

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary are more extensive for this week than will be usual; for the following will most likely be new and unfamiliar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection *returns to the role of women in the new covenant*.

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of August 13, 2005

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

To review, *Canticles* or *Song of Songs* or *Song of Solomon*—all names for the same book—is usually taught in Christian fellowships as a series of love poems between Christ and the Church. The book is, indeed, poetic, but it is a three-part play in verse. Until the modern era, most important secular writings (i.e., literature) were in verse. The care used in the construction of the work, in putting the thoughts into verse, conveyed to the audience knowledge that the work wasn't business writing, or some other form of scribbling.

Drama also carries with it knowledge that what is being read isn't a mimetic representation of reality, but was at least one additional step removed, for drama is intended to be performed. In its performance additional representation is made through observing the actions of the characters. The audience becomes aware of role as observer. And indeed, the saints of this era as glorified sons of God will observe the actions of human beings during Christ's millennial reign over humanity. Thus, a narrative presented as drama most effectively conveys a shadow within a shadow.

In the play of shadows that the historical record of circumcised Israel represents—the reality casting these shadows is the Church, the collected body of born-from-above disciples—Israel's rejection of God during Samuel's tenure as judge anticipates the rebellion of the Church during the first year of seven endtime years of tribulation. Israel didn't realize that it was rebelling against God when the nation wanted a king to rule over it as other nations had. The Church will not realize that it, too, is rebelling against God when it returns to, or continues (as the case may be) traditional practices and ceremonies derived from historical exegesis. Thus the anointing of Saul as king and his reign (and evil spirit) pertains to the Church during the first three and a half years of the tribulation. David's wars and warring as well as his preparation for the construction of the temple anticipates (just as does Joshua's warring once Israel crossed the Jordan) what happens during the second half of the Tribulation. Christ Jesus has not left His friends without knowledge of what will befall them. He has given them the

complete story or record as seen in the shadows born of Spirit disciples will cast during the turbulent years just ahead.

The kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9-14) when Satan is cast from heaven halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation. Joshua's crossing of the Jordan and the beginning of David's reign—both anticipate as shadows this event. The antiChrist is not an unbeatable foe, but Satan, given the mind of a man and cast to earth. As the spiritual king of Babylon, his fall from glory was anticipated by King Nebuchadnezzar being given the mind of a beast for seven years. For Satan, these seven years are the last three and a half years of the Tribulation plus the short while after Christ Jesus has reigned during the millennium. Only Satan will not return to glory as Nebuchadnezzar did. Instead, fire will come out from his belly and he will be utterly consumed (Ezek 28:18-19).

Thus, Solomon's reign—and the peace God gave to Israel for forty years—anticipates Christ Jesus' millennial reign over the earth. At the beginning of this reign, Christ will marry the Church. So today all disciples are part of the Bride. If they keep their heads covered by the righteousness of Christ (i.e., the covering of grace)—the head of the Bridegroom is uncovered—and practice no hypocrisy for their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees (Matt 5:20), then they will be glorified, adopted, and be one with Christ Jesus as a man and a woman become one flesh through marriage. *Canticles* anticipates what occurs to Israel after the Bridegroom and Bride marry. The relationship between *He* and *She* isn't idealized, but the reflection of what happens when words of love and devotion lose their meaning, the reason why Satan will be loosed for a short while after a thousand years.

The person conducting the service should begin by reading Canticles chapters 3 through 8.

Commentary: The setting and the tenor of the drama changes with verse 8 of chapter 2.

In verses 8 and 9, *She* addresses the chorus, then in verse 10, double-voice discourse is used, in that *She* relates what *He* says to her. This double-voiced discourse continues through verse 15... double-voiced discourse within Hebraic poetics with its thought couplets adds another layer of complexity to the presentation of an already sophisticated narrative. It would seem logical for the audience to hear *He* say to *She* what *She* relates to the chorus. The language is endearing as it reveals a ripening of the mating season in nature, so the content is of beautiful procreation. But the double voiced discourse places an intermediary—actually two intermediaries—between nature and the chorus, with the audience one step further removed.

In verse 16 and the first thought couplet of verse 17 *She* addresses the chorus; the double voiced discourse has ended. Then in the last thought couplet of verse 17, *She* addresses *He*. And Scene

Two closes. This scene is brief as narrative, but with on-stage movement and action, the scene would be approximately the same length as the first scene.

Again, for those unfamiliar with the term, double voiced discourse occurs when a story is told within a story. A character in the story becomes the narrator for another story that is of, but also is in addition to the story being read. In a drama, which is a story told, a character telling a story, or relaying what another character said tells a story within a story. This is done in good writing or drama for deliberate reasons that relate to the revealing of the greater narrative. As mentioned earlier, the play *Mousetrap* in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* is a mini-version of the overall story and is a type of double voiced discourse.

Chapter 3 begins Scene Three, with *She* addressing the chorus in verse 1, and in the first thought couplet of verse 2, and in the presentation of a thought in the second couplet of verse 2. There is now considerable action without speech; i.e., *She* moves about on the stage searching for *He*, but not finding her beloved. The last or second presentation of the second thought couplet of verse 2 occurs after the searching concludes. *He* cannot be found.

She's address in verse 3 is probably to the spokesperson for the chorus—it could be a direct address to the audience. *She's* address in verse 5 is certainly to the chorus. And with *She's* admonition to the chorus in verse 5, Scene Three closes. It is again brief as narrative, but with the time obviously spent searching, the scene when acted will take approximately the same length of time as the first scene.

Verse 6 begins Scene Four. In verses 6-8, *She* or the spokesperson for the chorus verbalizes her (or his) observation of Solomon coming so that the audience can also “see” what is seen. The one speaking in verse 11 is equally ambiguous in that either *She* or the spokesperson for the chorus could utter the command to the chorus. Either way, time is spent with the chorus observing the coming of Solomon and his escort.

If *Canticles* is broken into acts as it seems to be, Act One concludes with the end of chapter 3. Act One would then have in it four scenes that have in them a considerable amount of searching and observing, even to the use of double-voiced discourse to prevent *He* from being heard, or to emphasis his absence...the woman is present but the man is not throughout most of the act. The woman professes her love for the man, but *He* seems to have disappeared for a time. *She* finds him and brings him into her mother's house, and into the bedchamber where *She* was conceived. If *She* represents the Church, then her mother's house and the bedchamber where she was conceived reaches back in time. This juxtaposition of location between the king's chambers (chapter 1, verse 4) and her mother's bedchamber (chapter 3, verse 4) suggests something is seriously amiss in a relationship based on love.

Chapter 4 begins Act Two, Scene One. In verse 1, *He* addresses *She*. His words/comparisons will not woo many woman—and the juxtaposition of “my sister, my bride” (v. 9, 10, 12) suggests the complicated relationship of land and people personified through the character *She*.

Frankly, the words/comparisons *He* uses in verse 1-16 seem too pat, too practiced, too dispassionate. The comparisons lack the sense of intimacy that *She*’s language use conveyed in Act One. But in the last half of the thought couplet of verse 16, *He* has apparently successfully wooed *She*, for *She* invites him to come and eat.

Chapter 5, verse 1 continues the action of chapter 4 after a passage of some period of time: *He* tells either the audience or the chorus that, indeed, *He* came to his garden. In the last half of the thought couplet of verse 1, the chorus tells the audience to eat, drink, and be drunk with love. And with this admonishment, Act Two, Scene One concludes.

Verse 2 begins Scene Two, with *She* addressing the chorus. And instead of the double-voiced discourse of Act One, the audience hears the words of *He*. Verse 3 has *She* again addressing the chorus—there is a pause or gap in the narrative between verse 4 and verse 5. With verse 5, *She* continues addressing the chorus as evidenced in verse 8, which occurs after *She* went about the city looking for *He*.

She is badly abused by the watchmen in verse 7. Her offense is apparently looking for *He*, whose knock *She* was slow in answering...parallels, indeed, can be drawn between the history of the Church in the first few centuries of this church era and *She*. But in all likelihood, as circumcised Israel forms the spiritually lifeless shadow of the Church, the present Church anticipates the mindset that will cause many spiritually alive human beings to follow Satan when he is released for a short period after a thousand years. Thus, the present Church will do in type what Israel does during the Millennium. The greater problem with this analogy is that Christ Jesus doesn’t behave as *He* does, suggesting that *He* doesn’t represent God, but rather, the civil administration during the thousand years. Therefore, the collective administrations of the greater Church anticipates *He*, whose words are practiced, but spoken without great sincerity.

In verse 9, the chorus asks a hard question: “What is your beloved more than another beloved”? In verses 10-16, *She* answers the question by mostly describing *He*’s outer appearance. In Chapter 6, verse 1, the chorus asks where has *He* gone that they may seek him with her. In verse 2 and 3, *She* answers and Scene Two concludes.

Act Two, Scene Three begins in verse 4 with *He* addressing *She*. But a complexity is introduced in verse 8: *He* now addresses the chorus and says that there are sixty queens and eighty concubines... Solomon’s heart was turned partially away from God because of his many wives that physically foreshadow spiritually alien ideas or theologies. According to *He*, *She* is different from the wives and

concubines. Thus, *She* symbolically represents an entity unlike a wife or concubine; *She* represents an entity akin to the Church which will, in the Millennium, include all of humanity, for all will be born of Spirit and will have physically entered into Christ's rest.

In verse 11 & 12, *She* addresses the chorus, then in verse 13, one half of the chorus addresses the other half. Remember, when the chorus danced onto the stage, the chorus divides right and left, with half on either side of the steps leading onto the stage. The steps traditionally separates the stage from the rest of the world.

In Chapter 7, verses 1 through 8 and the first half of verse 9, *He* addresses *She*, but in words that are too smooth—in words that have become vain and without meaning. In the second half of verse 9 and in verse 10, *She* addresses the chorus, commenting apparently positively on the smoothness of his words. And as often happens in drama, the audience seems now to be in the privileged position of knowing more than the characters on stage know. *She* makes sure that the audience is aware of how smoothly *He* has spoken, but *She* makes no negative comment regarding this smoothness.

In verses 11 through 13 and on into Chapter 8, verses 1 & 2, *She* addresses *He*, with a break occurring after verse 2. In verses 3 & 4, *She* addresses the chorus. In the first half of verse 5, the chorus asks a question that the audience overhears. There is then another break, followed by the Leader of the chorus (or spokesperson) posing as God to say that the speaker awakens *She* under the apple tree. Verses 6 and 7 continue the address of the Leader of the chorus.

Act Two would technically conclude with the address of the Leader of the chorus speaking as God, with verses 8-14 constituting an Epilogue. In verses 8 & 9, the chorus speaks. In verses 10, 11, and in the first half of 12, *She* addresses the chorus. In the second half of 12, *She* addresses *He*. In verse 13, *He* addresses *She*, who then in verse 14 addresses him.

As drama, *Canticles* seems to be divided into seven scenes in two acts. The symbolism that would have been most apparent to Solomon would have had the personified land of Israel [Judea] as the woman, and the nation of Israel under Solomon as the man. However, the drama is millennial, which suggests that the two characters are the Church and the still human Church administrators. Regardless, *Canticles* is not an easily understood series of love poems between a man and a woman. No woman should expect a man to compare aspects of her to fawns or gazelles. If he does, the words need to be uttered with more sincerity than the man uses.

A last word before beginning another series: in the heavenly realm, there is neither male nor female, both sexes being biological products of this world and as such will remain in this world just as the house in which a physically circumcised Israelite dwelt remained in Judea, or Babylon, or Egypt. The physical body is no more than the temporary tabernacle or dwelling place of the born-of-Spirit son of God. Thus, a woman drawn by the Father through the gift of spiritual birth is not spiritually female, nor

is the man drawn by the Father spiritually male. And this cannot be said too strongly, too loudly, or too often: biology is part of this world, part of the physical creation, and as such, biology remains in this world. Thus, a baptized disciple is neither Jew nor Greek (racial biology doesn't matter), nor male or female (physical biology doesn't matter), nor free or slave (social biology doesn't matter). A baptized disciple is a son of God, a spiritual one-off creation just as Adam was a physical one-off creation. The Church doesn't give birth to disciples in this age. Rather, the Church is to nurture those disciples whose only parent is God. Therefore, biology has no place in pulpits, and the Church has no business speaking any words but those of the Father. A biological woman who is a son of God has the same rights as has a biological male who is a son of God. Both are sons of God; both are one-off spiritual creations of the Father. And no disciple ought to be a respecter of persons, favoring this son of God over that one. For every son of God is presently in the role of help-mate to Christ Jesus. Every son of God needs the covering of grace, symbolized by the natural covering given males (the foreskin) and females (her hair). It was the circumcision faction and their modern descendants that practiced and continue to practice racism based upon biology.

No occasion should ever occur in *The Philadelphia Church* when a person speaks from the pulpit as a biological male or as a biological female or as a biological son of Abraham. Such favoring of one person's house or tent or tabernacle over another person's physical flesh ought not ever be. Jesus' brother James addresses being a respecter of persons, of the flesh.

The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.

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