

The Song of Songs

LESSON 2: INTERPRETING THE SONG

Intro:

BIG IDEA: Like all Scripture, the Song points us to _____ even if it isn't _____ about Christ.

History of Interpretation:

Jewish:

“God forbid! – no man in Israel ever disputed about the Song of Songs that it does not render the hands unclean, for all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.” **Rabbi Aqiba**⁷



Allegorical Literature:

An allegory is not tied to _____, but communicates truth in an _____ nature.

Allegorical Interpretation:

No one believed they were _____ but were _____ to teach a _____.

The Targum of the Song (700-900 A.D.) “a redemptive _____ of God’s chosen people, Israel.”⁸

The bedroom => _____, the Promised Land

Kissing => giving of the _____

Blackness => confession of the sin of _____

Her breasts: _____ & Aaron, the 2 _____ (son of David & son of Ephraim);

Moses & _____, Joshua & Eleazar.

Philosophical/Mystical Allegories

Christianity Allegory:

Origen



⁷ Longman, pp. 21.

⁸ Longman, pp. 24.

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“I advise everyone who is not yet rid of the vexations of the flesh and blood and has not ceased to feel passions of this bodily nature, to refrain from reading the book and the things that will be said about it.” **Origen**⁹

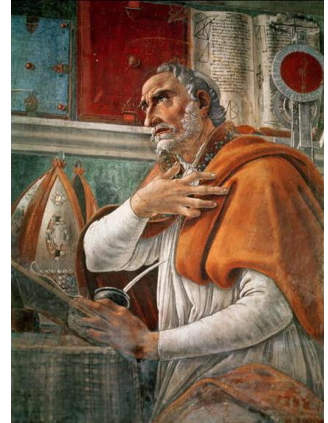
Jerome (4th century)

Augustine

Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century)

Martin Luther:

The Westminster Assembly condemned those who understood the Song as “a hot carnal pamphlet formed by some loose Apollo or Cupid.”¹⁰



“This whole book called ‘The Song of Solomon’ describes the communion between the Lord Christ and his saints.” **John Owen**¹¹

Some interpretations:

“It is a book about fellowship and communion with Christ. It is not in any sense to be interpreted literally. It is spiritual. It is an allegory, a spiritual dialogue between Christ our heavenly Bridegroom and the church, his bride.” **Don Fortner**¹²

_____ in a sense

_____ in another

No obvious _____ this is an allegory

The events seem to be _____, using names of real people and _____.

Allegory had no reasonable _____ for interpretation.

“Allegory, however, is too often uncertain, unreliable, and by no means safe for supporting faith. Too frequently it depends upon human guesswork and opinion; and if one leans on it, one will lean on a staff made of Egyptian reed.” **Martin Luther**¹³

⁹ Gledhill, pp. 30.

¹⁰ Longman, pp. 34.

¹¹ Owen, John. *Communion with God*. Carlisle, Banner of Truth Trust. 1991. pp. 45

¹² Fortner, Don. *Discovering Christ in the Song of Solomon*. Auburn, Evangelical Press, 2005. pp. 9.

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“They sincerely felt that the Song’s explicit sexuality was at odds with the rest of the Bible, and so they used allegorical interpretation to change the surface meaning into conformity with what they thought the rest of the Bible taught. However, there is absolutely nothing in the Song of Songs itself that hints of a meaning different from the sexual meaning.” **Tremper Longman**¹⁴



During the Enlightenment, the allegorical interpretation began to lose its influence.

1. Tradition was challenged by _____ arguments. People studied the text using a new method of interpretation.
2. Growth in _____ discoveries. We found love poems from _____, Mesopotamia and other places similar to the Song.
3. Similarities with _____ culture. For instance, songs like this were sung as part of wedding ceremonies.
4. Newfound _____ for the human body after years of the influence of Augustine on the church.

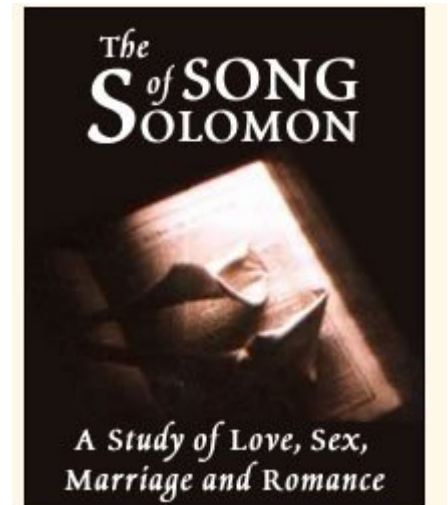
Literal or Natural Interpretations

John Calvin

Joseph Dillow¹⁵

My Approach

Assessing the _____ meaning using a literal or natural



¹³ Kinlaw, Dennis. *Song of Songs, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 5*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan. 1991. pp.1203.

¹⁴ Longman, pp. 36.

¹⁵ Dillow, Joseph. *Solomon on Sex*. Nashville, Thomas Nelson. 1977. pp. 8.

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interpretative method => _____ thru Christ => _____ about redeemed sexuality & a picture into the relationship of Christ & the Church (Eph. 5)

“Their intuition may have been correct even if their exegetical method left something to be desired. This writer concurs with their position and believes there is biblical support for that intuition. That support rests in the analogical nature of the relationship between biblical election and human marriage.” **Dennis Kinlaw**¹⁶

“Just so, this book points us not only to the wonder of human love, but also, especially when human love fails us, to the even greater wonder of God’s love.” **Kathleen Buswell Nielson**¹⁷

The key word is “_____” not “_____”.

In other words: it really means what it says and that functions as a type for our relationship with Christ. It is about BOTH.

¹⁶ Kinlaw, pp. 1208.

¹⁷ Nielson, Kathleen Buswell. *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs: Wisdom’s Searching and Finding*. Phillipsburg, P & R Publishing. 2009, pp. 133.