Session 6 - Searching for the Beloved – Songs 3:1 – 11

A. INTRODUCTION:

1. Last week we saw the King demonstrate his ability to overcome all the obstacles and difficulties before him (mountains and hills) and call the Shulamite out of her comfort in the House of Wine to come and join him on the mountains and hills. The King summoned the Shulamite to come with Him to the mountains, to learn how to worship and delight in His presence in the face of obstacles that have defeated her in the past. His presence makes all the difference in the circumstance, and He has declared the winter season to be over, and that the time of fruitfulness is beginning. The King's purpose in drawing her out is not to force her into uncomfortable and fearsome circumstances, but to expand her comfort zone to include all circumstantial realities. Since He is with her, she does not need to be afraid about anything! Instead, she is invited to experience intimacy and adoration in the very place of challenge and fear.

2. The Shulamite refused the King's invitation to arise and told Him to turn and go to the mountains without her (2:17). Her fear of facing the areas of her life where she had previously known failure and defeat (mountains and hills) overcame her desire to be with her beloved and she chose to stay in the comfort of the chamber. Her fear was an expression of her spiritual immaturity, not of her rebellion towards God.

3. As we move on into Chapter 3 we see the King strategically withdraws His presence from her for the purpose of drawing her into deeper obedience. The reason the Shulamite chooses to remain in the chamber is two-fold:

   a) she is afraid of the new challenge

   b) the chamber has been a place of great comfort, pleasure, and safety because of the King's presence.

   The King's response to her compromise is not anger or impatience. He knows her deeply, and fully understands and has sympathy for her in her fears. However, He does not enable her compromise, but simply withdraws His presence, knowing that He has captured her heart, and that she will miss Him.

B. THE DARK NIGHT OF COMPROMISE

1 On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. 2 I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. 3 The watchmen found me, as they went about the city. "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" 4 Scarcely had I passed them, when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I brought him to my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. 5 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or does of the field, do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

1. ***"…by night…"*** "Dark nights" are normal and necessary components of the journey to intimacy and authority. They are God's chosen strategy for taking us deeper into the experience of intimacy and the fulfillment of His promises to us. This particular dark night happens because of compromise or sin in our lives. We cling to the old ways, because we do not trust Jesus to be enough for us in the new adventure to which He is calling us. So, He withdraws His presence to lure us out of the comfort zone.

2. The Shulamite's heart is hungry for the King's presence, but she seeks Him in the context of what is familiar, what feels safe – ***"On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves. . ."*** She is searching for Him in the memories of past encounters. Memories of past encounters are good, and are for the purpose of arousing faith to take the next step of obedience. Without a determination to follow Jesus in obedience, the past memories become mere nostalgia, with no power. These memories are like clouds with no rain, like wrapping paper left after the gift has been opened. His desire is to draw her deeper, so He will not give in to her compromise. Instead, the memories of His presence will increase her longing until she makes the decision to arise and pursue Him. She is not a hopeless hypocrite; her desire is for Him, and this compromise is out of immaturity and fear, not out of rebellion and sin.

3. The Shulamite will not find Him in the comfort zone at this point. His purposes for the next season are different than that, and He will not accommodate her fears – ***"I sought him, but found him not."***

C. LEAVING THE COMFORT ZONE TO PURSUE THE KING

[2] I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. [3] The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"

1. The Shulamite makes the decision to arise and pursue the King... The Bride added obedience to her prayer by arising as commanded in Song 2:10. The pain of losing a measure of His manifest presence on her heart moved her to arise off her bed. *Her longing has become greater than her fear, and she leaves the safety of the comfort zone.*

2. Notice that her decision is expressed in only partial obedience. She leaves the safety of the bridal chamber, but does not completely follow the King's invitation to come with Him to the mountains. Rather, she decides to go about the city, which speaks of involvement with the people of God (see Hebrews 11:10; 12:22). The streets and the squares speak of the places of interaction and commerce where relationships are experienced. She is still staying within the safety of what she knows.

3. While there is nothing wrong with becoming involved with God's people, it was not the King's strategy for her at this time. He wanted to draw her to the mountains to expand and deepen her experience of intimacy, safety and authority. These verses speak of premature engagement with activity that is still rooted in her fear of full obedience. The time for full engagement with God's people will come later, *after she has been qualified and prepared to walk in the authority that is her destiny*.

4. The Shulamite asks the watchmen (1:8b) if they have seen the King. The watchmen are the shepherds of the church, the elders of the church who are to watch over believers (Heb. 13:17). So she asks them to direct her towards her beloved. However, she already knows where he has gone but is avoiding the risk of following him there and instead hoping for an easier option from the leaders. Often we hear God but rather than follow we seek endless advice from others hoping they will show us an easier option.

5. The watchmen's silence and the absence of counsel point to at least three possible factors:

   a) The watchmen are at a place of poverty in their own experience. Only those who have seen Him can direct others in that pursuit.

   b) The Holy Spirit may have withheld insight from them in order to press the Bride into deeper commitment to pursue the King at any cost.

c) They have revelation that she needs to pursue Him for herself so remain silent.

D. FINDING THE KING

4 Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him to my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.

1. The King allows Himself to be found by the Shulamite, even though her faith is small and her obedience is only partial. It moves the King's heart that she has left the bridal chamber to search for Him, and He meets her at her point of faith. This is tremendously encouraging to us. Jesus does not wait to reveal Himself more until our obedience is perfect, but rather sees our weak faith as significant.

2. The Shulamite holds tight to the King, not releasing Him from her grasp. This is another picture of the wrestling with God that is necessary for the full blessing to come. Yes, He meets her in her weakness, but He longs to lead her into more. She clings to Him, wrestling with Him for the greater revelation and blessing. This is the reality of contending in prayer, interceding for the fullness of God to be revealed in our lives.

3. She has a new resolution to hold on to the King with a determination that resulted from her painful season of spiritual struggle. She "never lets go of Him" throughout the remainder of the Song. Seasons of "spiritual wrestling" can birth a deep resolve in us to never allow compromise to be tolerated in our lives.

4. The Shulamite is eager to bring the King into the institutional Church, "***until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.***" The "mother" here is a picture of the church—as those who do God's will (Mt. 12:46-50) and those used as God's vessels to bring people to the new birth. Paul spoke of the New Jerusalem as our "mother" (Gal. 4:26). Israel is pictured as a "mother" who gave birth to the redeemed (Rev. 12:5, 17).

5. There is a gentle violence in the Shulamite's determination to infuse His presence into her mother's house. Again, her motive is good, but the time is not ripe. The King has a definite time in which she will be received with joy, and His influence will have its full effect. We may often find that our attempts to ignite the hearts of our family and friends are ineffective. We want the Holy Spirit to come and do something to them, to reveal Himself in a way that will change their hearts toward Him and make our journey easier. Instead of turning their hearts to Him, our premature engagement can provoke even greater resistance. Consider the example of Paul in the early days of his conversion (Acts 9)

6. Jesus knows the perfect time to release His presence through us for maximum influence and impact. We must wait for His timing, because it involves our transformation through deeper encounters with Him, and the subsequent release into our destiny of intimacy and authority.

Acts 11:25-26: 25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

E. THE KING REAFFIRMS HIS PROTECTION OF THE BRIDE

5 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or does of the field, do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

1. Even though the King is with the Shulamite in her environment, He is fully aware that she is not yet stable or confident in His love. At this point in her journey, she would still be easily swayed by the opinions and activities of others, and so He speaks the same protective warning over her.

2. The Lord has every one of us on a course that is tailor-made just for who we are, and where we are going on the journey. Jesus does not want the Shulamite disrupted from His agenda by the well-meaning but contrary opinions and strategies of others in the Body of Christ.

3. Jesus fully understands the right timing for the Bride to be awakened to the call of ministry that is on her life. He will awaken her for that calling when it is time. Until then, He intends to keep her in the quiet place of His own strategy, revealing His love to her and leading her to the place of stability and maturity.

F. OVERVIEW OF SONG 3:6-11

6 Who is that coming up from the wilderness, like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant? 7 Look, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men, of the mighty men of Israel, 8 all of them holding swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh, because of terrors by night. 9 King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of Lebanon. 10 He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem.11 Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.

1. King Jesus is revealed to the Bride as a "safe Savior." She gains insight into His safe leadership. This does not mean that we will not have difficulties. It means we are in a safe place where our heart will mature in obedient love for God. The safest place for our heart is in seeing Jesus as the King who enables us to walk in hundred-fold obedience and faith, even when facing the mountains. The devil lies to God's people about Jesus not being a safe leader.

2. In this section of the Song the King reveals the extravagance and the safety of His love for the Bride. Through this revelation, He sets the context for His declarations of love for her, and His perspective of who she is becoming as she follows Him.

G. THE GLORIOUS BRIDEGROOM

6 Who is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant?

1. **"Who is this Man?"** is one of the first questions we must answer in our journey. Everything rests on the identity and work of this One who has taken initiative with us, who gave Himself for our redemption and glory. Like Peter, we must have a heart-revelation of who Jesus is so that we will find grace to follow Him through the journey He is leading us on.

Matthew 16:15-17 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

2. **coming up from the wilderness.** Jesus is pictured as coming out of the wilderness of testing and sacrifice, emerging as victorious after having been proven as worthy by the suffering He endured. He was tested in the wilderness – this is not only the 40 days during His fast, but the entire time of His life on earth, with the culmination coming on the cross. Jesus was exposed to every temptation that we face (see Luke 4:13; Hebrews 4:15), and remained true to His Father's heart, even when He became sin so we could become righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was the "faithful witness" (Greek = martus, martyr) who embraced every point of testing and never missed the mark of perfection.

3. The wilderness speaks of testing, but also of encounter. All through Scripture the great saints encountered God in the wilderness, and gained much revelation there. Jesus embraced the wilderness of His human existence for two main reasons:

   a) To bring the struggles of humanity into the experience of God

   b) To demonstrate that as a man filled with the Holy Spirit, He could live in full communion with and obedience to the Father.

   It is also the place where God takes His Bride to cleanse her and woo her after failure (see Hosea 2).

4. Jesus comes like **"pillars of smoke"**. The smoke speaks first of the glory of the Lord, the covering that goes before His presence to protect His people as He comes among them (see Exodus 19:18; 40:34; Isaiah 6:1-4). The smoke also speaks of the burnt offering, the pleasing sacrifice of the sin offering. Jesus was taken into the wilderness outside the camp (see Exodus 29:14; Hebrews 13:13) in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic pictures of the sin offering. He is pictured here as the One who completes the sacrifice, providing safety and assurance to the Bride.

Exodus 29:14 But the flesh of the bull, with its skin and its offal, you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It is a sin offering.

Hebrews 13:12-13 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. [13] Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

5. Jesus is the sacrificial intercessor for His Bride. He is ***perfumed with myrrh and frankincense*** which speaks of the costly and fragrant aroma of the sufferings of Jesus for us. He is the One who made the way open, offering Himself as the incense upon the altar.

6. He is anointed ***with all the fragrant powders of a merchant.*** The merchant's powders speak of Jesus' commitment to us. A merchant's hands were scented as a result of handling (buying and selling) the perfumed powders in the marketplace. He is like a merchant who sold everything to purchase beautiful pearls (His Bride). Jesus is the perfumed merchant who sold everything to purchase us in His love. His incarnation and death (3:6) prove that He loves us and is committed to our welfare.

Mt. 13:45-46 [45] "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, [46] who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

H. THE KING'S EXTRAVAGANT PROTECTION OF THE BRIDE

[7] Look, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men, of the mighty men of Israel, [8] all of them holding swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh, because of terrors by night.

The protection and security that we have in God's grace is described in military terms.

1. ***The litter of Solomon*** speaks of the vehicle the King uses to carry the Bride through the wilderness to her place in His palace. The Hebrew word for litter means bed or couch – this was an extravagant sedan chair with a couch or bed on which to rest with her beloved as he carried her in safety. She was on her bed of ease (3:1) now she can rest on His bed of protection. Hidden with her beloved behind the veil and carried through the wilderness to their wedding day. She is completely unable to make the journey on her own. There is no way for her to get to His dwelling from where she is, He must come and get her.

2. ***Around it are sixty mighty men***: Solomon had sixty valiant men surrounding his couch to guard or protect his bride from the enemy on her journey through the wilderness to his palace in Jerusalem. This speaks of the Spirit's extravagant protection of the Church. Only a king could afford the security of sixty highly skilled warriors. Solomon used tabernacle language—there were sixty support pillars in Moses' tabernacle. In the wedding litter we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, with access to His authority. This "vehicle" provides all that we need for our hearts to be safe in our journey through the wilderness to His "palace" in the New Jerusalem.

   [6]Raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ… (Eph. 2:6)

3. ***[8] all of them holding swords and expert in war.*** These warriors represent the full provision for the safe passage of the Bride from the shepherd's tent to the palace. God has provided everything necessary for our safety in the journey, to ensure that the journey will be completed and that our joy will be full upon arrival. The Holy Spirit, along with angels (Hebrews 1:13-14) and the marvelous companions that God gives us are His protection and provision for safety and for the certainty that what He has begun in us will be completed.

4. ***each with his sword at his thigh, because of terrors by night.*** All these attendants have their swords by their sides. They are fully equipped in battle, experienced and sufficient to protect, defend, and guide the Bride to her destination. Because of their presence, there is nothing to fear, even in the darkest night of the journey.

I. JESUS' REDEMPTION OF HIS BRIDE

[9] King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of Lebanon. [10] He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by (*for*) ***the daughters of Jerusalem.***

1. The marriage carriage or chariot, is pictured here in its beauty, in the glory and care of its preparation to transport the Bride to the palace of the King. It is hand-made by the King Himself, adorned with precious metals and royal materials.

2. The cedars of Lebanon were used in building Solomon's temple, which housed God's glory. The wood in the tabernacle spoke of humanity, and the gold that covered the wood referred to Deity. The wood of Lebanon was the most beautiful, fragrant, expensive, and strongest wood. The gospel of salvation was "made" by Jesus—the strongest and most glorious Man. He was hung on a cross made of wood which He had spoken into being at creation and from this place he provided the carriage (the way) to our eternal glory of intimate authority as the Bride of Christ.

3. ***posts of silver*** speaks of redemption which holds up the canopy over us – His redemption ensures that we will arrive safely as a mature Bride.

4. ***its back of gold*** - gold speaks of God's divine nature – we can rest safely in His divinity leaning on Him, knowing He is fully in control

5. ***its seat of purple*** - purple speaks of His royalty – we are seated with Him on His throne and are safely held in His authority.

6. ***its interior was inlaid with love –*** the inner linings or tapestries of this carriage are woven through with love. We are carried through the wilderness surrounded and held within His perfect love. Those outside cannot fully appreciate the power of his love and mercy that enfolds us.

7. ***for the daughters of Jerusalem*** – this love is extended to all who desire to be His – to His Church.

J. THE BRIDE'S EXHORTATION TO THE CHURCH

[11] Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.

1. The Bride is now receiving the revelation of the King's glory that will impel her forward into her journey. The fears that caused her to compromise in the previous night have been dealt with by the majesty of the King's procession, and she is being empowered by this new and deeper revelation of who He is, and what He has done to win her heart.

2. She exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem – a picture of the larger Body of Christ – to go out and see Him, to leave the confines of what they are used to and fix their gaze on the person of Jesus. Each one must embrace this journey, and the revelation of the extravagance of redemption will strengthen each one for the way set before them.

3. The daughters must be given eyes to see the King and His crown. The Spirit of revelation must come to them, that they might behold and understand the cost of their redemption, and the love that motivated Jesus to pay the price. The crown is a dual crown of glory and of suffering. The crown of thorns becomes the crown of glory, a royal diadem in the hand of the King. Isaiah tells us (62:3) that the people of God are the crown of glory in His hand. We were the thorns that caused Him great pain, impressed upon His mind to the point of shedding blood, but we are transformed into the glorious crown that gives Him great joy and causes the nations to rejoice and be glad.

4. The King is crowned by His mother, Israel. She was the entity that brought about His greatest sorrow, and she will be His greatest glory.

This coronation day is the day of the gladness of His heart. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2), and it was His gladness to do so. It was the day of His betrothal, the day that He became truly one with His Bride by taking on her sin, and transferring His glory to her.

Is. 62:5 For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

5. This entire prophetic picture will be fully realized at the second coming of Jesus to the earth, when the glorious King and His Bride will join in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev.19). This revelation of the fullness of God's redemptive plan is what is to empower the church to complete the journey to intimate authority.

Isaiah 35:8-10 A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. [9] No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, [10] and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Revelation 19:5-9 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" [6] And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! [7] Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." [8] And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. [9] Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' "And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."