

227. How can we compare this couple to Romeo and Juliet?
228. Is there anyone anywhere in the United States like the two persons described here? Discuss.
229. Why go to her mother's house? Where is her father?
230. What were her final words for the women of the harem and Solomon?
231. Where is the wife like the Shulammitte? Discuss.
232. Are there men like the shepherd? (What about the rest of us?)
233. What is really important with our wife?
234. Why would any wife want a brother-sister relationship with her husband? or is this what is meant? Discuss.
235. What a tremendous example this passage is of the kind of love we as the bride should give to our living Lord. Please discuss the very practical application of this text to your own personal relationship to your Lord.

TEXT 8:5-14

FIFTH SCENE — The Homeward Journey, 8:5-14

Villagers (or the Shepherd's Companions): Inquiry, 8:5a

The Lovers: Dialogue, 8:5b-14

Shepherd, 8:5b

Shulammitte, 8:6-12

Aspiration; 6, 7

Recollection; 8, 9

Declaration, 10

Information, 11

Repudiation, 12

Shepherd, 8:13

Shulammitte, 8:14

5. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?
Under the apple-tree I awakened thee:

- There thy mother was in travail with thee,
There was she in travail that brought thee forth.
6. Set me as a seal upon thy heart,
As a seal upon thine arm;
For love is strong as death:
Jealousy is cruel as Sheol;
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
A very flame of Jehovah.
 7. Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can floods drown it:
If a man would give all the substance of his house for
love,
He would utterly be condemned.
 8. We have a little sister,
And she hath no breasts:
What shall we do for our sister
In the day when she shall be spoken for?
 9. If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver;
And if she be a door,
We will enclose her with boards of cedar.
 10. I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof.
Then was I in his eyes as one that found peace.
 11. Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon;
He let out the vineyard unto keepers;
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand
pieces of silver.
 12. My vineyard, which is mine is before me:
Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand,
And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.
 13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken for thy voice;
Cause me to hear it.
 14. Make haste, my beloved,
And be thou like to a roe or to a young hart.
Upon the mountains of spices.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 8:5-14

200. We are no longer in Jerusalem—how was it possible to return to the wilderness? Who is asking this question? Why lean on her beloved?
201. Under the apple tree seems to be a very special place for two reasons. What are they?
202. What is suggested in the use of a seal—a seal had two or three purposes. Show how they relate here. Why upon the heart and the arm?
203. In what way is love as strong as death?
204. In what way is jealousy as cruel as the grave? How does this relate?
205. Something was in danger of being burned up. What was it?
206. True love can be seen in this Song. Define it.
207. Love is impervious to water. Why?
208. True love cannot be bought. Why?
209. How then is this love obtained?
210. Who is the “little sister” of verse eight?
211. Who is speaking and who is addressed in verse eight?
212. The metaphor of “wall” in verse nine carries what meaning?
213. There seems to be opposites involved in reference to “a wall” and “a door.” Explain.
214. The maiden decides she shall be “a wall.” Why mention her breasts?
215. A decision seems to have been reached in verse 10b—a very important decision. What was it?
216. How shall we relate the information given in verse 11 to the story of this Song?
217. The Shulammitte had a vineyard. What was it?
218. There seems to be a rejection in verse 12b—or is this the meaning? Discuss.
219. Who is speaking in verse 13? Who is addressed? For what purpose?
220. What is the emphasis in the closing verse? Who is involved?

PARAPHRASE 8:5-14

Shepherd's Companions

5. Who is this coming up from the country
Leaning on the arm of her beloved?

Shepherd

There under the citron tree I awakened thy love;
There thy mother pledged thee to me;
There she that bore thee took my pledge.

Shulammite

6. Set me as a seal upon thy heart,
As a seal upon thine arm!

Solomon (concluding comment)

- For love is strong as death;
Jealousy is as unyielding as Sheol;
Its burnings are fiery darts,
A most vehement flame. (lit., flame of JAH)
7. Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can rivers drown it.
If a man should give all his wealth for love,
He (or, It) would be scornfully rejected.

Shulammite (recalling her brothers' discussion in her girlhood days)

8. "We have a little sister,
She has still no breasts.
What shall we do for our sister,
When someone asks for her in marriage?"
9. If she be like a city wall,
We will build her battlements of silver.
But if she be like a door,
We will make her secure with cedar boards."

Shulammite

10. I was a city wall,
 And my breasts like towers upon it.
 Then became I in his (Solomon's) eyes
 As one that finds peace.
11. Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon,
 He left his vineyard to tenant-keepers,
 Who gave for its fruit a thousand shekels.
12. My vineyard, my very own, lies before me.
 Thou, O Solomon, mayest have the thousand shekels
 And the tenant-keepers two hundred!

Shepherd

13. O thou that dwellest in the gardens,
 My companions wait to hear thy story;
 Let me, too, hear it!

Shulammite

14. Come, my beloved, swift as a fleeing gazelle
 Or a young deer upon the mountains of spices!

COMMENT 8:5-14

Exegesis 8:5-14

The comments of Walter F. Adeney are unexcelled on this section of scripture.

"Now the bridegroom is seen coming up from the wilderness with his bride leaning upon him, and telling how he first made love to her when he found her asleep under an apple tree in the garden of the cottage where she was born. As they converse together we reach the richest gem of the poem, the Shulammite's impassioned eulogy of love. She bids her husband set her as a seal upon his heart in the inner sanctuary of his being, and as a seal upon his arm—always owning her, always

true to her in the outer world. She is to be his closely, his openly, his for ever. She has proved her constancy to him; now she claims his constancy to her. The foundation of this claim rests on the very nature of love. The one essential characteristic here dwelt upon is strength—'Love is strong as death.' Who can resist grim death? Who escape its iron clutches? Who can resist mighty love, or evade its power? The illustration is startling in the apparent incompatibility of the two things drawn together for comparison. But it is a stern and terrible aspect of love to which our attention is now directed. This is apparent as the Shulammitte proceeds to speak of jealousy which is 'hard as the grave.' If love is treated falsely, it can flash out in a flame of wrath ten times more furious than the raging of hatred—'a most vehement flame of the Lord.' This is the only place the name of God appears throughout the whole poem. It may be said that even here it only comes in according to a familiar Hebrew idiom, as metaphor for what is very great. But the Shulammitte has good reason for claiming God to be on her side in the protection of her love from cruel love and outrage. Love as she knows it is both unquenchable and unpurchasable. She has tested and proved these two attributes in her own experience. At the court of Solomon every effort was made to destroy her love for the shepherd, and all possible means were employed for buying her love for the king. Both utterly failed. All the floods of scorn which the harem ladies poured over her love for the country lad could not quench it; all the wealth of a kingdom could not buy it for Solomon. Where true love exists, no opposition can destroy it; where it is not, no money can purchase it. As for the second idea—the purchasing of love—the Shulammitte flings it away with the utmost contempt. Yet this was the too common means employed by a king such as Solomon for replenishing the stock of his harem. Then the monarch was only pursuing a shadow; he was but playing at love-making; he was absolutely ignorant of the reality.

The vigour, one might say the rigour, of this passage distinguishes it from nearly all other poetry devoted to the praises

of love. That poetry is usually soft and tender; sometimes it is feeble and sugary. And yet it must be remembered that even the classical Aphrodite could be terribly angry. There is nothing morbid or sentimental in the Shulammite's ideas. She has discovered and proved by experience that love is a mighty force, capable of heroic endurance, and able, when wronged, to avenge itself with serious effect.

Towards the conclusion of the poem fresh speakers appear in the persons of the Shulammite's brothers, who defend themselves from the charge of negligence in having permitted their little sister to be snatched away from their keeping, explaining how they have done their best to guard her. Or perhaps they mean that they will be more careful in protecting a younger sister. They will build battlements about her. The Shulammite takes up the metaphor. She is safe now, as a wall well embattled; at last she has found peace in the love of her husband. Solomon may have a vineyard in her neighborhood, and draw great wealth from it with which to buy the wares in which he delights. It is nothing to her. She has her own vineyard. This reference to the Shulammite's vineyard recalls the mention of it at the beginning of the poem, and suggests the idea that in both cases the image represents the shepherd lover. In the first instance she had not kept her vineyard, for she had lost her lover. Now she has him, and she is satisfied. He calls to her in the garden, longing to hear her voice there, and she replies, bidding him hasten and come to her as she has described him coming before,—'Like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.'

And so the poem sinks to rest in the happy picture of the union of the two young lovers." (*Exposition of the Bible*, pages 535-536.)

Marriage 8:5-14

Every marriage should have a honeymoon more than once. Do these words of the text awaken fond memories of the day

when your beloved said, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth . . .?" Make them true again—only this time you can plan it well ahead. You have so much more experience. Your wife would be delighted to respond to such an invitation and these words really could be hers.

Do you remember the place where you asked her that great question? That place cannot be repeated—that question cannot again be asked, but the devotion and excitement and commitment can all be repeated a thousand times a thousand. We can be that seal upon her heart and upon her arm. What message is written upon the seal? It is surely obvious—it says: *I love you*. But what is meant? It means: "I give myself to you." The whole person of the husband is given to the wife—not some of the time, but all the time. Love is an act of the will as much as an expression of emotion. The seal is upon the arm as well as the heart. Our wife finds protection and very visible evidence in a multitude of little acts of love that we have given ourselves to her.

As the reader can observe from the *Paraphrase*, we believe 6b and verse 7 are the concluding observation of Solomon concerning the whole story of his *Song*. As he said in Ecclesiastes 12: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter"—so here we believe he is saying—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole subject of love—human and divine": *Love is strong as death*. Once the total self has been given, that commitment is just as irrevocable and immutable as death! It will not change—it will not yield. The possessiveness and protection of that decision is "as cruel as the grave." To challenge that decision is to expect a flame of fire! A fierce fire like the fire of God! Solomon is going on record for all time that there is nothing—absolutely nothing so indestructable as pure love. He could, and did command a flood of waters to overflow the Shulamite—; it was a flood of flattery and wealth. When the waters subsided, she was as immovable as she was before he started. If anything, she was more intractable. As she looked at him with the kind of cold indifference only scorn can give, he said—"Turn your gaze from me, I cannot look upon thee."

(6:5) Solomon of all men should know that love (not lust) cannot be bought. Are we to read into his words: "If a man would give all the substance of his house . . ." that he was willing to give a great sum of money—even "half his kingdom" for the love of the Shulammitte? If so, he found her love not for sale.

The above comments all apply to many wives—and they are married to some unworthy husbands—i.e., there are many of us who do not appreciate the dear girl our Lord has given us for a wife.

From the reading of our earlier comments you will notice we have applied verses eight through ten to the Shulammitte. These verses describe her in her childhood at home (a "little sister that hath no breasts"). These could be the words of her brothers as they expressed their concern over her as she approached the marriageable age. She is too young now but she will soon "be spoken for." When she arrives at that age will she be a wall or a door? i.e., will she refuse unworthy advances upon her? or will she welcome all who come to her? In either case her brothers wanted to help her. If she was a wall they would reinforce it with silver turrets—if she was a door they would enclose her with boards of cedar. After her experience with Solomon she can say that she was indeed a wall. In her maturity she proved herself to be a virtuous woman; very much like the one Solomon described in Proverbs 31:10-31. Because of her resistance and refusal, she was given release from his court and enjoyed peace.

Is your wife a wall or a door? So very much depends upon our total attitude toward her. Surely we can have at least as great a concern as the brothers here described. Most virtuous women become such because someone believed they could and wanted them to. In the case of our wives, it has been the example and words and love of our Lord who has created the resolve and surrender that gave them peace; but the constant concern and support of a husband who also loves her Lord would be a great help.

Verses eleven and twelve describe an offer made by Solomon to the maiden. Was this his last desperate attempt to win her?

She describes a vineyard Solomon offered to her—or to her family. It yielded a thousand pieces of silver every year and the clear profit on it was two hundred pieces of silver. She replies that she has her own vineyard—which in the poetic figure is herself and her beloved. Solomon can keep his vineyard and his servants can keep the profit, she much prefers her own vineyard.

Such loyalty can only arise out of genuine love. Our heavenly Father is mercifully kind to us in not only His gifts, but in what He withholds. How many wives would steadfastly refuse all the offers of Solomon? Would a large income for life be an attraction? We are glad most of us do not have to find out.

Verse thirteen probably contains the words of the friends of the bride. One of her friends refers to her as “Thou that dwellest in the gardens”—or “Thou that dwellest in paradises.” All her friends are eagerly waiting to hear of what happened in the paradise of the King.

We can imagine that every detail was told again and again. Yea, we are still telling the beautiful story of love strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave and a love that can neither be drowned nor bought.

So ends this song of songs. “No longer are there ‘mountains of separation’ between them (2:17), but ‘mountains of fragrant communion’ in their own waiting home. Solomon has chosen to conclude his inspired composition by recalling the Shulammitite’s earlier invitation to her beloved but with an important change befitting the new circumstances. The Song began abruptly with the maiden’s musings (1:2ff). It ends abruptly with her loving entreaty. In each case the beloved shepherd is the focus of her thoughts.” (Clarke)

Communion 8:5-14

Surely verse 5a has in it a description of every Christian—In answer to the query—“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” We could say that it

is every member of the bride of Christ. We have come up and out of the wilderness of this world and are leaning heavily upon our beloved Lord for support.

It was under a tree that He awakened within us a love for Him. "Beneath the Cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand." I can recall the love and wonder that filled my heart when I remember what happened when He died for me. It was at the same place my new birth took place. When I came to commit myself to Him and was buried in baptism unto His death—I was born of the water and the Spirit (Romans 6:1-4; John 3:3-5). We, like the maiden, ask Him to seal us. He has already done so with the blessed Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30; II Corinthians 1:21).

The conclusion of the whole *Song of Solomon* as well as the Christian experience, is that "His love is as strong as death, His jealousy is as cruel as Sheol." He will not let me go. We give up—but He does not. How many times has our Lord hindered Satan's efforts? How often has the flame of love stopped our adversary short of capturing us? We can identify many such times, and there are innumerable times when His jealous love protected us and we did not even know it. So many times we have indeed been overwhelmed and the flood of sorrow, or disappointment or discouragement have overflowed. But His love is unquenchable. We cannot buy it, we do not deserve it, but we are so glad that He will not sell it.

We are also that little immature sister. We need some older brothers who will take the kind of interest described in these verses. We have been "spoken for" by our beloved Lord. Will we be a "wall" to the allurements of Satan, or will we be a "door"? If we resist, we do need someone who will offer encouragement to keep up the fight. We want someone to come and help us erect our "battlements of silver." There are times when we have been a door and welcome the knock of the evil one. O, how we need someone to "enclose us with boards of cedar." "Ye who are spiritual"—help us—we need it! (Galatians 6:1, 2).

What a solid satisfaction must have filled the heart of the

Shulammite maid as she declares her victory of maturity—"I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof." She was more than a conqueror because of her love. The victory and the strength and the growth are out of love and not stubborn resistance. Her peace was the gift of grace; so is ours.

Every Christian can remember a special offer of our enemy which had a personal appeal to us. It was much like the vineyard Solomon offered. We are asked to sell out for a very high price—"a thousand pieces of silver"—and the promise is that the benefits will continue at "two hundred" a month. Such an offer will be accepted if we do not have our own vineyard. We *are* branches in the great vine and my Father is the caretaker of this vineyard. My joy is to abide in the vine and bear much fruit. Therefore, I can have no interest in the vineyard of this world.

There are those who eagerly await our testimony. They want to hear all the ways God led us and delivered us from Satan's harem. Before we can tell them anything we must speak again to the one my soul loveth. "Make haste my beloved"—lead me to "the mountains of spices." When we have spent time in prayer and meditation we shall have something to say and not before.

FACT QUESTIONS 8:5-14

236. According to Adeney where was the apple tree where the shepherd first made love to the maiden? What were the circumstances?
237. Adeney feels verses six and seven are not the eulogy of Solomon—but of whom? Discuss.
238. There is only one reference to God in this whole Song. Why? Discuss.
239. What were the "floods" that attempted to overcome her love?
240. This passage distinguishes it from nearly all other poetry devoted to the praises of love. How? Discuss.

241. Towards the conclusion of the poem fresh speakers appear. Who are they? What is their message?
242. Who is "the little sister"? Discuss.
243. What is "the vineyard" of the Shulammitte?
244. "Every marriage should have a honeymoon more than once." What is meant?
245. Some things cannot be repeated in our marriage—and some things can. Discuss.
246. Discuss just how we shall set a seal upon the heart and arm of our wife.
247. We have suggested that Solomon is the speaker in the last half of verse six and verse seven. Discuss his meaning.
248. How do the words of Solomon apply to wives today?
249. Was there a younger sister at home—or does this refer to the Shulammitte? Discuss.
250. How can we help to make our wives a wall instead of a door?
251. What was the last offer of Solomon?
252. Discuss the mercy of God as related to what He doesn't give us.
253. Does this Song speak to the needs of our generation? Discuss.
254. Show how these verses can have application to our relationship with our Lord. Discuss the following verse units: (1) Verse 5; (2) Verses 6, 7; (3) Verses 8-10; (4) Verses 11, 12; (5) Verse 13; (6) Verse 14.