The Banner of God's Love

Song of Solomon 2:4— "... his banner over me was love."

The Song of Solomon is a "love song" (1:1-2). There are 177 verses. Some form of the word "love" is found 66 times (once in every 2½ verses)!

Historically, it is about a romantic relationship between Solomon and a humble Shulamite maiden.

- Jews view it as an allegory of Jehovah's love for Israel.
- Christians depict it as a type of Christ's love for His church and the individual believer.
- Combining these two views we may say the Song of Solomon is simply a picture of God's love for His people.

DIFFICULTIES: No other book has more diverse opinions among Bible scholars as this book. Its poetic structure makes interpretation difficult. First, it not written chronologically—Thoughts, desires, anticipations, reminiscences and dreams are expressed as present happenings. Secondly, sometimes it is hard to discern who is talking (bride or bridegroom). Speakers change abruptly without noting who is speaking.

There are several views of the love story behind this song. Here is one commonly accepted interpretation:

A young Shulamite girl worked in the vineyards of King Solomon. One day Solomon came to inspect his vineyard disguised as a shepherd. During his visit he was instantly attracted to this beautiful Shulamite girl. A romantic relationship ensued between them. However, the Shulamite was unaware Solomon's true identity.

Throughout the book they express their love for each other...

- 1:2 ...thy love is better than wine.
- 1:15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.
- 2:2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.
- 2:5 ... *I am sick of love*.
- 7:6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!
- ⇒After a season Solomon leaves, but promised to return.

While he is gone the Shulamite longed for him. She looked for him. She dreamed about him. She bragged about him. "The daughters of Jerusalem" asked her, "What makes your guy so special?" (5:9). She was more than happy to describe him to these other women (5:10-16). She spoke about his hair... his eyes... his cheeks... his lips... his hands... his physique... his legs... his countenance... his mouth. She concluded saying, "He is altogether lovely." After finishing describing him, these women said, "Wow!" (6:1). [We should so talk about Jesus that others will say, "We want to seek Him too!"]

Finally, one day she hears a procession of chariots. She wonders, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense...?" (3:6).

The cry is passed along, "Behold, King Solomon is coming!" Then someone tells her, "King Solomon is asking for you!"

Then she recognizes his voice, "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills..." (2:8-10). King Solomon is actually her shepherd lover who has returned to take her away. "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." (Picture of the rapture?)

In our text she joyfully describes what it was like to be taken from the vineyards into Solomon's palace.

I. The BRINGING into His company ("He brought me...")

- This Shulamite could never have come into His presence if he had not brought her (cf. 1:4).
- A. Only Christ can bring you into God's banqueting house (John 14:6).
- B. No man seeketh after God. It is Christ seeking us to bring us unto God. 1 Peter 3:18— For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.
- **II.** The BANQUET that He caters ("He brought me to the banqueting house...").

- A. A place of ABUNDANCE. Everything a person could want is spread out upon the King's table. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it MORE ABUNDANTLY."
 - This is a place where you will hunger and thirst no more.
- B. A place of PROVISION. God provides for those who belong to Him. He takes care of them. Beneath the banner of His love we find everything we need.
- Someday soon Christ will take us from this world to His heavenly banqueting house (John 14:1-3). Marriage Supper!
- III. The BANNER of His compassion ("...and his banner over me was love.")
 - ➡ What is a banner? Like a flag... pennant... ensign.
 - A. The **PERSON** of the Banner—The Shulamite said it was "HIS Banner." Solomon hoisted the banner over her. She didn't hoist it.
 - Jehovah-nissi (Ex. 17:15) The Lord is my banner. It's Jesus— He's my banner, flag, standard, He's my victory!
 - B. The **PURPOSE** of the banner—Identification
 - Identifies what country or family we belong to. Each of the twelve tribes in Israel had it's own banner that identified which tribe they belonged to (Num. 2). Each tribe would encamp under it's own banner/flag.
 - ➡ Christians camp under the banner of Christ's love. That banner identifies us as "Christians."
 - 2. A nation's flag usually displays a symbol **identifying it's philosophies**. If you see a flag of China it would tell you China is a communist nation.
 - The symbol of Christ's banner is a CROSS depicting His love (Rom. 5:8). [Hymn: *The Banner of the Cross.*]
 - 3. A rallying point. Armies use a banner to rally it's troops.
 - Christ is my "rallying point." [Hymn: Sound the Battle Cry.]
 Christ was lifted up on the cross. He is lifted up in the
 Gospel, as an rallying point to gather souls unto Him.

- 4. Corporations use banners to **advertise** and attract customers to their products.
 - ► Christ "advertises" Himself as LOVE! He attracts people by His love. Jeremiah 31:3—Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.
- 5. Sports teams use banners / pennants to "motivate their fans"
 → Christ motivates us by His Love (2 Cor. 5:14).
- C. The **PORTRAYAL** of the banner. What did the banner represent?
 - 1. It represents POSSESSION / ownership.

When Columbus landed at Venezuela in 1498, he planted a Spanish flag on it's shore thus claiming ownership for Spain.

- God owns us. We are His possession. His love bought us at the price of Christ's blood shed on the cross.
- No matter how bad I may feel... no matter how bad things appear... I belong to God because of Christ's love who gave Himself for me.
- 2. It represents PROTECTION. Those citizens who dwell under the flag of the United States are protected by the government of the United States. Likewise, we who belong to Christ are assured of Christ's loving protection (Isa. 54:17).
 - Once we put up our flag over a territory we've won, we will defend that area. Jesus has won my soul and put His flag of love over me, therefore He will defend me.

A flag can strike fear in the hearts of it's enemies, or pride in the hearts of it's citizens and friends. If you saw a flag of a communist country approaching our borders with it's weapons aimed at us, it would produce fear. However, if you were at war and saw the flag of one of your allies coming to your aid, it would produce a sense of hope, courage, and comfort.

3. It represents VICTORY.

Most of you are familiar with the picture of six soldiers victoriously raising the American flag atop Mt. Suribachi, during the battle of Iwo Jma in WW2. Why is it significant? Because raising that flag represented the capturing of that area. It was an emblem of conquest.

- When America landed men on the moon, they planted a flag. That was a symbol of ACCOMPLISHMENT, VICTORY.
- There is a battle today for the souls of men. Satan staked out a claim on my life. But the love of Christ won my heart and today His banner of love flies over me.
- D. The PLACEMENT of the banner—"OVER me." I am covered with His love.
 - 1. It was not a shy love one might try to conceal!
 - 2. His banner was not hidden, camouflaged, or concealed! It was lifted HIGH where the world might see!
 - 3. Jesus said, "If I be lifted UP..." We need to raise His flag!

SUMMATION: His banner is still flying over us today. Do you see it?

The banner isn't a banner that says "Try harder." It says, "I love you."

It is not a banner of LAW—It's the banner of LOVE. Our relationship with Christ is one based on love, not law. We serve and obey Him because we love Him. If a person lives for God out of fear or necessity, it is done grudgingly and there will be no joy. Which word characterizes your relationship with Christ: "Love" or "duty."

Flags usually display a **motto**. The motto on the banners of the tribes of Israel distinguished each tribe from other tribes (Num. 2:2). So the motto on Christ's banner is "love." That is what distinguishes Christians from all others (John 13:35).

Whose banner flies over your soul?

Jesus wants to bring you into His banqueting house. Will you accept His invitation?