

# SONG OF SOLOMON and TITUS

## SONG OF SOLOMON

Song of Solomon is full of hope, waiting and longing. It is also known as Song of Songs and as Canticles or Canticle of Canticles. Selections such as chapter 2:8-17 and 8:6-7 are often read at weddings, but it is not assigned for any Sundays. It is read for Passover in the synagogue.

Song of Solomon is a love song or poem – really more like a collection of related poems that tell the story of two lovers. There is nothing else like it in the Bible. There are more references to animals and plants, gardens and spices than any other book of the bible. Expect something beautiful and surprising.

Believers have read this book as an affirmation of love between a man and a woman. It is a celebration of creation, including human sexuality – a taste of the Garden of Eden. The title suggests that it is about King Solomon and his beloved (perhaps the Queen of Sheba?), but neither one is named clearly as the lover in the book. Song of Songs teaches us about the joys and sufferings of love, about the beauty and power of love. It is about you and the one you love.

Believers have also read Song of Solomon as a love song between God and his people, between Jesus and the Church. This book teaches us about the tenderness and passion of God's love for us. It is about you and the One Who Loves You.

There are two main voices in Song of Solomon, the man and the woman OR the Lord and the believer. "The daughters of Jerusalem" are a third voice which is similar to the chorus in Greek drama. This is a group which speaks with one voice, responding to or clarifying the experiences of the lovers. Some Bibles have headings which the English editor has added. These may help identify the voices. It may also help to think of this as a series of connected poems instead of one continuous poem.

Names for the beloved in Song of Songs have been used in the new Testament and Christian literature for Jesus: "lily of the valley," "Rose of Sharon," "fairest of ten thousand." Song of Solomon has inspired many devotional gems which help us understand the love of Jesus, spiritual renewal and loving Jesus in return. Two that I especially recommend are Hinds Feet on High Places and Mountains of Spices by Hannah Hurnard. You are welcome to borrow them from me.

## TITUS

The New Testament letters have only a few passages which refer to Jesus' birth. Titus has two, and they are often read for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day worship (2:11-14 and 3:4-7). This passage from Titus 3 may also be familiar because it is quoted in Luther's Small Catechism in the section on Holy Baptism.

*When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the waters of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This spirit he has poured out on us richly through Jesus our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-7*

Titus is a short, powerful letter from one church leader to another. *I left you behind in Crete for this reason, that you should put in order what remained to be done and should appoint elders in every town. (Titus 1:5)* The good news about Jesus is stated clearly and quickly. Most of the letter is practical instruction for selecting leaders, handling troublemakers and guiding groups within the church. These three chapters address timeless issues, but they are expressed within a specific history and context.

The New Testament character of Titus is a companion of the apostle Paul. He is named in Galatians 2:1-3 and II Corinthians 2:12-13. When Paul travels to Jerusalem to get approval for his teaching from the church leaders who knew Jesus, Titus is with him. It is during these meetings (see Acts 15) that they decide that Gentiles do not need to follow Jewish law in order to be Christians. Titus, a Gentile, does not need to be circumcised. He is therefore an excellent choice to silence bad teaching and to establish good leadership.

Titus, like I and II Timothy, is not about introducing the Gospel or starting a new congregation. This is a later phase than most New Testament writing. Many have questioned if this is a letter from the historical Paul to the historical Titus. Perhaps an anonymous writer has compiled the wisdom of Paul and Titus for the next generation of the church. The question of authorship does not change its value. Each generation must faithfully select leadership and maintain organizational structure which promote gospel preaching and godly living.

***Good things come in small packages. Song of Solomon has eight chapters. Titus has three.***