

Songs - Vision for the Vineyard (6:11-8:4)



1. The Bride's Love for the Lord (6:11-13)

As the bride walks in the revelation of Songs 6:4-10, her heart is overcome by love for the Lord's entire Church. She commits to serve the weak and immature in His garden (6:11-12). The garden is mentioned nine times in Songs. The first three times it is called 'her garden' (4:12, 15, 16). The last six times it is called 'His garden' (4:16; 5:1; 6:2, 11; 7:12; 8:13).

- a. Downward Mobility – She went 'down' to the garden of nuts. She did not need another invitation. Earlier she told the daughters of Jerusalem that He will be found in the garden, feeding the flock (6:2-3). We can see this as an extension of the original invitation of 2:10-14. For the nuts to bear fruit and reproduce, the shells must be crushed. They must die and be buried before they can bear much fruit.
- b. Purpose – 'to see...the verdure of the valley' to assess and nurture the budding green shoots from the ground. Immature believers are often: (i) not responsive; (ii) not humble; (iii) not grateful. But the bride cares about the budding shoots for they are the Lord's garden, His vineyard, and His inheritance.
- c. '*Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people*' – Suddenly, out of blue, from within the depth of her soul, the love for the church overcame her heart instead of bitterness, frustration, and grief at the immaturity of the garden. This is the 'zeal for the Lord's house. (Ps 69:9)

'Chariots of my noble people' – the armoured vehicle in Israel is called in Hebrew 'Merkaba' - tank. God's outstanding servants were spiritual warriors.

'To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.' (Col 1:27-29).

2. Two responses from the Church are:

- a. '**Respect & Acceptance**' (6:13) – 'return' (mentioned 4 times) '*That we may look upon you,*' i.e., it is an honour to learn from you. Here only 2 verses refer to her as the 'Shulamite'.
- b. **Scorn & Rejection** (6:14) – '*What do you see in this Shulamite?*' (*What good can come out of Nazareth?*) '*As it were, the dances of two camps (armies)?*' In Hebrew, it is 'Mahanaim' (The camp of Mahanaim, NIV C.f. Gen 32:1-2). This is the famous place of the great conflict between Jacob and Esau. In Mahanaim, Jacob met God's angel and wrestled with Him all night before he became 'Israel' - 'Prince with God.' This was after his hip bone was dislocated, so he limped from that point on. The dances of the two camps can refer to the *spiritual conflicts* in the Shulamite's life in her pursuit of the King. Shulamite's life must have been a controversial figure. (Matt 10:34-35)

3. Vindication of the Bride (7:1-9)

- a. This passage answers the sarcastic scorn, '*What would you see in the Shulamite?*' (6:13) – Why all these unwanted (and needless?) spiritual conflicts! But the Lord vindicates her by praising her virtues most comprehensively.
 - (i) beautiful feet in sandals – the good news of the gospel (Is 52:7; Eph 6:15)
 - (ii) thighs – strength in her walk with God (C.f. Song 5:15)
 - (iii) navel – umbilical cord, i.e., well-nourished in the early spiritual development
 - (iv) waist – a heap of wheat = abundance of wheat. (pregnant with the great harvest?)
 - (v) breasts – the ability to feed others with milk of the Word
 - (vi) neck (ivory) – strong and unbending, yet beautifully yielded to do God's will

- (vii) eyes – devotion and revelation. There were two pools in Heshbon with clear, not muddy water. The gate of ‘Bath Rabbim’ was a resort area with clean water in the once royal city of Heshbon (Num 21:25-26)
- (viii) nose – discernment as a means of protection from a tower
- (ix) head – thought life, crowned like Mt Carmel, purple hair – kingly authority and devotion.
- (x) The King is held captive – Her kingly royal devotion holds the King captivated to her (6:5)

Note: in Ch 4 the Lord praises her from the head down. In Ch 7 He praises her in reverse order, from feet up.

- b. The King’s attraction (9:6-9) is the bride’s three-fold commission to ministry – (1) to nurture others; (2) to release the Spirit; (3) to maintain her intimacy with the King.
 - (i) ‘palm tree’ – spiritual victory & rest (Ex 15:27; Rev 7:4)
 - (ii) ‘fragrance of breath’ – Spirit & Word
 - (iii) ‘roof of her mouth as wine’ – Spirit-filled speech and intimacy with God.

4. 7:9-8:4 Mature Partnership of the Bride

1. *‘Wine goes down smoothly for my beloved, moving gently the lips of the sleepers’ (7:9)*
 - a. The bride is not resisting the cup: (i) the wine of the Spirit (joy c.f. Neh 8:10; Joel 2:18; Acts 2:15-16); (ii) the cup of suffering to do the will of God (Matt 20:22) – she agrees and follows the Spirit’s leadership, so *‘the wine goes down smoothly’ without choking.*

‘Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book, it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.’ (Ps 40:7-8)

The question Lord popped to me during the 21 days of prayer & fasting: ‘Will you drink the cup?’ (C.f. Matt 20:22)
 - b. Awakening the sleepers by the wine of the Spirit, *‘Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light’* (Eph 5:14 c.f. Acts 2:15-16). Why isn’t she choking on His wine? Because she finally knows her full spiritual identity: *‘I am my beloved’s, and His desire is toward me.’ (7:10)*
2. *‘I am my beloved’s, and His desire is toward me.’ (7:10)* This confession was the result of the process of her spiritual formation.
 - a. ‘Total belonging to the Lord.’ She now lives for the Lord and serves Him without any concern for herself. Her focus is entirely on what He desires without any thought of self-interest (Rev 4:11).
 - b. Her spiritual identity is formed through the revelation of the Lord’s desire for her. This is the most prominent theme. Insight into God’s desire for us gives us the strength to be free from the opinions of men and live before the audience of One. What she values the most is what pleases Him the most.

We are defined most by the fact that God desires us, and that we desire Him!
3. The bride’s prayer (7:11-12): ‘Come...Let us...’ Calling for partnership followed by *‘let us’ (repeated 4 times)*. Note the change *‘I went down’ (6:11) to ‘Let us go...’ (7:11)*. She now wants the King’s presence to go with her. She has the vision of a close partnership with the Lord. Her labour for Him is the labour of love.
 - a. *‘Let us go forth’* – There is no more fear (2:10-13). She went to the garden alone in 6:11. Now she seeks intimate partnership in the field. *‘You are God’s field...’ (1 Cor 3:9)*
 - b. *‘Let us lodge in the villages’* – She is willing to ‘lodge’ and ‘work’ in the remote unknown villages. She is not bothered about not being in the city centre.
 - c. *‘Let us get up early’* – She is willing to work hard and be diligent, not give ‘eye-service.’ Hirelings work for wages, but the Lord’s servants work for love.

- d. *'Let us see...vine...grape...pomegranate...'* – to see the young shoots maturing in His garden.
 - e. *'There I will give you my love'* – She will not run from difficulties in her ministry assignment – hard work, risk, disappointments, and mistreatments. But right there in the rigours of ministry work she will love the Lord and keep the intimacy of the Spirit. It is easier to love the Lord in the banqueting table than in the field with rigorous labour (2:3-4).
4. The bride's costly preparation for the beloved: *'...at our gate(s) are pleasant fruits all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you.'* (7:10)
- a. 'mandrakes' – known as fertility fruit with purple flowers and beautiful fragrance (Gen 30:1). At the gates of the garden, she has laid all kinds of pleasant fruit, old and new (Matt 13:52). This is the fruit of her labour for the Lord. She laid them out at the gate for the Lord to enjoy on His way into the garden (Gal 5:22-23, C.f. Rev 4:10).

Will the Lord find pleasant fruit at my gate in the course of my race for Him? *'I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'* (1 Cor. 15:10)
 - b. *'Oh, that you were like my brother...'* She is restrained from publicly showing her affection due to modesty. Certain experiences and encounters the Lord gives us are holy. They are not for public consumption. Some of our experiences can be easily misunderstood (C.f. 2 Cor. 12:2-6).
 - c. *'Spiced wine of the juice of (my) pomegranate'* – It's the best of the best she has prepared for the Lord. It is costly wine (not heard of) both in cost and time.
5. The Lord's response: *'His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me...'*
- a. The Lord responds to the bride's love by embracing her (C.f. 7:8). His left hand is His invisible undiscernible presence. His right hand is His manifest presence that we can discern and see.
 - b. *'I charge you...'* – This is the third time, i.e., pause here and take it in. Gazelle and doe are not mentioned here (2:7; 3:5). This moment of intimacy is not so fragile as she matured in love.