

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

# Haggai, Song of Solomon

**Haggai** - 37th Old Testament book, between Zephaniah and Zechariah

- Classified “post-exilic” (with Zechariah and Malachi), Haggai prophesied about 520 B.C., after the return of the Jews from their captivity, or exile, in Babylon.
- Called the “successful prophet,” Haggai admonished the Jews to give higher priority to rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem (1:3-11) — and they did! (1:12-15; see also Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:14, 15)
- The only book in the Bible with exactly two chapters, Haggai is quoted once in the New Testament (2:6, in Heb. 12:26).
- Memorable in his critique of materialism, Haggai said, “You . . . [earn] wages to put into a bag with holes” (1:6b).
- He gave a powerful prophecy of Messiah to come — the Desire of All Nations (2:6-9).

**Song of Solomon** - 22nd book of the Old Testament, between Ecclesiastes and Isaiah

- attributed to Solomon, who wrote 1,004 other songs (1 Kings 4:32) and whose appetite for wives and concubines is legendary
- known by other names: Song of Songs (1:1) and Canticles, from the Latin word for *song*)
- love song of the Scriptures, using the words *love*, *lovely*, *beloved*, etc. about 60 times in 117 verses (eight chapters)
- one of two Bible volumes that do not mention God (the other is Esther); is not quoted nor referred to in the New Testament

## Interpretation of Solomon's Song

Written with the unambiguous language of romantic love between a husband and his wife, the Song is read as a type or parable of the love between the Lord and Israel, or between Christ and the church.

1. Allegorical interpretation of the Song prevailed for much of the past two millennia. It regards the romantic language as an extended parable that illustrates the passionate relation

between God and His people. The allegorical method looks for spiritual meaning in the details of the story. Those who insist that this Song is an allegory hold that without it, the language of the Song is too erotic and that the multiple marriages of Solomon are too debasing to merit a place in the canons of Holy Scripture.

2. Literal interpretation has been widely accepted since the Reformation. It sees the Song as the romanticized

account of Solomon's courtship and marriage with a Shulamite bride and finds its natural value and application in the marital relations of any husband and wife. Read in this way, it affirms and expands on Solomon's view, elsewhere, of the joys of conjugal love (Prov. 5:15-23), as well as the views of several other Bible authors (Gen. 2:24, 25; 1 Cor. 7:1-5; Heb. 13:4, for example).

3. A moderate approach is taken by those who admit that the Song was penned for Solomon and his Shulamite lover but that the necessary and ultimate meaning is found in the relation of eternity's husband, the Christ, with His bride, the church. This “typical” interpretation sees one big picture of Jesus' love for His people and declines to be involved in applying each word or phrase.

## Familiar phrases from the Song

- “Rose of Sharon . . . lily of the valleys” (2:1).
- “Little foxes that spoil the vines” (2:15).
- “I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine” (2:16; 6:3; 7:10).
- “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away . . .” (2:17; 4:6).
- “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it” (8:7).

## Song of Solomon in a sentence:

Natural and romantic language merge to provide an earthy-yet-lofty picture of love between a man and a woman: the Shulamite and her beloved.

**Haggai in a sentence:** After chiding the people for investing much in their homes and little in God's house, the prophet cheers them in rebuilding the temple and promises them a greater glory in the Messianic age.