

## NOTES ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON (1:5-6)

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### The Banquet (1:2-2:7)

[The Shulamite, continued from 1:4b, “Rightly do they love You.”]

**1:5** *I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.*

#### 1. Physically:

- i. The Shulamite was “lovely” (“comely” in KJV) because of her beautiful face, luxurious hair, and well-proportioned body (4:1-5; 6:4-7; 7:1-9). And she was lovely “like the curtains of Solomon”, which would have been the resplendent tapestries and hangings of his pavilion.
- ii. The Shulamite was “dark” (“black” in KJV) because she had been required to work outside (1:6), where the sun’s rays had darkened her complexion. (This denies the claim of those who identify her as the Queen of Sheba or Pharaoh’s daughter.) Her skin color was therefore “like the tents of Kedar” (mentioned also in Psalm 120:5), which were made of dark goats’ hair and covered with soot on the inside.

#### 2. Spiritually:

- i. The church is “lovely / comely” because of *Christ’s grace to her*. This is described in great detail in Ezekiel 16:3-14.
- ii. The church is “dark / black” because of *men’s afflictions against her*. This is indicated in the next verse (v.6). Many commentators attribute her darkness to sins she committed. But she does not do so. Besides, sins result in self-inflicted darkness. Contrarily, she in the next verse (v.6) attributes her darkness to afflictions inflicted upon her by others. In this regard, consider that darkness of skin results from beatings producing bruises and from malnourishment and disease (e.g., Job 30:30; Lamentations 4:8; Revelation 6:5).

**1:6** *Do not look upon me, because I am dark, ...* | Her meaning appears to be “When you look upon me, behold my loveliness, and do not disdain or scorn me because of my darkness.” She then describes how she came to be dark:

... **Because the sun has tanned me. ...** | As the sun of *heaven* darkens the *physical* skin, so does the sun of *persecution* darken the *spiritual* skin (see the sun striking people in Isaiah 49:10 / Revelation 7:16).

1. As Christ’s skin was darkened by the bruises inflicted upon Him by His persecutors (Isaiah 53:5), so will it be with His church.
2. As malnourishment and disease darken the skin (e.g., Job 30:30; Lamentations 4:8), so is it when Christ’s church is afflicted by the apocalyptic rider on the black horse shouting “Enough wheat to feed one man will cost you a day’s wage! Do not ask for oil and wine, because you cannot afford it” (Revelation 6:5 paraphrased).

-- All these elements are found in Romans 8:35-36: Christ’s church is darkened by tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, and exclaims “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

... **My mother’s sons were angry with me; ...** | Here is given the reason why Christ’s church was forced to suffer the sun of persecution. Note that she does not speak of “my *father’s* sons” being angry at her. Sons of the heavenly Father do not act in anger against His church. Rather, she speaks of “my *mother’s* sons”, referring to fellow-humans and even family-members.

1. As Christ was persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 4:27), so does He warn His church that “you will be hated by all for My name’s sake” (Matthew 10:22; 24:9).
2. Christ also warns believers that “a man’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matthew 10:36, quoting Micah 7:6).

... **They made me the keeper of the vineyards, ...** | As the Shulamite was forced to keep the vineyards of those who were angry at her, so has Christ’s church been forced to do the same.

1. These “vineyards” are false religions which hate Christ’s church. They are in contrast to Christ’s vineyard, which is His church. The Shulamite speaks of Christ’s church when she calls it “my own vineyard” (later in this verse) and when she sings the “song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard” (Isaiah 5:1-7). But now she speaks of other vineyards, false religions.
2. Christ’s church here laments being “made” to be the “keeper” of false religions. False religions have always tried to force themselves on Christ’s church. Here are some examples in the first-century church:
  - i. Judaizers in Galatia made Christians “keep the Law of Moses” after being liberated from it by Christ (Acts 15:1, 5; see Paul’s epistle to the Galatians).
  - ii. Rome made Christians in Asia Minor show allegiance to its Caesar and gods or lose their membership in guilds (as in chs.2f in The Revelation of Jesus Christ).
  - iii. False teachers made Christians follow the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6, 14, 15).
  - iv. A female preacher made Christians follow her false doctrine and immoral requirements (Revelation 2:20). (She is the only female preacher cited in Christ’s church, and rightly named *Jezebel* and despised by Christ.)-- In all these instances, Christ’s church was darkened by what was forced on her.

... **But my own vineyard I have not kept.** | False religions forbid Christ’s church from keeping her own vineyard by faithfully serving Christ and His gospel, doctrine, and ways.

1. Imperial Rome did so during the Ten Persecutions (under Nero-Diocletian, c.64-303 AD; see Revelation 2:10)
2. Ecclesiastical Rome did so during the Dark Ages.
3. Communist regimes have done so in more modern times.
4. Anti-Christian governments today do so. For example, in the schools and offices of some governments, Christians are forbidden to display a Bible, tell others about Jesus Christ, pray, assemble for Bible study, or even mention Christ’s name. Those governments accuse Christians of being “intolerant” and “noninclusive” – which is, ironically, what those governments are to Christians!