

Tradition and Love

Key Verse: *“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”*
—Song of Solomon 4:16

Selected Scripture:
Song of Solomon 4:8–5:1

THIS BOOK OF THE BIBLE, the Song of Solomon, is in reality an allegorical representation of the mutual love between Christ and the church—his espoused bride. It is in highly symbolic language that this love story is told. Thus, in the context of today’s lesson we see Christ speaking of his love and care for the church.

In Song of Solomon 4:10, we read, “How fair is thy love, . . . my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!” Here, we see Christ symbolically speaking to the effect that it is the character of love which he is especially looking for in his bride. He also mentions “the smell of thine ointments” as perhaps referring to the acts of kindness and service by which the church demonstrates this character of love.

As our lesson continues, the church is symbolically spoken of as being a garden in which many valuable things are grown. “Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.” (vss. 13,14) The fruitage spoken of here symbolizes the fruits and graces of the Spirit by which the

church is developed and prepared as a bride. (Gal. 5:22,23; II Pet. 1:5-7) The herbs, spices, and oils also mentioned as being part of this garden all served various important purposes in Biblical times. They also had pleasing odors. This perhaps represents the services and acts of kindness and sacrifice accomplished on behalf of others by the church. The Apostle Paul speaks of these things as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”—Phil. 4:18

The Key Verse of our lesson points out another feature of this symbolic “garden” of our Christian walk and development. It states that winds from the north and south are called upon to blow upon it, that the spices and fruitage may flow out even more. The wind seems to be a reference to the trials and troubles of life. Some of these are permitted directly from God as he sees our need for certain experiences, thus representing the north wind. In other experiences, Satan may be allowed to try and tempt us along certain lines, representing the south wind. God supervises these experiences too, only allowing the needed lessons to be learned, and never to the hurt of the New Creature. By these winds of trials and testings, the church is developed so that its fruitage “may flow out.”

In Song of Solomon 5:1, we find further symbolic language concerning Christ and the church. “I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” Here we see, again symbolically, Jesus speaking of the fact that he has eaten of the Word of God and drunk of the doctrines of truth. He urges his “friends” to do likewise. The word “friends” really means close associate, or companion. It is the church who are the companions and close associates of Jesus. Indeed, they are seeking to follow in his footsteps. They eat from the same source of truth—the Word of God—as he did. They drink the same wine of sound doctrine that he drank. Let us accept the Master’s invitation to eat and drink “abundantly.” ■