindrances; one should seek to foster what is of God, to strengthen his faith; and by the word to clear away and deal with whatever hinders, That is all quite right, but properly speaking no man is yet in a healthy Christian condition until he is settled — settled, without a question, in Christ, and knows that he is a new creature — knows that all the old is judged and gone before God, and the man is walking in peaceful communion on the ground of it. I say that no person is in the proper Christian condition until that is his state.

Now it is plain that this is a very different thing from the bride here. If we look at the church in the New Testament, she is always assumed to be in that state. There may be, of course, as we know in matter of fact, things which are quite contrary to what we may call the theory of the church, or of a Christian. That is not God's idea. But I am speaking now, I repeat, of things according to God. But God does not look upon the bride in Canticles according to that idea. Here therefore we come to the exercises — the individual, blessed, exercises through which the bride who is here contemplated must pass in order to be spiritually suited to the King in His glory. And we see her here in darkness. "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth." That is a remarkable condition. It is just what we find in [Isaiah 50](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+50&t=DBY) — walking in darkness and seeing no light. But confiding, trusting; nay, more than that, with affections drawn out towards Christ.

In fact, the great point of this book is the forming of the affections, and the giving her who has such affections (though what are these to His?) — giving her who has real and true affections for the returning King, confidence in His affection as incomparably beyond her own. Thus she needs this. she needs it more particularly because she is obliged to look back and see and know that she was "black" — not merely comely, but — black. She is obliged to see what she had passed through, and why it was. It would not be wholesome, it would not be true without this. For there cannot be stable blessing according to God, whether to the Christian now, or to the Jew by and by, or to any other soul apart from truth. There never can be the real power of grace without the power of truth. There always must be truth in the inward parts: that is, there always must be the confessing of what we really are in God's sight, or what we have done in God's sight. It must he out between God and our own soul. She consequently has to feel this very soon indeed. Spite of all that she has been or is, she, to her wonder, learns His love. It may not have that fulness of heavenly character that we know to be our portion, but it is nevertheless most rich and wondrous and truly divine.

Well then, "By night on my bed." There may be this darkness. He has not come. It is not a question of the Lord being yet there. And these figures are used to bring vividly before us what she is passing through. "I sought him whom my soul loveth" — for now she is not at all afraid to avow it. "I sought, but I found him not. I will rise now and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways." Just as if that were the place to find Christ. Not so. He is not regarded as coming through the broad ways, or being in the streets; He comes out of the wilderness. That is where she knows, and where she will know, the Lord as taking and identifying Himself with the condition out of which Israel must come; whereas that is not at all the place where we know the Lord.

We know the Lord in another way altogether: we know Him in heaven. That is our proper way of knowing Him, but she has these anticipative views of Him, and at the same time is trained in a deepening acquaintance with His love before He comes. "I sought, and I found him not." And no wonder: she sought Him not rightly. It was not the true place. "The watchmen that go about the city found me" — the guardians of order, but what could they say? What could they do? "To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth"; for she does confess now. It is not only that she has got the affection, but she owns it even to them, although it might seem hardly the place. But so she does. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." That is, it is her soul laying hold of His coming into a renewed connection with Israel.

There is great force in all these figures. The mother is always Israel according to Scripture. Not so the church. The church is never regarded as the "mother." Whom would she be the mother of? Not of herself — not of Christians. You could not have that. The church is not the mother of Christians, still less is the church the mother of the Lord. And there you see we at once find the importance of seeing relationship as God unfolds it in His word. The mother, as I have said, is always Israel. The bride, the wife, is the church. We do find a bride here, but we shall find that there is a difference. We must not confound the two. We must not suppose that the "mother" and the "bride" are the same; and it just shows the utter and dreadful blindness of system in the minds of men that the greater part of Christendom does regard the mother in the Canticles and the bride to be the same identical person. Nay further, the grossness of darkness leads them to think that the Virgin Mary is both. They are so utterly dark, for I know nothing in paganism that is more degradingly dark than the superstition of Romanism. You would think it strange on the part of human beings who have got the Bible — who have got the New Testament — men, you must remember, of learning and ability, possibly some of them even converted to God, for I would not deny this. And yet I am telling you a plain and positive fact which it has been my experience to find out and know, when I say that these are the delusions which carry away and captivate souls at this present moment. Nay, into which souls, out of a certain yearning and aspiration after something better which they cannot find in ordinary Protestantism, are breaking away. What a mercy, beloved brethren, to have the truth and the word of His truth.

Now, if you look at [Revelation 12](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12&t=DBY), how beautiful it is, and comforting to our souls, to find that a book which at first sight might not seem to be the key to other parts of Scripture yet indeed is so. I suppose that most people think that you want a key to The Revelation, but the truth of it is, so wonderfully is the word of God woven together, and so surprising the mutual uses of all parts of the Scriptures, that, as we find Genesis a key to The Revelation, so also we find very often that The Revelation is a key to Genesis. And this is very encouraging to see; because it is God that has trained His people not to have their favourites — always a dangerous thing. Whether it is in living people or in the word of God, it is a great thing to be able to use without abusing — a great thing to be open to the help of all that God uses for His own glory and for the blessing of His people.

Well, the 12th of Revelation makes it perfectly plain, for there we have the woman, and the woman in remarkable glory. She has got the sun and the moon under her feet, a crown of twelve stars, etc. Now, what woman is that? I need not tell you what haste always says — "Oh, it is the church." Not so; it is not the church. For you see that the woman there brings forth the male of might; and that male of might — who is he? Surely there is no mistake. The male of might who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron — can anyone doubt who he is? It is Christ and none but Christ. Christ is the male of might. Consequently we see at once who the woman is, because it is Christ that always determines the truth of every person and every thing.

Let me bring Him into contact with my own soul's state. Let me bring Him into contact with any soul anywhere. The moment you bring Christ in, you have the truth. I learn my own state, whether it is good or bad, by bringing the Lord in. And so also you learn who or what is before you by bringing Christ in. Well then, you bring Christ into that chapter, and you see Christ in the male of might, and the woman is His mother? Who is that? Not the church. The church is not the mother of Christ. Israel, "of whom Christ came," is the mother, as the apostle Paul teaches in the 9th of Romans; so that you see what Paul puts so finely in [Romans 9](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+9&t=DBY) is what John teaches symbolically in[Revelation 12](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12&t=DBY); whereas when you come to see the church then you have another thing — the bride, the Lamb's wife. Ah, that is the church. Again, you find another woman (I may just say by the way), but she is neither one nor other. She is the woman that pretends to be the church, but is the antichurch. Just as there will be a man that will be the antichrist, so there is a woman that is the antichurch. That is Babylon, Rome is the great centre of Babylon.

Well then, the meaning clearly is that she connects in her spiritual embrace, if I may say so, she associates the one that she loved, who was clearly the returning King, with the mother's house — "the chamber of her that conceived me."

"I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir*not up,*nor awake my love, till he please." I have already shown the importance of this intimation that comes in now and again in the book. It always introduces a fresh view of the matter and of the Lord as anticipated by the heart of Jerusalem; for here you must remember that Jerusalem is to be the chosen bride — and I mean, by that, Jerusalem that is to be. Not the Jerusalem that is on high — not the Jerusalem that now is, but the Jerusalem that is to be — the Jerusalem that is to be born of God, just as much as the Jerusalem on high is the great new creation in Christ. But this is the Jerusalem that is to be the chosen bride of the King when He comes again into this world.

"Who is this?" then is the word. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed which is Solomon's." Nothing can be plainer, Solomon is not the figure of Christ in relation to the *church.*David may be. I do not mean that David always is, but David may be so pre-eminently, because he at any rate knew more of the sufferings of Christ and was identified with the rejection in a way that Solomon never was. Solomon never knew anything but glory: he was the man of peace. All, so to speak, was bright and glorious as far as Solomon was concerned and it is clear that this one that she looks for is not a suffering one.

It is not here, then, the Lamb rejected on earth and glorified in another scene. That is what we who are Christians are looking for, and, consequently, now we are willing to follow Him — glad to follow Him in His path of rejection. But in the case before us it is another thing, and so we find a beautiful picture of what is to be, what belongs to Him. Threescore valiant men surround — of the valiant men of Israel. "They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night"; for you see it is not yet the day. You must remember that. She is expecting, and looking for the day. You find her here, but it is a vision of the night. She is on her bed, so when she does go forth it is from her bed, and so on. It is not yet the day. The day is expected, looked for, counted on; but not yet come.

"King Solomon" — for there again it is the king — "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver." There was grace there. "The bottom thereof of gold" — divine righteousness — just as much indeed for Israel as for us. It is no question of man's righteousness at any time. "The covering of it of purple" — as suits a royal personage. "The midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem." I need not say that the groundwork of it all is love. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." It is anticipative: He is not yet come; but that is what He is to be when He comes for her. Thus you see it is not at all the scene of one taken away into heaven: that is not the point at all. It is one coming — coming to the earth.

It is one that is crowned here; and again you observe the mother reappears, for her heart is different now. When He was here what had she for Him? No heart at all, none whatever, not even Jerusalem — not even that which ought to have been an answer to His love as His earthly bride. On the contrary, if there was any difference between Israel as a whole and Jerusalem in particular, Jerusalem was the hottest of all against the King — against the Lord Jesus. But when this day comes His mother reappears. Always remember that it is not the bride: it is His mother that comes out here. That is, it is not the bride only.

Now when we look at the New Testament, where we have the heavenly bride, we have the Father, but no mother. Why the Father there, and the mother here? Because for us, all is divine in its source. The Father — the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — He is the One that is our God and our Father. But the mother is connected more with nature. The Father of Christ, who is the source of everything, is the One that gives us our place and being and relationship; but not the mother. We find here Israel's connection as the mother, so that I think there need not be a doubt on the part of any person who is open to conviction. Of course I am entirely hopeless of convincing those that will not be convinced. But I think that those that are willing to face the word of God need have no question whatever left in their souls as to the true intended bearing of this beautiful book.

Let no one suppose that I mean from this that we are not entitled to take all the love of it, for indeed we are. If Christ has, or will have, such love for them, how much more for us, — for ours is much more, what I may call, a settled love: I mean a love that flows out of an already established — and divinely established — relationship. In their case it is a relationship that is going to be established. I grant that there is a certain beauty in the affections that precede, but they are not of the same kind. They are greatly associated with the hope, whereas in our case it is not merely that. Ours is the present conscious love of the Lord Jesus, and not exercises through which we pass in order to know that that love rests upon us. We may need them. If there be anything that hinders there must be exercises to deal with it and get rid of it; but that is not the proper state of Christian person.

[Canticles 4](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Canticles+4&t=DBY).

We see here how the Lord works to draw out the love of His people. We have a beautiful address which faith will lay hold of in the day that is coming. They will know that it is the Messiah that says this of them, and it will be full of comfort. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock *of*goats that appear from mount Gilead." And so He dwells upon her personal grace and beauty. Well, I am not going to enter, of course, into the details of this, but everything is taken up that belonged to herself expressly. Not what she did: it was not her doings, because that is not the thing that sets the heart perfectly at rest. We cannot be always doing, and we may be very often too, self-reproached because of the poverty of our doing; and if the love be to ourselves personally — if the love be told out, and told out not as a mere matter of feeling, not as a passing vision or anything of that kind, but if it be the unmoveable, the immutable word of God, how blessed for the souls that are awakened to say, That is His language to me, that is what He feels about us. Well, this is what will be brought home to their heart in that day. You will notice the difference.

She speaks also. There is the interchange of` affection on the part of the bride towards the Bridegroom. But I will point out one very marked and, I think, striking difference, and that is — that when He speaks He always speaks to her; when she speaks she speaks of Him, but not to Him. Now that is exactly what it should be. One can feel the propriety of this, and how perfectly suited it is in the relationship in which they stand; because what she wants is to know that such an one as He — that One so holy, that One so perfect — could love one who had been brought (in the very first chapter) to own that she had been the very reverse. Still grace had wrought, and she knew that grace had wrought, and she did not deny it. But yet she wanted to know what He felt. And He speaks out; He lets her know.

The first half of the chapter then is occupied with the Bridegroom telling the bride how beautiful she was in His eyes. The latter part of it is something else, and that is, it is fully knowing, fully appreciating the danger in which she found herself — the snares and the enemies that surrounded her. That is the meaning of the word ''Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon" (ver. 8), and this is explained still more where He goes on to say, "Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens."

There is nothing in scripture without a blessed meaning, and in perfect grace towards the reader of the Bible who counts upon God's opening His word. "From the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." These are images clearly of the greatest possible danger. They signify that she had been, so to speak, in the lions' den. And so she had. The images show that she was surrounded by these most cruel enemies that are so eager to seize upon their prey. "From the mountains of the leopards." And so she had been in the mountains of the leopards! But, "Come with me." He calls her away — gives her the certainty of deliverance; for who is He? Is not He entitled to do so? Can He fail? Impossible! It is not, therefore, merely a cry from her heart. That is not the character of it. It is not herself bemoaning her danger. It is not herself praying therefore to be delivered "from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards," but it is He who feels for her — He who knows it all infinitely better than she. It is He who says "Come with me from Lebanon." There is no reproach.

How did she get there? Departed from Him! How was she found in the mountains of the leopards? Was He there? Not at all. Did she go there to find Him? It was her self-will It was her evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. It was that which had done the mischief for Jerusalem; it was that which had scattered the Jews to every part of the world. There they had been, no doubt, and even then they will be suffering, although they will be back in Jerusalem, as I suppose, when this Song applies. They will be again in the mere place — the scene, but not yet in the conscious favour and under the glorious protection of Jehovah. Far from that. The lions and the leopards will still have to do with them, although they may not be any longer scattered among the Gentiles, but the lion and the leopard will have their hand over them. They will have their paw, so to speak, over them still. For, as we know, it is exactly in that way — as the beast — that the Gentile powers are described in the prophets. And I refer to this as an evident link of connection between this book and, I might say, the Psalms also; but the Psalms relate more to individual dealings. There is one Psalm, [Psalm 45](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+45&t=DBY), and there may be other allusions, which form a kind of transition-link between the Book of Psalms and this wonderful Song of Songs. In that Psalm we have the bride, and the very same bride that is spoken of here. I only throw out this hint, by the way, as possibly helping souls who may not have considered it adequately.

Well then, the Lord pursues this second address, this invitation to come away from all these evil and dangerous surroundings, and again speaks of what she is to Him. A very sweet word is added here — that after He had spoken of her as in the den of the lions and the mountains of the leopards, He should still say, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon" (ver. 11) It is just in keeping with the same spirit, only a little stronger than what we find in the prophets; that is, that whereas Jerusalem will have really been discarded as the unfaithful wife, the Lord will look upon her more as in the sorrows of a widow. That is, He will not reproach her with her being a repudiate because a guilty woman, but He will speak of her with tenderness and mercy as in the sorrows and weeds of widowhood.

Then in the next chapter (5) we have a further experience through which she passes, particularly in the second verse. The first verse rather belongs to the chapter before.

[Canticles 5](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Canticles+5&t=DBY).

"I sleep." It is still the same thought: it is night. "I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." It is not His actual coming. This is what passed through her soul. This is what she sees, as it were, in the Vision of the night. It is not, as yet, His coming in the morning. It is not that. He will come in the morning without clouds, but I repeat, you must always bear in mind that the morning has not yet come. This is, therefore, what passes through her heart which is filled with longing desire for His coming in the bright day. So here she, as it were, hears His voice, and she shows that her heart is by no means fitted, as yet, for His return, for this is the excuse — "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" That is, though God's love was brought before her soul, instead of there being an answer at once by going forth to meet Him, she makes excuses why she cannot go, and why she cannot take the trouble to open the door, for that was all that was needed. So "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door." There is still an appeal to her, but there is that which is intended to produce self-judgment in her. She, as it were, says that He lingers, that He does not at once turn His back upon one that so ill-requited His love. "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him."

There was real affection, although there was not any right answer to His. "I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." It was the needed rebuke for Israel — for Jerusalem. It was making her feel that this occupation with herself or her circumstances, this lack of freshness of heart in going forth to meet Him was what she had to rebuke herself for; and so, now that she has come to her senses, to feel the wrong that she had done to His love, she goes, and she calls, and she searches for Him once more. ''The watchmen that went about the city found me; they smote me." Now, you see, it is worse. On the former occasion they could give her no direction to find Him whom her soul loved, but now they smote her, for what business had she to be out at that time of night? And so they smote her. "The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me."

It was no doubt because of the reality of her affection, and her desire to find the One that she loved, but still it was out of season: it was out of place and they, at any rate, dealt with that. Thus the very desire she had to find the Bridegroom brought her into a false position. So she says, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." And here then we find fresh persons — not the watchman, but her companions; Jerusalem will not be alone. There will be others: there will be others awakening at that time to whom she can speak, so to say. And, accordingly, say they, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us?" Now comes what I referred to — her confession of the beauty of the Bridegroom. You see it is not said to Him. Now you see all her heart goes out in speaking of the Bridegroom. She speaks well of the Lord. She is not ashamed to tell about Him. It is not now merely that she loved Him, but who He was, and what He was, whom she loved, are what come out in the rest of the chapter. And in the chapter that follows, we come to another point to which I have not yet called your particular notice, but I must do so briefly.

[Canticles 6](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Canticles+6&t=DBY).

The word had come, "My beloved has gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lilies." You will observe that just as there are charges followed by the announcement of His coming, which are a very important help to the understanding of the different parts of this book, — so also there is the expression of the bride's affection to the Bridegroom. In the latter part of the second chapter she did not say this. There it was another word — "My beloved is mine." That is in the 16th verse. "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies." Here in this chapter we have what is better, "I am my beloved's" — it is the converse.

And this marks a very decided progress in her soul — in the affections of Jerusalem, when we come to apply it, not personally, but to the object of the book. And the difference is this. The first thing — and this is equally true of a renewed soul — the first thing that the soul wants, is to know what we find in the second chapter — that Christ is mine. And Jerusalem will go through similar experience, and very justly. It would be a poor thing to know that I am His, if I did not know that He is mine. Necessarily, where the Spirit of God works in power, the heart does not begin with my being Christ's. I know very well that you will find the contrary of this among many godly persons, and they put it into verse too, that is to say,

"Am I His, or am I not?"

But that is not at all the first thing that the Spirit of God according to the word produces, in a heart that is subject to it. When one is occupied with one's self, this is the first thing. The first thing *then,*is, I want to know whether "I am His," because I begin with "I," but this is just what is bad for me — just the very thing that we want to be delivered from. And what delivers us from this? Is He *mine —*that treasure, that object of God's delight — is He mine? Is Christ mine? And this is exactly what Christ does give, for that is the point. It is not, as people constantly say, that the first thing is for me to know that I am saved. The first thing is to knew whether I believe in Him. That is, it is what Christ is to my soul, and not what my soul has got through Christ. You see, false theology always puts self forward, always makes that the first thing.

Now do not mistake me. I do not at all mean that there is not the fullest comfort for our own heart. It would be a poor theology indeed — it would be, above all, poor faith — for that is what it really comes to — it would be poverty indeed in divine things — if there were not the fullest satisfaction for the renewed heart. But then the first thought that God has, and the first thought, therefore, that as a believer, I ought to have — is this, not whether "I am His," but whether "He is mine." That is what the bride is here brought to confess — what she does confess. We must remember, beloved brethren, that in this book we have not the bungle, if I may so say — the bungle of men — in making out a science of theology from scripture. What we have in the word of God is the guidance of the Holy Ghost — the perfect, sure way of God in dealing with souls according to Christ. The first thing, therefore, is "My beloved is mine," but then she adds, "And I am His" — this follows. That I have got eternal life is very true, but the first thing is that I believe in Him.

Let me repeat — the first thing is not what I am to get, but whom I am to believe in — whom does God propose to my soul? Have I bowed to Him? Have I submitted thoroughly, simply, implicitly to Him? This then is the first thing — to believe in Christ, and not merely to believe that I am forgiven. My forgiveness is a consequence of knowing that I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the first thing of all, I say, is, not the salvation of my soul, but, bowing to the Son of God; and it makes a great difference in which way we put it. I could not give a more important lesson to a young evangelist than that, always to hold that before him — that the first thing is not the soul in relation to Christ, but Christ in relation to the soul, and if he settles that and keeps that forward I am persuaded that God will use it not merely for the soul, but above all for the glory of Christ; and after all, Christ ought to be more to me than all the souls in the world. It is not that one will love the souls of the world less, but, I say, Christ has the foremost place. The bride does not suffer for this. Far from it. She is more blest because she gets the blessing in God's way.

Well then, the next point of progress in this 6th chapter which has given occasion to these remarks is this — just the converse. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Now would it have the same force to say, "My beloved is mine and I am my beloved's?" No, not so. Now, you see, she knows Him. She is perfectly satisfied that He is hers. The consequence is that there is a new thing that is permanent. Wonderful to say "I am my beloved's." 'My beloved has been speaking to me; I have been speaking to Him. There have been those passages of affection, by the Spirit, between us; and now, I am my beloved's.' It is not, therefore, merely the expression of spiritual desire, but here there is a growing apprehension of this relationship, although it be not yet a formally established one, but still there is the spiritual preparedness for it. That is what God is working in her soul. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The one is just as much in season as the other; only the one takes necessary precedence of the other.

And this is followed by another, and very beautiful, unfolding of the love and delight which the Bridegroom has in the beauty of the bride. "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me" (vers. 4, 5). A wonderful thought that is, of the Lord finding such attraction in Jerusalem — that Jerusalem that cost Him so many tears — that Jerusalem that has so slandered Him from that day to this; for Jerusalem is still the same Jerusalem that was, the same guilty Christ-rejecting Jerusalem, but not always to be so. The Lord will make true these words, and give Jerusalem to believe in the day that is coming. Of course, when I speak about Jerusalem I mean the people, but still it is that very object and that people connected with that very city in the day that is coming.

So the Lord pursues this and He adds at the close, "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley" (ver. 11), because He desired to see what were the fruits of the humiliation that Israel had passed through. Jerusalem had gone into the greatest humiliation, and He wanted to see what were the effects of it, whether there were spiritual fruits of that humiliation. And what did He find? "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib" — that is, "*of my willing people."*That is the meaning of the word, and I presume that it ought to have been so rendered rather than put as a proper name. "The chariots of my willing people." That is His people are to be made willing in the day of His power. Now we know that when the Lord was here in the days of His flesh it was the day of His weakness. He was crucified through weakness, but He liveth by the power of God, and we know Him accordingly in resurrection. They will know Him when He comes forth; and this shows what the Lord's feeling about His people is. And immediately this is followed by "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite?" That is the object of His love. It is Jerusalem that is to be "As it were the company of two armies." That is, just as when in the days of Jacob's dealings there was the same — the company of two armies when the angels that protected him in the hour of his distress and fear — so it will be with Jerusalem in the day that is coming. They will be like the angels of God in their might and power.

[Canticles 7](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Canticles+7&t=DBY).

The Lord gives a fresh expression of His love to Jerusalem. On this I need not say much. It is, I repeat, what He saw in herself. It is not glory; that would be a small thing. It is in her possession. It is not power. It is not what she has to do in the world or anything of that kind. I have not the slightest doubt that Jerusalem in the day that is coming is to be made the metropolis of the earth. I have not a doubt that the Lord is going to accomplish a most wonderful work by the converted Jew after that day, but that is not the point. It is herself viewed as a person — the object of His love. This again comes out in a most striking way, and it is followed by what we have for the third time in the bride's answer, "I am my beloved's" (ver. 10), There is now the arriving at a settled sense of love — the possession of His love. "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." It is not necessary to say "He is mine." "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." She began with "My beloved is mine," but now she rests in this. 'It is no longer necessary to say that He is mine. It is so perfectly plain. He has made it so manifest by all these expressions of His affection and all the beauty that He finds in me.' "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages." And this ends the proper course of the Song of Solomon.

[Canticles 8](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Canticles+8&t=DBY).

The 8th chapter is a kind of conclusion to the book as the 1st chapter is a kind of preface; but still there are some important words in it, and I will endeavour just to say, briefly, a little upon them before I close.

"Oh, that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother I when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised." There the bride expresses the love that she had expressed from the first. Here again is a proof that, as yet, the marriage had not taken place, because there would be nothing to be ashamed of when it did. But you see here it is different. You see how the marriage not having yet taken place, and she having no right, if I may so say, from a settled relationship, this is her feeling. We have, therefore, a kind of going briefly over the ground that we have traversed before, as a conclusion of the whole matter.

"I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me" (chap. 8). I need not, of course, repeat what I have already said. "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me." And then, for the last time comes her charge. "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?" But is He now simply "like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant" ([Cant. 3:6](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Cant.+3.6&t=DBY))? No. There is another object. It is now "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Here we see that it is not now the Bridegroom, but she has a vision of herself — of herself united to the Bridegroom. Before, it was rather His coming to her, or for her, but now, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" She sees the bride, as it were, in spirit, and the Bridegroom.

"I raised thee up" — here is His answer. "I raised thee up under the apple-tree; there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee" (ver. 5). We saw the apple-tree or the citron-tree in Cant. 2. Here we have it again, and the meaning appears to be that, instead of Israel being viewed, or rather instead of the bride being viewed, according to her former associations, it is not the bride connected with being brought out of Egypt. We find that, historically, was the case. Israel was brought as a vine out of Egypt. Is that the case here? Oh, no. Again, it is not mount Sinai. It is not that there she was brought forth. Not so. It is no longer deliverance from Egypt. It is no longer being put under the covenant of law. It is under Christ. It is Messiah in the new covenant now. It is there that she is found, and there only. It is under the citron-tree. That is the great spring of all fruit — of all real fruit for God — the one source of all true fruit-bearing. And so she answers, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."

Then comes another word which might not be easily apprehended, but on which I must say a little. "We have a little sister" (ver. 8). Now who is this sister — this little sister that was not yet grown like the bride? It is the ten tribes, not the two. It is not Jerusalem, it is Ephraim. It is the house of Joseph. And why is it the house of Joseph? I refer to it now particularly to guard you from those nauseous publications that are floating about, talking about the lost ten tribes, as if that was anything for a Christian, as regards our connection with it. I hope there is not a single heart here that meddles with such trash — such delusive trash. Why, beloved friends, I think I can say that I never saw a more lowering, debasing, worldly thing in its character than a pamphlet that was, I suppose, sent for my edification only last night. Just turning over the leaves of it I found the one object to be the glory of man as he is now — the dragging down people from the heavenly place which they have got — the heavenly place in Christ — to glorify themselves because they have got a big city like this, and an active commercial country like this; to think that these are the glories of the ten tribes of Israel. I can hardly conceive anything more debasing to Christian persons than that kind of thing: and you will excuse me, therefore, if I speak in these strong and peremptory terms of it, because it is not everybody that is able to discern the character of a thing. But if the Lord gives me any light at all on spiritual or scriptural subjects, I am bound to say that that is my judgment of what I have seen and read of this foolish, absurd, and groundless attempt to trace the ten tribes of Israel in the Anglo-Saxon race.

Well, here we have Ephraim according to God, and not according to these terms of men. This is the way in which the Lord speaks of her — as a little sister. Why? Because she was undeveloped. Oh, the wonderful grace of God! Why were the Jews — the two tribes — developed, and why not Ephraim or the ten? Ah, the Jews had dealings with the Messiah. It is always the Messiah that develops either good or ill. If the Messiah be approached in unbelief, oh how terrible! And so it was with the Jew. But so it will not be in the day that is coming.

They will, therefore, have had that double experience — the bitter experience of incredulity, with all its horrors, and the destruction that it brought upon them; and the blessed experience of those whose heart has now been drawn to Him before He comes. For the Lord will give them that; and this book of Canticles is the drawing of the heart to the Messiah before He appears in glory — the fitting of them to receive Him, for it is quite a mistake that the Jew will be converted when the Lord appears in glory — quite a mistake. The Jew will be established when the Lord appears in glory; the Jew will be blest and accepted when the Lord thus appears, but conversion and dealing with the affection and with the conscience in the remnant, the Jerusalem that we are speaking of here, the bride — all this will have preceded His coming. But with Ephraim it will not be so. That is the reason why she is spoken of as this little sister that was not yet marriageable. She had gone through none of this experience. She remained just a little one. There was nothing to draw her out, so to speak, either in good or ill. There she was in her littleness — in her want of understanding — in her want of experience in every way. It is she that is referred to, but then the Lord will bring Ephraim out of the hiding-place and will allure her, as it is said, into the wilderness — will deal with Ephraim there. That is fully entered into in the prophets, and so it is alluded to here. The book would not be complete, as we can see, without showing this.

Just one word more. If we apply the Canticles to the church, pray who is the little sister? You see the thing does not hold for one moment; but when you have Jerusalem as the bride, then Ephraim is indeed the little sister. If it is a question of Ephraim dealing with the Gentiles, Ephraim will be the warrior, so to speak; but if it is in relation to Christ, then Jerusalem is viewed as the grown sister — the spouse, "my sister my spouse." Ephraim is the little sister. It is in relation, of course, to Christ's love. So here then it is entered into briefly.

But finally, "Solomon," we are told, had a vineyard at Baal-hamon — a remarkable expression. The meaning of the word Baal-hamon is "lord of the peoples." And I think it is a very important expression at this point. The children of Israel — the Jew — ought to have been, I will not say, "lord of the peoples," but truly to have been a blessing to every nation under heaven. Were they so? "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Was that true of Israel — the Jew? The very reverse. They lost the blessing themselves because they refused Christ, and they have been the great spreaders of incredulity against Christ wherever they have gone, to this day. There are no such decided enemies of the gospel, for they bear the same character as in the early days of Christianity and they do the same work, because the same unbelief prevails to this moment. But when He comes — when, Solomon, the true Solomon, comes — He will have a vineyard and His vineyard will be fruitful indeed. And here we find it with its connection. The vineyard is at Baal-hamon. It is in relation to all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, that the blessing of Christ will surely come.

The blessing may have tarried, as the vision has; but as surely as the vision will come, and not tarry, so the blessing will flow like rivers to every nation and tribe and tongue, but not till that day. It is at Baal-hamon, and it is in connection with Solomon — for this is the point. It is the Lord Jesus and not the church that is to be the true means of blessing to all nations. I admit that it will be when the church is with Him assuredly. I admit that it will be when the Jew is converted to Him, loves Him, knows Him, most surely. But the one that causes all the difference is not the Jew, and it is not the church. It is Christ. And it is Christ then come — Christ as King. That is what is spoken of here, and why He is spoken of as Solomon. ''Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon: he let out the vineyard unto keepers: everyone for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver," because there will be blessed fruit in that day. Everything will flourish.

It will be the day when, if it is the figure of a net cast into the sea, there will be all sorts of fishes (not small ones, too, but great), and the net will not be broken. Now the net is broken. There maybe, no doubt, a plentiful catch, but everything fails. The net is broken, and the ship would sink entirely if it were not for Him; but here in the passage before us, nothing fails. That will be its character. "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." This is the language of the bride — of Jerusalem — because she, too, has got a vineyard. "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those who keep the fruit thereof two hundred." She wishes to have no vineyard apart from Him. She is identified with Him. The Jew will have no pleasure, no joy, no fruit, except in connection with Christ

What a change! How blessed to think that that long-settled love, that disappointed love of the Saviour, will then be found, and will have awakened a love that flows from His own, and will be according to His own, in its measure, in the heart of her who was loved so long, and was so long unbelieving! But the unbelief will pass, the failure will pass, and the good will abide. Good is destined to triumph. Even now we know that God overcomes evil with good, but in that bright day there will be no evil even to overcome. Good will have its own bright and unalloyed way, and that will be for ever.

And so this beautiful book closes with the call of the bride, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices." She desires, earnestly desires that He shall come.

W. K.