# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE ONE

## AN INTRODUCTORY WORD AND DRAWN TO PURSUE CHRIST FOR SATISFACTION

### (1)

Scripture Reading: S.S. 1:1-8

At the beginning of this life-study of Song of Songs, I would like to offer a word of appreciation and memorial of and an expression of gratitude to Brother Watchman Nee. The outline with all the headings and subtitles and the interpretation of figures in this present life-study of Song of Songs are based on Brother Nee's particular study with a few co-workers in May 1935, in which I participated as one of not more than ten attendants, in a hotel on the shore of West Lake of the city of Hangchow, close to Shanghai.

The theme of Song of Songs is satisfaction of satisfactions. This book portrays the four stages in the experience of the lover of Christ and can be summarized by the following four sentences:

(1) A lover of Christ should be one who is attracted by His love and drawn by Him in His sweetness to pursue after Him for full satisfaction.

(2) A lover of Christ should be one who is called by Him to be delivered from the self through his oneness with the cross of Christ.

(3) A lover of Christ should be one who is called by Him to live in ascension as the new creation of God in the resurrection of Christ.

(4) A lover of Christ should be one who is called by Him more strongly to live within the veil through His cross after the lover's experience of His resurrection.

In the first stage the lover of Christ is attracted by Christ to follow Him. In the second stage the lover of Christ experiences the cross for the breaking of the self. The cross saves us from the self in order to get us out of ourselves. In the third stage the lover of Christ lives in ascension. To live in ascension is to experience the new creation of God in Christ's resurrection. In the fourth stage the lover of Christ lives within the veil, in the inner chamber of the whole universe, the Holy of Holies. In experience the cross comes first, followed by resurrection and ascension. Yet the experience of ascension is not sufficient. After ascension there is still the need of another following stage—living within the veil through further experience of the cross.

In Song of Songs, a book of poetry, we cannot find the words *cross*, *resurrection*, and *ascension*. Neither do we have the expressions *new creation* or *within the veil*. How, then, can we say that this book unveils different stages of the Christian life? If we would answer this question, we need to see that in Song of Songs the stages of the Christian life are revealed, or unveiled, through many different figures. The word *cross* is not used, but there are figures of the cross. In like manner, instead of the words *resurrection* and *ascension*, there are figures of resurrection and ascension. There are also figures signifying the new creation and the life within the veil. In reading this book, the hardest thing is to interpret the figures.

In this message we will first give an introductory word and then begin to consider the first stage—the stage of being drawn to pursue Christ for satisfaction.

## AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

### 1. A Particular Book

Song of Songs is a particular book in the holy Scriptures, for it is not a book of history, law, prophecy, or gospel.

### 2. A Poem of the History of Love in an Excellent Marriage

This book is a poem of the history of love in an excellent marriage. It is a romance of the highest standard. The entire

Bible is a romance, a love story, of God "falling in love" with man.

### *a. A History of King Solomon with the Shulammite*

Song of Songs is a history of the wise King Solomon, the writer of this book, with the Shulammite, a girl of the countryside. In this life-study Solomon is called the beloved and the Shulammite is called the lover (lit., "love"—1:15; 2:2; 4:1, 7; 6:4). *Solomon,* in the masculine gender, means "peace," and *Shulammite* is *Solomon* in the feminine gender. One is the king in the palace at the capital in Jerusalem, and the other is a girl from the countryside.

In a sense, Solomon and the Shulammite were not a match. Concerning marriage most would agree that two people should match each other. Yet it is difficult to find a husband and wife who are really a match. Two people who are the same may become enemies, but two people who are different may become loving friends. Solomon fell in love with a country girl, and the two of them were joined together. After their union they remained in communion all the time.

In a similar way, God fell in love with man. Since God is great and wise and we are small and unwise, we may find it hard to believe that God could fall in love with us. Yet even though man does not seem to match God, God has nonetheless fallen in love with man.

### *b. A Portrait of the Love of Christ in His Union with His Individual Believers*

Song of Songs is a portrait of the love of Christ in His union with His individual believers. The entire New Testament stresses the Body life, not the individual life (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:27). But Song of Songs stresses not the Body corporately but the believer individually. To have the Body life, we must have individual contact with the Lord. Without the individual fellowship with the Lord as a base, we cannot have the proper Body life.

*1) God Loving His Elect Israel as a Husband Loving His Wife*

As the record of a divine romance, the Bible first shows us that God loves His elect Israel as a Husband who loves His wife (Isa. 54:5-7; Jer. 2:2; 3:1; Ezek. 16:8; Hosea 2:19-20). Israel was a bride and God Himself was the Bridegroom. Thus, there was a bridal love between God and Israel.

*2) Christ Loving His Church as a Husband Loving His Wife*

Second, the Bible reveals that Christ loves His church as a Husband loves His wife (Eph. 5:25, 31-32; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9). In Revelation 19 we see that Christ will have His wedding feast with His overcomers as His bride, and His wedding day will be for a thousand years. Then in the new heaven and new earth, all of His believers as the New Jerusalem will be the wife of the Lamb. The New Jerusalem will be the corporate wife of Christ, the Lamb.

*3) The Believers Having Been Betrothed to Christ as Pure Virgins*

According to Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 11:2, the believers have been betrothed to Christ as pure virgins. In this sense, all the believers of Christ are female. Spiritually, we all, brothers and sisters alike, are virgins betrothed to Christ.

### 3. The Contents

The contents of Song of Songs are the progressive experience of an individual believer's loving fellowship with Christ. To use Hudson Taylor's expression, this is a book of union and communion with Christ.

### 4. The Sections

The sections of Song of Songs, which are according to the intrinsic and spiritual significance of this book, are as follows: drawn to pursue Christ for satisfaction (1:2—2:7); called to be delivered from the self through the oneness with the cross

(2:8—3:5); called to live in ascension as the new creation in resurrection (3:6—5:1); called more strongly to live within the veil through the cross after resurrection (5:2—6:13); sharing in the work of the Lord (7:1-13); and hoping to be raptured (8:1-14).

## I. ATTRACTED TO PURSUE AFTER CHRIST

Let us now begin to see how the seeker is drawn to pursue Christ for satisfaction (1:2-4a).

### A. The Lover's Yearning

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine. / Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you" (vv. 2-3). These verses express the lover's yearning.

#### *1. Yearning to Be Kissed by Christ*

The lover of Christ yearns to be kissed by Christ with the kisses of His mouth (v. 2a). The kisses of the mouth are the most intimate kiss. This yearning to be kissed by Christ is a response to Christ's cheering love, which is better than wine (v. 2b), and to His charming name (person), which is like ointment poured forth with the pleasant fragrance of the anointing oils (v. 3a).

Song of Songs is composed of many figures. The first figure is the wine which cheers people up. The wine here signifies Christ's cheering love. When we are down, if we consider Christ's love, we will be cheered. The second figure is ointment. His charming name, which signifies His person, is like ointment poured forth. No one can resist His cheering love and His charming person.

#### *2. Because of His Cheering Love and Charming Name, All the Chaste Believers Loving Him*

Because of His cheering love and charming name, all the chaste believers love Him (v. 3b). We all would condemn a man who attracts many young women to pursue him. But

with Christ it is different. The more chaste lovers of Christ there are, the better.

### B. The Lover's Pursuing

In verse 4a we have a word concerning the lover's pursuing: "Draw me; we will run after you." In her pursuit of Christ, she asks Him to draw her that she and her companions may run after Him. Everyone who is drawn by Christ will have companions in following Him. Since I was drawn by the Lord, many have followed the Lord with me. Consider the situation with Peter when he, a fisherman, was called by the Lord (Matt. 4:18-20). One day Christ the Beloved came, and Peter was charmed by Him and he left the nets and followed Him. Many followed Christ as Peter's companions. When we are drawn to follow Christ, we become a factor in others' following of Him.

## II. FELLOWSHIPPING WITH CHRIST RESULTING IN ENTERING INTO THE CHURCH LIFE

In Song of Songs 1:4b-8 we see that fellowshipping with Christ results in entering into the church life. The church life is indicated by another figure—the flock (vv. 7-8), which signifies the church as a collection of many believers.

### A. The Beloved Bringing Her into Her Spirit as the Holiest of All for Fellowship

The Beloved brings her into her spirit as the Holiest of all (His chambers) for fellowship. The word *spirit* is not used here, but it is signified by the word *chambers* in verse 4. Our spirit as Christ's dwelling place (2 Tim. 4:22) becomes His Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19) for fellowship.

#### *1. She and Her Companions Extolling His Love with Joy and Rejoicing*

In fellowship with Christ, the lover and her companions extol His love with joy and rejoicing, for rightly do they love Him (v. 4b).

### *2. Seeing Her Self That She Is Sinful in Adam but Justified in Christ*

She sees her self that she is sinful in Adam, but she is justified in Christ (vv. 5-6a). Her being sinful in Adam is signified by her being black like the tents of Kedar. Her being justified in Christ is signified by her being lovely like the curtains of Solomon. The tents are under the sunshine, but the curtains are within the inner chamber.

### *3. She Being Instructed by Him in the Way to Enter into the Church Life*

In her fellowship with Christ, she is also instructed by Him in the way to enter into the church life (vv. 6b-8).

#### *a. Persecuted by Her Denominational Brothers*

She was persecuted by her denominational brothers (her mother's sons—v. 6b), and she was turned away from the church by the flocks of His companions (v. 7b). She was persecuted by her denominational brothers, though they also were born by grace—the same mother (v. 6b)—and she was turned away from the church. This is the situation today.

#### *b. He Telling Her to Follow Him on the Footsteps of the Church*

The Beloved tells her to follow Him on the footsteps of the church (flock) and pasture her spiritual children (young goats) at the local churches (the shepherds' tents), where He pastures His church (vv. 7-8). She prayed, "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock?" Then Christ answered, "If you yourself do not know, / You fairest among women, / Go forth on the footsteps of the flock." To follow on the footsteps of the flock is to follow the church. We can testify that many times we did not know where Christ was, but as we followed the church, we found Him. When we find the church, we bring all the younger ones, indicated by the young goats, to the church as well.

### B. It Being Wonderful That the Fellowship of the Lover with Christ Results in the Church Life

It is wonderful that the fellowship of the lover with Christ results in the church life.

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE TWO

## DRAWN TO PURSUE CHRIST FOR SATISFACTION

## (2)

Scripture Reading: S.S. 1:9—2:7

In 1:2-4a we see that the lover of Christ yearned for Christ, sought Him, and was attracted by His love and drawn by Him in His sweetness to run after Him. Christ is pleasant, sweet, and full of fragrance as ointment. Furthermore, His love is cheering, better than wine. All the lovers of Christ are attracted and constrained by His love (2 Cor. 5:14).

In Song of Songs 1:4b-8 the Beloved answered His lover's yearning and seeking and brought her into the inner chamber (her spirit) to have intimate fellowship. That fellowship led the lover of Christ to enter into the church life, signified by the flock (v. 8; John 10:16). After the lovers of Christ enter into the church life, they begin to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Apart from the church life we cannot be transformed. The church life is a very important means used by the Holy Spirit to transform us. The Holy Spirit is transforming us with the saints in the church.

### III. TRANSFORMED BY THE REMAKING OF THE SPIRIT

The lover of Christ is transformed by the remaking of the Spirit (S.S. 1:9-16a; 2:1-3a). The Spirit is the compound, all-inclusive, sevenfold intensified, life-giving, and indwelling Spirit, who is the consummation of the consummated Triune God. This Spirit is actually God Himself doing the work of transformation by remaking us. Transformation involves a metabolic process by which the Spirit remakes us. This metabolic transformation is now going on within us in the church life.

### A. The Lover of Christ Being Transformed from a Strong Natural Person into a Person Who Trusts in Him and Looks to Him with a Single Eye

The lover of Christ is transformed from a strong natural person (a mare among Pharaoh's chariots—1:9) into a person who lives a life not relying upon herself but trusting in Him (lily—2:1-2; Matt. 6:28) and looking to Him with a single eye (eyes like doves—S.S. 1:15b; Matt. 10:16). At the beginning, the lover of Christ is strong naturally, like a mare among Pharaoh's chariots, but gradually she is transformed into a lily, one who is no longer full of natural strength but is full of life. Such a transformed one now looks to the Lord with a single eye. Her one goal, her one object, is the One whom she loves.

### B. The Beloved Appreciating Her Loveliness in Submission to Him

"Your cheeks are lovely with plaits of ornaments, / Your neck with strings of jewels" (S.S. 1:10). Here the Beloved appreciates her loveliness in submission to Him (cheeks lovely with plaits of ornaments) and her beauty in obedience to the transforming Spirit (neck with strings of jewels). The expression of this lover of Christ is full of submission followed by obedience. When we submit to the Lord, we will surely obey Him.

### C. The Transforming Spirit and Her Companions Adorning Her with the Constitution of the Life of God by the Redeeming Work of Christ

"We will make you plaits of gold / With studs of silver" (v. 11). The transforming Spirit and the lover's companions (we) will adorn her with the constitution of the life of God (plaits of gold) by the redeeming work of Christ (studs of silver). God's nature and Christ's redemption are put together by the Spirit and the companions to be her adornment. The Spirit transforms us, but the Spirit needs our companions to be His helpers. If we realize this, we will praise the Lord

Spirit that He has given us many companions to be His helpers in transforming us.

### D. At the Table Where Christ Is Feasting with His Lover, Her Love toward Him Spreading Forth Its Fragrance

"While the king was at his table, / My spikenard gave forth its fragrance" (v. 12). At the table where Christ is feasting with His lover (the king at his table), her love (spikenard) toward Him spreads forth its fragrance (cf. John 12:1-3). In the church life the small groups are often a feast with the Lord as the invisible guest. In the built-up vital groups, the lovers of Christ spontaneously spread their pleasant fragrance toward Christ.

### E. She Enjoying Him Privately in His Death in Her Embracing Love and Faith

"My beloved is to me a bundle of myrrh / That lies at night between my breasts. / My beloved is to me a cluster of henna flowers / In the vineyards of En-gedi" (S.S. 1:13-14). In these verses we see that she enjoys Him privately (at night) in His death (a bundle of myrrh) in her embracing with love and faith (breasts—1 Tim. 1:14; 1 Thes. 5:8). Every lover of Christ is full of faith and love and embraces Him with faith and love. Furthermore, she enjoys Him publicly in His resurrection (a cluster of henna flowers) in the churches (vineyards) of Christ as the fountain of redemption (En-gedi—"the fountain of the lamb"). In the churches Christ grows as clusters of henna flowers. In the churches there is also a fountain of redemption. The church is continually watered by the fountain of Christ's redemption. From this we see that a major part of our spiritual life is related to the church life.

### F. He Appreciating Her Beauty in Her Looking to Him with a Single Eye by the Spirit

"Oh, you are beautiful, my love! / Oh, you are beautiful! Your eyes are like doves" (S.S. 1:15). He appreciates her beauty in looking to Him with a single eye by the Spirit (eyes like doves—v. 15). The first striking aspect of our beauty in

the sight of the Lord Jesus is our single eye toward Him. By the Spirit we look to Him with a single eye.

### G. She Appreciating His Beauty in His Pleasantness

The Beloved and the lover appreciate each other. "Oh, you are beautiful, my beloved; indeed, pleasant!" (v. 16a). In this verse she appreciates His beauty in His pleasantness.

### H. She Humbly Realizing That She Is a Small Person

"I am a rose of Sharon, / A lily of the valleys" (2:1). The word for *rose* in this verse refers to a wild rose, despised in the land of Judea. Here the lover humbly realizes that she is but a small person, living on the one hand a pretty but despised life (rose) in the common world (Sharon, meaning "plain"), and on the other hand a pure and trusting life (lily) in the low place (valleys). This was her humble recognition and realization regarding herself.

### I. He Appreciating Her as His Love Who Lives a Pure and Trusting Life

"As a lily among thorns, / So is my love among the daughters" (v. 2). Here He appreciates her as His love (Shulammite) among the world-loving adulteresses (daughters—James 4:4) who lives a pure and trusting life (lily) among the filthy and unbelieving people (thorns).

### J. She Appreciating Him as the Source of Rich Provision Who Supplies Her in a Timely Way

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, / So is my beloved among the sons" (S.S. 2:3a). Here she appreciates Him as the source of rich provision (apple tree) who supplies her in a timely way. The lover and the Beloved both have beauty, and they appreciate the beauty in each other. This shows us that transformation produces a mutual appreciation between Christ and His lover.

## IV. SATISFIED WITH THE REST AND ENJOYMENT IN CHRIST

The lover is satisfied with the rest and enjoyment in Christ (1:16b-17; 2:3b-7). Satisfaction requires two things—rest and enjoyment. First, we need to rest and then, as we are at rest, we have some enjoyment. The issue of this rest and enjoyment is satisfaction.

### A. She Being Satisfied

#### *1. With Her Rest in His Feeding Life as the Resting Place in the Night in His Embracing and in His Death and His Resurrection as the Shelter*

She is satisfied with her rest in His feeding life (green) as the resting place in the night (couch) in His embracing (2:6) and in His death (cypresses) and His resurrection (cedars) as the shelter (beams and rafters—1:16b-17). In typology, in figure, a cypress tree signifies Christ's death, and a cedar tree signifies Christ's resurrection, in which His humanity is high and uplifted. Christ's death and resurrection are a shelter with beams and rafters.

#### *2. With Her Delighting in Resting under Him as an Overshadowing Canopy in the Day and Her Tasting of Him as the Sweet, Timely Supply*

"In his shade I delighted and sat down, / And his fruit was sweet to my taste" (2:3b). This reveals that she is satisfied also with her delighting in resting under Him as an overshadowing canopy in the day (shade—Isa. 4:5-6; 2 Cor. 12:9) and her tasting of Him as the sweet, timely supply (sweet fruit).

#### *3. With Triumphant Love Spread over Her in the Enjoyable Church Life*

"He brought me into the banqueting house, / And his banner over me was love. / Sustain me with raisin cakes, / Refresh me with apples, / For I am sick with love" (S.S. 2:4-5). Here the lover is satisfied with triumphant love (banner of love) spread over her in the enjoyable church life (banqueting

house), in which she is sustained with Him, Christ, as bread of life (John 6:35—raisin cakes) and refreshed with Him as fruit of life (Rev. 2:7; 22:2—apples) to heal her lovesickness. Christ sustains us with Himself as bread and refreshes us with Himself as fruit.

### B. He Taking Care of Her Rest in Him

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, / By the gazelles or by the hinds of the fields, / Not to rouse up or awaken my love / Until she pleases" (S.S. 2:7). Here we see that He takes care of her rest in Him.

#### *1. Considering Her One Easily Stirred Up*

He considers her one easily stirred up (gazelles or hinds of the fields). Every lover of Christ is a person who can easily be stirred up.

#### *2. Solemnly Charging the Meddling Believers*

He solemnly charges (adjure) the meddling believers (daughters of Jerusalem). Among the saints in the church life, there are a number of meddling brothers and sisters. They care about the things of others and not about their own need to love the Lord and to grow in the divine life. Such meddling ones are signified by the daughters of Jerusalem.

#### *3. Not to Awaken Her from Her Experience of Christ in Resting in Him*

His charge is that no one awaken her from her present experience of Christ in resting in Him. In her Christian life she has reached the goal of resting in and experiencing Christ and being satisfied in the church life. Temporarily, Christ agrees with her situation and does not want anyone to awaken her. This is the end of the first stage of the Christian life of a lover of Christ.

Many of us can testify from experience that this truly is the situation. At this point we can say, "I am resting in Christ and I am enjoying Christ. I am covered by Him and I am in Him. His life is my couch, and His death and resurrection

are the rafters which cover me. Here in the church life Christ's love is the banner spread over me. I am satisfied."

### *4. Until She Feels Pleasant in Her Second Pursuit after Him*

He allows her to remain at rest until she feels pleasant in her second pursuit after Him (she pleases). As we will see when we come to the next section, Christ does not intend that His lover stay in this first stage. She needs to enter into the second stage of the Christian life of a lover of Christ—the stage of experiencing the cross of Christ for the breaking of the self. The lover of Christ should not stay in the self, allowing the self to become the center, but should experience the breaking of the self by the cross.

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE THREE

## CALLED TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE SELF THROUGH THE ONENESS WITH THE CROSS

Scripture Reading: S.S. 2:8—3:5

In Song of Songs 2:8—3:5 the lover of Christ is called by Him to be delivered from the self through her oneness with the cross. This is the second stage in the experience of the lover of Christ. Three critical words help us to interpret this section: *cross, self,* and *introspection.*

The cross is signified by the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice (2:14). These are places of safety, but they are rugged, and few would be willing to go there. The clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice surely signify the cross as the place of safety for fallen man. The safest place for us to be is the cross.

Although the self has no figure in Song of Songs, according to Christian experience it is manifested in the second stage. In the first stage, the lover of Christ pursues Him, receives help in the fellowship in the inner chamber, and enters into the church life, where she experiences transformation. She enters into the rest and enjoyment of Christ for her full satisfaction. Then the self rises up, and the lover of Christ begins to care only for being perfect. This is the self.

The self is very subtle. In Matthew 16, after the Lord Jesus unveiled the way of the cross for the accomplishment of God's economy, Peter showed his love for the Lord by saying, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" (v. 22). Peter thought that was his own word. Actually, Peter spoke from his self, which had become one with Satan. The Lord Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (v. 23a). Then the Lord spoke about denying the self (v. 24). This reveals that the self is the satanic humanity; it is man

possessed and usurped by Satan. As a result, man in his fallen humanity cares only for himself. Because everyone is for himself, selfishness is seen in all kinds of relationships—between husband and wife, between children and parents, between employers and employees.

We should not think that we can become so spiritual that we no longer have a problem with the self. Even a lover of Christ, one who yearns for Him, seeks Him, and gains Him, is still troubled by the self. We still have a part of us that is fallen and satanic, and this part will remain with us until our physical body is redeemed, that is, until we will have been redeemed to the uttermost from the old creation. This was the situation even with the apostle Paul. He had received so many visions and revelations, yet he realized that he was still in the fallen humanity (2 Cor. 12:7). Although we also are still in the fallen humanity, we should not live in it and we should not live by it. As an elderly believer in Christ, I can testify that the older I become, the more bothered I am by the old creation, by the fallen, satanic humanity.

As we will see when we come to the end of Song of Songs, the lover of Christ eventually sighs because she is still in the old creation. She longs to be fully like Christ, who has absolutely nothing to do with anything of the old creation. She has been remade by God to be a new creation, yet according to God's economy, God has allowed a part of the old creation to remain with her.

We may have some success in pursuing after Christ and may attain a certain amount of satisfaction. But then we may ask, "How can I maintain this? How can I keep myself in this condition?" At this point the self comes in.

Self comes in under the false cloak of introspection. Actually, self is constituted with introspection. Introspection is to examine yourself by looking into yourself. The Bible teaches us to always look away unto Jesus (Heb. 12:2). We should not look at ourselves. Our self is not worthy to look at. Nevertheless, every spiritual person who reaches a situation of satisfaction in Christ eventually falls into introspection, not only examining the self but also analyzing it. When I was a young believer, I looked at myself quite

often. I did not like to do anything that would not glorify the Lord. But actually I was not caring for the Lord; I was caring for myself and for what others thought of me. Looking into ourselves in this way is the greatest weakness in the spiritual life and the greatest enemy.

In helping others who are seeking to be spiritual, we may encourage them to pray and to confess their shortcomings to the Lord. Such prayer and confession are normal. However, in some cases we should encourage others to cease from confessing and simply believe that the blood of Jesus cleanses them and that God is faithful and righteous to forgive them (1 John 1:7, 9), reminding them that God is faithful to honor Christ's redemption.

When we are introspective, we may confess the same matter again and again, thinking that the more we confess, the more forgiveness we will receive. This kind of confession comes from the satanic self; it is the result of analyzing ourselves in spiritual things. Only the cross of Christ can deliver us from such a situation caused by introspection. Therefore, we need to be called to be delivered from the self through our oneness with the cross. When we become one with the cross, hiding ourselves in the clefts of the rock and in the covert of the precipice, we will be delivered from the self.

## I. BY CHRIST'S RESURRECTION POWER THROUGH HIS FELLOWSHIP

The lover of Christ is called to be delivered from the self through her oneness with the cross by Christ's resurrection power through His fellowship (S.S. 2:8-9).

### A. Coming, Leaping upon the Mountains and Skipping upon the Hills

"The voice of my beloved! Now he comes, / Leaping upon the mountains, / Skipping upon the hills" (v. 8). This leaping and skipping signifies Christ's power to overcome difficulties and barriers. As the One in resurrection, He surely has a way to overcome difficulties and barriers. All the troubles concerning our fellowship with Christ come from our side. Many "hills" and "mountains" frustrate us from coming to Him, but He is never frustrated, for He can "leap" and "skip."

How can we go to the cleft of the rock, to the covert of the precipice? We do not have the strength to do this. The only way that we can go to the cross is by the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10). Therefore, Christ comes to the self-satisfied seeker in the power of resurrection.

### B. Being Like a Gazelle or a Young Hart

"My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart" (S.S. 2:9a). The word *hind* in the title of Psalm 22, which is concerned with resurrection, signifies Christ in resurrection. Christ's being like a young hart signifies that His power is the power of resurrection.

### C. Standing behind "Our Wall"

"Now he stands behind our wall" (v. 9b). His standing behind "our wall" signifies that the lover's introspection as the problem in her self is a separation between her and Him.

### D. Looking through the Windows and Glancing through the Lattice

"He is looking through the windows, / He is glancing through the lattice" (v. 9c). The windows and the lattice signify the openings set up by God for Him to fellowship, to commune, with her. No matter how much we try to hide ourselves secretly, there is a window that Christ can see through. Because man became fallen, there seemed to be no way for God to touch man or have fellowship with man. But the conscience of man is the window with a lattice, which is open for God to come in to contact fallen man. We should keep this in mind when we go out to preach the gospel. As we are preaching the gospel, we need to learn how to touch others' conscience.

## II. ENTREATED TO RESPOND AND ENCOURAGED WITH THE PASSING AWAY OF THE WINTER AND THE COMING OF THE SPRING OF RESURRECTION IN ITS FLOURISHING RICHES

In verses 10 through 13 the lover is entreated to respond and is encouraged with the passing away of the winter and

the coming of the spring of resurrection in its flourishing riches. The Beloved entreated His lover to come out from behind the wall.

### A. The Lover of Christ Failing to Respond to Him in His Fellowship

"My beloved responds and says to me" in verse 10a indicates that the lover of Christ failed to respond to Him in His fellowship. If the lover had given a proper response, it would not have been necessary for the Beloved to speak again.

### B. She Being Down in Her Situation

"Rise up, my love" (v. 10b) indicates that she was down in her situation, so Christ asked her in love to rise up. Whenever we have some attainment in spiritual seeking, the result is a down situation. Such a situation is mainly due to the self and introspection.

### C. Christ Wanting Her to Come Out of Her Down Situation to Be with Him

The words "My beauty, and come away" (v. 10c) indicate that Christ in His appreciation of her wanted her to come out of her down situation to be with Him. This is a word of encouragement.

### D. The Time of Dormancy and Trials Being Over

"Now the winter is past; / The rain is over and gone" (v. 11). This indicates that the time of dormancy (winter) and trials (rain) is over and that the time of spring (resurrection) is coming.

### E. The Flourishing Riches of Christ's Resurrection

"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 has ripened its figs, / And the vines are in blossom—they give forth their fragrance" (vv. 12-13a). Here "flowers," "singing," "voice of the turtledove," "blossom," and "fragrance" indicate the flourishing riches of Christ's resurrection. All these are signs of resurrection. When we sing,

we are in resurrection. Whenever our mouth is closed, we are in winter.

### F. Christ's Eagerness in Asking His Lover to Get Away from Her Introspection of the Self to Be with Him

"Rise up, my love, / My beauty, and come away" (v. 13b). This repeated word indicates Christ's eagerness in asking His lover to get away from her introspection of the self to be with Him. However, it is not easy for one to come out of introspection. It is very difficult to help a brother or sister who is introspective. Sometimes it takes a year or more before such a one can be helped to get away from the introspection of the self.

## III. CALLED TO BE IN ONENESS WITH THE CROSS

In verses 14 and 15 the lover is called to be in oneness with the cross. Whereas in the New Testament we have a clear word concerning the cross, in Song of Songs the cross is signified by figures of speech.

### A. Christ Wanting to See His Lover's Lovely Countenance and Hear Her Sweet Voice in Her Oneness with the Cross

"My dove, in the clefts of the rock, / In the covert of the precipice, / Let me see your countenance, / Let me hear your voice; / For your voice is sweet, / And your countenance is lovely" (v. 14). Here Christ, considering her His simple lover (My dove), wants to see His lover's lovely countenance and hear her sweet voice in her oneness, union, with the cross (the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice). Here we see Christ's call for His lover to be in oneness with the cross. This point on the cross is the central stress in this section on deliverance from the self.

If I had been the lover, I might have said, "My beloved, I cannot get to the clefts of the rock. The clefts are too high and the way is too rugged. I do not have enough power to go there." But here Christ was indicating to His lover that she

could enter into the experience of the cross by the power of His resurrection.

The objective cross must become our subjective experience. We need to get into the cross and the cross must get into us. In this way we and the cross become one. Our oneness with the cross is our salvation. To be delivered from the self means to be saved from the self through becoming one with the cross. Every day we should be conformed to Christ's death by the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10). Without the oneness with the cross, we cannot be delivered from the self. I appreciate the chorus of the hymn which says, "Through the Cross, O Lord, I pray, / Put my soul-life all away; / Make me any price to pay, / Full anointing to receive" *(Hymns,* #279). We need to be willing to pay the price to enter into the subjective experience of the cross.

### B. Christ Charging His Lover to Be Aware of Her Peculiarities, Habits, and Introspections Which Ruin the Resurrection for His Lover

"Catch the foxes for us, / The little foxes, / That ruin the vineyards / While our vineyards are in blossom" (S.S. 2:15). Christ charges His lover to be aware of her peculiarities, habits, and introspections (little foxes) which ruin the resurrection for His lover (our vineyards in blossom).

The little foxes that ruin the vineyards signify our peculiarities, our habits, and our introspections, and the vineyards signify the church life. To be spiritual is good, but it often leads to peculiarity. Nearly every spiritual person is peculiar, having some kind of peculiar streak. When we become peculiar, we are no longer spiritual. Instead, we become a trouble to the church. The deliverance from peculiarity is the cross.

## IV. THE LOVER'S REJECTION AND FAILURE

In 2:16—3:1 we see the lover's rejection and failure.

### A. Realizing That Christ Belongs to Her and She to Christ, yet He Not Being with Her

"My beloved is mine, and I am his; / He pastures his flock

among the lilies" (v. 16). She realizes that Christ belongs to her and she to Christ according to her feeling, yet He is not with her, but He is away feeding His pure and trusting followers (pastures among the lilies). At this point she and Christ are not one.

### B. Rejecting Him by Asking Him to Wait until Her Down Situation Is Over

"Until the day dawns and the shadows flee away, / Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young hart / On the mountains of Bether" (v. 17). Here she rejects Him by asking Him to wait until her down situation is over and then to turn to her in His resurrection, like a gazelle or a young hart, at the time of their separation, which could be removed only by Him and not by her (on the mountains of Bether). The word *Bether* means "separation." The lover seemed to be saying to Him, "Lord, I am not ready. Please do not come now but wait until my situation is over. Be like a gazelle upon the mountain of separation." This separation, this mountain, is a problem, and it can be removed only by Him.

### C. In Her Introspection She Seeking Her Beloved but Failing to Find Him

"On my bed night after night / I sought him whom my soul loves; / I sought him, but found him not" (3:1). In her introspection, in her down situation, she seeks her Beloved, but she fails to find Him.

## V. THE LOVER'S WAKING UP AND RECOVERY

Song of Songs 3:2-4 speaks of the lover's waking up and recovery.

### A. She Rising Up to Seek Her Beloved in the Ways and in the Methods of the Heavenly Jerusalem

"I will rise now and go about in the city; / In the streets and in the squares / I will seek him whom my soul loves. / I sought him, but found him not" (v. 2). She will rise up from her introspection to seek her Beloved in the ways and in the

methods of the heavenly Jerusalem (signified by Jerusalem on earth).

### B. The Ones Who Watch Over God's People in the Ways of the Heavenly Jerusalem Finding Her

"The watchmen who go about in the city found me— / Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" (v. 3). The ones who watch over God's people spiritually (Heb. 13:17) in the ways of the heavenly Jerusalem find her, and she asks them if they have seen the One whom she loves.

### C. Finding Her Beloved and Holding Him

"Scarcely had I passed them / When I found him whom my soul loves; / I held him and would not let go / Until I had brought him into my mother's house / And into the chamber of her who conceived me" (S.S. 3:4). Not long after she leaves the ones who watch over God's people, she finds her Beloved, and she holds Him and will not let go until she brings Him into the Spirit of grace, through which she was regenerated (mother's house—chamber—Heb. 10:29; Gal. 4:26; Eph. 2:4-5; Gal. 5:4) for secret fellowship.

The mother's house was the place where she was born, and the mother's chamber was the place where she was conceived. The mother is grace. According to Galatians 4:25-26 the Jerusalem above, which is our mother, represents the principle of grace, which produces free heirs, and the Jerusalem on the earth produces children in bondage. The mother's chamber signifies love, which is of the Father. The Father's love issues in grace. Ephesians 2:4-5 says that God loved us and then saved us by grace. We were conceived in God's love and born by God's grace.

Although the lover of Christ fell into introspection, one day she woke up and realized that she was a sinner saved by grace. Then she could say, "God loved me and Christ saved me by grace." Second Corinthians 13:14 speaks of the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings God's love and carries God's grace to us. Hence, the Spirit is called the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29). Once the lover realized that she was a sinner saved

by grace, she was revived. Then finding her Beloved, she held him and would not let go. She brought Christ to her mother's house, where she was born by grace, and to the chamber, where she was conceived in love. As the chamber is the inward part of the house, so God's love is the inward part of Christ's grace. As saved ones, we have both the love of God and the grace of Christ.

### VI. CHRIST CHARGING THE MEDDLING DAUGHTERS NOT TO AWAKEN HER

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, / By the gazelles or by the hinds of the fields, / Not to rouse up or awaken my love / Until she pleases" (S.S. 3:5). Here Christ charges the meddling believers (daughters of Jerusalem) not to awaken her from her experience of Christ in her being delivered from the self, secluded in her introspection, into her secret fellowship with Him until she feels pleasant concerning her next experience of Him (she pleases).

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE FOUR

## CALLED TO LIVE IN ASCENSION AS THE NEW CREATION IN RESURRECTION

Scripture Reading: S.S. 3:6—5:1

In the second stage (S.S. 2:8—3:5) the lover of Christ learned three basic lessons: the power of resurrection, the riches of resurrection, and the life of the cross. The power of Christ's resurrection is signified by Christ as a gazelle and a hart leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills (2:8-9). The riches of Christ's resurrection are signified by the plants, the voice of the turtledove, and the various fragrances in the spring (vv. 12-13a). The life of the cross is signified by the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice (v. 14). The life of the cross is lived by the power of resurrection and is encouraged by the riches of resurrection.

In the next stage—the call to live in ascension as the new creation in resurrection (3:6—5:1)—we need to learn the lesson of discerning the spirit from the soul (Heb. 4:12). Few of today's Christians are able to discern the spirit from the soul. Many actually believe that in the Bible the words *spirit* and *soul* are synonyms, even though 1 Thessalonians 5:23 speaks of "spirit and soul and body." If we do not realize that the spirit is different from the soul, we cannot reach the stage of being called to live in ascension as the new creation in resurrection.

Ascension is in the heavens. Although we are on earth, as believers in Christ our regenerated spirit is joined to God the Spirit in the heavens. These two spirits are one. This is like electricity: It is in the power plant and also in our room, yet there is one current. When we are in our spirit, we are joined to the ascended Christ in the heavens.

To live in ascension means to have a Christian life all the time in our spirit. This requires that we discern our spirit from our soul. If we love others by our soul, we are on the earth, not in ascension. But if we love by our spirit, we are in ascension. We have been seated in the heavens with Christ (Eph. 2:6). Positionally, we are seated there, but we need to live in ascension. After calling us to the cross, Christ calls us further to live in ascension as the new creation in resurrection.

## I. THE NEW CREATION

Song of Songs 3:6—4:6 is concerned with the new creation.

### A. By the Lover's Complete Union with Christ

The lover of Christ becomes a new creation by her complete union with Christ (3:6-11). We were united with Adam, which made us the old creation. Now we are in union with Christ, so we are a new creation. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

#### *1. She Coming from Egypt like Persons in the Unshakable Power of the Spirit*

"Who is she who comes up from the wilderness / Like pillars of smoke, / Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, / With all the fragrant powders of the merchant?" (S.S. 3:6). She (as an overcoming representative of God's elect) comes from Egypt (wilderness) like persons in the unshakable power of the Spirit (Exo. 14:19-20), perfumed with the sweet death and fragrant resurrection of Christ and with all the fragrant riches of Christ as a merchant. The Lord needs the overcoming ones, those who are perfumed, permeated, with the fragrance of Christ's riches.

#### *2. She Being the Victory of the Victorious Christ*

"There is his bed, Solomon's— / Sixty mighty men surround it, / Of the mighty men of Israel. / All of them wield the sword and are expert in war; / Each man has his sword at his thigh / Because of the night alarms" (S.S. 3:7-8). She is the victory (bed for rest and victory in the night) of the

victorious Christ, full of the power of the overcomers among God's elect which carries Christ even in times of difficulties, and these overcomers are experts in war, fighting with their weapons at the time of alarms.

### *3. She Being a Palanquin as a Carriage of Christ*

"King Solomon made himself a palanquin / Of the wood of Lebanon. / Its posts he made of silver, / Its bottom, of gold; / Its seat, of purple; / Its midst was inlaid with love / From the daughters of Jerusalem" (vv. 9-10). She is a palanquin (for the day) as a carriage of Christ, made by Christ Himself of the resurrected, uplifted, and noble humanity (the wood of Lebanon), having God's nature (gold) as its base, Christ's redemption (silver) as its supports, the royal (purple) throne as its seat, and the love of the believers covering the inside.

### *4. The Spirit Bidding the Overcoming Believers to Look Away from Themselves unto Christ in His Humanity*

"Go forth, O daughters of Zion, / And see King Solomon with the crown / With which his mother crowned him / On the day of his espousals, / Yes, on the day of the gladness of his heart" (v. 11). Here the Spirit bids the overcoming believers to look away from themselves unto Christ in His humanity of incarnation as a crown of His boast, at the time of the believers' betrothal to Christ, a day of the gladness of His heart.

If Christ did not have humanity, He could not marry us. Because we are human, we could not be betrothed to Him unless He also had humanity. Thus, our betrothal to Christ depends on His humanity, which is His crown. The humanity which Christ put on in His incarnation and uplifted in His resurrection is His crown. We need to look away to Christ in His humanity.

At this juncture we should note that the union of the bed with its sleeper, the union of the palanquin with its rider, and the union of the bride with her bridegroom, indicated in the three items above, all signify the complete union of the

lover with Christ. Because we have been united to Christ, we have become the new creation.

### B. The Beauty of the Lover, the Bride, as the New Creation

In 4:1-5 we see the beauty of the lover, the bride, as the new creation.

#### *1. The Beauty in Her Singleness and Insight by the Spirit*

"Oh, you are beautiful, my love! / Oh, you are beautiful! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; / Your hair is like a flock of goats / That repose on Mount Gilead" (v. 1). In this verse we see the beauty in her singleness and insight by the Spirit, which is invisible to the outsiders, and in her submission and obedience through God's feeding that subdues her disobedience among the disobedient people.

#### *2. The Beauty in Her Receiving the Divine Food*

"Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes / That have come up from the washing, / All of which have borne twins, / And none of them is bereaved of her young" (v. 2). This speaks of the beauty in her receiving the divine food by her power that has been dealt with by the cross, made clean by the Spirit's washing, and strengthened twofold and balanced, without losing strength.

#### *3. The Beauty in Her Speaking with Christ's Redemption and His Authority*

"Your lips are like a scarlet thread, / And your mouth is lovely; / Your cheeks are like a piece of pomegranate / Behind your veil" (v. 3). This is her beauty in her speaking with Christ's redemption and His authority by her lovely mouth and in her expression full of life which is hidden.

#### *4. The Beauty in Her Submissive Will to Christ*

"Your neck is like the tower of David, / Built for an armory: / A thousand bucklers hang on it, / All the shields of the mighty men" (v. 4). Here we have the beauty in her submissive will to Christ that is rich in the defending power.

#### *5. The Beauty in Her Tender Faith and Love*

"Your two breasts are like two fawns, / Twins of a gazelle, / That feed among the lilies" (v. 5). This speaks of the beauty in her tender faith and love strengthened twofold and nourished in the environment of a pure and trusting life.

### C. Her Deeper Pursuit

Verse 6 speaks of her deeper pursuit: "Until the day dawns and the shadows flee away, / I, for my part, will go to the mountain of myrrh / And to the hill of frankincense." In her deeper pursuit she would go and remain in Christ's death and resurrection in their high peaks until Christ comes, when the day dawns and the shadows flee away. Earlier, she was afraid of the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice, but now she is willing to be there, remaining in Christ's death and resurrection.

## II. CALLED TO LIVE IN ASCENSION

In verses 7 through 15 the lover is called to live in ascension.

### A. His Calling

In verses 7 and 8 we have the Beloved's calling.

#### *1. Appraising Her Beauty and Perfection*

"You are altogether beautiful, my love, / And there is no blemish in you" (v. 7). Here He appraises her beauty and perfection.

#### *2. Asking Her as His Bride to Look with Him from His Ascension*

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; / With me from Lebanon come. / Look from the top of Amana, / From the top of Senir and Hermon, / From the lions' dens, / From the leopards' mountains" (v. 8). *Amana* means "truth," *Senir* means "soft armor," and *Hermon* means "destruction." In this verse He asks her as His bride to look with Him from His ascension, the highest place of the truth and of Christ's

victory in His fighting, and from the heavenly places of the enemies. Here we have a living in Christ's ascension.

### B. Her Silent Answer

The lover does not answer the Beloved's call audibly. Verse 9 indicates that she gives a silent answer: "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride; / You have ravished my heart with one glance of your eyes, / With one strand of your necklace." Here He considers her as one with Him in nature and as His bride, whose answer without voice, by a quick look and by her submission to God's instruction, has ravished His heart.

### C. His Private Enjoyment of Her

Verses 10 through 15 describe His private enjoyment of her.

#### *1. Enjoying Her Beautiful Love*

"How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! / How much better is your love than wine, / And the fragrance of your ointments / Than all spices" (v. 10). Considering her as one with Him in nature and as His bride, He enjoys her beautiful love, which is much better than wine, and her ointments, which were the King's (1:3) and are more fragrant than all spices.

#### *2. Enjoying Her Word as Fresh Honey and the Fragrance of Her Conduct*

"Your lips drip fresh honey, my bride; / Honey and milk are under your tongue; / And the fragrance of your garments / Is like the fragrance of Lebanon" (4:11). He enjoys her word as fresh honey (for restoring the weak), which comes from her lips, and her word as honey and milk (for restoring the weak and feeding the immature ones), which are under her tongue, and the fragrance of her conduct as the fragrance of ascension.

### *3. Considering Her an Enclosed Garden, a Shut Up Spring, and a Sealed Fountain*

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride, / A spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (v. 12). He considers her not as something open and public but as an enclosed garden, a shut up spring, and a sealed fountain.

#### *a. An Enclosed Garden That Grows All Kinds of Plants in Different Colors*

"Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates / With choicest fruit; / Henna with spikenard, / Spikenard and saffron; / Calamus and cinnamon, / With all the trees of frankincense; / Myrrh and aloes, / With all the chief spices" (vv. 13-14). In His enjoyment of her she is an enclosed garden that grows all kinds of plants in different colors as different expressions of the inner life and in a variety of fragrances as the rich expression of the mature life.

#### *b. A Sealed Fountain with a Shut Up Spring in Gardens That Flows as a Well of the Living Water*

"A fountain in gardens, / A well of living water, / And streams from Lebanon" (v. 15). He considers her a sealed fountain with a shut up spring in gardens that flows as a well of the living water of the life-giving Spirit and as streams of the resurrection life.

## III. LIVING A LIFE OF LOVE

Song of Songs 4:16—5:1 speaks of living a life of love.

### A. The Answer of the Bride

Verse 16 is the answer of the bride: "Awake, O north wind; / And come, O south wind! / Blow upon my garden: / Let its spices flow forth; / Let my beloved come into his garden / And eat his choicest fruit." She wants the difficult environment (north wind) and the pleasant environment (south wind) to work on her as a garden that its fragrance may be spread. She asks her Beloved to come into her as a garden and enjoy

its choicest fruit. We all should consider ourselves gardens to Christ, producing fruit for His enjoyment.

### B. The Answer of the Beloved

"I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; / I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; / I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; / I have drunk my wine with my milk. / Eat, O friends; / Drink, and drink deeply, O beloved ones!" (5:1). Here the Beloved answers, inviting His beloved "friends," the Triune God, to eat, drink, and drink deeply, to enjoy her with Him.

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

### MESSAGE FIVE

## LIVING IN ASCENSION BY DISCERNING THE SPIRIT FROM THE SOUL

Scripture Reading: S.S. 4:7-15; Heb. 4:12; 1 Thes. 5:23; 2 Cor. 4:16

In this message I would like to give a word about living in ascension by discerning the spirit from the soul.

### THE CALL TO LIVE IN ASCENSION

In Song of Songs 4:7-8 the Lord calls His lover to live in ascension as a new creation in resurrection. The new creation is only that which is in ascension in resurrection. Without resurrection, there cannot be a new creation.

#### The Lord Expressing His Appreciation of His Lover

"You are altogether beautiful, my love, / And there is no blemish in you" (v. 7). Here the Lord expresses His appreciation of His lover to prepare her to receive His call to live in ascension.

#### The Call to Come with Him from Lebanon

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; / With me from Lebanon come" (v. 8a). Lebanon is a high mountain, signifying resurrection. In 2:9 the lover was in "our wall" of the introspective self. The wall is down in the self. Her introspection had built a wall which separated her from the Lord. Now He calls her to come with Him to a high mountain, which is the top of resurrection—ascension. Christ died, rose, and then ascended. First we experience resurrection, then ascension.

### Looking from the Top of Amana, from the Top of Senir and Hermon

"Look from the top of Amana, / From the top of Senir and Hermon, / From the lions' dens, / From the leopards' mountains" (v. 8b). We have pointed out that *Amana* means "truth." Hence, this is the peak of revelation. *Senir* means "soft armor." Soft armor indicates that the fighting is over and the victory has been gained. *Hermon* means "destruction." The enemy has been destroyed. In Christ's ascension is His victory. There is no more fighting, for the enemy has been destroyed and the armor has become soft. Furthermore, the truth is here. The truth refers to the reality of the Triune God—all that God is, all that Christ is, and all that the Spirit is. This is ascension.

### Looking from the Lions' Dens and from the Leopards' Mountains

Verse 8 speaks of looking from the lions' dens and from the leopards' mountains. The victory has been gained, but the lions and the leopards, which signify Satan and his evil forces, are still there. These evil powers are also in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12). Christ calls His lover to look from this, indicating that we must have our living in ascension.

In our daily lives we should not live in our "wall," down on the earth, nor should we live in our "den." We should not live in seclusion. We have been resurrected and are now in ascension; the war is over, and victory has been gained. However, all the enemies are still there, and thus we need to be watchful.

## OUR NEED TO DISCERN THE SPIRIT FROM THE SOUL

To live in ascension requires that we discern our spirit from our soul. This is according to our experience.

### God's Economy in Saving Us

We are of three parts. We have a spirit, a soul (the self), and a body (1 Thes. 5:23). God's economy in saving us is first

to regenerate our dead spirit by imparting Himself into it as the divine element, making our spirit new. However, our soul is still old. Hence, after we have been regenerated, our soul needs to be transformed. The transformation of the soul is a gradual process that takes place step by step. Our body is also old. Therefore, the body, the outer man, needs to be consumed day by day, while the inner man is being renewed (2 Cor. 4:16). This renewing will go on and on until it reaches its peak with the transfiguration of our body, that is, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21).

### Saved Persons Having Two Men

As saved persons we all have two men. The new man is in our spirit, and the old man is in our soul. Regardless of whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, whatever we do, if we do it in our soul, we are living by the old man. For instance, you may love a certain brother and want to help him. But if you love him and help him not in your spirit but in your soul, you are living in your self, the old man. This is to do a good thing in the old man. Before doing anything—in this case helping a brother—we must first pray to contact the Lord in our spirit, asking Him what He feels about what we intend to do. Then in our spirit we may have the sense that the Lord is happy. This is an indication that the Lord wants us to do this particular thing. Then we should proceed to do it in our spirit. This is to live in the spirit.

### Living by the New Man

If we do things by the old man in the soul or in the self, we are living on the earth. The things we do may be good, but we are nevertheless on the earth because we are living in the soul. Today there are many good people who are doing good things, but these people are all living in the soul. As lovers of Christ, we need to realize that our old man, including our soul, has been crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20a). It is no longer "I" who live, but another man—Christ—lives in me (Gal. 2:20b). When we live by this other man, we are the new man, for we are living in the spirit, not in the soul.

### Living in Ascension by Living in Our Spirit

Our spirit is connected to the heavens by God as the Spirit. In spirit we are therefore in the heavens, in ascension. To live in ascension requires that we live, act, move, and do everything in our spirit. Thus, we must learn how to discern our spirit. If we do not know our spirit, if we do not know how to discern our spirit from our soul, we cannot be a spiritual person. When we live in our spirit, we are in ascension as the new creation in resurrection. We are a new person living in a new universe.

### The Need for Practice

We should not think that discerning the spirit from the soul is something that is too difficult for us to learn. We all can learn how to do this if we practice one thing: We should always inquire of the Lord: "Lord, is this the old man, the soul, the old 'I' only, or You with me?" If we sense that we are alone in the old "I," then we are in the soul, in the old man. If we sense that we are one with the Lord and that He is with us, then we are in the spirit. If we have proper fellowship with the Lord, inquiring of Him before doing things, then in our spirit we will have a deep sense of the Lord's feeling. We will know whether He is happy or not. This is to discern the soul from the spirit to live in ascension. May we all learn to have this most important practice in our daily living.

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE SIX

## CALLED MORE STRONGLY TO LIVE WITHIN THE VEIL THROUGH THE CROSS AFTER RESURRECTION

### (1)

Scripture Reading: S. S. 5:2—6:3

In 5:2—6:3 the lover of Christ is called more strongly to live within the veil through the cross after resurrection. In the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 8:2; 9:11-12, 24) a veil separates the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The veil is a figure of our flesh (10:19-20). For us to enter into the Holy of Holies the veil must be rent. This indicates that no matter how much we are in ascension, in our spirit, we are still in the old creation and we still have our flesh. Thus, even after the experience of living in ascension, we still need the experience of the cross.

We should never think that while we are still in the old creation we can attain such a high degree of spirituality that we are no longer in the flesh. Consider the case of the apostle Paul, who surely was a very spiritual person. After God gave Paul high revelations, there was given to him "a thorn in the flesh" to warn him that he still had the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7).

We must never consider that we are a "saint" or an angel. We are proper believers in God's process of His economy. God's economy is first to regenerate our spirit and then to transform our soul, but the flesh is still here. We need to be warned that if we are careless with the flesh, we will damage our spiritual life.

Because Christians are often careless concerning the flesh, divisions among believers are common. According to the book of Acts, Barnabas became dissenting with Paul and separated himself from him (15:35-39). This division was caused by Barnabas's intention to take his cousin John, who was also

called Mark, with them on a proposed journey to visit the churches. "Paul did not consider it suitable to take with them this one who withdrew from them in Pamphylia and did not go with them to the work. And there was a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; and Barnabas, taking Mark along, sailed away to Cyprus" (vv. 38-39). Every argument involves something of the flesh. Probably Paul was in the spirit as he was contending, but Barnabas was arguing according to the flesh. This indicates that even with spiritual persons the flesh remains and can cause damage.

We should not think that if we are living in ascension the flesh is no longer with us. No, the flesh is still here. We may be in ascension, but the veil, the flesh, is still present. When Christ was crucified, the veil in the temple was split in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). With Christ the veil was riven, but our veil still remains. Therefore, we need a stronger call, not merely to remain in ascension but to learn the lessons of the cross and live within the veil. In our experience the veil, the flesh, must be riven, and then we need to pass the riven veil to live in the Holy of Holies. For this, we daily need to learn the lesson of the cross.

## I. THE STRONGER CALLING OF THE CROSS AFTER RESURRECTION AND HER FAILURE

Let us now begin to consider the stronger calling of the cross after resurrection and after the lover's failure (S. S. 5:2—6:3).

### A. The Beloved's Calling

In 5:2 we have the Beloved's calling: "I sleep, but my heart is awake. / A sound! My beloved is knocking: / Open to me, my sister, my love, / My dove, my perfect one; / For my head is full of dew, / My locks with the drops of night." In His calling of the lover, the Beloved regarded her as His sister. This means that she had the same nature as He. Here the lover realized that her old man, the outward man, was crucified and her new man, the inward man, is living. She heard her Beloved knocking and asking her to open to Him, reminding her of His suffering as He suffered at Gethsemane

for His crucifixion. His head being "full of dew" and His locks with "the drops of night" refers to Christ's suffering at night in Gethsemane before His death.

### B. Her Refusal

Verse 3 tells us of her refusal: "I have put off my garment; / How can I put it on again? / I have washed my feet; / How can I dirty them again?" The Beloved called, but she refused His call. Since she had put off the former manner of life of her old man through the dealing of the cross, how could she put it on again, for this would need her Beloved to repeat His suffering for crucifixion? Since she had been cleansed by His redeeming blood, how could she defile herself, since this would need her Beloved to repeat His suffering of death? These were her reasons for refusing the Beloved's call.

### C. Her Opening of the Door

In verses 4 and 5 she opened the door.

#### *1. Her Beloved Showing His Pierced Hand through Her Narrow Opening*

"My beloved put his hand into the opening of the door, / And my inner parts yearned for him" (v. 4). Her Beloved showed His pierced hand through her narrow opening so that her inner parts were moved to yearn for Him. From experience we know that, on the one hand, we may reject the Lord, but, on the other hand, we may not close the door entirely. After closing the door, we may leave a little opening through which the Lord can stretch His hand. Here the Beloved's pierced hand reminded her that He was crucified for her.

#### *2. Rising Up to Open the Door to Her Beloved*

"I rose up to open to my beloved; / And my hands dripped with myrrh, / My fingers with liquid myrrh, / Upon the handles of the bolt" (v. 5). She rose up to open the door to her Beloved. Her action showed her Beloved her appreciation of His sweet death.

### D. The Beloved's Hiding

"I opened to my beloved, / But my beloved had withdrawn; he was gone. / My soul failed when he spoke; / I sought him, but found him not; / I called him—he answered not" (v. 6). She opened to her Beloved, but He had withdrawn and gone. Her soul was discouraged when her Beloved spoke. Then she sought Him, but she did not find Him. She called Him, but He did not answer.

### E. Her Being Wounded

"The watchmen who go about the city found me. / They struck me; they wounded me; / The keepers of the walls took my veil from me" (v. 7). The ones who watch over God's people (Heb. 13:17), not knowing her problem, struck and wounded her, thinking that she would be helped by their striking. The guards of God's people took away her veil, her covering, shaming her publicly. Sometimes we may think that we can help others by rebuking them. However, instead of helping them, this rebuking wounds them.

### F. Her Seeking Help from the Common Believers

"I adjure, O daughters of Jerusalem, / If you find my beloved, / What shall you tell him? / That I am sick with love" (S. S. 5:8). This indicates that because her sense of failure was so deep, she felt that even the younger believers could help her. She charged them to tell her Beloved that she is sick with love, considering that her Beloved may have some concern about her love for Him.

### G. The First Question of the Ones Whom She Asks

In verse 9 we have the first question of the ones whom she asks concerning her Beloved: "What is your beloved more than some other beloved, / O you most beautiful among women? / What is your beloved more than some other beloved, / That you adjure us so?" Considering that she is the most beautiful among females, they asked her what was so much better about her Beloved than some other beloved that she adjured them so.

## H. Her Impression of Her Beloved

In verses 10 through 16 she answered by giving her impression of her Beloved, appraising Him with many excellent and detailed expressions.

### *1. Her Beloved Being Pure yet Full of Life and Power*

"My beloved is dazzling white yet ruddy, / Distinguished among ten thousand" (v. 10). Her Beloved is pure yet full of life and power, and He is distinguished as an uplifted banner against the enemy (Isa. 59:19) and for the drawing of the sinners (John 12:32).

### *2. His Headship Being of God*

"His head is the finest gold; / His locks are wavy, / As black as a raven" (S. S. 5:11). His headship is of God (1 Cor. 11:3), and His submission to God is flourishing and strong.

### *3. His Expression of Sentiment Being Single and Pure*

"His eyes are like doves / Beside the streams of water, / Bathed in milk, / Fitly set" (S. S. 5:12). His expression of sentiment is single and pure, flowing like the river of life, distinct and clear and in proper order.

### *4. His Countenance Being Beautiful and Sweet*

"His cheeks are like a bed of spices, / Mounds of sweetly fragrant herbs; / His lips are lilies, / Dripping with liquid myrrh" (v. 13). His countenance is beautiful and sweet through His suffering of people's smiting and despising, and His mouth is pure, releasing sweet words of grace based upon His redemption.

### *5. His Works Being Full of the Divine Binding Power and Being Stable for the Carrying Out of God's Will*

"His hands are tubes of gold, / Set with beryl; / His belly is an ivory work, / Overlaid with sapphires" (v. 14). His works are full of the divine binding power and are stable for the carrying out of God's will. His inward parts (Phil. 1:8) are

full of deep, tender feelings wrought through His sufferings under a clear heavenly vision (Exo. 24:10).

### *6. His Standing and Supporting Strength Being of the Righteous Standing Based on God's Divine Nature*

"His legs are pillars of white marble, / Set upon bases of gold; / His appearance is like Lebanon, / As excellent as the cedars" (S. S. 5:15). His standing and supporting strength is of the righteous standing based upon God's divine nature, and His expression shows that He is a person who has ascended into heaven and whose excellency transcends all others.

### *7. His Taste of Divine Things Being Sweet*

"His mouth is sweetness itself, / And he is altogether desirable" (v. 16a). His taste of divine things is sweet, and He is altogether lovely and desirable.

### *8. The Impression of the Beloved Realized by the Lover*

"This is my beloved, and this is my friend, / O daughters of Jerusalem" (v. 16b). This is the impression of the Beloved as her Friend realized by the lover.

We might also be asked how much better our Christ is than others, that is, why our Christ is so sweet to us. Many of us may not be able to answer this question adequately. If you were to ask me, I would say, "My Christ is the all-inclusive One. His riches are unsearchable (Eph. 3:8). He is the preeminent One, the first in everything (Col. 1:17-18): the first in all creation (v. 17), the first in resurrection (v. 18), and the first in everything in my living. He is also the God-allotted portion to me for my enjoyment (v. 12). My Christ is the Son of God who became a man. He was flesh, but in His resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Moreover, my Christ has seven eyes, which are the sevenfold intensified Spirit (Rev. 5:6)." We must forget about preaching other things and preach and teach only the all-inclusive Christ.

## I. The Second Question of the Ones Whom She Asks

In Song of Songs 6:1 we have the second question of the ones whom the lover asks concerning her Beloved: "Where has your beloved gone, / O you most beautiful among women? / Where has your beloved turned, / That we may seek him with you?" Still considering that she is the most beautiful among females, they asked her where her Beloved has turned that they may seek Him with her, indicating that they had been attracted by her testimony concerning her Beloved. She was a pursuer after Christ, and her pursuit influenced, affected, and attracted others.

## J. Her Reply

Verses 2 and 3 are her reply.

### *1. Realizing That Her Beloved Is within Her as His Garden*

"My beloved has gone down to his garden, / To the beds of spices, / To feed in the gardens / And gather lilies" (v. 2). After seeking help from others, she realized that her Beloved is within her as His garden and in all other believers as His beds of spices, feeding in her and other believers as His gardens and gathering the pure and trusting ones.

Christ's garden is in our spirit. In our spirit we grow all the beautiful, spiritual, divine, and heavenly things, which are sweet to His taste. This is possible only if we live in our spirit. The most precious thing for a believer is to live in the spirit. If we live in our spirit, our spirit becomes a garden. The Lord is feeding, shepherding, and pasturing us that we may grow all kinds of spices and fragrances to satisfy Him.

### *2. Telling Them That She Belongs to Her Beloved*

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures His flock among the lilies" (v. 3). She tells them, according to her faith, that she belongs to her Beloved and He to her and that He is now feeding His pure and trusting ones. Her

word here indicates that she is now more matured in life than when she spoke the same word in 2:16.

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

### MESSAGE SEVEN

## CALLED MORE STRONGLY TO LIVE WITHIN THE VEIL THROUGH THE CROSS AFTER RESURRECTION

### (2)

Scripture Reading: S.S. 6:4-13

In this message we will consider further the matter of being called more strongly to live within the veil through the cross after resurrection.

### II. A LIFE WITHIN THE VEIL

Song of Songs 6:4-13 speaks of a life within the veil. The intrinsic significance of this section is that a loving pursuer of Christ needs to experience His ascension by living in the heavenly Holy of Holies within the veil through the cross after she has experienced His resurrection.

### A. The Beloved's Praise

Verses 4 through 10 are the Beloved's praise.

#### *1. Her Beloved, Treasuring Her as His Love, Praising Her That She Is Beautiful as the Heavenly Sanctuary and Lovely as the Heavenly Jerusalem*

"You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, / As lovely as Jerusalem" (v. 4a). Her Beloved, treasuring her as His love, praises her that she is beautiful as the heavenly sanctuary (Tirzah—1 Kings 14:17) and lovely as the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22), indicating that she lives in the Holy of Holies within the veil, experiencing the ascension of Christ through the cross after her experience of His resurrection.

In the heavens there is the sanctuary of God, which is

divided into two sections. The first section is called the Holy Place, and the second is called the Holy of Holies. In between, there is a partition, a separation, a veil. Hebrews 10:20 tells us that the veil in the sanctuary signifies the flesh. In the heavenly sanctuary there is the flesh; this is according to God's economy.

One basic principle in God's economy is that God is not a God of time and space. With Him there is no time element, for He is a God of eternity. We care for location, thinking that there is no flesh in the heavens, but God cares for the fact. Seemingly we are in the heavens, but we still have the flesh, and we will continue to have it until God accomplishes and consummates His economy absolutely.

In our spiritual experiences we were attracted by the Lord's love and drawn by the Lord Himself in His sweetness. We followed Him by taking the footsteps of the saints in the church through the centuries. Then we entered the fellowship with Him in our spirit. In this fellowship we were instructed concerning how to enter into the church life, and in the church life we are being transformed. We have beauty through this transformation, and we also have rest, covering, and satisfaction. All these spiritual significances match Solomon's writing.

The next stage is that of living in the heavenlies as God's new creation in resurrection. After experiencing this stage we need to go on to experience the rending of the veil. The veil in the temple was split by Christ's death (Matt. 27:51). However, the veil of the flesh has not been taken away. Rather, the veil still remains for God to use in perfecting His seeking saints. For example, Paul was surely a matured brother, having passed through the age of living in the heavens as the new creation of God in resurrection. But according to 2 Corinthians 12 God allowed a "thorn in the flesh" to be given him (v. 7). Here we see that even such a mature and spiritual person could still be troubled by the flesh. This indicates that no matter how much of God's element we may have in our regenerated spirit, or how much we have been sanctified, renewed, transformed, and conformed to the image of the

firstborn Son of God, as long as we are living on earth, we still have the flesh.

Whereas the regeneration of our spirit was instantaneous, the transformation of our soul is progressive. The redemption of our body is also progressive. Paul said that our inner man is being renewed but that our outer man, our body, is decaying day by day. This is God's arrangement according to His economy. God has no plan for us to reach such a high standard of spirituality that the flesh is no longer present. God's economy is to keep us living in ascension as a new creation in resurrection, no matter how spiritual we may be. We might think that in resurrection there should no longer be the flesh, but God still needs it in order to work something in us.

Because the flesh is still with us, we need to deal with the flesh every day by watching and praying. If we do not watch, the flesh will act. In our prayer we need to be watchful, praying in the spirit.

In Song of Songs 6:4 Jerusalem is a sign of royalty. The more heavenly we are, the more royal we become. To be royal is to reign like a king. Romans 5 says that those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life (v. 17). Nevertheless, even though we may be royal and live in ascension as God's new creation in resurrection, there is still a veil in the heavenly sanctuary. This indicates that no matter how spiritual we may be, we are still in the flesh, which is the veil. Therefore, we need to learn to pass through the veil by the dealing of the cross every day. Then we will live within the veil, in the Holy of Holies, which is just God Himself. This is the highest stage in the experience of the lover of Christ as presented in Song of Songs. When we reach such a stage, we will have nothing to do but to wait and hope for rapture.

### *2. She Being Terrible as an Army with Banners*

The lover of Christ is also "terrible as an army with banners" lifted up as a sign of victory (v. 4b)

### *3. The Lover's Becoming the Heavenly Sanctuary and the Heavenly Jerusalem Being Due to Her Victory over the Enemies*

This praise of her Beloved indicates that her becoming the heavenly sanctuary and the heavenly Jerusalem is due to her victory over the enemies. Only by being an overcomer, one who overcomes the enemies, can we live within the veil.

### *4. An Indication of Her Maturity in Life for God's Building*

Previously the lover was likened to a mare, a horse among Pharaoh's chariots, a rose in Sharon, a lily in the valleys and among thorns, a dove, a pillar of smoke, a bed, a palanquin, a garden, and a fountain with a spring, but now she is likened to the heavenly dwelling of God and the heavenly Jerusalem, indicating her maturity in life for God's building.

For the building of the Body of Christ, we need the maturity of life. Ephesians 4:12-16, which speaks of the building up of the Body, tells us that we need growth to reach maturity so that the Body of Christ can be built up. To build up the church in a general way requires only the capacity to manage, arrange, and take care of things. This is not something organic but something organized according to human management. However, the building up of the Body has nothing to do with our ability to organize, manage, and arrange things. The Body of Christ is an organism, not an organization. The building up of this organism depends on growth and the maturity in life. The building of the Body is organic.

To build up the Body organically, we need to mature. This is the reason that we are now stressing the building up of the Body much more than the building up of the church. First Timothy is a book on the church as the house of God (3:15). There is nothing in this book on the building of the Body of Christ. First Timothy 3 speaks of the arrangement of elders and deacons in their service, but Ephesians does not speak of elders and deacons. Instead, it speaks of members growing. First, we need to grow, and then we can perfect others. This perfecting is according to 2 Corinthians 13, in which Christ is living and growing in us (v. 5) and we are enjoying the

Triune God in the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's fellowship (v. 14). This is the building up of the Body, not the building up of the church as a kind of organization. This building, for which we need the maturity in life, is unique. It is the organic Body of Christ, which will consummate the organic New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth.

### *5. The Lord's Word of Seeming Rejection*

"Turn your eyes away from me, / For they overcome me" (S.S. 6:5a). This is the Lord's word of seeming rejection (cf. Mark 7:25-27; John 11:5-7; Exo. 32:10; Gen. 32:26), but actually it is the word inviting her expression of her overcoming love to Him. Such a rejection is actually a kind of welcoming. When the Lord says, "Turn your eyes away from Me," He is really saying that we should put our eyes on Him all the time. When we love someone, we want that person to look at us all the time. The Beloved's words are words that invite the lover's expression of her overcoming love to Him.

### *6. Her Hair Being Like a Flock of Goats*

"Your hair is like a flock of goats / That repose on Mount Gilead" (S.S. 6:5b). The meaning here is the same as that in 4:1b.

### *7. Her Teeth Being Like a Flock of Ewes*

"Your teeth are like a flock of ewes / That have come up from the washing, / All of which have borne twins, / And none of them is bereaved of her young" (6:6). The meaning here is the same as that in 4:2.

### *8. Her Cheeks Being Like a Piece of Pomegranate*

"Your cheeks are like a piece of pomegranate / Behind your veil" (6:7). The meaning here is the same as that in 4:3b.

### *9. Her Beloved Being Loved by Many Different Believers*

"There are sixty queens and eighty concubines / And virgins without number. / My dove, my perfect one, is but one; / She is the only one of her mother; / She is the choice one of her who bore her. / The daughters saw her, and they

called her blessed; / The queens and the concubines, / They also praised her" (6:8-9). Here we see that her Beloved (Solomon, typifying Christ in a positive sense) is loved by many different believers, some as queens, some as concubines, and some as virgins (all in the positive sense in poetry), but her Beloved, considering her as His love and perfect one, praises her as the only one lover of Him, the only and choice one regenerated by grace.

#### *10. Her Beloved Praising Her as the Dawn*

"Who is this woman who looks forth like the dawn, / As beautiful as the moon, / As clear as the sun" (v. 10a). Her Beloved praises her as the dawn, being beautiful as the moon and clear as the sun, bringing and shining the light on others.

#### *11. Terrible as an Army with Banners*

In verse 10b the Beloved again says that she is as terrible as an army with banners. The meaning here is the same as that in verse 4b.

### B. The Lover's Work

"I went down to the orchard of nuts / To see the freshness of the valley, / To see whether the vine had budded, / Whether the pomegranates were in bloom" (v. 11). Here we see the lover's work. She works on herself as a garden which is growing as the valley growing the fresh green things, as the vine budding, and as the pomegranates blossoming. She works on herself as a particular garden to grow nuts, to grow strong, hard food. She considers herself not only a garden of soft things but an orchard growing particular nuts for Christ.

### C. The Lover's Progress and Victory

Verses 12 and 13 describe the lover's progress and victory.

#### *1. She Not Being Aware That She Is Progressing Swiftly*

"Before I was aware, / My soul set me among the chariots

of my noble people" (v. 12). She is not aware that she is progressing swiftly as the noble people's chariots going forth.

### *2. Those Who Are Attracted by Her Asking Her to Come Back*

"Return, return, O Shulammite; / Return, return, that we may gaze at you. / Why should you gaze at the Shulammite, / As upon the dance of two camps?" (v. 13). Those who are attracted by her ask her to come back that they may look at her as at two camps of an army celebrating their victory by dancing (cf. Gen. 32:2).

In Song of Songs 6:13 the lover's name Shulammite, which is the feminine form of Solomon, is first used, indicating that at this point she has become Solomon's duplication, counterpart, the same as Solomon in life, nature, and image, as Eve to Adam (Gen. 2:20-23), signifying that the lover of Christ becomes the same as Him in life, nature, and image to match Him (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29) for their marriage.

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE EIGHT

## SHARING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

Scripture Reading: S.S. 7:1-13

By the end of chapter six the lover, having passed through various stages of transformation, has become Solomon's duplication. She is now called *Shulammite* (the feminine form of *Solomon*—S.S. 6:13), for she has become the same as Solomon in life, nature, and image to match him for their marriage. This couple's becoming one indicates the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem the redeeming God (signified by Solomon) and all His redeemed (signified by the Shulammite) become one. The New Jerusalem is a mingling of divinity and humanity to express the processed, consummated Triune God in human virtues.

At this point it seems that the book should end, yet it continues. Solomon is the lord of many vineyards, and these vineyards require much labor. Now the country girl, who has become his Shulammite, must become his co-worker. This indicates that eventually Christ's lovers need to share in the work of the Lord. To share in the Lord's work we need to be qualified, and our qualification depends upon the spiritual equipment, that is, it depends on our being equipped with all the attributes of the divine life.

### I. EQUIPPED AS A WORKER IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

In 7:1-9a we see that the lover, the Shulammite, is equipped as a worker in the work of the Lord.

### A. The Spirit's Review of the Virtues of the Lover

The speaker in verses 1 through 5 is not Solomon nor the Shulammite but a third one—the Spirit. The Spirit is one with Christ (2 Cor. 3:17), and the Spirit is one with the

believers (Rev. 22:17). Thus, when this third one speaks, it is as if the two are speaking. Christ, the believers, and the Spirit are one.

Verses 1 through 5 are the Spirit's review of the virtues of the lover. Virtues are signs of maturity in the divine life. The more mature we are, the more virtues we have. Hence, to review the virtues of the lover is just to present what this co-worker has become, what she is.

### *1. The Spirit Reviewing Her Beauty*

First, the Spirit, esteeming her as one of the royal household, reviews her beauty. Romans 5:17 reveals that the life of Christ in us can make us kings to reign: "Those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." In Romans we see that Christ's life is a life of righteousness for our justification, a holy life for our sanctification, and a victorious life to make us overcomers. Romans also tells us that we can reign in this divine life of Christ. This life can make us kings; it can make us royal. Song of Songs indicates that a lover of Christ should reach the maturity in His royal life to reign as a king with Christ. This is the first virtue, the first qualification, for her to share in the Lord's work.

#### *a. Her Beauty in the Gospel Preaching and in Her Standing Power*

Song of Songs 7:1 says, "How beautiful are your footsteps in sandals, / O prince's daughter! / Your rounded thighs are like jewels, / The work of the hands of a skilled artist." Here the Spirit reviews her beauty in the gospel preaching and in her standing power through the skillful transforming work of God the Spirit (Rom. 10:15; 2 Cor. 3:18).

#### *b. Her Beauty in Her Inward Parts*

Song of Songs 7:2 goes on to say, "Your navel is a round goblet / That never lacks mixed wine; / Your belly is a heap of wheat, / Fenced in by lilies." In this verse the Spirit reviews her beauty in her inward parts filled with the divine life

received through the drinking of Christ's blood and the eating of His flesh by faith (John 6:53-54).

*c. Her Beauty in Her Active Ability to Feed Others in a Living Way*

Song of Songs 7:3 continues, "Your two breasts are like two fawns, / Twins of a gazelle." This refers to her beauty in her active ability to feed others in a living way (John 21:15, 17; cf. S.S. 4:5).

*d. Her Beauty in Her Submissive Will, in the Expression of Her Heart, and in Her Spiritual Sense of High and Sharp Discernment*

"Your neck is like a tower of ivory; / Your eyes, like the pools in Heshbon / By the gates of Bath-rabbim; / Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, / Which faces Damascus" (S.S. 7:4). Here the Spirit reviews her beauty in her submissive will (signified by the neck) wrought by the Spirit's transformation through sufferings for the carrying out of God's will, in the expression of her heart which is open to the light, clean, full of rest, and accessible (eyes—cf. 1:15; 4:1; 5:12), and in her spiritual sense of high and sharp discernment (nose).

*e. Her Beauty in Her Thoughts and Intentions and in Her Submission and Obedience for Her Consecration*

Song of Songs 7:5 says, "Your head upon you is like Carmel, / And the locks of your head like purple. / The king is fettered by your tresses." In this verse the Spirit reviews her beauty in her thoughts and intentions, which are strong for God (cf. 1 Kings 18:19-39), and in her submission and obedience for her consecration, which are for the glory of God and capture her Beloved, who is the King.

***2. The Spirit's Review Presenting All the Believers a Beautiful Portrait of the Lovely Lover of Christ***

The Spirit's review presents all the believers a beautiful portrait of the lovely lover of Christ from her feet to her head

as an expression of Christ, whom she loves (cf. S.S. 6:4-10). Such a portrait qualifies her to share in the work of the Lord.

### B. The Beloved's Inserted Words

Suddenly, while the Spirit is speaking, Christ inserts some words. In 7:6-9a we have the Beloved's inserted words.

#### *1. The Beloved, Considering Her His Love, Praising Her*

"How beautiful and how pleasant in delights / You are, O love! / This your stature is like a palm tree, / And your breasts are like the clusters" (vv. 6-7). Here the Beloved praises her first in her beauty and pleasantness that delight others and then in her mature stature like Christ (Eph. 4:13) and in her rich feeding of others.

A co-worker of Christ must be a beautiful and pleasant person who delights others. The young co-workers need to learn to be pleasant with others and to carry out an attracting work. Others should be happy to see you and want to have fellowship with you. The lover has become such a person, so she is qualified to participate in the Lord's work.

#### *2. The Beloved Enjoying Her Mature Stature of Christ and Sharing It with the Members of His Body*

"I said, I will climb the palm tree; / I will take hold of its branches; / And your breasts will be like clusters of the vine, / And the fragrance of your nose like apples, / And the roof of your mouth like the best wine" (S.S. 7:8-9a). This indicates that the Beloved will enjoy her mature stature of Christ and share it with the members of His Body. He wishes that her feeding of others would be rich, that her intuition would be fragrant for nourishing others in life, and that her foretaste would be of the power of the age to come (wine—John 2:10; Matt. 26:29).

## II. WORKING TOGETHER WITH HER BELOVED

We have seen the portrait of her qualifications. Now we will see that she works together with her Beloved (S.S. 7:9b-13).

### A. Wishing That Others Would Enjoy Smoothly What She Could Be

"Going down smoothly for my beloved, / Gliding through the lips of those who sleep" (v. 9b). Here she continues her Beloved's word, wishing that the Lord would enjoy smoothly what she could be, and that those who love God in losing consciousness of themselves would enjoy what the Lord would enjoy. This indicates that our working together with others must become their enjoyment. As we co-workers are working together, we should remember to be a joy to others and to one another.

### B. Confessing That She Belongs to Her Beloved for His Desire

"I am my beloved's, / And his desire is for me" (v. 10). Here she confesses that she belongs to her Beloved for His desire.

### C. Wanting to Carry Out with Her Beloved the Work That Is for the Entire World

"Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages" (v. 11). This reveals that she wants to carry out with her Beloved the work that is for the entire world by sojourning from one place to another. This indicates that she is not sectarian. In the Lord's work it is not easy to keep our work open, to not keep our work "in our pocket." We must learn to keep the work open, so that others can come to sojourn there and we can go to sojourn elsewhere. This is to keep one work in one Body.

### D. She and Her Beloved Working Diligently Not for Herself but in the Churches

"Let us rise up early for the vineyards; / Let us see if the vine has budded, / If the blossom is open, / If the pomegranates are in bloom; / There I will give you my love" (v. 12). She and her Beloved work diligently not for herself but in the churches, for others to bud, blossom, and bloom, in which she renders her love to her Beloved. If we work in this way, others will receive much help.

### E. In Her Working Together with Her Beloved There Being a Mutual Love Giving Forth Its Fragrance between Them

"The mandrakes give forth fragrance, / And over our doors are all choice fruits, / New as well as old. / These, my beloved, I have stored up for you" (v. 13). In her working together with her Beloved there is a mutual love (signified by the mandrakes—Gen. 30:14) giving forth its fragrance between them as a couple loving each other, signifying the bridal love between the lover of Christ and Christ, and in their working places there are plenty of fragrant and choice fruits, new and old, which she stores up for her Beloved in love.

We need to learn to work for the Lord in a way that the Lord will enjoy. If in our working we care only for our own joy, we have already failed. We must work for His joy, bearing many fruits of love with much fragrance of love.

To share in the work of the Lord is not to work for the Lord but to work together with the Lord. This requires a matured life. The Pentecostal movement has stressed power and miracles, yet little attention has been paid to the matter of life. The Assembly of God has given more emphasis to the teaching of the truth, but it also has neglected the matter of life. Nevertheless, the Lord has had those who have sought out the experience of the inner life. This began with saints such as Madame Guyon, Brother Lawrence, and others. They were deep in life, but their teachings were mystical and mysterious. William Law improved their teachings into something quite practical, helping many believers. Andrew Murray was helped by him and was among the first to see that the New Testament Spirit of God has an element of humanity. He said that the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, the resurrected Christ who is the Spirit, contains His glorified humanity. Jessie Penn-Lewis received much help from Andrew Murray and stressed the subjective inner life, especially the subjective aspect of Christ's death. A young man, T. Austin-Sparks, was saved through Mrs. Penn-Lewis's preaching and became her co-worker. Mrs. Penn-Lewis saw the subjective aspect of the death of Christ, and T. Austin-Sparks saw the

principles of resurrection for the building up of the Body of Christ. Brother Nee received much help in the early days from the writings of these teachers and from other good writings from the second century forward.

Through our experience we have learned that to work together with the Lord we must be mature in life and we must teach the high truths. Song of Songs does not emphasize truth, mentioning it only once (*Amana* means "truth"—4:8). However, in Song of Songs we see that to work with the Lord we need the maturity in life, we need to be one with the Lord, and our work must be for His Body. Our Lord is Solomon and we must be the Shulammite; that is, we must be one with the Lord. Actually, to work with Christ we must be Christ. Paul was a real Shulammite because he lived Christ (Phil. 1:21).

The Shulammite works as Solomon's counterpart, taking care of all the vineyards (S.S. 8:11). This indicates that our work should be for the Body, not just one city. We must have a work that is for the entire world. This is what Paul did by establishing local churches and then working to bring them into the full realization of the Body of Christ.

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE NINE

## HOPING TO BE RAPTURED

Scripture Reading: S.S. 8:1-14

Song of Songs 8 reveals the lover's hope to be raptured. The Shulammite was matured in life to the extent that she became Solomon in every aspect and from every view, except for the fact that she still had the flesh.

### I. GROANING FOR HER FLESH

"O that you were like a brother to me, / Who nursed at my mother's breasts! / If I found you outside, I would kiss you, / And none would despise me" (8:1). Realizing all the troubles from her flesh, she wishes that the Lord could be her brother in the flesh who was born of grace, the same as she is, and that she could kiss Him as one who is the same as she is in the flesh and no one would despise her. This indicates her groaning for her flesh. This shortage, this problem, could be settled only by rapture.

### II. HOPING TO BE SAVED FROM HER GROANING FOR THE FLESH

In verses 2 through 4 we see that she is hoping to be saved from her groaning for the flesh (Rom. 8:19-25). This indicates that she hopes to be raptured through God's redemption of her body (Rom. 8:23b; Eph. 4:30b).

#### A. Hoping That She and Her Beloved Could Meet in the Heavenly Jerusalem

"I would lead you and bring you / Into my mother's house, / Who has instructed me; / I would make you drink spiced wine / From the juice of my pomegranate. / His left hand would be under my head, / And his right hand would embrace

me" (S.S. 8:2-3). Here she hopes that she and her Beloved could meet in the heavenly Jerusalem, where she is perfected by grace, and that she could afford her Beloved a way to enjoy the riches of her experience of the divine life for His satisfaction in His embracing, as what He did to her before rapture (2:6).

### B. Her Beloved Charging the Meddling Believers Not to Awaken Her from Her Proper Hope of Rapture

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, / Do not rouse up or awaken my love / Until she pleases" (v. 4). Her Beloved charges the meddling believers not to awaken her from her proper hope of rapture until she wakes up in the countenance of His face, that is, until she meets Him face to face in rapture.

## III. BEFORE THE RAPTURE

Verses 5 through 14 are concerned with matters before the rapture.

### A. The Spirit Speaking through a Third Person

"Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, / Leaning on her beloved?" (v. 5a). The Spirit, speaking through a third person, asks who this lover of Christ is who came up once from the spiritual wilderness by herself (3:6) and now comes up from the fleshly wilderness by her Beloved.

### B. Christ Answering That She Is a Sinner Who Has Repented and Has Been Saved by Grace

"I awakened you under the apple tree: / There your mother was in labor with you; / There she was in labor and brought you forth" (8:5b). Here Christ answers that she is a sinner who has repented and has been saved by grace through regeneration in Him as the Provider of life (2:3).

### C. The Lover Admitting That by Herself She Is Not Able to Stand and Live in Her Beloved until Her Rapture

"Set me as a seal on your heart, / As a seal on your arm; / For love is as strong as death, / Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol; / Its flashes are the flashes of fire, / A flame of Jehovah. / Many waters cannot quench love, / Nor do floods drown it. / If a man gave all the substance of his house for love, / It would be utterly despised" (8:6-7). Here we see that when the lover hears what her Beloved spoke in verse 5, she admits that by herself she is not able to stand and live in her Beloved until her rapture. She asks her Beloved to keep her by His love and His strength, for His love is as strong as the unshakable death and His jealousy is as cruel as the unconquerable Sheol, which is like the jealous Jehovah (Exo. 20:5; 2 Cor. 11:2), who is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29) that burns up all the negative things that can be burned. His love cannot be quenched by trials nor drowned by persecutions nor replaced by any wealth. If one would replace it, he would be utterly despised.

### D. Being Concerned for the Younger Lovers of Christ

"We have a little sister, / And she has no breasts: / What shall we do for our sister / On the day when she is spoken for?" (S.S. 8:8). Since the lover has matured in life in pursuing Christ and in her ultimate consummation of her experience of Christ, before her rapture she with Christ is concerned for the younger lovers of Christ. She is concerned about how to perfect them to mature in life for the building up of the Body of Christ and to love Christ until they are betrothed to Him in love for the constituting of the bride of Christ (v. 8; 2 Cor. 11:2).

### E. She with Her Beloved Perfecting One Who Is a Wall and One Who Is a Door

"If she is a wall, / We will build on her a battlement of silver; / And if she is a door, / We will enclose her with boards

of cedar" (S.S. 8:9). If one is a wall for the separation of sanctification, she with her Beloved will perfect her by building upon her a battlement based upon the redemption of Christ (Rom. 3:24). If one is a door as an entry for people to enter into Christ, she with her Beloved will perfect her by building an enclosure around her with Christ's heavenly and glorified humanity (Matt. 26:64; Acts 3:13) and His heavenly human life (Phil. 2:7-8).

### F. Testifying That She Is a Separating Wall with Two Towers of Faith and Love

"I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers; / Then I was in his eyes like one who has found peace" (S.S. 8:10). Here she testifies that she is a separating wall with two towers of her faith and love (1 Tim. 1:14), which have been developed, so she is in the eyes of her Beloved as a person who has obtained peace based upon sanctification.

### G. In the Work of Christ He Being the Lord of All the Works, and the Lover of Christ Participating in One Part of the Work

"Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon: / He let out the vineyard to keepers; / Each was to bring a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit. / My vineyard, which is mine, is before me. / You will have the thousand, O Solomon; / And those who keep its fruit, two hundred" (S.S. 8:11-12). In the work of Christ He is the Lord of all the works (Baal-hamon and vineyard). The lover of Him participates in one part of the work (one vineyard) and gives to Him what He requires (a thousand shekels), and she as one joined to her Beloved gives to herself as a keeper of the fruit (not of the vineyard) two hundred shekels as a reward. This indicates that Christ as our Beloved is the Lord of all, possessing all things (Acts 10:36), and we as His lovers share in all His possessions (1 Cor. 3:21-22) freely in the grace of Christ (Rom. 3:24) which is the issue of the love of God (2 Cor. 13:14). Yet, we as His lovers still should give Him as our Beloved what we should give, not as a duty but as a matter of love (cf. Gal. 5:13).

Christ as our Beloved, joining Himself to us as one, still likes to give us, as His lovers joined to Him as one, a reward of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8). This implies that Christ as our Beloved gives us a reward for the residue of our labor as an incentive to our faithfulness in our labor for Him in love (cf. Matt. 25:20-23); hence, it is a reward of righteousness.

Solomon as a great lord, possessing many vineyards, rented the vineyards to gain produce. The vineyard keepers would pay Solomon one thousand shekels. Each vineyard keeper had helpers to keep the fruit. Each vineyard keeper had to pay those who kept the fruit two hundred shekels. We also have received a part of the Lord's work. According to the Lord's requirement, we should pay Him the one thousand shekels, that is, pay Him what He requires. Because we do not have helpers, we as the vineyard keepers are able to keep the fruit ourselves. Thus, instead of giving the two hundred shekels to others, we give it to ourselves. This is the same as the Lord giving us two hundred shekels as a reward.

Today, we work with the Lord, and He requires that we pay Him something. If we are faithful, we pay what the Lord requires. Yet we still have a residue, which becomes our reward.

To fulfill the Lord's requirements in our working with Him, we must have some residue. With this residue as the basis, the Lord will reward us when He comes back. According to Matthew 25 the Lord requires not only what He has delivered to us but what He has given to us with interest (vv. 26-27). This interest is the residue. In this parable the Lord says to the faithful one, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master" (vv. 21, 23). This is to enjoy the millennial kingdom as the Lord's reward. However, in this parable the slothful slave, who did not have any interest or residue was disciplined and punished (vv. 28-30).

Song of Songs 8:11-12 shows us that our work with the Lord must exceed what He requires. Then we will have a residue, and this will be the reward which He will give to us righteously. In 2 Timothy 4:7-8 Paul said, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day." Here we see that the reward is not according to the Lord's grace but according to His righteousness.

### H. The Lover of Her Beloved Asking Him to Let Her Hear His Voice

Song of Songs 8:13 says, "O you who dwell in the gardens, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it." The lover of her Beloved asks Him who dwells in the believers as His gardens to let her hear His voice as her companions listen for His voice. This indicates that in the work, which we as the lovers of Christ who express Him as our living outwardly do for Him as our Beloved who indwells us as our life inwardly, we should fellowship with Him in His speaking. As we are working with Him, we need to maintain our fellowship with Him, always listening to Him.

### I. The Lover of Her Beloved Praying That He Would Make Haste to Come Back in the Power of His Resurrection to Set Up His Sweet and Beautiful Kingdom

"Make haste, my beloved, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices" (v. 14). The lover of her Beloved prays that He would make haste to come back in the power of His resurrection to set up His sweet and beautiful kingdom which will fill the whole earth (Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:35). Here we should note that the prayer of this lover of her Beloved is the concluding word of this poetic book, portraying the union and communion between Christ as the Bridegroom and His lovers as the bride in their bridal love, as the prayer of John, a lover of Christ, is the concluding word of the Holy Scripture, revealing God's eternal economy concerning Christ and the church in His divine love (Rev. 22:20).

## A CONCLUDING WORD

The poem, as a type, in this poetic book as the story of the love between a king and a country girl is a marvelous

and vivid portrait, as the fulfillment, of the bridal love between Christ as the Bridegroom and His lovers as His bride in their mutual enjoyment in the mingling of His divine attributes with the human virtues of His lovers. The correspondence of the progression with its stages on these two sides of the poem and its portrait is the intrinsic revelation of the Holy Word of the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God. The progress begins with the first stage of Christ's lovers' being drawn to pursue Him for satisfaction, continues through the following stages of (1) their being called to be delivered from the self through the oneness with the cross, (2) their being called to live in ascension as the new creation in resurrection, (3) their being called more strongly to live within the veil through the cross after resurrection, and (4) their sharing in the work of the Lord, and ends with the last stage of their hoping to be raptured. May such a progress with its stages be a landmark to us in the course of our pursuing of Christ for His and our mutual satisfaction!

# LIFE-STUDY OF SONG OF SONGS

## MESSAGE TEN

## THE FOUR STAGES OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IN SONG OF SONGS

Scripture Reading: S.S. 1:2-4a; 2:14; 4:8; 6:4

Song of Songs, although it is a short book, contains a great many figures and is full of important points. In reading this book it is easy for us to lose our way. However, through the writings of those who have gone before us, especially through Brother Nee's study of this book, Song of Songs has been opened to us. I am thankful that through Brother Nee we can see that Song of Songs is a spiritual life-story of Christian experiences, signified by a romance. In Song of Songs these experiences are in four stages.

### THE FIRST STAGE—ATTRACTED BY CHRIST AND DRAWN BY HIM TO PURSUE AFTER HIM FOR FULL SATISFACTION

In the first stage we are attracted by Christ and drawn by Him to pursue after Him for full satisfaction (1:2—2:7). This stage includes many things: yearning to be kissed by Christ; the fellowship in the inner chamber; entering into the church life by following the footsteps of the flock; being transformed by the remaking of the Spirit; and participating in Christ's rest and satisfaction.

In this stage a sinner saved by grace is stirred up, attracted by Christ's love, and charmed by what He is. Song of Songs 1:2 says of Christ, "Your love is better than wine." Nothing in the whole universe can compare with Him. Verse 3 goes on to speak of Christ's "anointing oils" and says that His "name is like ointment poured forth." This ointment, which is actually Christ Himself as the Spirit, is a compound of divinity, humanity, Christ's death and resurrection, the

effectiveness of His death, and the power of His resurrection. The name here signifies Christ's person, His being, and Christ is this compound Spirit. "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45b). This indicates that Christ's name as His person is the compound ointment.

### THE SECOND STAGE—CALLED TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE SELF THROUGH THE ONENESS WITH THE CROSS

The second stage is the call to be delivered from the self through the oneness with the cross (S.S. 2:8—3:5). In brief, the second stage is the stage of the experience of the cross. In considering this stage, it is sufficient that we remember just one word—cross. Song of Songs 2:14 says, "My dove, in the clefts of the rock, / In the covert of the precipice, / Let me see your countenance, / Let me hear your voice; / For your voice is sweet, / And your countenance is lovely." Here "the clefts of the rock" and "the covert of the precipice" are figures of the cross. Christ wants to see His lover's lovely countenance and hear her sweet voice in her oneness, union, with the cross. The cross is the central stress in this section on deliverance from the self.

When we pursue after Christ and become satisfied with the rest and enjoyment in Christ, we may become very occupied with and concerned about the self and thereby fall into introspection. Thus, we need to experience the denying of the self and the breaking of the self by being one with the cross. We need to stay in the clefts of the rock and remain hidden in the covert of the precipice. This means that we should daily stay at the cross. We should be able to say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). We—"I," the self, the natural man, the old man—have been crucified, and now we should stay on the cross. This is to be in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the precipice. How can we reach the clefts and the covert, which are rugged places high up in the mountains? How can we remain there? We can go to the cross and remain there only by the power of Christ's resurrection (Phil. 3:10).

### THE THIRD STAGE—CALLED BY CHRIST TO LIVE IN ASCENSION AS THE NEW CREATION OF GOD IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The third stage is to be called by Christ to live in ascension as the new creation of God in the resurrection of Christ (3:6—5:1). Christ's death is followed by Christ's resurrection, and in His resurrection we are a new creation. The new creation is a product of Christ's resurrection. Anyone who is in Christ and in His resurrection is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). The matters of resurrection and a new creation are closely related to Christ's ascension. Actually, Christ's resurrection and ascension are one. If we are in His resurrection, we are also in His ascension. When we live in resurrection, we are surely living in ascension.

Proof that the third stage of spiritual experience in Song of Songs is the call to live in ascension is found in 4:8: "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; / With me from Lebanon come. / Look from the top of Amana, / From the top of Senir and Hermon, / From the lions' dens, / From the leopards' mountains." As we have pointed out, *Amana* means "truth," *Senir* means "soft armor," and *Hermon* means "destruction." When we live in ascension, we have the truth (signified by Amana) and we have the victory (signified by Senir and Hermon) over the enemy. When we live in ascension, we realize that the war is over, that the victory has been gained, and that the enemy has been destroyed. The lions' dens and the leopards' mountains signify Satan and his evil forces. These evil powers are in the air, but when we live in ascension, we are in the heavens, far above them. Furthermore, when we live in ascension, spontaneously we are a new creation of God in the resurrection of Christ. How wonderful!

### THE FOURTH STAGE—CALLED BY CHRIST MORE STRONGLY TO LIVE WITHIN THE VEIL THROUGH HIS CROSS AFTER THE EXPERIENCE OF HIS RESURRECTION

We may think that the third stage is the highest stage, but according to Song of Songs there is yet another stage. The fourth stage is to be called by Christ more strongly to

live within the veil through His cross after the experience of His resurrection (5:2—6:13). In ascension, in the heavens, there is the sanctuary of God, and a veil, which signifies the flesh (Heb. 10:20), divides this heavenly sanctuary into two sections. We should not think that once we have arrived at the heavenly sanctuary, we have already attained the highest point of spiritual experience. We may have come to the highest point, but we may not yet be in the inner chamber of the heavenly sanctuary. This inner chamber is the Holy of Holies—God Himself. The veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was split in two at the time of Christ's crucifixion (Matt. 27:51), but the veil has not been taken away. The veil is still there. After we reach ascension we eventually realize that with the sanctuary in the heavens there is an inner chamber and that we need to enter within the veil and live within the veil, that is, live in God Himself.

We have seen that the veil signifies the flesh, which is worse than the self. After the first stage, the object of our dealing is the self. Later, in the fourth stage, the object of our dealing is the flesh. This requires a further experience of the cross, for we need to enter within the veil through the cross. This means that even after we have experienced resurrection and ascension, we still need the cross in order to live in the Holy of Holies within the veil. We experience the cross in the second stage, but we need to have the deeper experience of the cross in the fourth stage.

Song of Songs 6:4 says, "You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, / As lovely as Jerusalem." Here the lover of Christ is likened to Tirzah and Jerusalem, indicating that she has become God's dwelling place. When she was first drawn by the Lord, He likened her to a mare, a horse among Pharaoh's chariots. Then she was likened to a rose in Sharon, a lily in the valleys and among thorns, a dove, a pillar of smoke, a bed, a palanquin, a garden, and a fountain with a spring. Now she is likened to the heavenly dwelling of God and the heavenly Jerusalem. The word *Jerusalem* in verse 4 is a sign of the New Jerusalem, indicating that all the lovers of Christ eventually will become the New Jerusalem—the ultimate

consummation of the Bible. Here in God's Holy of Holies we have the highest spiritual experience.

We have seen the four stages of spiritual experience in this book: the stage of pursuit, the stage of the cross, the stage of ascension, and the stage of living in the Holy of Holies. If we have a clear view of these four stages, we will have the proper understanding of Song of Songs. Such an understanding surely is priceless.