Song of Songs

Pathways of Discipleship Bible Survey

ELM GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Title and Meaning
- Hebrew Bible: title taken from first words in 1:1
- Greek, Latin, and many English versions follow suit, with some English versions calling it “Song of Solomon”
- The designation as “Song of Songs” may indicate that this is the best among Solomon’s musical works

Authors & Date
- Did Solomon write this?
  - By Solomon
  - For Solomon
  - In honor of Solomon
  - Dedicated to Solomon
  - He is either the author or collector of these love songs; no clear indication that he is the author

Structure of Book
- The Courtship (1:2-3:5)
  - The lovers’ remembrances
  - The lovers’ expression of mutual love
- The Wedding (3:6-5:1)
  - The kingly bridegroom
  - The wedding night and first night together
  - God’s approval
- The Marriage (5:2-8:14)
  - The first major disagreement
  - The restoration
  - Growing in grace

Themes in Song of Songs
- Interpretations of the Song of Songs
  - Allegorical interpretations
    - Jewish and Christian allegorical interpretations
      - An allegory/type of God’s love for Israel or Christ’s love for the church
  - Evaluation
    - Those have been the prevailing views
    - Common image or metaphor in Scripture for the love of God (compared to husband/wife)
    - No indication that we’re looking at a metaphor
• Explicit sexual imagery
  • Most natural reading of the text is straightforward
  • Concerns of wisdom literature; deals with the practical issues of life; marriage and sexuality are a part of that

• The Imagery of the Book
  • This isn’t the way we’d describe our love today
  • Agrarian orientation of the imagery in the book
    • Lover thinking about images that mesmerize you
    • Go back to lessons about figurative language and see it from the perspective from an Israelite reading it during that time
  • Garden imagery
    • Thinking biblically about the garden, the writer may be causing us to think about Eden and the relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed; naked and no shame
    • There is nothing else on this side of the Fall that man will ever experience closer to the Garden than the love and relationship between husband and wife
    • Closest thing to real love we can experience in a sinful world
  • Wine and viticultural imagery
    • Drunk with your love
    • Greater than anything you can imagine because God has created it

• The Message of the Book
  • The wisdom perspective on love and marriage
    • The value and pleasure of marital intimacy and sexuality
      • God created it and there is nothing in Song of Songs that connects sexual intimacy with childbearing; it’s for the purpose of pleasure and procreation
    • The exclusivity of the marriage relationship
      • If Solomon was involved with this book, this is where he missed it
    • The power of marital love
      • 8:6-7; nothing in life more valuable and powerful than this; nothing worth trading for this
    • The difficulties that must be overcome in the growth toward intimacy
      • If I fail to work at it, there’s no way physical intimacy happens automatically

• Canonical connections and overall contribution to a biblical theology of love, marriage, and sexuality
  • Three key contributions of practical theology
    • Corrects the sexual suppression that has often characterized the church
      • Augustine: since sex was the vehicle by which natural sin was passed on, sex itself is inherently evil
      • Pope Gregory I: sexual pleasure can never be without sin
    • Corrects the non-biblical idea that sexual pleasure is life’s ultimate pursuit
      • It’s only to be in the context of the marriage relationship
    • Affirms the purity of the marriage and the importance and purity of the sexual relationship in marriage
      • Not only place in Scripture that talks about it
- Genesis: be fruitful and multiply
- Genesis: united together
- NT teachings about divorce
  - There is always pain when it happens
- Homosexuality
  - Sex is for a man and a woman
- 1 Corinthians 7; better to marry than to burn with lust; proper channeling of sexual energy; God, though, gives to some the gift of singleness
- Sex outside of marriage destroys what God intended for us to enjoy; sexual unfaithfulness or sin can mess things up even years down the road
- Illustration: Wilt Chamberlain said he would have traded all his women for the one woman he would have wanted to stay with for keeps
- Song of Songs shows us the power of the relationship between a man and woman when they are committed to each other

Resources
John MacArthur: *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*
Zondervan Handbook to the Bible
Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush: *Old Testament Survey*
Longman and Dillard: *An Introduction to the Old Testament*
Lecture Notes from Liberty Theological Seminary, Dr. Gary Yates
Holman Illustrated Study Bible