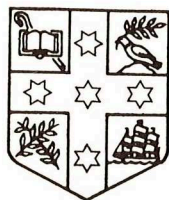


A STORY BASED ON
THE SONG
OF SONGS

MAIDEN OF PEACE



J. W. McMILLAN



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MAIDEN OF PEACE

A story
based on
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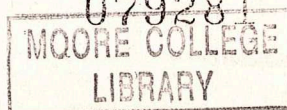
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INTRODUCTION

The object of this little book is to set out in the form of a story one of the many ways of interpreting the Song of Solomon. The 'Song of Songs' is considered by many to be the most difficult book in the Bible to interpret with any degree of certainty, and no claim is made that the interpretation found in this little book is the only correct one. However, the author, who is a student of the Bible, has written within itself, and which also illumines the story, a commentary which we find in the opening pages of the

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1. THE MAIDEN AND THE SHEPHERD

Abishag jumped up and opened the gate of the courtyard of the house as she heard her brother's footsteps outside. He looked tired after his night's watch in the vineyard. She greeted him politely, but it was evident that she had not forgotten his angry words when he and her other brothers had told her that from that time on she would have to help watch the vineyard (1). She had risen early and had her breakfast, so as soon as she let him into the house she set off along the street of the little town in which the family lived. She passed through the gate and made her way along the road to the vineyard. Just ahead of her was a flock of sheep and she felt a sudden thrill of excitement when she saw who the shepherd was. She edged past the sheep and caught up with him. He smiled at her pleasantly.

"The LORD be with you, my sister," he began.

"The LORD bless you," she replied (2).

Abishag had talked more than once with this shepherd over the last few weeks, and from her vantage point on the tower of the vineyard she had noticed the tender care which he took of his flock. More than once he had carried a newborn lamb in his arms; sometimes she had seen him with a sick sheep over his shoulders. He had taken more notice of Abishag than she had realised. The delicate beauty of her face and form had stirred his inmost being. He knew the reason for her brothers being angry with her and he felt the more highly of her for it. As they came near to the point in the road where the track to the vineyard branched off, he came more closely to her, and gently took her hand in his.

"May I speak one word to you, my sister?" he asked.

Abishag nodded. At the side of the road was a little grove of cedar and fir trees, and a few apple trees, by the side of a little brook. The shepherd had often rested there while his sheep grazed or rested in the shade. There was still a little grass, despite the summer heat. He led Abishag to it.

"I sometimes call this place my 'house of wine' (3)," he explained with a smile. "I often stop here to have something to eat and drink".

"It is a good house," she returned. "It has grass for a carpet, fir trees for rafters, and cedar trees for its beams."

The shepherd looked at her tenderly.

"My sister," he began, "I love you. You are beautiful. Your eyes are like doves. I want you to be my wife (4)."

"I am only a crocus of the plain, a lily of the valley," Abishag replied (5).

"You are like a lily," he agreed, "and other girls are like thistles!" (6)

"You are greater than I am," she replied. "I am only a flower, but you are like this apple tree, shady and fruitful. I would delight to sit in your shadow and eat your fruit (7)."

The sheep were beginning to wander. The shepherd drew Abishag to him and kissed her tenderly (8). Then he took from his leather bag some raisins and an apple and put them into her hands (9).

"Today I and some of the other shepherds are setting out to graze our flocks in Lebanon, and you know that this means that we shall be away from home for some weeks (10). The other shepherds are ahead: I waited until dawn, in hope of seeing you. As soon as I return I shall meet your elder brothers and arrange for our betrothal. For you and you alone are my love," he concluded.

"And you are my beloved," Abishag replied

They kissed and parted. Neither dreamed just how long that parting would last!

(1) Song 1:6. (2) Ruth 2:4. (3) Song 2:4. (4) Song 1:15-17. (5) Song 2:1. (6) Song 2:2. (7) Song 2:3. (8) Song 1:2a. (9) Song 2:5. (10) Song 4:8.

2. THE KING'S MESSENGERS

The senior elder of the little town of Shunem made his way to the town gate. He had just received the startling news that a party of men, carrying a banner with the sign of King David and what appeared to be an empty palanquin, was on its way to the town. They appeared to be coming from the nearby city of Jezreel. He had sent messengers to call the other elders of the town and soon after they gathered at the gate the party arrived. The two men that were carrying the palanquin laid it on the ground and everyone could see that it was empty. The senior elder of Shunem went forward and addressed the leader of the party.

"The LORD be with you," he said in greeting.

"The LORD bless you," the visitors returned (1).

The elder looked enquiringly at the leader of the party.

"Why have you come to this place?" he asked politely.

"We have come on a special errand on behalf of our beloved King David himself," the leader began.

"I trust that our lord the king is in health," the elder interposed.

"He is not," the leader replied, "and this brings us to the purpose of our visit. As you must know, the king is now an old man, and is greatly affected by the weather. The winter is coming, and we know he will feel the cold keenly. No matter how many bed-clothes are put on, he still complains of being cold. So the king's advisers have made a special recommendation."

"What is that?" the elder asked.

"They have suggested that a beautiful young maiden should be found to act as the king's nurse. She will have her own quarters in the king's chambers, and may be able, with the warmth of her own body, to help keep him warm.

We have been sent to look for a suitable young woman," he explained (2).

"That should not be a difficult task," the elder replied. "Surely amongst the maidens of Jerusalem itself some suitable maiden could be found."

"It has proved more difficult than we anticipated," the leader replied. "It is true that there are many beautiful young women in Israel, but most of them are either married or betrothed, and a few, we are sad to say, have surrendered their maidenhood for base gain. But this is beside the point. Have you any suitable maiden here in Shunem?"

The senior elder looked across at his companions.

"What about Abishag?" one of them suggested.

"Is she young and beautiful?" the messengers asked.

"Yes," the elders replied.

"Is she betrothed?" the visitors asked.

"No."

"Are you sure that she is still a maid?" they asked cautiously.

"The whole town knows that she is a virtuous maiden," they replied. "Some time ago she quarrelled with her brothers because they tried to persuade her to marry a man whom she did not love or respect, and she refused. We are sure that she is still a maid."

"Then let us see her father," the leader suggested.

"Her father is dead," the senior elder explained. "But I shall take you to see her mother and her elder brother and they may be able to help you."

The elder led the party through the town gate and up the street to the house where Abishag lived. Her mother welcomed them in and brought water to wash their feet. She wakened her eldest son, who was still sleeping after a night in the vineyard.

The leader of the party explained the purpose of their visit. Abishag's elder brother's eyes grew wide with amazement as he heard of the amount of money which would be paid to the family of the maiden chosen for the work, and he assured them that his sister would be delighted to go.

"May we see the maiden for ourselves?" the leader asked.

"Certainly," her brother replied, "I will send for her at once."

He called to someone in the inner part of the house and a bright-faced little girl came running in.

"Run quickly to the vine-yard and tell Abishag to come home at once," he ordered. "You stay and watch until I send someone to relieve you."

The little girl quickly ran off.

"Who is that girl?" the leader of the party asked.

"She is our little sister: the youngest in the family," he replied.

"She is a little beauty," the man replied. "What do you plan to do for her when she reaches marriagable age?"

Her brother smiled.

"It all depends on her nature," he replied. "If she is like a wall, like her sister Abishag, who will not allow any man to touch her, we shall build her up and make her more desirable by offering a good dowry of silver to go with her: if she is like a door, open to receive any man who comes along, we shall fence her in with cedar wood to keep them out" (3).

While they waited for Abishag to come her mother brought wine and set it before the visitors.

"This is our special spiced wine," she explained, "made from grapes and pomegranates from our own vineyard."

They sipped it appreciatively. Before long Abishag arrived. She was flushed from her exertion, and her hair was blown about her face, but they could see that she was a truly beautiful maiden. She looked enquiringly at the visitors, and then at her brother.

"Does she meet with your approval?" her brother asked them.

They nodded in assent.

"Abishag," her brother began, "these men have come to take you to Jerusalem. You are to be nurse to King David."

She stared at him in amazement.

"To Jerusalem?" she began, "But....."

"There are no 'buts' in it," her brother interrupted. "These men have come from Jerusalem specially to call you. They have even brought a palanquin for you."

Abishag was dumb-founded. She wondered if she was dreaming. She had told no one about the shepherd's promise, and he had still not returned from Lebanon: she knew that even if she did mention it to her brothers, they would say she had dreamt it. She had always been a dreamer.

"When do you wish to leave?" Abishag's brother enquired.

"At once," the leader replied, with emphasis. "The king's business requires haste (4) and especially a matter like this. If we leave now we can be in Jezreel by night-fall, and from there new bearers will be available to carry her on the next stage of the journey to Jerusalem. One of the women from the king's household is waiting in Jezreel ready to accompany her."

"But my clothes are not washed!" Abishag protested.

"Do not worry about that," the leader laughed. "You will not need these rough garments in the palace. All the best will be found for you. Please come at once."

Abishag silently kissed her mother and followed the men outside, weeping quietly to herself. She was soon seated in the palanquin, and the bearers swung it on to their shoulders. She heard the clink of coins as the leader handed over part of the king's bounty to her elder brother, and then she was on her way—to Jerusalem!

(1) Ruth 2:4. (2) I Kings 1:1-4. (3) Song 8:8, 9. (4) I Samuel 21:8.

3. THE KING'S CHAMBER

The next few days passed almost as in a dream for Abishag. She was carried first to Jezreel, where she spent her first night away from home, in the care of one of the court women from Jerusalem. The next day fresh bearers began to carry them to Jerusalem. The court woman tried to cheer Abishag by telling her stories of the life at court, but Abishag's thoughts were far away, with her beloved shepherd (1).

When they reached Jerusalem she was escorted into the women's quarters of the palace. The young women looked at her with great interest, as many of them had aspired to do the work for which she had been chosen. After a night's rest she was taken to the dressing room, where she laid aside the rough home-spun garments which she had worn in the country and was dressed in fine linen robes, as befitted a nurse for the king. All the while the young women that had come with her were praising the beauty of her body, and she found this somewhat embarrassing. Her tanned complexion contrasted with their pale faces, so she explained to them that her brothers had been angry with her, and set her to looking after the vineyard, where she was sunburnt (2). She thought wistfully of her own vineyard, her lover, whom she had not kept near her, and asked herself where he would be at that moment (3). To ask the question was to answer it: he was not to be found in a palace, but out with his flock, or near the shepherds' dwellings (4). She recalled vividly their last conversation in the grove of trees by the roadside (5).

Then she was taken into the king's chamber (6) and her real duties began. The aged king was almost bed-ridden and Abishag waited on him devotedly. There was nothing indelicate in her relationship with King David: she treated him like a father, and he treated her as a daughter (7).

Her duties inevitably brought her into contact with many members of the royal household. There was Bathsheba the queen, and others of the king's wives and concubines: Adonijah and Solomon, and others of the king's sons

—and Abishag was somewhat disconcerted by their admiring glances and whispered compliments. But in spite of them all her thoughts were on her beloved shepherd.

The last few years of David's reign witnessed the struggle of two groups of people to gain supremacy in the kingdom of Israel. Adonijah, David's son by Haggith, was handsome and popular. Joab, the commander-in-chief of the army, backed his claim to the throne, as did Abiathar the high priest. Adonijah raised a private army of fifty men to act as his body-guard, and carefully planned a gathering of his supporters at En-rogel, at which he was publicly acclaimed as king (8).

The first King David knew of this was when Bathsheba was ushered into his chamber: Abishag, who was waiting on the king, could see at once that she was very worried about something. She bowed low before her husband (9).

"What do you want?" the king asked.

Bathsheba told him all that had happened. Adonijah had been proclaimed king. Abiathar and Joab were supporting him. When she saw that the king had grasped the situation she went on:

"All the people of Israel know that you are alive, and they wait for a word from you. If you do not give the word, I shudder to think what will happen to Solomon and to me after you have been gathered with your fathers" (10).

While she was still talking to the king it was announced that the prophet Nathan had come. David greatly respected him, for he knew that he was a man who spoke the message of God without fear of men. He endorsed every word that Bathsheba had said (11).

Although King David's body was weak, his mind was still alert. He sat up in his bed and began to give orders. He called for Zadok the priest, and for Benaiah, one of his trusted military advisers, and told them what to do. They, with Nathan the prophet, were to go to Gihon, just outside of Jerusalem, and there anoint Solomon as king. Then they were to escort him back, riding on the king's mule, and seat

him on the royal throne in the sight of the king, so that all the people would know that David himself had nominated Solomon as his successor (12).

The king's plan was rapidly carried out. The noise of the trumpet announcing Solomon's anointing reached Engorgel just as Adonijah's supporters were finishing their feast. Soon after, Abiathar's son Jonathan came to tell them what was happening. Adonijah fled and took refuge at the altar. His rebellion was at an end (13).

When Solomon heard of this, he sent a message to assure Adonijah that his life would be spared, as long as he showed himself a worthy man. Adonijah came and bowed down before Solomon, and was sent in peace to his house (14).

In the months that followed David had a number of private conversations with Solomon. He knew that his own days were numbered and he earnestly counselled Solomon to walk steadfastly in the way of the LORD (15). He told him of all the preparations that he had made for the building of the temple in Jerusalem and gave him the pattern to be followed in its erection (16). He also advised him how to deal with Joab, the commander-in-chief of the army, and with Shimei, the rascal who had abused David when he fled from Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion (17).

At last King David's life drew to its close. He grew daily weaker, his breathing became more laboured, his pulse grew feeble and irregular, and his servants knew that the end was near. Soon after his death his body was buried in the city of Jerusalem, the place that he himself had conquered and made capital of Israel (18).

(1) Song 1: 7. (2) Song 1: 5, 6. (3) Song 1: 7. (4) Song 1: 8. (5) Song 1: 15-2: 6. (6) Song 1: 4. (7) 1 Kings 1: 4. (8) 1 Kings 1: 5-10. (9) 1 Kings 1: 15. (10) 1 Kings 1: 16-21. (11) 1 Kings 1: 22-27. (12) 1 Kings 1: 32-40. (13) 1 Kings 1: 41-49. (14) 1 Kings 1: 50-53. (15) 1 Kings 2: 1-4. (16) 1 Chronicles 28: 11-21. (17) 1 Kings 2: 5-9. (18) 1 Kings 2: 10-11.

4. THE MAIDEN'S DREAMS

After King David died, Abishag fondly hoped that she might be allowed to return home. She had been brought to Jerusalem to be the king's nurse, and now that he had died there was no further need of her services. But when she approached the eunuch who was in charge of the harem he pointed out that she would be treated like any other woman in the palace. A special order from King Solomon himself would be needed, and thus far no such order had been issued, he told her.

Abishag had looked forward to seeing her shepherd lover again, and her longings expressed themselves in her dreams. One of these was so vivid that she thought it was real. She dreamed that her beloved was coming for her: she saw him leaping over the mountains and coming outside the lattice windows of the palace (1). She heard him describe all the beauties of the Jezreel valley in Spring and invite her to come away with him. He reminded her that there were little jackels damaging the vineyards, where the vines were in bloom, and suggested that she might be needed to help to guard them again (2). She responded to his entreaties, even though she realised that the time had not come for her to be with him (3). She dreamed that he was in the city, and that she was searching for him, and found him, and brought him, oddly enough, to her mother's house, far away in Shunem (4)! She felt constrained to warn the maidens of Jerusalem, who were so keen to experience Solomon's embrace, how dangerous it was to stir up sexual passion before it wakened of its own accord (5).

Then one day Bathsheba came with the news that Adonijah and Joab had been executed at King Solomon's command. Abishag was not surprised to hear about Joab: she knew that King David had advised Solomon to put him to death (6). But she was surprised to hear about Adonijah.

"Why was Adonijah put to death?" she asked. "I thought that King Solomon had pardoned him."

"He was put to death on account of *you*!" Bathsheba replied.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I will tell you," Bathsheba replied. "Adonijah came to me and asked me to speak to King Solomon, and request that you be given to him for his wife. I agreed to do this, but as soon as I made the request Solomon became very angry, and ordered Benaiah to put Adonijah to death. At the same time he gave orders that Abiathar was to be deposed from the priesthood. When Joab heard what was happening, he fled to the altar, and there he was put to death" (7).

"But why did the king get so angry about Adonijah's request? I would not have married him, for I am promised to my own beloved. But surely to ask for me was not a crime worthy of death," Abishag protested.

"Adonijah was a fool to think that any member of the king's harem would be given to him," Bathsheba replied. "But there may be a deeper reason: I think that my son wants you for himself."

But Abishag was not immediately summoned to the king's presence. The king paid a state visit to Egypt, and returned with an Egyptian princess as his bride. All the palace women gathered by the lattice-work windows of the palace to see the wonderful sight of Solomon's palanquin, surrounded by 60 Israelite warriors, returning to Jerusalem after his journey through the wilderness (8).

After Solomon's return Abishag had an even more vivid dream. She dreamt that her wedding day had come, and that she was with her beloved. She listened to him describe her beauty, using phrases that come naturally to a shepherd: hair like a flock of goats, teeth like newly washed ewes, breasts like twin fawns. He knew that she was like an enclosed garden, for she had kept herself pure for her beloved. And now she dreamed that the time had come for him to enter his garden and fully enjoy her love (9).

Then the dream changed. She dreamed that he had come to her room at night and that she, for trivial reasons,

had refused to open the door and let him in. When she relented, and opened the door, he had disappeared. She went out to find him, but was unsuccessful. The watchmen of the city found her and abused her, and took away her veil. When she awoke, her dream seemed so vivid that she charged the other maidens to tell her beloved, should they find him, that she was love-sick (10).

The other maidens humoured her. "What is so special about your lover? How is he greater than others?" they asked her (11).

Abishag had her answer ready and described to them all his beauties. To her he was 'altogether lovely' for he was her beloved and her friend (12).

The maidens questioned her again.

"Where has he gone, this lover of yours?" they asked. "Tell us, so that we can look for him too" (13).

She knew the answer to that question. Her beloved would always be found with his sheep, leading them to good pastures among the lilies (14).

Meanwhile Solomon was adding to his harem. He had sixty queens, and eighty concubines, by the time he summoned Abishag to his presence. They all praised her beauties to the king, so that he desired her all the more (15).

But Abishag was adamant. Her desire was for her beloved and for him alone. The other women in the harem tried to reason with her. They urged her to forget her own people and her father's house, and to submit herself to the king's desires. For he desired her beauty, and they urged her to make him her Lord (16).

Then one day the summons came.

(1) Song 2:8-14. (2) Song 2:15. (3) Song 2:16, 17. (4) Song 3:1-4. (5) Song 3:5 (cf. 2:7 & 8:4). (6) I Kings 2:12-34. (8) Song 3:6-11, I Kings 3:1. (9) Song 4:1-5:1. (10) Song 5:2-8. (11) Song 5:9. (12) Song 5:10-16. (13) Song 6:1. (14) Song 6:2, 3. (15) Song 6:8-10 (cf. I Kings 11:3). (16) Psalm 45:10, 11.

5. THE MAIDEN AND KING SOLOMON

When Abishag came into the king's presence, it was plain why he wanted her company. He was lavish in his praises. He compared her to Tirzah, the queen city of the northern part of Israel, and to Jerusalem, his own capital. He praised her himself, and he repeated the praises that he had heard from his queens and concubines (1).

Abishag was unmoved. She reminded him of the circumstances in which she had come to the palace. She had gone quietly to the vineyard and garden when she was summoned to Jerusalem. She had become like a royal chariot (2): in fact, one of the compliments that had been paid to her was that she was like a mare in one of Pharaoh's chariots (3). But, although she wanted to leave, she heard voices telling her to return (4): she wondered why they wanted to look at her: perhaps they saw in her a conflict, like the dance of two armies (5).

Solomon continued to praise her. Both he and his brother had wanted her, and Adonijah had died because he was rash enough to ask for her. He praised her face and her form, and likened her hair to a net in which a king had been held captive (6). He became more and more ardent in his praises, and made it clear that it was his desire to partake of the fruits of love that her body bore (7).

Abishag remained unmoved. "I belong to my beloved, and he is longing for me," she replied firmly. Her one desire was to return to her home in the country and to be reunited with her beloved shepherd. She desired his embrace and his alone (8).

Solomon was astonished: never before had he seen such firm and deep-rooted virtue. He looked at the maiden with compassion.

"You have found peace in my sight (9). Return to your home, and may the LORD grant that you might find rest in the home of your beloved" (10).

Arrangements were made for her return home and a palanquin was provided for her to be carried back to Shunem. It was Spring again, and there were flowers in blossom in the valley of Jezreel. As they neared the village the bearers carried her past the little grove with its apple trees, the place where her shepherd lover had first declared to her his love. A flock of sheep were resting contentedly in its shade and she could see the shepherd sleeping under one of the apple trees. She stopped the palanquin, and tip-toed towards him. Yes, there could be no mistake: here was her beloved. She knelt down beside him and kissed him. He opened his eyes, and gazed into her face, and knew at once that she had been faithful to him, as he had been to her.

"Set me like a seal on your heart and arm," she pleaded. "Bind me to you for ever: for love like ours is a flame of the LORD, a fire that can never be quenched" (11). They went together to her home, Abishag leaning on his arm (12). She took him to her mother's house, as she had longed to do before (13) and again declared her love. King Solomon was indeed a 'master of a multitude' (14) with his far-flung empire and many queens and concubines, but she was content with her own vineyard, her beloved (15). She was content to be with him—in the field, on the mountains—wherever he was! (16).

* * *

King Solomon was deeply impressed as he considered the story of Abishag and her shepherd-lover. He was a song-writer, and a keen student of human nature. He knew well the dire prophecies that Samuel, the last of the judges, had made at the time that the people demanded a king (17) and he knew that they had been fulfilled. He knew that a new element, earthly kingship, which was not God's ideal for His people, had been introduced into Israel. And he saw that Abishag's love and loyalty to her absent lover were pictures of the love and loyalty that the nation of Israel was expected to show to her invisible divine Shepherd. His own father had written those immortal words, "The LORD is my Shepherd" (18).

As he thought, the Spirit of God guided him put into song form the essence of the story. He did not mention Abishag's name, for he did not wish the primary lesson of the song to be lost by undue attention to the circumstances of its origin. He did not even refer to her as the 'Shunammite' or 'maid of Shunem' (19), but as the 'Shulammit' (20), the 'maiden of peace', the feminine form of his own name. Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (21), but only one has been preserved for us in the pages of Holy Scripture. It is for a good reason that it is known as the 'Song of songs, which is Solomon's' (22).

(1) Song 6:4-10. (2) Song 6:11, 12. (3) Song 1:9. (4) Song 6:13a. (5) Song 6:13b. (6) Song 7:1-5. (7) Song 7:6-9. (8) Song 7:10-8:3. (9) Song 8:10b. (10) Ruth 1:9. (11) Song 8:6-7. (12) Song 8:5. (13) Song 8:1, 2. (14) Song 8:11. (15) Song 8:12. (16) Song 8:13, 14. (17) I Samuel 8:10-22. (18) Psalm 23:1. (19) I Kings 1:3. (20) Song 6:13. (21) I Kings 4:32. (22) Song 1:1.

CONCLUSION

What lessons can we learn from the Song of Songs? What relevance has this story of almost three thousand years ago to life today?

The Apostle Paul laboured long in the city of Corinth. He was used by God to establish a Christian church in a commercial centre that was notorious for its immorality. After he left, he wrote two letters to the Christians there, and in the second one expressed the fear that was in his heart as he thought of what the future might hold for them.

"I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ, to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. But *I am afraid* that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your *thoughts* will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (1).

The reader will see at once the similarity between the experience of the Shulammit and the picture which the apostle had in mind. The Shulammit, during her stay in the palace, was in danger of being led away from her sincere and pure devotion to her absent shepherd-lover. In the very same way the believer in Christ is in *constant* danger of being drawn away from a simple and whole-hearted devotion to his absent Lord. We see this clearly in the first and last of the letters to the seven churches in the Revelation. The first church, Ephesus, had lost its first love: the believers there did not love the Lord Jesus as much as they had done at the beginning (2). The last church, Laodicea, while considering itself to be rich and prosperous, had left the Lord Jesus standing outside the door (3), just as the maiden had done in her dream (4). Even in the first century we read of Diotrophes, who wanted to be 'pre-eminent' in the church (5), usurping the place that rightly belongs to the Lord Jesus alone (6).

The very same thing is true in this twentieth century. Our Lord is absent, or, rather, while we are 'at home in the body' we are 'away from home and the Lord' (7).

Although we have not seen Him, we love Him (8), but it is all too easy for things that we can see to draw our hearts away from a sincere devotion to Him. 'Bigness', high-sounding titles, and outward show of any kind are a few of the many things that have an attraction for the fleshly nature in the believer. But as we remember that 'the Lord is near' and live in constant touch with the Lord Jesus, the 'peace of God' will keep guard over our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus (9). May God enable us each one to so dwell in Him that when the Lord Jesus appears, we shall have confidence and not be ashamed in His presence (10).

(1) 2 Corinthians 11: 2, 3. (2) Revelation 2: 4. (3) Revelation 3: 20. (4) Song of Solomon 5: 2-8. (5) 3 John 9. (6) Colossians 1: 18. (7) 2 Corinthians 5: 6, 8. (8) 1 Peter 1: 8. (9) Philippians 4: 5-7. (10) 1 John 2: 28.

NOTES

1. *The History of Abishag* is found in 1 Kings 1, 2: see especially Ch. 1: 1-4, 15, and Ch. 2: 12-25. It must be emphasised that there is no real proof that Abishag was the Shulammite of the Song of Solomon, but, in the Author's judgement, many of the difficulties in interpretation (though by no means all of them) can be solved if this identification is made.

2. *The Song of Songs*, when interpreted in this way, may be divided into the following main sections.

Ch. 1; 1 Title

Ch. 1: 2-4 The Shulammite in the King's Chamber.

Ch. 1: 5, 6 Her explanation to the harem women of her swarthy complexion.

Ch. 1: 7-2: 6 Her longing for her Beloved Shepherd (7), her realisation as to where he might be (8), leading on to her recalling a conversation that she had with him before being brought to the palace (1: 9-11, 13-2: 6). 1: 12-14 contrasts the king and the Beloved.

Ch. 2: 7 The first 'refrain', a warning against arousing passion (cf. 3: 5, 8: 4).

Ch. 2: 8-3: 4 The first dream, in which she believes that she hears and sees her Beloved coming to her, and finally brings him to her mother's house.

Ch. 3: 5 The second 'refrain'.

Ch. 3: 6-11. The description of Solomon's palanquin coming up from the wilderness.

Ch. 4: 1-6: 2. This whole section describes the second dream.

Note 4: 1-15. The Beloved describes the maiden.

4: 16-5: 1. The maiden dreams that the marriage takes place.

5: 2-7. The maiden dreams that she has lost her Beloved by leaving him outside the door.

5: 8. She charges the harem women to tell her where he is, should they see him.

5: 9. They ask her about his distinctiveness.

5: 10-16. She describes his beauty.

6: 1. They ask about his whereabouts.

6: 2, 3. She describes his work.

Ch. 6: 4-9. Solomon begins to woo the maiden.

6: 10. He quotes the opinion of the court ladies.

6: 11-13. She describes her experience.

7: 1-9a. Solomon continues to woo the maiden.

7: 9b-8 3. She stands firm.

8: 4. The final refrain (cf. 2: 7, 3: 5).

Ch. 8: 5. The maiden's return.

8: 5b-7. Her words to her Beloved.

8: 8, 9. The little sister

8: 10. The reward of faithful steadfastness,

8: 11, 12. Solomon's vineyard, and the Shulammitess, compared and contrasted in a riddle.

8: 13. The voice of the Beloved.

8: 14. The voice of the maiden.

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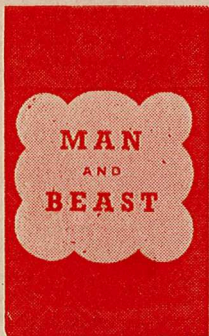
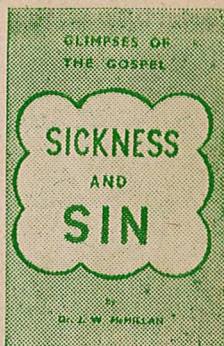
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