

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## Studies in the Song of Solomon: Song of Solomon 2:8-3:5

Today we come to the second of our talks on the Song of Solomon. We will look at the verses from 2:8 to 3:5. Take time after this broadcast to read them through carefully.

There can be few more moving scenes in Scripture than that when the risen Lord Jesus met His disciples on the shores of Lake Galilee. They had spent a wearying night fishing – and caught nothing. At the word of Jesus, they let down their nets for a final time, and caught more than they could easily draw in. There, on the lake shore, Jesus met them with a welcome breakfast of bread and fish. After they had eaten, Jesus speaks to Peter.

No doubt, there had been an earlier private meeting between Peter and his Lord when the whole sad saga of Peter's denial had been gone into and settled. But now, publicly before the other disciples, Jesus challenges Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" The question comes to Peter not just once, but three times (John 21:1-17). Peter, who had once proudly boasted that even if all the other disciples denied Jesus, he would never do so, had learned sufficient of himself that he dare no longer boast of his love for his Lord. Instead, he throws himself upon the Lord's understanding, and cries, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Those words of Jesus, "Do you love Me?" still challenge us today as we come to this Song of Solomon.

Last week, we saw that we can approach this book in three ways:

1. As an eastern love song between King Solomon and his bride.
2. As a picture of the mutual love between the Lord Jesus and His Church.
3. As a picture of the relationship between the Lord and a restored nation of Israel in a future day.

Today, we shall largely concentrate on the second of these aspects. As we do so, may we keep in mind those words of Jesus, "Do you love Me?"

The bride speaks in verse 8: "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." Amidst the myriad voices which might have fallen upon her ears, one stands out – the voice of her Beloved as He draws near! Her heart responds in joy. Listener, does the voice of Jesus mean as much to you today?

That voice meant everything to Mary Magdalene as she stood before the empty tomb on that Easter day, weeping. Listen to her distress as she pleads with the One whom, through her tears, she mistook for the gardener: "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus' answer, "Mary", was sufficient. She knew His voice! He was alive! Her night was turned to day! (John 20:1-18). Before His death, Jesus had said to His disciples, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). As we read His word, the Bible, day by day so we, too, will come to know our Shepherd's voice. We will not want to begin the day without first letting Him speak to us and we, in turn, speaking to Him in prayer.

But as believers, we are waiting to hear that voice of Jesus in a special way. Paul writes to the Christians at Thessalonica, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 17). Are we waiting to hear His summoning shout to take us to be with Himself in heaven forever? Perhaps today our ears will hear His lovely voice!

Jesus warned His disciples, and us, that it was the evil servant who said in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming", who consequently behaved in a way which was displeasing to his master (Matthew 24:48-51). The Bible closes on the comforting, yet challenging note, "He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20). May our hearts be listening for His voice in that way!

As the bride senses the nearness of her Beloved, so she recognises something of His eagerness to be with her – "leaping upon the mountains...like a gazelle or a young stag" (verses 1 and 2). Much as I may long for the coming of my Lord, I know that His desire to have His Church with Him is far, far greater! Sir Edward Denny put it in this way,

*He comes, for, oh! His yearning heart  
No more can bear delay,  
To scenes of full unmingled joy  
To call His bride away.*

So Isaiah writes of that day, "He shall see of the travail of His soul (that is, all the suffering of Calvary to redeem you and me), and be satisfied" (53:11).

At first, the bride only hears her Bridegroom afar off. But now He has come near to her and, in verses 8-14, she reports His words to her. The words are recognised today as part of our classic heritage of literature in their poetic description of springtime. So we'll read them together:

"My Beloved spoke and said to me: 'Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away! O My dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely.'"

The coming of springtime in Israel still heralds a brilliant and colourful display of flowers. But today, we want to take these words as the words of the Lord Jesus to His Church. Throughout the time of the Lord's absence in heaven, His Church down here, in one part of the world or another has been suffering persecution. That suffering will come to an end when He comes to take His Church to be with Himself. Then indeed, the winter will be past! Eternal spring will have arrived!

For the nation of Israel, too, there will come a day when the winter is past. At present, that nation still stands under God's judgment of "no longer...mercy" and "not My people" (Hosea 1:6-11). But in a coming day, that same nation having gone through a time of great tribulation, will turn to God in repentance and faith and, once more, come into the blessing of God.

In verse 14, the Bridegroom calls to His bride, likening her to a dove, in its characteristics of loving gentleness, "O My dove, in the clefts of the rock." Isaiah had promised, "A Man will be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (32:2). So the Christian gladly sings,

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.*

The Bridegroom goes on, "Let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely." Of course, we shall gladly praise Him in heaven! But the Lord wants to hear our praises now! Are we ready to spend time with Him in daily communion? When we come together with His people, are our hearts full of His praise? The praise and prayer we offer Him now will have a special place in heaven in that day. So John writes of that day, "[They] fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8).

In verse 15, it is perhaps the Bridegroom and the bride who speak together: "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines..." Communion with the Lord is spoilt not only by the bigger sins, murder, adultery, etc. but by the little sins, lying, jealousy, if any sin can ever be called little! The Lord would have nothing come in to spoil our communion with Him. May we have that same desire.

The bride speaks in verse 16: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His. He feeds His flock among the lilies." Are we able to speak of the Lord Jesus in the certainty of that same confident, loving relationship? A well known hymn puts it like this:

*Dear Saviour, Thou art mine,  
How sweet the thought to me!  
Let me repeat Thy name,  
And lift my heart to Thee.*

*Mine! mine! mine!  
I know Thou art mine;  
Saviour, dear Saviour,  
I know Thou art mine.*

Andrew Miller has written, "...faith can say without the least misgiving – "Christ is mine – He is my Beloved – and my Beloved is mine" – mine now – mine to wash my sins away – mine to clothe me with the righteousness of God – mine to dwell in my heart by His Spirit – mine through life – mine in the swellings of Jordan – mine in heavenly glory! Mine to look to – mine to speak to – mine to care for me – mine to sympathise with me – mine to help me – mine to close my pilgrim path."

"And I am His." So Paul exults: "For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come – all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 2:21-23).

"He feeds among the lilies." The Bridegroom had earlier addressed His bride, "Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (2:2). All those who love the Bridegroom form that special company where He delights to take His place: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). In verse 17, the bride looks forward longingly to the return of her Bridegroom, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away..." So the old hymn has it:

*Some golden daybreak Jesus will come;  
Some golden daybreak, battles all won,  
He'll shout the victory, break through the blue,  
Some golden daybreak, for me, for you.*

In chapter 3, the bride mourns the absence of her Bridegroom. She cannot be satisfied without Him. "By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought Him, but I did not find Him. "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." I sought Him, but I did not find Him" (verses 1 and 2). There could be no real happiness for this bride apart from her Bridegroom. Four times over in verses 1-4 she refers to Him as "the one I love".

We have already thought of Mary Magdalene on that Easter morning. She, too, was desolate until Jesus revealed Himself to her. Centuries ago, Augustine who, as a young man had tried all that life had to offer, including its worst debauchery, finally handed his life over to Christ. As a result, he wrote, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our souls can find rest only in Thee". Only Christ can satisfy the heart! And so, at last, she can say, "I found the one I love. I held Him and would not let Him go" (verse 3).

It is said of Archimedes that the solution to determining whether the king's crown was pure gold or adulterated with lead came to him as he lay in his bath. In the joy of that discovery, he leapt out of the bath and ran into the street exclaiming, "Eureka! – I have found it!" But the joy of discovering Jesus as Saviour and Lord is greater than any other.

It was Andrew who excitedly went home and told his brother, Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah – the Christ" (John 1:41). Shortly after, Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth" (verse 45). Likewise, the woman who met the Lord Jesus by Sychar's well, rushed to tell the men of the city, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did" (John 4:29).

Listener, have you found this same Saviour, Jesus? Does He mean so much to you that you are determined never to "let Him go"? Remember God's promise, "Those who seek Me diligently will find Me" (Proverbs 8:17). It may be that sometimes the pressures of life are such that you may feel your hold of Him to be slipping. Be assured of this, that those nail-pierced hands of His have such a hold of you that He will never let you go! Listen to His promise: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:29-30).

Verse 5 closes with the call of the bride (or perhaps of bride and Bridegroom) that no one disturbs their time of love together. So important is this time of love that this same charge is repeated three times in this short book: in 2:7; 3:5; and 8:4. It is significant that 'Solomon' and 'Shulamite', as the bride is described, both have their origin in the Hebrew word 'shalom' meaning 'peace, wholeness'. The prophet, Zephaniah, captures for us something of that undisturbed love and peace which the Lord will enjoy with a restored nation of Israel in a coming day: "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" (3:17). As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we, too, can look forward to an uninterrupted time of love, joy and peace when we are with Him in heaven.

The hymn sums it up:

*We'll see Thee soon, Lord Jesus,  
Amid the ransomed throng,  
Its glory, joy and beauty,  
Its never-ending song:  
Oh, day of wondrous promise,  
The Bridegroom and the bride  
Are seen in glory ever,  
For ever satisfied!*

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