

Songs - The Glory of His Presence (3:1-11)



A. 3:1-5 - Withdrawal of His Presence, Shulamite's Nightmare

1. *'By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought him, but I did not find him.'* (3:1) The bride turned down the Lord's invitation to come to the mountains with Him in Ch 2. Not because she had a rebellious heart, but because she was fearful and insecure about the unknown. Now she is seeking the Lord's presence in the night hours, expecting the sweet presence she had known so well as in the past season. However, something has changed. Strangely the sweet presence of the Lord has lifted from her heart. Now the bride is desperately seeking the Lord into the night as before, but she cannot experience the nearness of His presence. What has changed? The withdrawal of the Lord's sweet presence was a new and uneasy experience for her, was His loving discipline.
 - a) 'On my bed' – as opposed to 'our bed' and 'our houses' (1:16). She is not supposed to be on the bed alone, but on the mountains with the Lord (2:10). Their partnership is momentarily disrupted.
 - b) The key refrain here is *'I sought the one I love,'* or *'whom my soul loves.'* it occurs 4 times in v1-4. The Shulamite's heart is still set to love the Lord. Perhaps she is 'seeking' Him with prayers and fasting? It usually works, but not this time. Why not? Because prayer and fasting cannot substitute obedience.

'Who may ascend to the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.' (Ps 24:3-4)
2. The Loving Discipline of the Lord – *'Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously? [for the entire devotion of our being]'* (James 4:5). Understanding the passion of the Lord (jealousy) is the key to a deeper walk with God. *'For I the LORD your God am a jealous God.'* (Ex 20:5)
 - a) The loving discipline of the Lord is not the sign of His anger or rejection, but the manifestation of His love for us. It is an 'accelerated learning.'

'Whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.' (Prov 3:12)

'As many as I love I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent [Laodicean church]...To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne.' (Rev 3:19-21)
 - b) All of us experience the loving discipline of the Lord. Never knowing the discipline of the Lord points to an 'illegitimate birth'.

'But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons...but He [disciples us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.' (Heb 12:8, 10)

'When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' (1 Cor 11:32)
 - c) The Lord always tenderly waits for us before He disciplines us. He gives us an ample time. When He does discipline us, He shares our pain in the process.

'I gave her time (Jezebel) to repent of her immorality...' (Rev 2:21-22) *'In all their afflictions He was afflicted...In His love and in His pity, He redeemed them.'* (Is 63:9)
3. The pain of losing the Lord's presence created such a desperate crisis in her soul that she was willing to move out of her comfort zone to search for the Lord into the late hours of the night. *'I will rise now', I said, 'and go about the city; In the streets and in the squares, I will seek the one I love.'* (3:2)
 - a) The Lord knows that hiding His face would produce earnestness in her heart. The Shulamite did not know how deeply God's love has already worked into her heart. It was the moment of *her realisation she could not live without the presence of the Lord.* She began to add 'obedience' to 'prayer'.
 - b) *'Streets and squares'* – The Shulamite is ready to comb through the streets of the city and risk her personal safety in the hope of somehow finding the Lord, rather than toss and turn all night in her comfortable bed. *'When God plays hard to get'* (RT Kendall). *'God left him [Hezekiah] to test him and to know what was in his heart.'* (2 Chr 32:31) *'And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs*

himself up to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us...' (Is 64:7). What would the Shulamite do?

- c) The Shulamite walks into the city going from street to street asking, 'Have you seen the one I love?' (3:3) C.f. Jacob - 'I will not let you go unless You bless me.' (Gen 32:24-30) The gracious Lord cannot help but be found by her. 'Scarcely I had passed by them [watchmen], when I found the one I love.' (3:4) E.g. When a father plays 'hide and seek' with his little child, he cannot help but make it easy for his child to find him.

'Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.' (James 4:8)

- d) 'I held Him and would not let Him go' (4:4) – This night season produced in her a holy resolution to 'never ever let go of Him again'. Indeed, the Shulamite never loses Him again. *We do not need to lose the presence of the Lord.*
- e) 'Until I brought him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.' (4:4) – her home is the last place she would bring a man unless she is totally committed to the relationship. A woman inviting a man is contrary to the Jewish custom. The chamber of birth is where she began her life, i.e. *Nothing is hidden from him.* We don't share our baby photos with strangers. Now the Shulamite has invited the Lord to the most vulnerable place and the deepest part of her life and heart.
4. *'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem...Do not stir up...'* (repeated 3 times) (C.f. 2:7; 3:5; 8:4)
- a) The Lord speaks each time. Perhaps it is the Holy Spirit. This is a 'pause button' in the story - Selah in psalms, meaning 'Do not disturb this season of life, but go deeper in the Lord.'
- b) Each of these seasons serves as a 'portal', i.e., a setup to lead to the next season, to a fresh encounter with the Lord. The Shulamite has a prophetic encounter of the coming King (3:6-11). It is flash-forward – the opposite of flashback. Chronologically, this portion belongs to the last chapter in the song. So, it can cause confusion. Some have tried to rearrange the song. However, prophetically the placement makes perfect sense to us who awaits the coming King Jesus Christ.

B. 3:6-11 - Manifestation of His Glorious Presence on Wedding Day

1. 'Who is this...?' – This is a rhetorical question. It is repeated 3 times (3:6; 6:10; 8:5), referring to (i) the bridegroom, (ii) the bride, (iii) the bride leaning upon the bridegroom. This might be the Holy Spirit's Voice, or maybe the bride. This scene provides yet another revelation of the Lord as the coming Bridegroom King out of the wilderness, not as a gazelle or a stag, but an exalted and glorified King coming to take His bride away to His city for a great wedding!
- a) *'Pillars of smoke'* – the manifestation of God's glory in Exodus (Ex 19:18; Is 6:4; Rev 15:8 C.f. Joel 2:30).
- b) *'Myrrh and frankincense'* – the symbol of death, and of worship and intercession (Rev 5:8; 8:3-5).
- c) *'Scented with merchant's fragrant powders'* – the beauty of Jesus' personality, the height of His beauty being His love. Jesus is the merchant who sold everything to buy the pearl the great worth.
'The kingdom...is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.' (Matt 13:45-46)
- d) The contrast between (i) a young stag jumping on the hills, asking her to join Him in His adventure to a distant mountain (Ch 2), (ii) the glorious King sitting on His chariot (palanquin) escorting His bride to His city (Ch 3).
2. *'Behold, it is Solomon's couch (wedding chariot)' (3:6-8)* – What a contrast to the Shulamite's lonely couch she decided to leave behind (3:1).
- a) The sixty valiant men of war with swords on their thighs described the unparalleled military might of the King. The Shulamite has nothing to fear – not mountain tops nor the wilderness. There were sixty pillars for the courtyard in Moses' tabernacle (Ex 27, 38). C.f. *'For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways...'* (Ps. 91:11-13)

3. *Palanquin (chariot) – a raised seat supported by the poles and carried on the guards’ shoulders. ‘Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the king made himself a palanquin: He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by [for] the daughters of Jerusalem.’ (3:9-10)*
- a) We are marching into the wilderness on the King’s chariot, surrounded by His love, guarded by the mighty angels. What is there to fear as we follow the Lord into the wilderness of this life in our heavenward journey? *‘[He] made us alive together, and made us sit together [on the King’s Palanquin] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.’ (Eph 2:5-6)*
 - b) Solomon specifically designed this chariot himself for His bride queen, to take her from her hometown to His city. It is made of (i) ‘wood’ – humanity; (ii) ‘pillars of silver’ – redemption; (iii) ‘support/railings of gold’ – divine nature; (iv) ‘seat of purple’ – royalty. (v) ‘interior paved with love’ – internal tapestry inlaid with His love for us (from inside out). This is how the Lord is escorting us through the wilderness of this life to our eternal home in heaven.
 - c) *‘On the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart’ (3:11) – Jesus is crowned with many crowns. A wedding crown given by the mother is different than a conquering crown of the king. This crown is connected to the gladness of his heart. We are Jesus’ crown of joy, and this is the ‘day of the gladness of His heart.’*

A royal wedding psalm: ‘All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad. King’s daughters are among Your honourable women; At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear. Forget your own people also, and your father’s house; So, the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him.’ (Ps 45:8-11)

C.f. ‘...and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.’ (Is 62:5)

C.f. ‘And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.’ (Rev 19:7-8, C.f. Rev 21:9-21)

What is the requirement for the bride? Her willingness to leave behind all her earthly connections and follow the Lord.’ E.g., Rebekah left her father’s house and all former attachments for her bridegroom, Isaac. ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ (1 Cor 2:9)