

Union &
COMMUNION

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HUDSON TAYLOR



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Publisher's note:

The author's selection of Bible versions has been retained whenever possible, including the Revised Version when it was originally cited. The text of this book, however, has been updated for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been revised for clarity and readability.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. Scripture quotations marked (RV) are taken from the Revised Version of the Holy Bible.

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Chapter 1

No Better Song!

The song of songs, which is Solomon's.
—Song of Solomon 1:1

This book is well called *the song of songs*! There is no song like it. If it is read properly, it brings a gladness to the heart that is as far beyond the joy of earthly things as heaven is higher than the earth. It has been well said that this is a song that grace alone can teach, and experience alone can learn.

Our Savior, speaking of the union of the branch with the vine, said, “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*” (John 15:11). And the Beloved Disciple, writing of Him who “*was from the beginning,*” who “*was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*” (1 John 1:1–2) in order that we might share the fellowship that He enjoyed, also said, “*These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*” (1 John 1:4).

Union with Christ and abiding in Christ: what don't they secure? Peace, perfect peace; rest, constant rest; answers to all our prayers; victory over all our foes; pure, holy living; ever increasing

fruitfulness—all of these are the glad outcome of abiding in Christ. The practical use of the Song of Solomon is to deepen this union and to make this abiding in Christ more constant.

The New Testament Connection

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16), and therefore no part is, or can be, neglected without loss. Our purpose in studying God’s inspired Word is that we may know “that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). Christ’s teaching in John 17:3, “And this is [the object of] life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,” agrees with this. Should we not then act wisely by keeping this object always in view in our daily life and study of God’s holy Word?

Few portions of Scripture will help the devout believer more in the pursuit of this all-important knowledge of God than the too-much neglected Song of Solomon. Like other portions of the Bible, this book has its difficulties. But so have all the works of God. Is not the fact that they surpass our unaided powers of comprehension and research an indicator of divinity? Can man, whose mind is finite, expect to grasp infinite divine power or to understand and interpret the works or the providence of the all-wise God? And if not, is it surprising that His Word also needs superhuman wisdom for its interpretation? Thanks be to God that the illumination of the Holy Spirit is promised to all who seek it. What more can we desire?

The key to the Song of Solomon is easily found in the teachings of the New Testament. Read without this key, the book is especially unintelligible. The Incarnate Word is the true key to the written Word. But even before the Incarnation, the devout student of the Old Testament could find much help for understanding the sacred mysteries of this book in the prophetic writings, for there Israel was taught that her Maker was her Husband. (See

Isaiah 54:5.) John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, recognized the Bridegroom in the person of Christ and said,

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. (John 3:29)

Paul, in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, went still further and taught that the union of Christ with His church, and her subjection to Him, underlies the very relationship of marriage and affords the pattern for every godly union.

In Solomon, who is the bridegroom-king as well as the author of this poem, we have a representation of our Lord, the true Prince of Peace, in His coming reign on earth. When this occurs in actuality, not only will there be His bride, the church, but also a willing people, His subjects, over whom He will reign gloriously. Then distant sovereigns will bring their wealth and will behold the glory of the enthroned King, proving Him with hard questions, as the queen of Sheba once did to King Solomon.

They to whom this privilege is accorded will be blessed. A brief glance will be enough for them for a lifetime, but what will be the royal dignity and blessedness of the risen and exalted bride! Forever with her Lord, forever like her Lord, forever conscious that His desire is toward her, she will share His heart and His throne alike. Can a study of the book that helps us to understand these mysteries of grace and love be anything other than most profitable?

It is interesting to notice the contrast between this book and the one preceding it. The book of Ecclesiastes teaches emphatically that "*vanity of vanities; all is vanity*" (Ecclesiastes 1:2), and thus this book is the necessary introduction to the Song of Solomon, which shows how true blessing and satisfaction are to be possessed.

In the same way, our Savior's teaching in the fourth chapter of John points out the powerlessness of earthly things to give lasting satisfaction. This is in striking contrast to the flow of blessing that results from the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to reveal not Himself but Christ as the Bridegroom of the soul:

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up [overflowing, on and on] into everlasting life.
(John 4:13–14)

Studying the Song of Solomon

Throughout this book of the Bible, we will find the speakers to be the following: the bride, the Bridegroom, and the daughters of Jerusalem. It is not usually difficult to ascertain the speaker, though people have come to different conclusions regarding some of the verses. The bride speaks of the Bridegroom as her “*Beloved*,” the Bridegroom speaks of her as His “*love*,” while the addresses of the daughters of Jerusalem are more varied. They vary among “*the fairest among women*”; “*the Shulamite*,” or the King’s bride; and also the “*Prince’s daughter*.”

Throughout this study of the Song of Solomon, it will be helpful to break up the book into six sections. The chapters that follow will deal with each of these sections. It will be observed that the bride is the chief speaker in sections one (Song 1:2–2:7) and two (Song 2:8–3:5), sections in which she is much occupied with herself. But in section three (Song 3:6–5:1), where the communion with the Bridegroom is unbroken, she has little to say and appears as the hearer. Also in this section, the daughters of Jerusalem give a long address, and the Bridegroom has His longest. He calls the

betrothed His bride for the first time and calls her to fellowship in service.

In section four (Song 5:2–6:10), the bride again is the chief speaker, but after her restoration, the Bridegroom speaks at length and “*upbraideth not*” (James 1:5). In section five (Song 6:11–8:4), the bride is no longer called “the fairest among women,” but she claims herself to be, and is recognized as, the royal bride. In section six (Song 8:5–14), the Bridegroom claims her from her very birth, and not merely from her betrothal, as God claimed Israel in Ezekiel 16.

In the secret of His presence
 How my soul delights to hide!
 Oh, how precious are the lessons
 Which I learn at Jesus' side!
 Earthly cares can never vex me,
 Neither trials lay me low;
 For when Satan comes to vex me,
 To the secret place I go!