

The Rapture In Song Chapter 6?

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DOES Song of Solomon chapter 6 depict a spring-time Rapture?

Let's take a look.

The actors in view in Song chapter 6 are the "daughters of Jerusalem," a type of Israel, the "Shulammitte," a type of the Church, and her beloved, a type of Christ.

The scene opens with the daughters of Jerusalem inquiring of the Shulammitte where her beloved may be found. The Shulammitte's glowing description of him in the previous chapter has ignited a desire in the daughters to seek him along with her:

"Where has your beloved gone,
O most beautiful among women?
Where has your beloved turned,
that we may seek him with you?
Together in the Garden of Love."

The Shulammitte tells the daughters of Jerusalem that her beloved has gone to his garden to gather lilies. Seeing that the Shulammitte is earlier described "a lily of the valleys ... a lily among thorns ... among the daughters," the lilies may be interpreted as signifying particular believers, or the Church:

"My beloved has gone down to his garden
to the beds of spices,
to graze in the gardens
and to gather lilies.
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;
he grazes among the lilies."

At this point, the Shulammitte's beloved enters the exchange. We interpret this to be the voice of Christ praising the Church. Despite her infirmities, she is beautiful beyond measure in his eyes. He speaks of her as "perfect ... the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her":

"You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love,
lovely as Jerusalem,
awesome as an army with banners.
Turn away your eyes from me,
for they overwhelm me—

Your hair is like a flock of goats
leaping down the slopes of Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of ewes
that have come up from the washing;
all of them bear twins;
not one among them has lost its young.
Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.
There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,
and virgins without number.
My dove, my perfect one, is the only one,
the only one of her mother,
pure to her who bore her.”

The daughters of Jerusalem join in to praise the Shulammitte as more beautiful and blessed than themselves:

The young women saw her and called her blessed;
the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.
“Who is this who looks down like the dawn,
beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,
awesome as an army with banners?”

The scene then shifts to the Shulammitte going out to the orchard to admire the blossoms of the valley. It’s apparently late spring as she is checking to see if the grapevines have budded and the pomegranates are in bloom:

“I went down to the nut orchard
to look at the blossoms of the valley,
to see whether the grapevines had budded,
whether the pomegranates were in bloom.”

All of a sudden, before she is aware, the Shulammitte finds herself among the chariots of her beloved, one imagines headed to his palace:

“Before I was aware, my desire set me
among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince.”*

At the abrupt departure of the Shulammitte, the daughters of Jerusalem cry out:

“Return, return, O Shulammitte,
return, return, that we may look upon you.”

The Shulammite's beloved answers:

“Why should you look upon the Shulammite,
as upon a dance before two armies?”

As is the case with much of Song of Solomon, opinions vary as to the meaning of the final verse. Some suggest the two armies depict the whole multitude of believers, signifying the union of Jews and Gentiles in the Church. Some interpretations render “a dance before two armies” “the dance of Mahanaim,” a well-known sacred dance taking its name from the locality in which it originated (Gen. 32:2; Josh. 21:38). Other commentators, taking “Mahanaim” to be a designation for the angels, or “angelic hosts,” render here a dance of angel choirs, i.e., a spectacle of special grace and beauty. In any case, the feeling conveyed is that the daughters of Jerusalem are awestruck.

Does Song chapter 6 give a glimpse of a spring-time Rapture?

With the season of blossoming grapevines and pomegranates upon us, it's a thrilling prospect to consider.

NOTES:

Song chapter 6 taken from the ESV translation

*Due to its obscure and mysterious nature, Song of Solomon is one of the most notoriously difficult books of the Bible to interpret. Probably the most debated and difficult passage to decipher is verse 12, rendered here: “Before I was aware, my desire set me among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince.” The KJV renders the verse: “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Charles Spurgeon comments on the latter translation:

“We cannot be quite sure at this time what these chariots of Amminadib were to which the inspired poet here refers. Some suppose that he may have alluded to a person of that name, who was renowned, like Jehu of old, for his furious driving Some have understood them to mean the chariots of God, of the people who surround the Great Prince himself; that is to say, the chariots of the angels, according as we read, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” In this case, the metaphor would be a very striking one—“Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of the attendants upon the Great King. I was like the cherubim themselves, all aglow with consecrated fire. In whatever way the critical point is deciphered, the practical solution appears to be this. The writer's soul was quickened, because full of life, full of energy, full of might, full of spirit,

and full of princely dignity too, and not only stimulated to a high degree, but also elevated, lifted up from dulness, indifference, and apathy...”

While the various translations and commentaries of verse 12 suggest a range of possible meanings, it seems clear that the poetic intent of the verse is to convey a sense of sudden enrapturement and taking flight. Whether this is precisely an allusion to the transfiguration of believers at the Rapture, only the One who inspired the words knows.