

Rapture In the Song of Solomon

By T.W. Tramm

WITH SPRING in full swing, it's time to revisit one of the Bible's most beautiful rapture typologies.

The biblical book entitled Song of Solomon is described as a collection of poems that celebrate romantic and physical love.

Traditionally, Jews see the Song of Solomon as having allegorical value pertaining to the love of God. Christians, likewise, see allegory pertaining to the love between Christ and the Church.

Many eschatologically minded Bible-readers, however, see a great deal more: a multi-act drama chock-full of rapture types.

The most commonly cited passage in this regard features one of the main characters, a "shepherd," coming to gather and spirit away his beloved, a Shulammitte (Gentile) maid. The passage is written from the viewpoint of the Shulammitte maid observing the shepherd's approach:

"The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; he is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice. My beloved spoke, and said to me: 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away'" (Song 2:8-10).

Let's consider the elements seen as typological of the gathering of the bride we call the Rapture.

In verse 8, the phrase, "Behold, he comes," brings to mind the similar phrase, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds," connected to Jesus' return in Revelation (1:7).

In the same verse, the shepherd's approach is characterized as being swift, "like a gazelle or young stag, skipping upon the hills." Swift or sudden is how Scripture characterizes the Lord's coming at the end of the age (Matt. 24:27; Rev. 16:15; 1 Thess. 5:3).

That the shepherd is said to be "behind our wall...looking through the windows," is suggestive of one coming from a different realm, i.e., heaven, through a door or window. Scripture frequently uses the analogy of a "door" or "window" as an entry point into heaven (Rev. 4:1; Mal. 3:10).

"Gazing through the lattice" suggests the shepherd's being partially revealed/partially concealed, as one imagines the Lord will appear upon His return in the clouds (Luke 21:27; Rev. 1:7).

Finally, as the shepherd arrives, he says to his beloved, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

The words "Rise up ... and come away" echo similar rapture phraseology such as "Come up here" in Revelation and "Your dead ... shall arise" in Isaiah (Rev. 4:1; Isa. 26:19).

It's easy to see why Song 2:8-10 is thought to be a poetic depiction of the Rapture.

But it gets more interesting.

Subsequent verses 11-13 are brimming with clues as to the season of the shepherd's coming:

"For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!" (Song 2:11-13).

Let's consider the seasonal clues individually.

1. "The winter is past."

"The winter is past" means spring has arrived.

2. "The rain is over and gone."

The reference to rain is important because in Scripture the Lord's coming is described as being like "the former and latter rains" (Hos. 6:3). The former and latter rains are such definite seasons in Israel that they are actually marked on the calendars and almanacs describing the various harvest times. The former (early) rains coincide with the October-December timeframe. The latter rains coincide with the March-May timeframe. Thus, May into June marks the beginning of the dry season in Israel, the time when "the rain is over and gone."

3. "The flowers appear on the earth."

In Israel, flowers bloom throughout the year. Spring, however, March-June, is the peak season. It's interesting to note that lilies are specifically mentioned in the Song of Solomon: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. Like a lily among thorns..." (Song 2:1, 2). According to sources, the best time to view "lilies among the thorns" as described in Song of Solomon is in the late spring/early summer.

4. "The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land":

The turtledove is a migratory bird. In Israel, it is said that by mid-April one can observe clouds of doves feeding on the clovers of the plain. They overspread the whole face of the land.

5. "The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the blossoming vines spread their fragrance":

Green figs and blossoming grape vines indicate the May-June timeframe in Israel.

The seasonal references leave little doubt as to the general timeframe of the shepherd's coming: late spring into possibly early summer. The question is, are these references merely aesthetic, a convenient backdrop for the romantic exchange between the shepherd and Shulammitite maid? Or are they, rather, telltale of the season in which the Good Shepherd, Jesus, will come and say to the bride: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away"?