

My Beloved

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[0 : 00] Now, as with so much of the Old Testament, there is, with much of the narrative, an original context, and there is a later, or layers, if you like, of deeper and deeper meaning and application.

And it's no doubt in our own minds, of course, that the Solomon of Solomon speaks ultimately of the beauties of Christ and of his love for his people, the Church.

I don't think we necessarily need to presume that Solomon himself and his bride and the delight of his heart were, you know, in their being besotted with each other, that they necessarily thought hundreds of years ahead to the Messiah, and that their descriptions of each other, as they wrote them down with poetic enthusiasm, but at the same time, under the inspiration of the Lord, I don't think they necessarily would have applied it to the Messiah's coming at the time.

But the Lord, of course, knows the end from the beginning. He has caused this to be not only lovers' poems to each other, but he has caused it also to speak clearly of his Son, of his coming, of his Godhead, of his manhood, of the beauty of his appearing.

And that is what we ultimately have here. Yes, there is a first instance of Solomon and the love of his heart, his bride, and so on. And that is all true application, but there is also the deeper application to Christ and to his Church, ultimately Christ and ourselves in that context.

[1 : 31] Now we begin in chapter 5, as you'll see from the end of chapter 4, where it says, Awake, O north wind, and come now south. Blow upon my garden, that the spices they all have made flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

And then there is a reply coming from the Lord himself, or from the beloved. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, eating my honey with my honeycomb, and so on.

Now, first of all, one of the things that recurs throughout the Song of Solomon is the reference to sister and spouse almost in the same breath.

Now this, of course, has nothing to do with incest or anything like that. It is a sense in which the love that Solomon, in the first instance, that Christ ultimately has for the Church, is a pure love.

Yes, she is his bride. Yes, she is the love of his heart. But just as Paul writes to Timothy, 1 Timothy 5, verses 1 and 2, where he says, Rebuke not an elder, but treat him as a father.

[2 : 38] The younger men as brethren, the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters with all purity. If one has a sister with whom one loves deeply, the love that you have for a sister is different from the love that you might have, say, for somebody with whom you are besotted in the sense of falling in love.

And yet there is the sense of both here. She's not a physical sister, but such is the purity, the disinterested purity of the lover here for his beloved.

That he refers to her both as spouse, as bride, and as sister, because there is a purity, a sincerity in this love in which there isn't a tint of inappropriateness or lust or anything like that.

It is all purity, but it is such a deep, deep love as overcomes all other things. My sister, my spouse, it's a phrase that recurs frequently throughout the song of Solomon.

And then we have these things which, yes, in the first instance we'd be talking about literal myrrh, literal spice. But we know some of the applications of these things in the fullness of time. I've gathered my myrrh with my spice.

[3 : 55] Now, the word spice literally translates as balsam. Myrrh, we know the context of myrrh, obviously one of the presents that the wise men brought to Jesus at his birth.

And it is that which is a kind of a bitter spice, a bitter herb, which which was used in burial. When we think of, well, at the end of John's account of the gospel, when Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea

came with a hundred pound weight of spices and myrrh and aloes and all these other things that they had brought.

It's a spice used in burial. There's a sense of bitterness, a sense of sorrow, and yet it's costly. And so in gathering my myrrh with my spice, it's a recognition that even in the midst of this love, there's a foreshadowing here of the Messiah and of his death.

But likewise, it says I've eaten my honeycomb with my honey. There's the solid honeycomb as opposed to the liquid dripping honey dripping off the tree, as it were.

So you've got you've got both and. But remember that when you think of Samson in the book of Judges, where he'd slain the lion and then he found honey in his carcass, sometime made it out of the strong, came forth sweetness.

[5 : 09] Sometimes our Lord is referred to as the lion of the tribe of Judah. Now, of course, just as he's the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the lion is likewise slain. And yet from the lion's death there comes this sweetness, that which is sweet and pure to his people, to the church.

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk. Now, remember that, well, milk obviously would be symbolizing purity and his infancy and youth in which he grew, and his youth and the purity of infancy, the purity of his young days, and of course all of his life. Wine to him, if you think in terms of what does it remind us of? It reminds us ultimately of the Last Supper. And as Jesus reached the cup to his disciples, he said, you know, take this and drink it, all of you.

And this represents my death until I come. So to him it is a bitter cup. It's a cup of death. To them it's a cup of blessing. And as Christ's death likewise purchases life for each of us who trust and believe in them.

So it is a bitter cup for him to partake of the cup of his death, from which he prayed that it more possible he might be delivered. But he does his Father's will.

[6 : 31] He partakes of it and he drinks it. That is the word of the bricks. And yet he reaches it to his disciples, his friends, and they partake of it and it is a cup of blessing to them.

Eat, O friends. Drink ye, drink abundantly. O beloved, who is he addressing when he addresses his friends? Jesus says to his disciples, Henceforth I call you not servants.

For the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends. For all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Our Lord addresses his own disciples as his friends.

He says to his friends at the Last Supper, Eat and drink abundantly. He says to us if we will have Christ as our Saviour, Eat and drink ye, drink abundantly.

O beloved, eat, O friends. Those who are redeemed by Christ are beloved in his sight. And he is partaking of his spice, of his myrrh, of his honeycomb and honey, of his wine and milk, and all these contrasting images here.

[7 : 39] Both of sweetness and joy, of death and suffering, of purity and of sacrifice. And that's only the first verse. You know, if you think, oh James, we're going to be here all night.

No, we won't be here all night. But there's just so much depth and riches in these chapters here. I sleep, but my heart waketh.

And here we've got a contrast here between the flesh that longs to be asleep and slothful, and just taking it easy, and the heart that at the same time knows it shouldn't be.

It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled. For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

It's not an original context. It's perhaps what somebody coming back as a guest from a wedding. He's coming back late. He wants to seek his beloved, and she's already asleep.

[8 : 36] He's just kind of feeling dozy. She's not completely fast asleep, because it says, I sleep with my heart waketh. The voice of my beloved that knocketh, she hears him, but she's half asleep.

She doesn't really want to get up. The flesh doesn't want to wake up. It just wants to sleep. But at the same time, the voice compels her. And here we have a picture, not only of, if we think of the disciples in Gethsemane, where our Lord, we read of him that is, you know, he was sweating great drops of blood.

And we could take that as being, my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night. While he was in agony in Gethsemane, they slept. He told them to wake up, to watch with him, to be vigilant.

But they were asleep. Since the flesh wanted to sleep, he went and he wakened them, and he said, you know, wake up, Peter, are you even sleeping? You know, and the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

I sleep, but my heart waketh. And it's the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me. Remember what Jesus says to the Laodicean church, that risen Christ says to the Laodicean church, in Revelation 3, verse 20, you know, it's a, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

[9 : 50] Any man will open unto me, I'll come in and suck with him, and he with me. And here's the beloved knocking at the door. But, says lover, she's asleep, she doesn't really want to get out.

There's all this manner of, really quite pathetic excuses, and I'll put on my coat, how will I put it on, I'll wash my feet, how will I defile them, I don't want to come running to the door, now I'll make them dirty, and all these excuses, which is the love of your life, is at the very door.

You don't say, oh, I don't want to get my feet dirty, I don't want to, I don't want to have to put my gown back on, or whatever. They're pathetic excuses, they're weak excuses, but these are the kind of excuses, which we come up with, when we are trying, not to have to answer, Christ's call.

And all of us, no doubt, remember a time, or perhaps we're at that time already, when the Lord may be calling, and knocking at our hearts, and we say, well, yes, okay, I don't really want to get up, I'd far rather be in this slumber, I'd far rather be asleep, I don't want to make my feet dirty, I don't want to make my gown back on, I don't want to have to do all these things.

Yes, my beloved put in his hand, by the hole of the door, my bow, suddenly, my heart, my inward being, was moved for him, and then finally, yes, she opens up, I rose up to open to my beloved, my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

[11 : 18] Now, it was part of the custom, of that culture and time, that a bride sometimes, and I know, the backs of her hands, the backs of the hands, would be the coolest part, of the body, according to some, and if you put myrrh on it, then there's the sense of, of not only the spice, and the fragrance of it, but here with myrrh, sweet smelling myrrh, it's not just sweet, there's also a sense of bitterness in it, and if we're taking this, as a kind of spiritual demonstration, there is the sense that, by the time she rises, to open to her beloved, there is the sense of regret, of sorrow, of repentance, for having slept so long, for having taken so, so long, to awaken and to respond, and I'm sure all of us know, what that is like, when the Lord is called to us, and then finally, perhaps, grudgingly, we come, and there's a certain bitterness, a certain repentance, and sorrow, that we didn't come sooner, we didn't come more enthusiastically, I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone, now we think, well, why has he done that, now if he wanted to, if he wanted to knock on the door,

I wanted to wake it up, I need to just wake, why did he withdraw himself, well, some commentators put it this way, saying that, he came to her, when she was, almost asleep, but not quite, when she's still drowsy, with sleep, and the flesh wants to sleep, but the soul is still awake, and he wakens her then, because then she will rise, and then she will come after him, and then she will seek him, whereas if he just walked away, and left her, she would have descended, into the deep sleep of death, now I'm sure we can all, think back, and think in a time, when if the Lord, had walked away from us, we would be in a complete state, of unbelief, and spiritual death, now, we would be sleeping, the sleep of death, but the Lord did not leave us, in that condition, nor does he simply, stand on the threshold, and answer immediately, when we finally clamber out, and come to open to him, because he desires, that we desire him, he desires, that we come seeking, he desires, that when we seek, we shall find, that when we knock, it will be open to us, when we ask, it shall be given, so she is compelled, if you like, by the knowledge, that her lover, her lover is here, she wants to come, seeking them,

I open to my beloved, my beloved, had drawn himself, and was gone, my soul failed, when he spake, that would be, at the remembrance, of his having spoken, I sought him, but I could not find him, I called him, but he gave me, no answer, now again, if we recognize, a spiritual reality here, it's, there is a sense, in which weaker faith, that is said by some, that weaker faith, receives an immediate answer, because it has to, if it doesn't receive, that immediate, it will just be snuffed out, and the Lord says, that smoking flax, he will not quench, and he won't crush, the bruised breed, but rather, faith that is a little stronger, is tested, it is required, to be exercised, to be made, to seek, made to move, made to expand, and extend, and be strengthened, by the very exertion, of seeking, we've got an example, of that, with the Syrophenician woman, of course, who comes, seeking help, from Jesus, and she cried, unto Matthew 15, verse 22, a woman of Canaan, came out of the

same coast, and cried unto him, saying, have mercy on me,
O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter, is grievously vexed, with a devil, but he answered, her not a word, I called, but he gave me, no answer, I sought him, but I could not find him, I called him, but he gave me, no answer, and then she persists, and then she keeps on, and we all know, in the account, that he says, you know, it's not fair, to take the children's meat, give it to dogs, the truth Lord, yet the dogs, eat of the crumbs, which fall from their master's table, then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee, even as thou wilt, do you see, great faith, may need to be tried, may need to be tested, and encouraged, to be exerted, be encouraged, to be exercised, and that we come, seeking the Lord, because he had said, seek and ye shall find, and so she's compelled, to come seeking him, and yet it's not always easy, because there's so much, discouragement, the watchmen, that went about the city, found me, they smoked me, they wounded me, now this is quite a contrast, if you, you know the contents, of the song of Solomon, and you'll know chapter 3, for example, she meets the watchman, in verse 3 of chapter 3, the watchman, that go about the city, found me, to whom I said, saw ye him, whom my soul loveth, but there's a difference, there, because in chapter 3, she gets up herself, and comes looking, for the beloved, she's seeking him, with the zeal of affection, and with truth, whereas here, there's been a sense, of sloth, there's been a sense, of allowing the Lord, to become more distant, from us, because we have become, more distant, from him, and it's in that context, that the watchman, who are sometimes positive, as being, or suggested, that in a spiritual sense, it would be the Old Testament, priests, or the prophets, or under the New Testament, they might be, or the apostles, or the ministers of the gospel, or whatever, and this smiting, is a kind of discipline, and when we think, of Jeremiah, for example, who says, chapter 2, verse 17, hast thou not procured, this unto thyself, and that thou hast forsaken, the Lord thy God, when he led thee, by the way, thine own wickedness, shall correct thee, and thy backsliding, shall approve thee, know therefore, and see that it is, an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken, the Lord thy God, and that my fear, is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts, now it is all, too easy for us, to allow the world, and its comforts, to lull us, into this false, deadly sleep, into which, we would be in danger, of simply drifting off, first into unconsciousness, of the Lord, and then complete indifference, to the Lord, and there are people, to whom that happens, in this day and age, plenty of them, many a person, starts out well, with the Lord, and then just, falls away, into this sleep of death, but here's the Lord, not allowing it to happen, he's waiting, knocking at the door, he's calling, and she drows, and he gets up, but he is withdrawn, so that she will come seeking, so that she will have to go, after him, and yes, there's a bit of, shall we say, discipline, involved here, there's a bit of, perhaps, rebuke here, by the watchman, the suggestion is, they have gone too far, verse 7, the keepers of the walls, took away my veil, from me, this sense of immodesty, inappropriateness, there's, there's too much, destruction here, and sometimes, this is likened, by people, to the, the chief priests, or to the, the Pharisees, giving the apostles, a hard time, as though, they were heretics, as though, their zeal for the Lord, was just fanaticism, and was henesy, and was in fact, leading them away, that they were, inappropriate, in their love, for the Messiah, and so, they smoked them, they whipped them, and they shouldn't have, they went too far, they did not recognize, the truth, that they were actually, seeking, the beloved, the Messiah, themselves, now, if we have here, this, this knowledge, that we must come, seeking him, it seems, a little unkind, it seems, oh, why are we put, to all this trouble, because the flesh, wants to just, fall back, asleep, now I don't know, about you, but sometimes, I found it necessary, if I know, I have to be up early, for something, then I don't just, put my alarm clock, by the bedside, where it's too easy, to just roll over, and clonk it out, and that shuts it off, and then you fall back asleep, sometimes I have to put it, on the other side, of the room, so when I get up, to stop it, from going off, I've actually, had to get out of bed, into the cold, to turn it off, and there I am, now out in the cold, and it's not so nice, as being in a nice warm bed, but my goodness, it gets you up, and this is the, the sense of it here, we have to be, got up, we have to be awakened, to the love, that Christ has for us, and which we, at one time, had for him, but perhaps, it has grown cold, as our flesh, and worldly thoughts, have grown warm, perhaps we have grown cold, to the Lord, hurt, at charge you,

[20 : 07] O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him, that I am sick, of love, and again, it's a different kind, of sickness, from in chapter 2, chapter 2, verse 5, it says, stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick, of love, and the sense, of the sickness, there in chapter 2, is almost, almost of the swooning, kind of fainting, with love, here, it is a sorrow of soul, it's a positive, illness, coming on her, because, she is so grieved, at having drifted, from the Lord,

sick, with the love, she still has, for him, but now, that he's not there, or appears, to have withdrawn himself, she is sick, and she is, failing now, because of it, and the daughters, of Jerusalem, are sometimes, taken to be those, who are, who may also be, seeking the Lord, but are perhaps, not at the same stage, as she is, and they are told, that if you find him, then tell him, that I am sick, of love, that all who seek, will find, but they are saying, well, you know, what's your beloved, more than another beloved, you know, we're all the things, we love, we're all the people, we love, so what's so special, about you Jesus, what's so special, about you Solomon, what is so special, about your Messiah, what is thy beloved, more than another beloved,

O thou fairest among women, and yet, there's the compliment, in there, they recognize, that this, the bride of Christ, is the most beautiful, of all, she is a beauty, that is from within, it is not of herself, it is not of outward, adornment, but still, they want to know, what is thy beloved, more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women, what is he, that thou, that is so, charges, and then we have, these descriptions, which in some instances, might seem almost to be, contradictory, obviously, they're not meant to be taken, as literal things, you know, people say, oh, the Bible's not meant to be taken, literally, it's just, it's just like an illustration, well, some of it, isn't meant to be taken, literally, this is pure, poetry, in some of it, nobody seriously thinks, that either Jesus, or Solomon has legs, that are physically, pillows of marble, but they are like, unto pillows of marble, for strength, he is white, and ruddy, is that a contradiction, in terms, how to be reddish, on the one hand, and white, on the other hand, it's purity, and beauty, or health, and beauty, that are symbolized here, my beloved, is white, for his beauty, and health, and ruddy, for his good looks, as it were, because of his inward beauty, and his outward strength, the cheapest, now the word translated, cheapest here, it literally means, a standard bearer, it is one, who has like, head and shoulders, above all the rest, bearing the banner, of the beloved, the cheapest, among 10,000, his head, is just the most, fine gold, now this is taken, to be illustrative, or a symbol, of his Godhead, that Christ, is God the Son, his head, is as the most, fine gold, his locks, are bushy, or literally, curly it would be, and black, is a raven, in other words, it symbolizes youth, the young prince of glory, there's no grey hairs, in there, it's all youth, and strength, and Godhead, that is here, his eyes, as the eyes of doves, by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set, again, it's not possible, this be a literal thing, it is again, symbolizing purity, the washedness, the purity, symbolized by milk, by the doves, often, so often, and symbols, of the spirit, the purity, that is here, the cleanness, that is here, the whiteness, that is here, fitly set, his cheeks, as a bed of spices, all the scent, and beauty, that comes to it, as sweet flowers,

God has made flowers, all over creation, and some of them we see, and many of them are tucked away, in places that we can't see, why does God make such bright colors, and beautiful shapes, in places, where nobody can see them, well God can see them, they glorify him, as sweet flowers, not everybody sees, the beauty of Christ, it is there, it is there, if we will behold it, but not everyone will see it, but it glorifies God, among of us, and we are enabled, to see the beauty, the color, the delight, that is in Christ, his cheeks, as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers, his lips like lilies, obviously these would be, red lilies, as opposed to white, dropping sweet smelling myrrh, and there again, is that the sense, of both beauty, and scent, and the bitterness, and sorrow, of death, his hands, as gold rings, set with the barrel, his belly, as bright ivory, some translate, the word that we have there, as belly, body, torso, as bright ivory, that shines, it's glowing, with brightness, and overlaid, with sapphires, how can somebody's body, be covered, with sapphires, well remember, we're not just talking, about a body, as though it were, au naturel, it's a body, it's also clothed, as though, for its, its eastern style wedding, the bridegroom, and the bride, would be adorned, with such rich clothing, sparkling, with precious stones, in the sense, that they would never again, be adorned, with such splendor, but here he is, adorned, as it were, not just with gold rings, set with a barrel, his body is bright ivory, burnish gleaming, white, overlaid, with sapphires, as though the garment, that he wears, is studded, with sapphires, and sapphires, are often taken, to be, a symbolic gem, of the heavens, for obvious reasons, the dark blue, of the night sky, and the stars, sparkling in it, so overlaid, with sapphires, again, indicating, his heavenly, origin, his heavenly, glory, his legs, and his pillars, of marble, strength, and straightness, solid, and immovable, in the sense, that nobody, can make him, move, he has more power, than any other, set upon sockets, of fine gold, remember how it says, that you know, that our feet, are to be shod, with the preparation, of the gospel of peace, and the gospel of peace, is as pure gold, here, that upon which his legs, are set, like his feet, are shod, with this pure gold, his countenance, as he looks out, is as Lebanon,

excellent, as the cedars, the cedar, was like the, the king of trees, to those in, in Bible times, Lebanon, was rich, in these cedars, it was its great strength, and it was, it was thus, regarded as the, the pinnacle, of all the trees, of the field, his mouth, now notice, mouth is distinct, from lips, because it's said earlier, about his, his lips, are like lilies, dropping sweet, smelling myrrh, mouth, it doesn't mean, literally, the lips, the sense, is of, almost the breath, and almost like, as he speaks, what comes from his mouth, we think of Isaiah, chapter 11, at verse, at verse 4, but with righteousness, shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth, he shall smite the earth, with the rod, of his mouth, and with the breath, of his lips, shall he slay, the wicked, again, if you think of, John chapter 20, verse 22, where the Lord, appears to the disciples, and then it's, he breathes on them, and says, receive the Holy Ghost, his mouth, is most sweet, the breath, that comes from him, the power, that emanates from him, is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely, this is my beloved, because I love him, and this is my friend, because he loves me, oh daughters of Jerusalem, you did ask, so I'm here, raving about, the love of my life, the lover of my soul, now there are some things, about this love, which is scary, it's not, it's not easy, to be seeking, the love of your life, and not finding it, when you're absolutely, smitten, and sick, with love, when it is the most, important thing, in your life, and you have yet, to find it, and then of course, the daughters of Jerusalem, are asking again, the next chapter, whether is thy beloved gone, or thou fairest among women, whether is he turned aside, that we may seek him with thee, and so the song goes on, there is something scary, yes, about this relationship, there is something scary, about love itself, if we are truthful, isn't there, because it's not, it's not comfortable, sometimes, when you know, that this, this great thing, has a, has a hold of you, as when love, takes a hold of you, you lose, in a sense, your own control, of yourself, it has control of you, you don't have control of it, it controls you, and there is something, a bit frightening, a bit scary about it, and there is something, a bit frightening, in the sense, as she is describing, how great, and powerful, and mighty, and wonderful, her lover is, so likewise, the church of God, if she is true, to her master, and savior, she knows, that the fear of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom, there is something, dreadful, about the Lord, there is something, awe, inspiring, which ought to make us, just a little bit scared, in his presence, but it's not a scare, that makes you want to, turn and run away, it's a kind of wonder, that makes you just want to, open your eyes, even wider, and take in even more, and you're just, transfixed, in this world, if you're going, in any direction, it is trance-like, towards him, because of the, magnetic power, of this love, that he has, for his own, bride, his own sister, and spouse, the purity, with which he loves her, is as, for a sister, but the desire, with which he loves her, is, as for a spouse, sanctified, blessed, in its relationship, but with an intimacy, and a fullness, in its consummation, which would be, impossible, outside, of the most intimate, marital bond, this is my beloved, this is my friend, oh daughters, of Jerusalem, if you know, Christ, as the lover, of your soul, then you know, that he knows, he knows, no other does, he knows you, inside out, he knows every secret, of your heart, he knows all the thoughts, of your mind, it's a bit scary, but that's because, it is so deep, because it is so special, because it is so, wonderful, and if, you see, all you have, is just, church, and religion, that's not going to, grab anybody, is it, that's not going to, stir anybody's heart, that's not going to, get them, in rapture, of writing, this kind of, of lovers poetry, which is the, the poetry, inspired, by the Lord, you see, they didn't just, write little love notes, to each other, and then, screw them up, and throw them away, oh, this was inspired, to be written, to be kept, to be preserved, because it wasn't just, one besotted lover, writing their love notes, to another, this was inspired, in order to be preserved, to speak of God, and his love, for his redeemed, of Christ, and his love, for the church, of the lover, of our souls, for those, who he has loved, so much, that he would, even go, unto death, and through it, and beyond it, for love, of her, this is, my beloved, and this is, my friend, oh, daughters of Jerusalem, and such, is, the intensity, of this love, that, no human love, even comes close, even the most intimate, and deep loves, that we may have, in this world, can't come close, to the love, of the Lord, if we are going, to have, our priority, ordered, and right, it must be, the Lord, first, and all other, human loves, after that, and in their, appropriate place, this, is my beloved, and this, is my friend, let's pray, yes, let's pray.

[33 : 21] Amen.