

Bodies

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[0:00] in order for the line to be kept going, in order to be children. So he's sticking with the law of Moses in that regard. And then they set up this situation with seven brothers.

And they each die one by one. So the woman was married to all seven of them. And then they say, with a slight sort of smirk, you know, if you believe in the resurrection, tell me, which of these men is she going to be married to in the resurrection?

Since they were all married to her. So, you know, they're trying to make Jesus look stupid. But Jesus isn't stupid. And do you know what he, see what he says? He says, you're wrong. You are in error.

That is quite something to say to people. It's not vindictive. It's not saying, but it's just saying, you're wrong. You've got it wrong. You are in error.

And the reason they're in error is they don't know their own scriptures. And they don't know the power of God. That's quite an indictment, isn't it?

[1:09] But if you flip it round, the answer is to do with what it actually says in the Bible. And it's to do with the sort of God who wrote the Bible. That he is a powerful God.

And things are not too difficult for him. He can do more than we can ask or imagine. And Jesus says, well, let me put you straight. In the resurrection, there will be a resurrection.

There will be bodies. Sexual relations will be different. So there will be male and female. But male and female will not be about reproduction.

Now, here on earth, male and female is inextricably bound up with reproduction. Having children. But in heaven, there won't be having children.

And there won't be marrying and giving in marriage. So some things will stay the same. And other things will be different. So there will still be maleness and femaleness.

[2:13] There will be bodies. But, and we're to understand this is from the power of God. There will not be marrying and giving in marriage. So we learn, by the by, that angels don't marry and get given in marriage.

So that tells us a little bit about angels. Maybe God made them one by one. Instead of having a family tree of angels, maybe they're all one off. That's a bit of a speculation.

And then Jesus turns the tables back on these people and says, Just look at your own scriptures. Just look at, right back in the beginning, where God says, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

And Jesus is clever and subtle and wonderful in the way he says this. He says, now just think about that.

If God says, I belong to this person, that person belongs to me. I belong to that person, this person belongs to me. I belong to that person, this person belongs to me.

[3:22] I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus is saying, they can't be dead, can they? They can't be gone.

If God is their God and they're his people, that can't be just forgotten. There must be an ongoing reality to that.

And then notice what Jesus is saying. And if it's Abraham, how could it possibly be Abraham if he didn't have a resurrection body? And how could it possibly be Isaac if he wasn't raised as Isaac? And how could it possibly be Jacob if he wasn't raised as Jacob? So there is resurrection. You notice Jesus' reasoning is quite subtle. But he's insistent.

There is resurrection. There is a future. There will be bodies. There will be recognisable people because of the power of God. So we're going to sing again.

[4:25] We're going to sing number 460 about the resurrection of Jesus himself, which is number 460. Glory to Jesus, risen, conquering son.

Relationship of love. Song of Songs is about a romantic relationship. It's in the Bible. The Bible talks about God and people.

We're meant to make that connection. Are we made for what you might call a romantic relationship with God? And we're not the people that we should be until we are entered into that relationship. That's the question that this book asks us. And this is the introduction I give each time. In case you've come along for the first time, the questions that arise, is this really a love song for human beings?

Well, it is. It starts off, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. And the bit that we were reading was quite warm, if not hot. So if you thought that the Bible was against sex, then the answer must be no, because that's very much what this book's talking about.

[5:35] And then isn't it embarrassing for a morning sermon? And it might be a little bit, actually. So the bits that we read, your breasts are like clusters of fruit. But let's not be embarrassed.

Let's see there is something beautiful and glorious being described here. What's the way of interpreting it? Just basically, the people and the plot seems to be about a woman, a farm girl, and she's marrying her bloke, who seems to be a shepherd.

And they describe one another like a king and queen. So it's a little bit like, get this the right way around. She's my princess Meghan Markle.

He's my Prince Harry. That's the way that they talk about each other. It's about human romance, but human romance is designed to be an expression of the divine love for his people.

And then the question, is this any use? And I think it's a huge amount of use. Because in these days, there's so much confusion about love and the meaning of sex and relationships and gender.

[6:55] And the Bible says, look, this is the beautiful, glorious way God designed things. It's a song which unashamedly celebrates the unmatched beauty and glory of covenanted love between two different beings.

It's a heterosexual sexual love. So that's my introduction. Let me just say again the caveat. My job as a Christian minister is to say what the Bible says.

And if you're visiting this morning, and this is a different way of thinking to the one that you espouse, I mean you no offence. It's my job to say what the Bible says. And that's what I'm going to try and do this morning.

So we've looked through the book. It started off with love and longing. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. It talked about courtship with the proviso of timing.

Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires. He's saying there's a right time for closeness. And that involves waiting. Then there was an incident of distance and loss.

[8:01] And there was this idea of the two lovers, well, rejection and getting back together. She dreamed about him coming to her, her turning him away. The time wasn't right.

There was a section on consummation where the things longed for were the realities. I have come into my garden. The garden was locked and hidden from all but him. And then we had some problems last time.

The lovers get out of step with each other, but they get back together again. And the section that we have here I think is about confirmation and affirmation. That's what we're going to look at.

Confirmation and affirmation. Please look at the text if you've got a Bible there. You can manage looking at it. There are a couple of big sections about the woman.

So there's two descriptions, which is actually, if I've counted correctly, the third of the description. Sorry. The second of the descriptions in the book. Chapter 6, verses 4 to 9. Description of the woman.

[9:00] Why have I got that? And then, yes. The friends ask, who is this? I think it's the friends who ask, who is this appear like the dawn?

And the lover says, I have gone down. I went to look at the vines. And then the friends say, come back so that we can look at you. And then we come to another description of the woman, starting

with her sandaled feet.

Oh, prince's daughter. And then there's a bit about intention and invitation. So intention, I will climb the palm tree, verse 8.

And invitation, may the wine go straight to my lover, last half of verse 9. And then they go places together. They go to the countryside, in verse 11.

And they go indoors. Where do they go indoors? In chapter 8, verse 2. I will lead you to my mother's house.

[9:59] And it ends up with, again, even now as they are married, there's a time thing. Do not awaken love till the right time. Now, there's quite a bit of repetition, as we see.

There's some of the things you will have seen before. And I don't think that can be avoided. There's repetition, repetition of descriptions, repetition of the do not awaken. That gets repeated through the song.

And I would like to try and take some time to have a little conclusion of what are we actually seeing and why is it there.

So that's the plan. And we'll go through the text. And then I'd like to, before we finish, to reflect on some of the implications of it. Okay? I'm going to do that anyway, even if you don't think that's okay. So a couple of things before we start. So an age rating warning. This bit does get a bit warm, if not hot. It's interesting to notice the way the song does this.

[11:05] It's not sort of pornographic. In many ways, it's not explicit. But it talks about things like towers and goats and jewels and deer and sheaves of wheat and drinking wine.

And those are perfectly innocent things to talk about. But grown-ups will know that these metaphors can be taken for the physical closeness and the physical pleasure of male and female.

And I think we should not be naive about it. I mean, that's... It never says that. But that's what it's getting at. So just notice that. And it's talking about the beauty and glory of covenanted heterosexual sexual love.

That's what it's talking about. A couple of mythbusters. Number one, the myth that God is not interested in our bodies. That myth has been around for a long, long time.

The idea that spirituality is about spirit as opposed to body. Greek philosophy would have said that.

[12:22] It would have said you cannot be spiritual if you're thinking about anything to do with the body. The body is bad. Forget it. Preferably get rid of it. Ignore it.

It's neither here nor there. Spirituality is about spirit. That's a Greek philosophical idea. It is not a Bible idea. The Bible does not do it that way.

As we've seen, Jesus himself would make this connection. You can't be Abraham if you don't have Abraham's body. And you are you, including your body.

That's the way the Bible looks at it. And it is, so I put it anti-Bible. And it's very specifically anti-Christian. Because Christianity has a focus on the resurrection of Jesus' body.

And I hope I can say a little bit about that as we go through. Interestingly enough, in the New Testament, Apostle Paul makes a specific comment about this.

[13:26] He says, many people will abandon the faith and follow things taught by demons. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

So Paul is quite strong on that. The idea that spirituality means that you command people not to get married. He says, that doesn't come from God. That comes from demons.

Now let me just be careful to say, the Bible, the New Testament does not command everybody should be married. Because in the New Testament there is a gift of singleness. And that's a gift too. The Apostle Paul said, that's what I've got. And that allows me to serve the Lord in a way I couldn't do if I was married. So it's the gift of singleness. But to forbid people to marry is, it says here, a demonic doctrine.

And I'm not sure you don't get close to that with the Rome Catholic teaching that priests should be celibate. Where on earth does that come from? I think it comes from this territory.

[14:36] And it's not what Christianity teaches. God created us in the beginning as spirit-breathed bodies. He made, it says he made the creatures out of the dust of the earth.

And of human beings, it said he breathed into them. And they became living creatures. Or he became a living creature. And bodies with spirit breathed in.

That's what human beings are. Not just spirit. Creation interacts with our bodies. So all the stuff we do, you do with your body.

You walk using your body. You express things using your body. You eat using your body. You sing using your body. You serve using your body.

And we interact with each other via bodies. Now I know texting and WhatsApp and so on and Facebook. Yeah. I don't know. Is a Facebook friend really a friend?

[15:38] Well, I better be careful here. But friendship. You shake hands with somebody. Friendship, you go for a walk together.

Friendship, you sit down and eat together. These are all things to do with the body. We interact with each other via our bodies. We are ourselves, including our bodies.

The idea that a person should only be the soul or the spirit is an odd and unsatisfactory condition to be in. Now just let me add to that.

In the book of Revelation, the saints who have died go to be with the Lord. And it talks about the souls. The spirits of just men made perfect and the souls that are under the altar.

They are not resurrected yet. They are themselves. They are consciously alive. But they are not resurrected. That is not the final state.

[16:38] They are waiting for the final thing. The final deal, which is the resurrection. So, myth buster number one.

Our hope, the Christian hope, and I think Jesus would say the hope of the whole scriptures, is new bodies' resurrection. Myth buster number two. God is not interested in human pleasure.

So, this myth would say Christianity is actually designed to deny people legitimate pleasure and make people as miserable as possible. You know, whether...

You might say we're actually quite good at that. But it's not what... Real, authentic Christianity is not there to make people miserable. It is profoundly to make people more human.

And that involves the enjoyment and pleasure that our bodies are made for and are capable of. The myth says if you're a Christian, you'll be miserable.

[17:46] It will get you. It will bring you down. Faith, this myth would say, is a fundamental attack on human flourishing. And that's a very old lie.

That's the lie that Satan used in the garden when he says, the reason God doesn't want you to eat that fruit is it will make you wise. It will do you good. And God doesn't want to do you good or improve you at all.

And that was the lie right back in the garden. And it's still a myth that's around. And it's not true. In the song here, we see a great deal about tasting, eating, drinking, smelling, seeing.

And we see a lot about beauty. And we see things that are good. And God made everything and said it's good. And there are many implications for this.

And we've got to handle it carefully. The Bible isn't saying anything that gives you pleasure must be right. Because even in the song, we have the serious issue of timing.

[18:49] Is this the right time for this pleasure? But I don't want to go too far down that road. Let's come back to the text.

So here is the lady who allowed me to photograph her in the National Trust, wherever it was, Petworth maybe. And she can be our model for a bit this morning.

We go to the Song of Songs, chapter 6, verse 4, where the lover says, You are beautiful, my darling. And let's go through the description.

So the first thing he says, you are beautiful like royal cities. Terza, which I believe was a capital city in the north. And, of course, Jerusalem, the esteemed, glorious city of the south.

And he says to this lady, you are as lovely as these royal capital cities. And he says, you are majestic as a bannered army, a troops with banners.

[19:59] I hope I will come back to this. But that's an interesting one, isn't it? You are lovely as powerful royal cities. And you are like an

army with banners.

Your eyes, he says, no, I'm getting too far ahead, aren't I? Your eyes, sorry, I'm going to click this in the wrong order. Your eyes overwhelm me.

Turn your eyes from me, they overwhelm me. Now, that's a new one as well. That her eyes have an effect on him. Your eyes overwhelm me.

Your hair is like a flock of goats tumbling down from Gilead. Well, we've had that one before. And your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing.

Each has its twin, not one of them is alone. So your sheep, your teeth are like sheep. And we thought about it last time. Do you remember we thought if he was going to think of something white and shining, what would he do?

[21:04] Snow, sheep, washed sheep. So white teeth in pairs. Hair like goats leaping down, teeth, white sheep in pairs.

And your temples behind your veil are like halves of a pomegranate. So there's a pomegranate associated with fruitfulness.

I have to say I'm a little bit defeated as to why you would say somebody's temples look like that. Is it the roundness? Is it the colour? Is it the idea of fruitfulness?

I don't know. But anyway, he obviously understood it and we don't necessarily. And he refers to her beauty. But do you notice he's also referring to her formidable nature.

There's something quite strong about this woman. A little bit like the woman in Proverbs 31. 31 is it? She's not just, as it were, a pushover.

[22:06] She's a strong woman. She's like a city. She's like an army. She has overwhelming eyes. Here's something that speaks about her power and her strength.

And that's an interesting thing to take on, isn't it? And then he goes on to talk about 60 queens there may be and 80 concubines and virgins beyond number. My perfect one is unique.

You can do the math. 60 plus 80 is 140. 140 is 2 times 10 times 7. 7 is the number of perfection, isn't it? So I think he's sort of countering with these numbers and says, you could have any, you know, just the complete number of these, whatever they are, queens, concubines, virgins beyond number.

Old Solomon had loads of these women. He was a king. But, you know, he had women on demand, if you like, or whatever it was.

But he says, but this is better. You're better. You're unique. My dove, my perfect one, the farm girl from down the road that I love is unique.

[23:19] The only daughter of her mother, the favourite of the one who bore her. And everybody agrees with me, he says. The maiden saw her and called her blessed, and the queens and concubines praised her.

So against the background of nobility and perfection, she's my girl. She's the one that I want. She's the one that I need. Do, do, do.

Yes. She's the object of admiration and praise. So let's go to, move on to the connecting verses.

So the friends, it's always a little bit difficult to tell exactly who's speaking, but it looks like it's the friends saying here, who is this? Now then, what does she do? She appears like the dawn.

She peeps in like the dawn. She's fair as the moon. She's, yeah, fair. Fair as the moon. She's bright as the sun.

[24:21] And she's as majestic as, the translation says, stars in procession. It more literally says the bannered ones. So we're coming back to the idea of banners and armies and hosts.

But we presume it's the stars. So, wow, look at this description of her. She is, she comes in like the dawn. She's as fair as the moon. She's as bright as the sun.

She's as majestic as the stars. Wow, what a brilliant description of this woman. She's amazing. And I'll just stop to think what we're talking about here.

We're talking about beauty. Aren't we? We're talking about beauty. And there's a beauty here that comes from beyond science.

So I've got some science programs that I like to listen to on Radio 4. I always find they're interesting. Well, sometimes they're a bit frustrating. But no scientist is going to capture the formula for beauty.

[25:25] You could put beauty in front of a scientist. And scientists would have no scientific way of recognizing what was there in front of him or her. Beauty goes beyond that.

Beauty goes beyond sort of evolutionary thinking. Beauty goes beyond economics and politics. Beauty comes from outside this world.

It's a heavenly thing coming into this world, isn't it? There's something about this woman that has its origin outside this world in heaven.

Giovanni Leone. Who knows who Giovanni Leone is? He's got a rush on the other one. I'll tell you who he is in a minute. Anyway.

He said this. And you can think whether he was right or wrong. And whether he should have put it like this. But what he said was, apparently, The strongest evidence to prove that God exists is a beautiful woman.

[26:32] Now, what a thought. The strongest evidence that God exists is a beautiful woman. Where does this beauty come from, you see? Why do we have beauty? Where is it? What is it telling us? And, according to Wikipedia, Giovanni Leone was the 37th Prime Minister of Italy from the 27th of June, 1963, to the 4th of December, 1963.

Is that right? I don't know. And I want to link this thought to the people of God, the Church of Jesus Christ.

The people of God here, this is the Church. You look around. Some of us have got grey hair. Some of us haven't got anything other than grey hair. Some of us are a bit wrinkled. Name no names. But, God's plan, God's view of his Church is that she shall be, and in a sense already is, beautiful.

Let me show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. The bride is a city. The city shone with the glory of God.

[28:07] Its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel. That he should make a bride without spot or blemish or any wrinkle, but, what does it say, radiant and glorious, something like that.

That's God's plan, if you're a Christian, for you. That's God's plan for, if our community is a Church of God, an Assembly of God, if our community is a Church of Jesus Christ, that's God's plan for us. And, in a sense already, that's how he sees us. And that's how he loves us. Fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession.

That is the destiny and the true identity of the Church of Jesus Christ, which is breathtaking.

Let's carry on through the text. So, one or other of them says, I went down to the grove of nut trees to look at the new growth in the valley to see if the vines had budded or the pomegranates were in bloom, and before I realised it, my desire set me among the royal chariots of my people.

[29:50] Or, if you look at footnote A, or among the chariots of Abinadab, or among the chariots of the people of the prince. And I think it is generally agreed, this is one of the most difficult verses in the song to translate.

It could mean various things. I don't think we need to get stuck on it. Something happens. Then the friends say, Shuv, shuv, come back, come back, shuv is the Hebrew for come back, turn, turn. Oh, Shulamite, come back, come back, that we may gaze on you. I don't know why they say it so insistently, but they say four times, turn.

I just want to pull this thread a little bit, because turning is a very powerful word in the Hebrew Scriptures. It can mean to turn back, like repent, we would say.

It can mean to come back from exile, return. It's a very resonant word. I don't know, just imagine you're going off in the wrong direction, or wandering around.

[31:09] Come back. Turn. Return. And four times they say that. I don't know, maybe I'm just being speculative, but do you think God doesn't repeat and repeat?

Turn. Turn. Come. Turn. Shuv. Shuv. That's the Hebrew word meaning turn, return, come back. I don't know, maybe God's saying that to you this morning. Maybe he's saying to you, where are you off to? Where are you going? Where are you going in your life?

Turn, and turn to me. There, anyway. Come back, O Shulamite. Come back. This is the girl that's being referred to.

We want to look at you. So let's go now to the next description. The lover says, why would you gaze on the Shulamite as on the dance of Mahanaim?

[32:08] Well, I don't know why, but that's the question he poses. And let's follow the description that he gives. So this time, in anatomical terms, instead of going from head to toe, he goes from toe to head.

You notice, so I put the captions at the bottom. So let's look at her feet. How beautiful your sandaled feet, O Prince's daughter. I think only royal people would have worn sandals.

So he's saying to Miss Farm Girl, or Mrs. Farm Girl, as she now is, your feet are like the princess's feet. There you are, I've drawn princess's feet.

And then he says, your graceful legs are like jewels, the work of a craftsman's hand. Now, I have to make this a little, legs is not really what it says.

It says thighs. He's talking about the thigh part of the body. And he says, and he uses a word to mean curves. So the curve of your thighs, is what he's actually saying, are like ornaments.

[33:23] Jewels, we tend to think of them being angular, don't we? Sort of like cut. But he's not saying that. He's saying, the curves of your thighs are like ornaments, made by a master's hand.

So I haven't tried to draw that. He follows the thing up like, your navel, so it's not naturally your belly button, but this part of your body, your sort of waist area, is like a rounded goblet, that never lacks blended wine.

So I tried to draw a rounded goblet. But you see, he's talking about her particular bodily shape, isn't he? The curves of your thighs, your belly area, is like a rounded goblet.

Do you notice that the fashion, fashion's changed, don't they? So he's not talking about a flat tummy, he's talking about a tummy that has a proper sort of curvature to it. And he says that, and one of the books said that, and I think this might be speculation, that the attractiveness was for the woman to look as though she was a little bit pregnant.

I mean, maybe it's a sort of indication of fertility, but the curviness of her tummy. And he says, your waist is like a mound of wheat encircled by lilies.

[34:37] So I'm just going to translate that, perhaps a push to the translation of mound. Do you put wheat in mounds? I thought you gathered them into sheaves.

And of course a sheave has a certain curved shape. So I think he's talking again about the curved shape of her waist. Not a mound, but a sheaf of wheat encircled by lilies.

And then he comes to her breasts, says they're like these two cute, shy creatures, the twins of a gazelle. So he's moving up her body, emphasizing really her femininity.

That she's not built like a man, she's built like a woman, because she is a woman. And that's the shape of her body. And then he now focuses in, oh, I'm so sorry about that picture.

It did it last time, didn't it? It's supposed to be her face. So something's gone wrong with the way it's projected. So you imagine I try to get a close-up of her face.

[35:44] And this is where he's going to her face, because the face is the sort of expression of the person, isn't it? And he says of her face. He says, where have we got to?

I think I'm out of order here. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are like the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabim.

I don't know what the pools of Heshbon look like. I don't suppose you do either. Or the gate of Bath Rabim, but there's something presumably legendary. Or, you know, when they sent Facebook pictures to each other, if you were by the pools of Heshbon, you would definitely take a selfie by the pools of Heshbon, because they're so beautiful.

And your eyes, he says, are like those pools. Your nose, am I getting this in the right order? It's like the Tower of Lebanon looking towards Damascus. I don't know.

I think you'd get in terrible trouble if you said to a lady these days, your nose is like the I-360 or something like that. But he doesn't mean it.

[36:54] We know. He means it in a complementary way. There's something strong. And, yeah, strong and elegant about your nose like a tower.

Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel. So he says, look at the beautiful mountains. Your head is like that. And your hair is like royal tapestry.

The king is held captive by its tresses. There's a word in there meaning purple, which is the kingly bit. And the king is held captive by its tresses.

This is another reference to her power. Now, if I put it this way, her power over him. The king is held captive by your tresses.

Your eyes overwhelm me. You are like an army with banners. There's something about her strength. And I just hesitate to put it this way, but I think this is what it's saying.

[37:57] Her power over him by her attractiveness in his eyes. Your, you know, if we were to say he was smitten by her, would you understand that?

Smitten meaning knocked over by her. Yeah, he's smitten. The king is held captive by its tresses. How beautiful you are. And how pleasing, oh love, with your delights. So this is about beauty. It is about relationship.

It is about closeness. It is about delight. And I just pause to say, and I think I'll probably say it again, we don't know actually what she looked like at all.

She, those of you who remember Downton Abbey, the aged butler Carson was in love with the aged housekeeper, Mrs Hughes.

[38:57] And she said, oh well, I'm old and wrinkly, he won't like me. And he said of her, in my eyes you are beautiful. So I think we're not actually limiting this to just the most photogenic of us.

I think this is about relationship. It's about the beauty that every woman has. And this is one specific instance of this.

It's talking about beauty and relationships and closeness and delight. And let's move on now to intention and invitation. Because he and she both say something.

So he says, and you might have noticed, that all of these descriptions put her high. So like a mountain, like a tower.

It sort of gives an idea of elevation. And here's another similar. So I've drawn a palm tree like the ones you'd find in Sri Lanka, where it says, your stature's like the palm and your breasts like clusters of fruit.

[40:04] And he says, I will go up the palm tree, I will take hold of its fruit. You could translate it, I will go up, I will possess the fruit.

But I think you get the general idea. May your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the best wine.

It's to do with height. And what he's talking about here is touch and taste. And she goes in the same direction with this.

End of verse 9. May the wine go straight to my lover, flowing gently over lips and teeth. I belong to my lover, his desire is for me. Again, so it's talking about the way bodies work, isn't it?

Touch, taste, drink, eat, smell, all these sorts of things. the intertwining of body in the closeness of touching and the delight and pleasure and enjoyment that goes along with this.

[41:15] It is about closeness and enjoyment of each other. And she says, I am my lover's, his desire is for me. And, I mean, that very obviously has implications and descriptions of heterosexual marriage.

But I want to just step back for a minute and say, if this is anything at all like the love between Christ and his people, isn't it totally amazing that, you know, if we take this, even in a very cautious way and say this is to do with Christ and his people, that he should say in any sense at all, his desire is towards us.

And that he should take any pleasure in closeness to us. But it seems to me that we have to take that.

We have to agree that that is the case. If there's any sense that this is a parallel with Christ and his church, that the man, the husband says, I love this, my bride.

I find delight in this, my bride. And in some sense, in some sense, you have captivated me, my love, my bride. And we say, but Lord, you must be making a huge big mistake because we're sinners.

[42:47] you know what rubbish we are. And the Lord says, yeah, I know that. But just hear my grace towards you. I, in my grace, have chosen you.

And I, in my grace, have loved you. And I'm going to say to you, you, you have captivated me. Well, let's follow the, this couple as they go on now.

So, they, they go places together. Come, let's go together. Verse 11, let's go to the countryside.

Let's go to spend the night in the villages. Let's go early to the vineyards.

We'll, we'll, we'll do this together, make a little trip. We'll go and do something together. Christopher Ash wrote a book called Marriage, colon, Sex in the Service of God.

And his, his thesis is that Christian understanding of marriage is that two people get together. It's not just, not just so that they can look into each other's eyes, but they can do things together to serve God.

[44:08] Sex in the service of God. And a married couple can do together what the two individuals could not do separately. That's the thought there.

Anyway, I don't know. They're going off to see what the vineyards are doing, see if the vines are blooded, budded, blossoms have opened, da, da, da, off they go. Some pomegranates there. Let's have a quick look.

Ah, yes. So, there they are. They're going out into the countryside and we get, again, fruit. It's almost like the Garden of Eden, isn't it? Mandrakes.

I always think that's a strange name. Mandrake sounds like a cross between a person and a duck, doesn't it? But in, in, in Hebrew, it's, it's more like love apple.

So, if you were to try, so love apple, you think that's an entirely different picture in the mind, isn't it?

So, she's thinking romantically even about fruit. These love apples send out their fragrance at our door as every delicacy new and old that I have stored up for you, my lover.

[45:12] So, they go outside together and they go inside together. If only you were to me like a brother who was nursed at my mother's breasts, then if I found you outside, I would kiss you and no one would despise me.

Different cultures have different conventions for who you can kiss in public. in Sri Lanka because it's the only other culture I know much about.

Men hold hands in public. That would give a very different message here, wouldn't it? And men and women don't show affection, husband and wife don't show affection in public.

So, I think what she's saying is, if you were my brother, I could kiss you in public. If you were husband and I couldn't, I wish you were my brother. I think that's what she's saying. If I found you outside, I would kiss you.

No one would despise me. I would lead you and bring you to my mother's house. So, there's the mother's house. Let's go together to the family home. You're like my brother in my mother's house. And here again, we've got the references to wine.

[46:11] Verse 2, the nature of pomegranates and the closeness together. His left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me. We're as close as possible. Outside, inside.

And, there we are. I'm not quite sure whether I draw our attention to this verse 4, but I will do so now. There's a timing element even here.

Not everything is appropriate every time. Some things are appropriate, sometimes some things are not. Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you. Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

So, let's just reflect on what we've seen. There's a lot about bodies, isn't there? These descriptions. There's a lot about beauty.

There's a lot about relationship and being captivated. You know, when you, relationships restrict us. We are held captive in relationship.

[47:11] But the way to fulfilment as a human being is so to be restricted. Because to be unrestricted, this is Ellis Potter's frame, total freedom equals death.

Being captivated is what human beings were made for in this sense. There's a lot here about delight and pleasure and enjoyment. There's also references in the context of family and community.

There's a lot to do with touch and taste and aroma and eating and drinking. And of course, we've got inside and outside. And I want to say two things from this.

That God is pro the body. Pro meaning in favour of. He invented bodies. He is in favour of the body. And God is pro pleasure enjoyment.

And I just want to touch on these two things before we finish. How do we know that God is pro-body and pro-pleasure? Well, we can look back to creation.

[48:19] God made Adam from the earth capable of bodily reproduction unlike angels and he said this is good. This is good.

and then we can step forward a long way in time and say the incarnation carne means flesh. Incarnation God became flesh. God took a human body and please understand he will never unincarnate.

It is a permanent arrangement that God has taken human flesh almost as we might say into his very being. The son of God will always be the incarnate son of God.

When we think of the lamb upon the throne or the son of God upon the throne there is a man with a human body a glorified human body there is a man upon the throne of the universe.

[49:45] Resurrection so incarnation resurrection absolutely fundamental to Christian faith on the third day he rose again from the dead the body Jesus rose bodily from the tomb physical glorified flesh flesh but flesh without the stain and the drag and the death sentence of sin glorified humanity that's what's at the heart of our faith he says that in the funeral service it says we ensure certain hope of the resurrection in which he will take our vile something vile bodies and make them to be like his glorious body that's brothers and sisters what we're headed for we're not headed for wafting around disembodied we're headed for glorious new bodies and the beauty of the person the

Christian sitting next to you will outshine the sun fair as the moon bright as the sun awesome as the stars in procession and there is the doctrine the understanding that between believers and the Christ is a connection that if what's happened to him it will happen to us if he was raised from the dead in him we will be raised too if he was resurrected so shall we be you have to forgive the indulgence of this illustration sooner or later sooner or later that's what will happen to us do you know the coyote and the roadrunner so the this is the coyote this is the roadrunner they try and catch each other and the roadrunner little bird there is so clever he always plays tricks on the coyote and here's a trick he's got a heavy heavy anvil and he's tied it to the foot of the coyote with a long rope and he's pushed the anvil over the edge of the cliff and it's falling down and the coyote isn't really conscious of this he's just thinking like this but you can see the rope unravelling like that and at some unspecified moment that rope is going to go tight and the coyote is going to go pitching over the cliff the same as the anvil yes can you imagine it and the coyote is going to go like that or whatever the roadrunner is going to make a cheeky noise now whether you are married or single whether you are young and flawless or old and wrinkled whether you are

Mr. or Miss Love Island or Carson and Mrs. Hughes there are weights for us as we are connected to Christ and as the connection rope sort of unravels through time at some point that is going to go tight and there are weights for us the effect that Christ has already achieved and that as he has been raised he will bring us along with him there awaits new bodies there awaits glorious beauty there awaits unimagined delights and pleasures and enjoyments because that's what we were made for and we will be with the one who loved us and freed us from our sins by his blood and to him be the power and the glory forever amen amen