

A Calling King; A Captivated King

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[0 : 00] in the Song of Solomon chapter 4, Song of Solomon chapter 4. And reading verses 8 to 11, Song of Solomon chapter 4, and verses 8 to 11, we read these words, Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon.

Come with me from Lebanon, depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Sinir and Hermon, from the dens of limes, from the mountains of leopards. You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride, you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride, how much better is your love than wine and the fragrance of your oils than any spice. Your lips drip nectar, my bride, honey and milk are under your tongue.

The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. Well, just for a few moments this evening, I want to focus on these four verses with you.

And for those of you who take notes, I love alliteration. Not as much as Myrtle Campbell over in Baravus. If you ever listen to him, you know he has alliterated points and sub points and sub sub points.

[1 : 24] I try and stay clear of that. But I do love alliteration. And so we're going to look at this passage under two headings. We're going to look at a calling king and then a captivated king.

A calling king and then a captivated king. First, we have the calling king. Look at verse 8. Here we see the king issuing a call to his bride. As we come to these verses, we can begin by considering the context.

The Song of Solomon was a love song written by King Solomon, the son of David. And it really has three functions. It celebrates human love, the love between a man and a woman.

But it also celebrates royal love, the love between this Jewish king Solomon and his Shilamite princess. And finally, it celebrates divine love, covenant love, the love between the Lord and his people.

And in chapter 4, we find the king admiring his bride. He makes this great announcement in verse 1. He calls her my love. And twice he calls her beautiful.

[2 : 31] He goes on to describe his appreciation of her beauty in verses 1 to 6. Her eyes are like doves. Her hair is like a flock of goats. Her teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes.

Her lips are like a scarlet thread. Her cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate. Her neck is like the Tower of David. Her breasts are like two fawns. And he closes by making another announcement in verse 7, where once again he calls her my bride and tells her that she is beautiful.

And he adds that he sees absolutely no flaw in her. There is nothing in her that he doesn't find attractive or praiseworthy. He doesn't look at her and say, well, I wish you had this.

That would make you a little more attractive. He doesn't look at her and say, I wish you didn't have that. And that would make you that bit more attractive. No, he looks at her and he says, there is no flaw in you.

And in verse 8, we hear the king issuing a call to this woman. The king addresses her as my bride. He's already called her my darling, my beautiful one, my dove.

[3 : 36] But now for the first time, he calls her my bride. The language becomes far more intimate. This is a familial bond. This is a covenant relationship. This is a firm commitment.

And he will repeatedly use that term throughout these verses and throughout this song. The king goes on and he calls his bride to come with him. At present, she is in Lebanon.

He's there in Jerusalem in southern Judah. She is in this country that is to the north of Israel. There is this separation, this distance, this gulf between them. And he calls her to leave Lebanon.

She is to leave the peaks of Ammanah and Sinir. That is Mount Hermon. She is to leave the dens of lions and the mountains of leopards, this place of danger. And she is to come with him.

He doesn't say come to Judah. He doesn't say come to Jerusalem. He says, come with me. Regardless of where they might end up, she will be with him.

[4 : 36] Regardless of what the future holds out for them, they will be together. Come with me, he says. Let's end this season of separation. Let's bring an end to the gulf, the distance that is between us.

Now, friends, as we focus on the king's call, I want us to consider the call of the king of kings and the lord of lords, the call of Jesus. We can think of the call that he gives to the person who's not a Christian.

He says to them, come with me. We see that in his call to Matthew. In Matthew chapter 9, there's Matthew sitting at his tax booth and Jesus is passing by and he calls out, follow me, come with me.

And that is what he says to every person who is not a Christian. At present, they are outside of his kingdom. At present, they are like that bride who's in the place of danger with these mountain bears and lions and all these other creatures.

They, too, are in a place of danger. And the lord says to them, come with me. He doesn't say, come to church. He doesn't say, come to the prayer meeting.

[5 : 42] He doesn't say, come to the communion table. He doesn't say, come to a system of doctrine. He doesn't say, come to a system of Presbyterian principles. He doesn't even say, come to the blue book of the Kirk session.

He says, come with me. Come with me. And tonight, I don't know really many of you in this building, and I don't know at all who's watching online. But if you are not a Christian tonight, then I want you to hear this loud and clear.

As the gospel is being preached in your hearing, not only tonight, but Sunday by Sunday, as the gospel is being preached, the lord is issuing this call, come with me.

And I am asking you, will you go with him? Will you go with him? We can also think, though, of the call that the lord gives to the backslidden Christian.

And again, he says, come with me. That's what he said to Peter in John 21. There's Peter standing before Jesus, full of remorse, full of regret.

[6 : 43] And Jesus calls out to Peter, follow me. Come with me. And that is what he says to every backslidden Christian. At present, they're on the borders of his kingdom.

Maybe one foot in, one foot out. They're in a place of danger. And the lord says, come with me. And if you're in a backslidden condition tonight, and I do think that this last 18 months has been a time, you know, for some to grow in their faith.

But I do think it's also been a time when others have backslidden in their faith. If you are in a backslidden condition tonight, I want you to hear this loud and clear. The lord is calling you to come.

Whatever you've done, come. You might say, but I've gone over the edge. And I've reached the point of no return. And the lord says, come. You might say, but I don't know if I'm a Christian anymore.

In fact, I don't even know if I was a Christian even to begin with. And I don't know why I'm even in this building tonight. Or I don't know why I put on the Zoom or the live stream tonight. And the lord says, come.

[7 : 50] Or you might be saying, but my sin is so public. And everybody knows about it. And they're talking about it. And I can feel their eyes on me as I sit in this building. And the lord says, come.

Come. He is willing to forgive. He is willing to restore the most backslidden Christian. And he simply says, come. And I'm asking, will you go with him?

Will you go with him? Finally, we can think of the call that the lord gives to the Christian at the end of their days. And again, he says, come with me.

That's what he said to his distressed disciples. In John 14, he saw their troubled hearts, their anxious hearts. And he told them that he was going to prepare a place for them. And why was he going to prepare a place for them?

That he might take them to be with him. And that is what he says to every Christian as they come to the end of their days. At present, they're outside of paradise.

[8 : 49] At present, they don't know the fullness of being in his realized kingdom. At present, they are in a world that is filled with danger, toil, and snare. But one day the king will say to them, come.

Come with me. And they will come. If you're a Christian tonight, friend, I want you to hear this loud and clear. A day is coming when the lord will gently say to you, come with me.

And nothing and no one will be able to hold you back. And when you see the king's face, when you finally see the king's smile, you will be glad and you will rejoice at nothing and no one could hold you back.

Well, friends, as we consider this opening verse, let's rejoice in the king who issues such a personal call, such a loving call, this gracious call, this glorious call, this wonderful summons, come with me, the king who calls.

But then we come second to a captivated king. Look at verses 9 to 11. And the king now describes his delight in his bride.

[10 : 07] The king speaks about being captivated by his bride in verse 9. He addresses her as my sister, my bride. Now, we've already heard him speaking about her as my bride, but now he addresses her as my sister.

In the ancient Near East, the closest bond between two people of opposite genders was the bond between a brother and sister. And here we find the king, and he's speaking of this close bond between himself and this woman.

He says that they are like brother and sister. They are that close. And he tells her that she has captivated his heart. Now, that word captivated is only found in this verse of Song of Solomon.

It's not found anywhere else in scripture. It can mean that the woman has stolen his heart, but it can also mean that she has made his heart beat faster.

One commentator says that a modern rendering would be, you drive me crazy. He can hardly think straight. He is enthralled with her.

[11 : 11] She has captivated his heart. And he claims here that his heart beats faster when he notices the smallest things. Did you notice the way that he says that just one glimpse, one glimpse at her eyes looking at him, and his heart starts to pound.

One glimpse at one of the jewels on her necklace, and his pulse starts racing. You know, there's a real vulnerability as we hear the king speaking in this way.

Because you can admire someone from a distance. You can flirt with someone without ever opening yourself up to them. But to declare your heart to someone opens you up to acceptance or rejection.

The king is saying to this woman, you make my heart beat faster. And he does so knowing that this declaration of his feelings must be received by her or rejected by her.

He's leaving himself open before her, leaving himself vulnerable before her. He's saying to her, I like you. I like you a lot. And he's not even received any inclination that she feels the same way about him.

[12 : 21] The king goes on, though, to contemplate the beauty of his bride in verses 10 and 11. The king begins by speaking about his delight in her love. Look at verse 10.

Once again, he calls her my sister, my bride. He just can't stop calling her my bride. He's so full of excited exuberance that they are in this covenant relationship.

And he wants everyone to know it. He shouts it to the world. She's my bride. Bit like Ali Moli last year that we all had to hear him on social media. And in the streets that Helena was his bride or going to be his bride.

He was so full of exuberance. And that's the same as this king. He is so full of exuberance that this woman is his bride. And he claims that her love here is beautiful and better than rich and joy-giving wine.

He continues by speaking about his delight in her fragrance. Verse 10 again. He thinks of the aroma that she leaves behind.

[13 : 23] And he says that the oils that she is wearing, that these fragrant oils that she is using, are better than any spice. He goes further and speaks about his delight in her words.

Look at verse 11. Yet again, he calls her my bride. And he says that her lips drip nectar. There's a real sweetness in what she says. And he builds on that by saying that honey and milk are under her tongue.

Do you remember in Exodus chapter 3, Moses and the Lord are speaking. And the Lord says to Moses that he is going to bring his people into a good land. And how is that good land described?

It is a land flowing with milk and honey. And here is this king. And he's saying this woman's words are good. They are like the provision of the land that the Lord gave to his people all these years ago.

That land flowing with milk and honey. That's what her words are like. Finally, he speaks about his delight in her garments. Verse 11. And his focus falls very much on the fragrance of her garment.

[14 : 33] He claims that they smell like Lebanon, which was famed for its large and aromatic cedar trees that were used in the construction of the temple. You can remember how Solomon built that temple.

And now he's going up to this woman and he's saying to her, you smell so good. You smell like the temple itself. I don't think it would be a good idea if some of us went back to our homes tonight and said to our wives or girlfriends or fiancés, you smell like the seminary.

But he's saying here, you smell like the cedars of Lebanon. There's this beautiful aroma coming from you. And it's coming from your garments that you're wearing.

Well, friends, as we consider this captivated king, I want us to consider the captivation of the king of kings and the Lord of lords. The captivation of Jesus. He's the king who's captivated by his bride.

Captivated by his people. In the early chapters of this song, the bride expresses these feelings of unworthiness, unattractiveness. She doesn't feel good enough for this king.

[15 : 45] And the king turns to her in chapter four and he says, you've captivated my heart. You make my heart beat faster. You know, friends, I want you to consider this.

In the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity took on human flesh. He is the God man. That is who Jesus is. He is fully God and he is fully man.

And his physical body was raised from the dead and has been glorified and has ascended to heaven. But, friends, it remains a physical body.

And that body has a heart which, and I say this carefully and reverently, but that body has a heart which beats a little bit faster when he surveys his people.

What encouragement that should be to us this evening. You say, I'm not a very good Christian. I've done nothing of any significance. I'm boring.

[16 : 42] I'm average. I'm a second-rate Christian. Maybe some of you watching online right now, you're not in this building tonight because you feel like a second-rate Christian compared with those who are in here. And you're distancing yourself more and more from the Lord's people.

And the Lord replies, you've captivated my heart. Even when our eyes steal a little glance at him, his heart skips a beat.

And we have the audacity to say, I'm not sure if he listens to me. I'm not sure if he loves me. Or we have the audacity to look at another Christian and say, well, they're in a sorry state.

I don't think very much of them. They are those who have captivated the heart of Christ in heaven. But let's go a little further and think about what the king delights in.

He delights in our love. Verse 10, he exclaims, how beautiful is your love? It's better than wine. You remember when he met Peter and Peter was standing before him.

[17 : 47] And the one thing Jesus asked him was, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Or you remember when he confronts the church in Ephesus and he says, I've heard about your orthodox beliefs.

I've heard about your orthodox behavior, but your love has grown cold. You've forsaken your first love. You know, friends, we can be experts at preaching.

We can be experts at the Kirk session, experts on the deacon's court, experts when it comes to dealing with church property, church finance, church discipline, church procedure.

But the Lord cares about our love. There's nothing that strikes his heart more than seeing a loveless Christian.

He delights in our fragrance. The bride was anointed with oils, which gave a fragrance that pleased the king. And every Christian has been anointed. They have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and gives off a fragrance, an aroma that brings the Lord pleasure.

[18 : 50] When he sees the work of the Spirit in the lives of his people, when he sees the fruit of the Spirit budding and blossoming in the lives of his people, the Lord says, this is a pleasing aroma.

This is the aroma of life. This smells good. He delights in our words. In chapter 2, the king says, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet.

And in chapter 4, he tells her that her lips strip nectar, they are like milk and honey. Everything that she says brings him joy and gladness.

You know, friends, the Lord loves to hear the words of his people. He loves to hear our prayers, the long prayers, short prayers, prayers we can't even put into words.

He loves to hear the praises of his people, loves to hear the testimonies of his people, loves to hear the spiritual conversations of his people. He loves to hear our words.

[19 : 50] And finally, he loves our garments. He loves to see us wearing the robes of his own righteousness that he has prepared for us and provided for us.

And he loves to see us adorning those robes with acts of faith, acts of love, deeds of righteousness that show the supreme place that he now has in our lives.

He loves to see the robes, the clothes that we are wearing. Well, tonight, friends, as we close, I want to ask every Christian, do you know how loved you are?

Do you know how loved you are? Perhaps you've come here tonight feeling very lonely, very alone. You're in a marriage that's difficult, it's hard work.

Or maybe it's come to an end through separation or divorce. Or maybe it's been breached by the invasion of death. Or maybe you're wondering if you'll ever get married, if there's anyone out there for you.

[20 : 52] Or maybe you've concluded that marriage isn't for you, but there's still lonely days and lonely nights. And here is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and he is saying to you, you've captivated my heart.

You're not alone. You're not unloved. You are not second rate. You've captivated the heart of the King of Kings.

Or perhaps you've come here tonight feeling very frail, very flawed. You're looking at these verses tonight, and you're saying, well, my love is weak. And my life has so little fragrance.

And my words are so often bitter. And they're more prone to gossip than to declare the gospel. And my deeds are often lacking in righteousness.

It looks as if I'm not even wearing the robes of Christ's righteousness at times. And here's the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and he's saying to you, you've captivated my heart.

[21 : 59] And all your sin and all your flaw, every flaw has been buried beneath my blood. And now I see no flaw in you.

What a king. Whose people captivate his heart. Well, friends, here's good news for us, hopefully to take through the week.

You, friend, living on this little island off the west coast of Scotland, you have captivated the heart of Christ in heaven.

What a thought. To go out this building tonight thinking, me, I've captivated the heart of Christ in heaven.

And whatever is going on in your family, whatever is going on with your work, whatever is going on with your health, whatever is going on with COVID, you have captivated the heart of Christ in heaven.

[23 : 06] I hope that encourages you tonight. Let's close by singing to the Lord's praise, the words of Psalm 45. Psalm 45. Psalm 45. Psalm 45.