

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON

## Introduction:

### 1. Young People and The Need for Sex Education:

With sexual promiscuity, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases on the rise<sup>1</sup>, the need for sound sexual education should be obvious. Parents have the God given duty of seeing that their children are properly taught in all areas of life, including sexuality (Deut. 6:9-11; Eph. 6:4; Song 8:2). But, sadly, many parents allow their children's understanding in sexual matters to be formed by their peers, the media, and public schools.

According to recent polls, "Parents are generally content with whatever sex education is offered by their children's school."<sup>2</sup> Many parents likely feel uncomfortable discussing sexual topics with their children and therefore leave it up to the sex ed. teachers. Plus, parents may simply trust that the instruction their children will receive from the school will be accurate and scientific. However, there are some things about the public school sexual education system that we need to know.

There are basically two types of sex ed. classes: Comprehensive Sexuality Education or the Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program. The type taught at your local school will depend on the state or school district mandates.

"Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs emphasize abstinence from all sexual behaviors and do not cover information on contraceptives, STDs, masturbation, etc."

"Comprehensive Sexuality Education is a program that starts in kindergarten and continues through high school. It brings up *age appropriate* (italics - C.D.) sexuality topics and covers the broad spectrum of sex education, including safe sex, STDs, contraceptives, masturbation, body image, and more."<sup>3</sup>

Comprehensive sex ed. means that promiscuity and homosexuality are viewed as a normal part of life. And remember, when public school teachers approach these topics they are doing so from a strictly secular perspective. That means an evolutionary, non-Biblical perspective. And it doesn't take very long for teens to figure out that if they really

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<sup>1</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate one-quarter of sexually active adolescents have sexually transmitted diseases.

<sup>2</sup> "Sex Education in America, An NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Poll" ([www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1622610](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1622610))

<sup>3</sup> "Sex Education in Schools, What is Your Teen Taught about Sex at School?" ([http://parentingteens.about.com/od/teensexuality/a/sex\\_education.htm](http://parentingteens.about.com/od/teensexuality/a/sex_education.htm))

ascended from lower life forms, then there is no such thing as objective morality. There are no grounds for calling any kind of sexual activity morally wrong.

Also, the “age appropriate” question is very subjective. How old should children be when they are taught about sexual matters? Some school districts are even approaching kindergarten children with sex ed. material! Fox News reported that in one elementary school in California “compulsory lessons about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community that will be taught to children as young as 5 years old.”<sup>4</sup> Children’s books like, “And Tango Makes Three,” and “King and King,” are geared toward very young children and aim to make the homosexual lifestyle more acceptable.

We have to ask the question, do we really want to turn our kids over to the public school system for their education on sexual issues?

## **2. Older People and The Need for Sex Education:**

Not only do our young single people need sound instruction on these matters, but married couples need help as well. Rather than creating our view of sexuality based on the prime time sitcoms night after night, we need to allow God’s word to accurately teach us what sex and marriage is all about.

God designed marriage, in part, to accommodate our sexual drive (1 Cor. 7:2). Marriage is the proper place to express sexuality, and passionate desire for one’s spouse is holy and right (Heb. 13:4). The man is commanded to understand his spouse and her desires (1 Pet. 3:7), and to rejoice with the wife of his youth (Pro. 5:18; Eccl. 9:9). The husband and the wife are to give their bodies over to one another (1 Cor. 7:3-5).

## **3. God’s Answer to Our Need:**

God is aware of our every need. He knows that children need to learn the importance of sexual purity and holy relationships. He knows that spouses need to maintain a pure, loving, and fulfilling marital relationship. The Bible has the information sufficient for instruction in every area of life, including sexuality (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:3).

In 1 Thes. 4:3, 4, Paul said that we are to abstain from sexual immorality and know how to possess our vessels in honor. Our passions are real, but must be kept under control and applied in the proper setting. We need to learn that not every instinctive drive needs to be acted upon. We also need to learn the value of love and passion within the confines of holy matrimony. The Song of Solomon teaches the difference between lustful passion and true love and aids us in our marriages and in teaching these topics to our youth.

## **4. About the Song of Solomon:**

The Song of Solomon (or Heb. Song of Songs which is Solomon’s, or Lt. Canticles) is a lyrical love poem. Although it does not contain the name of God (neither does the Book

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<sup>4</sup> Gay Curriculum Proposal Riles Elementary School Parents, Friday, May 22, 2009, By Katie Landan (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,521209,00.html>)

of Esther) it is still considered canonical. Whether or not Solomon wrote the book himself, we know that he did write many proverbs and many songs (I Kin. 4:32). The name of Solomon does appear several times in the book (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11f.). The book also indicates that it was written sometime during Solomon's reign. For instance, in 6:4, the beauty of Tirzah, capital of North Israel in 10th cent. BC, and the glory of Jerusalem extolled; also, in 6:8, Solomon at this point has only 60 wives and 80 concubines, where as at the end of his life he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kin. 11:3).

### **5. Various Interpretations:**

The Song of Solomon is difficult to interpret because it is written as a play and yet does not contain any narrative, a list of characters nor delineation of speakers. Many translators have tried to solve the problem by dividing the text and inserting the name of the characters they believed were speaking between the verses. These notes of course should not be taken as inspired. In fact, it may be best to ignore them altogether in order to form our own views on the book.

Here are the common methods of interpreting the book:

#### **a. The Allegorical View**

- i. Three subsets:
  1. God and the Jews
    - a. Prophets frequently used the marriage relationship to illustrate the relationship between God and His people (Hos. 1-3; Jer. 3; Ezk. 16, 23; Isa. 50:1; 54:5, 6).
    - b. The Song is read by Jews at the Passover (ISBE, Vol. IV, p. 2832).
  2. Christ and the church
    - a. This has been the dominant view since second century theologian Origen, who held a very low view of marriage and the sexual relationship.
    - b. The figure of wedlock is used often by the NT writers (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7-9; 2, 9ff).
  3. God and the soul of the believer
    - a. Similar to the positions stated above.
    - b. Rom. 7:1-4 - We are dead to the law and are to be married to another.
- ii. What do we say to this "allegorical view"?
  1. There is not a hint of evidence in the text itself that the book is allegorical.
  2. However, since the relationship between God and His people is likened unto a marriage, this song of celebration of married love could rightly be used to illustrate the love between God and His people.

#### **b. The Literal View**

- i. Two subsets:
  1. Solomon and his queen
    - a. It seems certain from the text that Solomon is involved in trying to win this Shulamite girl (6:8).

- b. But, can the shepherd (6:1-3) be the same person as Solomon?
  - i. Some have suggested that the man as a shepherd falls in love with the Shulamite, then he goes away from a long time, becomes a king, then comes back for the Shulamite.
  - ii. This may fit David, but how could it fit Solomon?
- c. How could Solomon be an example of marital fidelity?
2. Solomon, the Shepherd and the Shulamite (“The Shepherd Hypothesis”)
  - a. This view says that the Shulamite is in a struggle between her true love (the shepherd) and the wooing of sensual King Solomon. In the end she chooses the shepherd, thereby teaching a lesson of integrity and true love.
  - b. Solomon is used as a perfect representative of the sensuous, rich, influential man. And the shepherd is the typical poor, hard-working, honest man who gives true love to a woman. W.R. Smith regarded the Song of Solomon as a protest against the luxury and extravagant harem of Solomon. The fidelity of the Shulamite to the shepherd is a rebuke to the notion that every woman has her price.
  - c. The greatest and most influential proponent of this view was German theologian Heinrich Ewald. Other proponents include Strack, Koenig, and Driver. This study will draw largely from Michael Cole’s brief commentary on the Song of Solomon (<http://www.westarkchurchofchrist.org/library/songofsongs.htm>) and from Patsy Rae Dawson’s book, “Marriage: A Taste of Heaven,” which also espouses this view.
- ii. What do we say to this “literal view”?
  1. It seems that the book is best understood from the literal viewpoint.
  2. It also appears that we need to have a 3 character cast including the Shulamite, Solomon and the Shepherd.

## 6. Cast of Characters

- a. Three Main Characters:
  - i. Shulamite Maiden
  - ii. Shepherd Boyfriend
  - iii. King Solomon
- b. Supporting Cast:
  - i. Maidens of Jerusalem
  - ii. Citizens of Jerusalem
  - iii. Queens and Concubines
  - iv. Villagers
  - v. Wedding Guests

## 7. Proving that Solomon was not the Shepherd

- a. Shepherd identified as “my beloved.”
  - i. 1:7 - The one she loves feeds flocks
  - ii. 6:2, 3 - Her beloved has gone to feed his flocks
- b. Solomon identified separately

- i. 1:4 - The Shulamite is taken into the king's chamber
- ii. 3:6-11 - Solomon coming from the vineyard inspection into Jerusalem
- iii. 8:11 - Solomon owned a vineyard in Baal Hamon
- c. If Solomon and the Shepherd are the same man, this is not a story of marital success
  - i. Solomon at this point has 140 wives (6:8), but later he has 1,000 wives (1 Kin. 11:3). Therefore, the Shulamite didn't satisfy King Solomon.
  - ii. God created one man for one woman (Gen. 1:27). Kings were specifically told not to multiply wives (Deut. 17:14-20). Yet, Solomon was certainly excessive in multiplying wives (1 Kin. 11:1-3). Therefore Solomon and his harem violate the fundamental principle of marriage: one man for one woman.

### **8. Basic Outline of the Book** *(adapted from Michael Cole's commentary)*

- a. Day 1
  - i. Scene 1 - 1:1-8 (King's Camp)
  - ii. Scene 2 - 1:9 - 2:6 (King's Dining Tent)
  - iii. Scene 3 - 2:7-17 (Shulamite's Lighted Tent)
  - iv. Scene 4 - 3:1-5 (Shulamite's Darkened Tent)
- b. Day 2
  - i. Scene 1 - 3:6-11 (Jerusalem)
  - ii. Scene 2 - 4:1-7 (Palace)
  - iii. Scene 3 - 4:8 - 5:1 Garden)
  - iv. Scene 4 - 5:2-7 (Shulamite's Palace Bedchamber)
- c. Day 3
  - i. Scene 1 - 5:8 - 6:3 (Shulamite's Palace Room)
  - ii. Scene 2 - 6:4 - 8:4 (Palace Hall)
  - iii. Scene 3 - 8:5-7 (Shepherd's Village)
  - iv. Scene 4 - 8:8-14 (Wedding Banquet)

### **8. Themes of the Book**

- a. True love is better than sensual passion
  - i. Solomon is attracted to the Shulamite's physical body.
  - ii. The Shepherd has developed an emotional attachment to the Shulamite.
- b. "Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases" (2:7; 3:5; 8:2)
  - i. You can't rush into love
  - ii. Money (even Solomon's riches) can't buy love
  - iii. True love is much more enduring and rewarding than lustful passion