



Return, Return, Return, Return

Song of Solomon 6:13

Song of Solomon 6:13 KJV *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.*

I. INTRODUCTION – THE SONG OF SOLOMON

-This book, the Song of Solomon, is a book that is not preached from very often. In fact, I have been preaching now for basically twelve years and I have only preached from this book three times. (The other two sermons being: The Eyes of the Bride and God's Thoroughbreds of which the latter, I heisted off of my great brother-in-law, Mike Patterson.)

-It is a story, a parable, that tells of the love that Solomon had for what is commonly referred to as the Shulamite. She is a young woman that Solomon is courting with the intentions of marrying her and bringing her to the palace.

-There is some conjecture that this Shulamite is Abishag that is cross-referenced in 1 Kings 1-2. She is married by Solomon after some contention with his brother, Adonijah. Which is another sermon in itself.

A. Her Background

-She came from Shunem which was one of the lower regions of Galilee in the foothills of the mountains of Lebanon. David and Solomon owned large estates that had huge vineyards, spice gardens, and fruit orchards.

-In addition to all of this, vast herds of sheep were kept there which belonged to the palace. To take care of the farms and the vastness of the flocks, the palace would lease out the care of this to those who lived in that country and they were paid out of the king's treasury.

-The Shulamite was a daughter of one of the families. Scripture indicates to us that Abishag was brought to Jerusalem to serve as a concubine to David against her will. With blessing on her side, she ended up being a servant in the courts of the king.

-While she was in the courts, she became the aim of Solomon's affection. After King David died, she was sent back into her country. This would have been a very difficult burden for her to bear because of the stigma that marked her.

-She was disdained by her people because she was held in the same view as a harlot. Not only that but all the financial considerations from the palace were no longer available to her.

-She was and felt disgraced. She brings this to light in Song 1:5:

Song of Solomon 1:5 KJV *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

-She tries to tell others of her inner beauty but it does not seemingly work. She feels soiled outwardly, "I am black. . . as the tents of Kedar." She compares herself to the tents of Kedar where the shepherds lived which were very coarse and never washed. The tents were weather-beaten and stained by long use.

-But she adds, "I am lovely. . . . as the curtains of Solomon." No doubt she is making reference to the rooms in the palace. They are rich and stately. The world often views the church the same way. They only see the outside and never even guess the richness and depth of spiritual power that dwells within.

-The Shulamite knows her own heart. She also knows that the king has seen her beauty and that it will not be long before he comes and rescues her from the nagging surroundings that now imprison her. This Song of Solomon is nothing more than a type of the relationship that the Lord has with a New Testament church.

-So how is the king going to rescue his bride. First, he has to find her. We read in the Song of Solomon, that Solomon disguises himself as a shepherd and began to tend sheep as he carefully sought out this object of his desire.

-Finally, as luck or providence would have it, Solomon manages to tend the sheep directly next to Abishag's vineyard. Initially, she did not realize who it was that was attempting to win her heart.

Song of Solomon 1:7 KJV *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?*

-She did not recognize this disguised one who was coming to seek her out. Some might ask how it was that she did not recognize Solomon.

- 1. Solomon had to admire Abishag from a distance while she served David in the courts.
- 2. She considered herself a failure and unworthy of any such attention that would come from a king.

-Solomon is a type of Christ and Abishag is a type of the Church or the Bride of Christ. The Lord came to this earth clothed as a man to gain the heart of His bride and to prepare her for His final return.

-At first many did not recognize this Jesus Christ, who was simply of Nazareth, a carpenter, but in the course of time with conviction and the love of God, a church was born out of His devotion.

-Abishag ultimately fell in love with this mysterious shepherd who had shown her an unusual amount of attention. Whenever she was around him, she felt loved, protected, and provided for. This was a great change for her. Though she felt so unworthy of his attention, she loved every minute of it.

B. The Text

-But when we come to the text in Song 6:13, we find the cry of the daughters of Jerusalem. They cannot get away from her beauty. They are dazzled by her stately appearance. She is so different from them and now they fully understand that they will always be the second choice of the King.

-The Shulamite has left them and they want to look at her beauty again. So the cry comes from them, Return, Return, Return, Return.

II. THE WORLD IS LOOKING FOR THE REAL THING

-This is the cry of this age also. This world is looking for a church that is going to manifest the power and the purpose of the early church. They are crying out, Return, Return, Return, Return.

-The book of Acts gives us some things that we need to return to again to get back on track for 2005 if we are expecting to see some of the things of God that we long to see.

A. Prayer

-Leonard Ravenhill writes in his great book, *Why Revival Tarries* (ch. 2, Prayer Grasps Eternity)

No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. The pulpit can be shop window to display one's talents; the prayer closet allows no showing off.

Poverty-stricken as the Church is today in many things, she is most stricken here, in the place of prayer. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few pray-ers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere.

The two prerequisites to successful Christian living are vision and passion, both of which are born in and maintained by prayer. The ministry of preaching is open to few; the ministry of prayer—the highest ministry of all human offices—is open to all. Spiritual adolescents say, “I’ll not go tonight, it’s only prayer meeting.” It may be that Satan has little cause to fear most preaching. Yet past experiences sting him to rally all his infernal army to fight against God’s people praying. Modern Christians know little of “binding and loosing,” though the onus is on us—“Whatsoever ye shall bind. . . .” Have you done any of this lately? God is not prodigal with His power; but to be much for God, we must be much *with* God.

- We understand that we need to pray.
- We have heard great testimonies of what happens when people and churches pray.
- We know the power of prayer.
- We know the capacity of prayer.
- We know what prayer does to us individually when we pray.
- We know what happens in the lives of others when we pray.

-This is the crying need of this day: Prayer. It is the desperate need in my life. It is the desperate need in your life. It is the desperate need of this church.

-There are 28 References in the Book of Acts to Prayer (This list is not all inclusive):

- Acts 1:14 KJV These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. . .
- Acts 1:24 KJV And they prayed. . .
- Acts 2:42 KJV And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- Acts 3:1 KJV Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer. . .
- Acts 4:31 KJV And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. . .
- Acts 6:4 KJV But we will give ourselves continually to prayer. . .
- Acts 6:6 KJV And when they had prayed. . .
- Acts 8:15 KJV Prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:
- Acts 9:11 KJV . . . for *one* called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth. . .
- Acts 9:40 KJV But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed. . . .
- Acts 10:2 KJV Cornelius prayed to God.
- Acts 10:9 KJV Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:
- Acts 11:5 KJV I was in the city of Joppa praying. . . .
- Acts 12:5 KJV Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. . . .

- Acts 12:12 KJV Where many were gathered together praying. . . .
- Acts 13:3 KJV And when they had fasted and prayed. . .
- Acts 14:23 KJV And had prayed with fasting. . . .
- Acts 16:25 KJV And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed. . . .
- Acts 20:36 KJV He kneeled down, and prayed with them all. . . .
- Acts 21:5 KJV We kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. . . .
- Acts 22:17 KJV I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance. . . .
- Acts 28:8 KJV And prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. . .

B. The Fear of the Lord

-We live in an age that has little if any fear of God. The Proverbs clearly state that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

-Those who are backsliders have hardened their hearts in such a manner that it is almost as if they are standing stone-faced in front of God and demanding that He do something about their spirit and attitude.

-You will find a pattern in the Bible in reference to the fear of the Lord. It is always:

- Divine Order
- Glory
- Judgement

-This occurred with creation. This occurred with the giving of the Law (culminating with Nadab and Abihu). It can go on and on.

-You will find it specifically in Acts 5 with the account of Annanias and Sapphira. You find it with Elymas being stricken with blindness. You find it in the rebuke given to Simon the Sorcerer.

C. Holiness

-It is very interesting how people want great power and revelation without any kind of voluntary separation. The key to revelation is always going to be separation.

-But it is not just separation, it is voluntary separation. We have been called apart from the main flow of this world and only a voluntary separation is going to allow us to really have the power of the Holy Ghost to overcome.

-Those who do not voluntarily separate themselves from the world will not have a full pursuit of the Lord. Their prayer life is based on their need, not their desire. Those who gain revelation, willfully pray. They separate themselves through their desire to be with the Lord.

-When we practice the presence of the world we cannot expect to live in the presence of the Lord.

-The word holiness means "separation." To live "holy" one will always have to live in willful separation from this world.

-Consider the following present day happening, a little over a year ago. This happened to Bro. Ken Gurley's daughter (I did call and confirm this as to actually have occurred).

JUST STAND! By T'Neil Gurley December 20, 2004

It was during the fall semester of 2003 at the University of Houston when I decided to major in psychology with a minor in theology. My first theological class, Bible and Western Culture, was taught by the Dean of Religion who, after receiving his doctorate from Rice University, taught at another local university before coming to the University of Houston. Only later would I discover that he was a Church of Christ minister with a Oneness background.

Halfway through the semester, the professor made a condescending comment about the strict upbringing forced upon his wife during her childhood. She was raised in a pastor's home and each year her father wrote a note stating that she could not participate in gym class because she did not believe in wearing pants. The class erupted in laughter and derision. Immediately following this outburst, he dismissed the class. I felt such indignation. I purposed that in the next class I would stand up and speak up.

The topic of the next class was Ezekiel's vision of wheels (Ezekiel 1:10). He finished his lecture early and for the first time in the class, he asked if anyone had questions. I raised my hand. At that moment, I felt an indescribable strength infusing me.

"Sir," I said, "I do not have a question, but I do have a comment." The class all turned to stare at me. The instructor told me to continue.

"In the last class, you told how your wife was not allowed to wear pants because of her beliefs. The tone of your voice and this class's response to your statement offended me. I am a Pentecostal and my father also wrote notes for me asking that I not be forced to participate in certain activities because of the dress required."

The class was as silent as I'd ever heard it. I plunged on. "I do not appreciate my beliefs being presented in so patronizing a manner—especially in a religious studies class."

"So," the professor responded, "You don't wear pants?"

I shook my head no. He then asked why I believed it was wrong. I gave the response I had been taught in Sunday school, "Because in Deuteronomy 22:5, it instructs believers to not confuse the genders by their dress." I went on to explain that for thousands of years of human history that no woman wore pants, and that until World War II, it wasn't common even in the 20th Century.

The professor looked upset. He dismissed the class. Another Pentecostal girl walked up to me and we stepped out together. She confessed amazement that I had stood up to the professor—but I viewed it more as standing up for God!

I called my father and he warned me that one of three things would happen. First, the professor would find some aberrant, historical instance of women wearing pants. Or, he would come "loaded for bear" and would try to disprove my understanding of the passage in Deuteronomy. Or, he might apologize.

My being human, I assumed the worst. The next few days were filled with surfing Apostolic websites and reading Bible studies about modesty. I prayed too. I prayed a lot!

I walked into the next class feeling prepared but very nervous. The strength I had felt when I stood and spoke now seemed gone. I said a silent prayer as the professor walked into the class. He went to the lectern and stood quietly. He assumed the same posture until the entire class had assembled, and then he asked someone to close the doors.

"I have an apology to make," he said. "In the last class, I was so shocked when a young lady spoke that I didn't know what to say. I owe this young lady an apology."

A friend of mine was taping this class, otherwise I wouldn't have remembered what was said. I sat in awed silence as God's presence entered that classroom.

"It takes courage to stand up for what you believe," the professor continued. "Today, I want to explain to everyone here why she believes what she believes." Looking directly at me he said, "I am sorry. I did not know there were any of you left."

Then, gazing around the room, he explained, "My wife grew up believing the same way you do. As a matter of fact, so did my mother." His tone dropped and his words became filled with emotion.

“I was nine years old when my family changed churches. The new church allowed women to wear makeup. My mother had never put on any makeup, but because of the pressures of the ladies in the new church, she felt she should try to fit in. I remember standing at the bathroom door, watching her at the vanity trying to apply makeup for the first time. She was crying so hard that the mascara kept running down her cheeks.”

“I did not know what to do,” the professor continued his story. “She did not want to wear the stuff, but she felt the need to fit in.” He paused for a while as he struggled to hold back his own tears. “This young lady,” he said speaking of me, “does not wear makeup because the Bible teaches that humans should not seek to alter their appearance. She also wears skirts because the Bible says for women to not wear that which pertains to a man. Nowhere in Scripture does it speak of women wearing pants. She doesn’t cut her hair because the Bible says that a woman’s hair is her glory and that it should be uncut.”

He looked at me for agreement. With tears running down my face, I nodded at him. He continued on, describing not just the point I disagreed with him, but all of the other distinctions of the Pentecostal faith.

“She also believes that in order to be saved, you must repent of your sins, be baptized in the Name of Jesus and be filled with the Holy Ghost. She believes in one God—not a Trinity.”

He grew quiet again. “How do I know this? My family is all Pentecostal. I know everything she believes.”

This would go for about an hour. Then, he dismissed the class. I walked up to him after class and thanked him. “Don’t thank me,” he said. “I was wrong. I admire you for standing up for what you believe. That’s a tough thing to do.” He went on to describe his family’s history in Pentecost. As the Lord would have it, one of his relatives was my father’s mentor in the ministry.

“It’s a small world,” my professor said, as he turned and left the classroom.

I left encouraged. For the rest of the semester, the professor seemed to find occasions to speak of the phenomena of Pentecost. He described how third world countries were swiftly converting to Pentecost. He told how the Pentecostal doctrine gave the hopeless hope of a much better day to come.

The next semester, I was disappointed that I wouldn’t have this same professor. Yet, when I showed up for one of my courses, there he was! The instructor planned for the class had some last minute changes and he was filling in. I felt that God had permitted this to happen.

In the opening class, he spoke about the gift of tongues. He told the class that rather than having him explain it that it would be best to have a “tongue-talker” explain it. For 45 minutes, he permitted me to answer questions about speaking in tongues and to explain the difference between the initial gift of the Holy Ghost and the additional gifts of the Spirit.

Not long afterward, my father preached a message called, “Asking God for the Hard Thing.” Then and there, I determined to ask God for something very difficult. I asked that God would allow my professor to return to the God and beliefs of his childhood. I asked God that he would come back home.

I learned something from this experience. It doesn’t matter how many degrees, titles and years of training someone has—he or she needs the truth we possess.

I learned something else. When you stand up for God—you will never stand alone. God will be there with you.

III. CONCLUSION – RETURN, RETURN, RETURN, RETURN

-This world needs to see a church like it has never seen before. One that is separated. One that is beautiful. One that is

powerful. One that is available.

-This is how we change our world. Not going toward them but rather pursuing God with everything inside of us.