

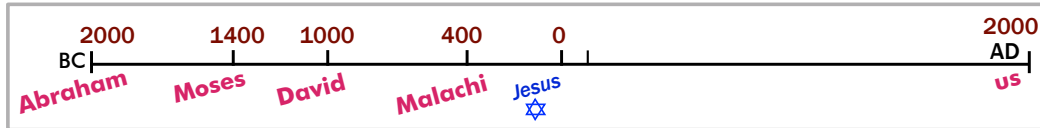
## Lesson #15 - the first part of 1 Kings, plus the Song of Songs

2019

Before starting this lesson, read at least **1 Kings, chapters 3, 8, 10, 11:1-3**. If possible read the whole book. You may find it helpful to read just the minimum chapters, go thru the lesson and then read the whole book. You will discover what works best for you.

In previous lessons, we looked at a chart that helped us think thru the entire Old Testament, using just 4 dates and 4 names.

The line begins with 2000 BC, just as it ends with 2000 AD, to correspond to the time in which we live. Remember, we are dealing in round numbers to see the bigger picture.



The date **2000** BC is connected with Abraham. The time in which he lived.

The date **1400** BC is when Moses lived.

The year **1000** BC is the time of David.

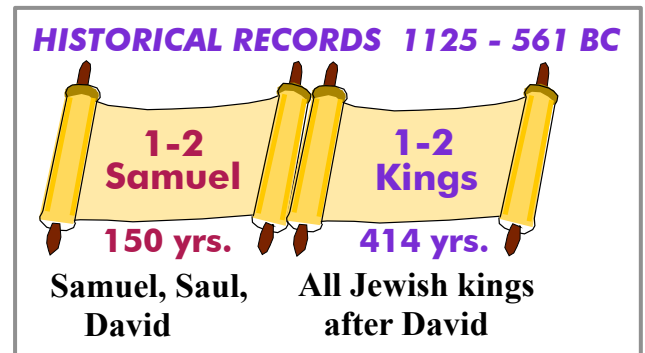
And **400** BC is the date for the prophet, Malachi.

Memorize these 4 names and 4 dates and as you study and learn, you will be able to fit all the Old Testament together in chronological order.

The books of **Samuel** told about Samuel, Saul and David. Together, they covered 150 years, from 1125 to 975 BC.

Now there are 2 books of **Kings** which cover the next 414 years, 975-561 BC. They tell about the rest of the Jewish kings after David. As in the past, Levite historians record events as they happen and then store the documents with the rest of Jewish history. *First Kings* covers a period of 123 years from 975-852 BC.

Chapters 1-11, the reign of Solomon  
Chapters 12-16, the division of the kingdom  
Chapters 17-22, the ministry of Elijah



This lesson covers chapters 1-11, the reign of Solomon and then the first of his books.

2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel told about David's sin with Bathsheba. Altho God forgave them, their newborn son died. The next year they had another son and named him Solomon. Because they had repented, God wanted to assure them He was not holding their sin against them. To do this, He gave their new son a 2<sup>nd</sup> name, Jedidiah, meaning *loved by the Lord*. 2 Sam. 12:25

After this, David continued as king for the next 19 years. He was a good king, but during these years there was also a lack of justice. When David broke God's laws, he deserved death. Because he repented, he received mercy. But the memory of these sins made him afraid to enforce capital punishment in the nation and with his sons. So at the end of David's life, when he is 70, he is aware of the injustice.

This is where the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings begins. One of David's sons who had not been disciplined, decides to name himself king while David is still alive. David knows he must take action. He installs Solomon as the next king and actually has him sit on his throne to make it legal and settled. David tells him to bring the guilty to justice as soon as he has full kingship. After being king 40 years, David dies at the age of 70 in 970 BC.

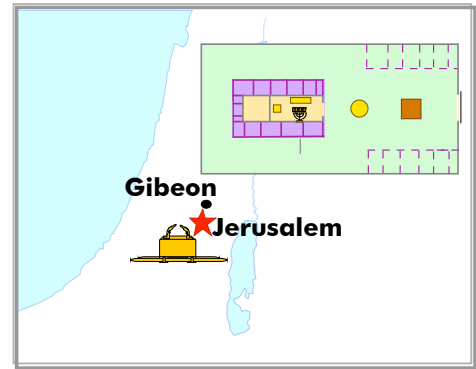
Solomon shows leadership by immediately dealing with the injustices of the past. Some people he puts to death because it is what they deserve. To others he shows mercy and spares their life, but they must live under restrictions. If they break the restrictions, they will die. The nation sees their new king as a leader who is both just and merciful.

Soon afterwards, they see him as a spiritual leader. Solomon wants to continue what his father had started in national worship of God. But this cannot happen unless leaders thruout the nation are following God.

The ark representing God's presence is in Jerusalem, in the 2-room tent that David made for it.<sup>1</sup> However God's house (the Tabernacle) with all the other furniture is still in Gibeon, 8 miles to the northwest. 2 Chronicles 1:2. This includes the large bronze altar where animal sacrifices are offered when people repent and want forgiveness of sin.

Solomon therefore, takes about 100 priests, Levites, military and government advisors to Gibeon. For the next 7-8 days, he leads them in repentance and commitment to God alone. He understands they, the leaders, must first be right with God before they can spiritually lead the nation.

On one of the nights, God personally appears to Solomon in a dream and offers to give him anything he wants. Solomon is just 20 years old. He is a brand new king. We could expect him to ask for power, riches, fame or a long and successful rulership. Instead he asks for wisdom in leadership.



*Now O Lord, my God, You have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give Your servant a discerning heart to govern Your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours? 3:7-9.*

Solomon is 20 years old. Notice his humility. Even tho he has the title of king, he refers to himself as God's servant. And the nation is not *his* people; they are God's people. As he looks at the responsibility, he feels totally inadequate, like a child. He recognizes he needs wisdom to govern and to know right from wrong in his decisions. His request shows unusual depth for such a young man. It is a reflection on the godliness of David and Bathsheba and the spiritual training he received from them over the last 20 years.

God responds by giving Solomon 2 kinds of wisdom: **human** wisdom and **godly** wisdom.

**Human** wisdom gives him ability to govern wisely, to understand the world around him and to use common sense.

**Godly** wisdom gives him ability to see things as God sees them and be in tune with God's desires.

Solomon becomes the wisest man who ever lives. Yet in later years, he builds altars so his foreign wives can worship their pagan gods. Then a little later, **he** begins to worship these idols. How could he do this when he had so much wisdom? The answer lies in the difference between his 2 kinds of wisdom.

Solomon had **human** wisdom all of his life, regardless of what he did or how he did it. It was unconditional. But human wisdom did not give insight about God. That was why he needed godly wisdom. **Godly** wisdom was conditional and in proportion to his obedience.

Each time Solomon disobeyed and did not repent, he lost some of his godly wisdom. At first it was just a small amount. But by the time he was in his mid-40's, even tho he had human wisdom, he no longer had godly wisdom. Fortunately, in the last year of his life he turned back to God and regained his godly wisdom. He said in his memoirs, *obeying God is what really matters in life*.

To see the complete picture, we need to start with Solomon's first year as king. This is when he is filled with godly wisdom. Using that wisdom leads to his greatest spiritual accomplishment, the building of the temple – known as Solomon's temple.



Along with the temple are other courtyards and buildings. The temple itself is a small 3-story building consisting of 2 main rooms - the holy place and the most holy place. There are smaller rooms along the side for the priests or for storage. The temple is twice the size of the house of the Lord in Gibeon, making it 90 feet long by 30 feet wide.

In addition, there is a 30 foot porch at the front. It is built with white stone. When the sun was shining on it, it reflected a beautiful golden color. Inside, it was finished with cedar paneling. Some of it was overlaid with gold. The people worshipped God outside in one of three courtyards around the Temple.

Solomon takes 7 years to build it. 1 Kings 6:38.

When it is finished, the furniture, including the ark, is put into place.

Finally, after over 100 years, the place of worship and the ark, representing the Lord's presence, are in the same place.

Solomon then gathers the people in Jerusalem to dedicate the temple. He leads the people in a prayer of dedication. He starts out by saying,

*O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth below — You who keep Your covenant of love with Your servants who continue wholeheartedly in Your way.... But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built!... Hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive. 8:23, 27, 30*

In this prayer Solomon shows both his humility and his understanding of God's greatness. He does not see himself as doing God a favor by building this temple. Rather, he is amazed God would dwell in it. God responds to Solomon's prayer. His glory descends and His presence fills the Most Holy Place.

Solomon then blesses the people.

*Praise be to the Lord who has given rest to His people Israel just as He promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises He gave thru His servant Moses... so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other. But your hearts must be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by His decrees and obey His commands, as at this time. 8:56, 60-61*

Both his prayer and blessing reveal Solomon in his greatest depth of godly wisdom. That night, once again God personally appears to Solomon in a dream. He says He has heard Solomon's prayer and will do as Solomon asked. When Jews repent, acknowledging God by looking toward this temple in Jerusalem, God will hear and forgive them.

It is during this time that Solomon writes a song which becomes our Psalm 127. In verses 1 - 2 he writes,

*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.*

Solomon, in his godly wisdom knows, unless the temple was built in God's way and God's timing, it would just be an empty building. Unless God watches over and protects the city, anything he (Solomon) or others do will be useless. God is the real king. He, Solomon, is just God's representative.

Solomon's kingdom is known for its peace, prosperity and size. For the first time, the Jews are in control of all the land that God promised to Abraham, even up to the Euphrates River in the north. Solomon becomes known as a king of kings, meaning he is king over other kings and is greater than any other king in the area. Altho the Jews are in control of all the land, they do not live in all of it. Other nations with their kings live in parts of it and pay tax for living on land belonging to the Jews. These other kings accept that Solomon is king over them. He is king of kings.



God gives Solomon human and godly wisdom. He also gives him riches, honor, fame and glory. People from thruout the known world come to see him.

One of them is the Queen of Sheba. Tradition and legend say she was queen of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian royal line descended from a son born to the Queen of Sheba and Solomon. This is **only** legend and is absolutely **not** true. Archeology, language and historical records show the country of Sheba was never part of Ethiopia or even part of Africa. It was on the other side of the Red Sea in Arabia. The Queen of Sheba was from the land we know today as Yemen.

She comes to test his wisdom and to make trade agreements. We know this from the quantity of spices that are mentioned. Things she gets with trade from India can be sent to Solomon and things he gets from thruout the Mediterranean can be sent to her.

Like Saul and David before him, Solomon has a wonderful beginning. But also like them, he has **FAILURES**.

1. He becomes a selfish ruler. At the beginning, Solomon had built things for the good of the people. His labor force was made up of non-Jewish people living in the land. But near the end of his reign he builds things only for himself and his own pleasure. He requires harsh labor and heavy taxes from the Jews themselves. Little by little he loses the respect of his people.
2. He disobeys God's laws for kings. Three hundred fifty years before the Jews had any kings, God had given 4 laws to Moses about kings. In the summary book of Deuteronomy, the first 3 laws were negative.  
*A king should not acquire a lot of horses for himself. The king is not to take many wives... Neither is he to accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. 17:16-17*

In the days of the Old Testament, nations needed horses, marriage alliances and lots of gold or silver to give them military strength and superiority. God said the nation of Israel was to be different. They were not to build up military protection. He was their King and His laws were the laws of their land. The human king, God's representative, was to trust **God** for protection. If the people and their leader obeyed, God would guarantee victory against all enemies. They did not need to use the ways of the world.

So there is no misunderstanding, let me emphasize, these laws against military build-up were only for the Jews in the Old Testament when they were a theocracy. They do not apply to the nation of Israel today nor to any nation.

The first 3 laws were negative. Do not accumulate horses or silver and gold. Do not take many wives.

A 4<sup>th</sup> law for Jewish kings was positive – what a king should do.

*When he, the king, takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, the book of Deuteronomy, taken from that of the priests. It is to be with him and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees. 17:18-19.*

Let's see what King Solomon does with these 4 laws.

1 Kings 10:26. *Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had 14 hundred chariots and 12 thousand horses...*

Solomon is trusting in horses to give him military strength rather than trusting God.

Chapter 11:1-4 *King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, you must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his father had been.*

In those days peace treaties with other nations were usually made official thru marriage. A lesser king would send one of his daughters to be part of the greater king's harem. If the king's daughter is in another country, he will not want to attack it. And the king who received the daughter will not want to attack her father. Marriage alliances gave far more security than signatures on a scroll.

The greater the number of foreign wives in a harem, the greater the fame and prestige of a ruler. To the world of that day, Solomon was indeed a great king because he had 700 peace treaties - 700 foreign, royal born women in his harem. This does not mean Solomon actually lived with all these women, but only that they were set aside and available for him as potential wives. They lived in a palace called the Palace of the Virgins.

As Solomon entered into more and more marriage alliances, it became easier to trust them for his protection rather than trusting God. Because of the culture, he could have left these pagan women in the palace of the virgins and used them strictly as a guarantee of a peace treaty, having nothing further to do with them. But instead, Solomon actually loves many of them and marries them for his own pleasure. Then just as God said, his heart was led astray.

In 1 Kings 10:16, we read that *Solomon made 200 large shields and 300 small shields of hammered gold.* These are not shields for warfare. They are like gold bars or securities that a nation has in its treasury. We know this by how much gold or value is in each of the shield. In times of danger, these gold shields can be used to buy safety for the nation. Solomon is trusting in gold for his protection, instead of trusting God.

Solomon fails the first 3 laws because he also fails in the 4<sup>th</sup>. He never writes out a copy of the law and reads it. **Failure to read God's Word leads him to forget God's Word** and he disobeys.

Since these were laws for all Jewish kings, let me comment on Saul and David the previous kings. Neither of them depended on horses and chariots for their military battles.

Saul did not enter into marriage alliances. David entered into some. While he had numerous wives, they were not from nations with whom they could not marry. David's heart was never led astray by pagan wives.

In regards to gold, Saul did not accumulate silver or gold. David did, but all of it was put to one side for Solomon to use when he built the temple. It was never for military protection.

David had failures in his life, but he read and knew God's Word thruout his life. This is why it could be said in chapter 11:4, *David's heart was fully devoted to the Lord his God.*

In summary, Solomon has had 2 major **FAILURES** in his life.

1. He became a selfish ruler.
2. He disobeyed God's rules for kings.

Now there is failure 3. He practiced idolatry

*He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord... 11:5*

The consequence is found in verses 9-11.

*The Lord responded to Solomon's disobedience because Solomon's heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Altho He had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, since this is your attitude and you have not kept My covenant and My decrees which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.*

After Solomon's death there is civil war and only 2 of the 12 tribes follow his son. Ten tribes take a rebellious official and make him their king. God allows 200 years of civil war because of Solomon's disobedience. His sin is especially serious because he had a special relationship with God, being named, *loved by God*. In addition, God personally appeared to him two different times. But in spite of these spiritual experiences, he still turned away from God.

God told Solomon if he obeyed he would have a long life. Because he did not obey, he died when he was 60 years old. During his 40 years as king, he had a glorious beginning. He had tremendous wisdom and was able to give godly advice to many. But when he became careless in his obedience, he lost his godly wisdom. He spent 10-15 years in idolatry.

Finally, in the last year of his life, Solomon repents. His godly wisdom is restored. But sadly, he never seems to have the depth and *enjoyment* of God like he had in his early days.

Solomon's life is history of the past, but from him we can find lessons for our lives.

#### **Lesson # 1**

If God offered to give us anything, what would we ask for? Our request would reveal our true character. Unless this lesson was on our mind, I doubt many of **us** would ask for wisdom to know right from wrong in our decisions.

#### **Lesson # 2**

**Failure to read God's Word leads us to forget God's Word.** It will become easier and easier to disobey God and see nothing wrong in it. It's OK because everyone else is doing it.

#### **Lesson #3**

Spiritual experiences make us **feel** close to God, but they do not have power to **keep** us close to God. It is studying and applying God's Word that keeps us obedient.

#### **Lesson #4**

Continued disobedience destroys our godly wisdom and our enjoyment of God. We will still be in God's family, but we will lose the **joy** of our salvation.

Some very serious lessons can be learned from Solomon.

We have looked at Solomon's life; now let's look at his writings. Thruout his life, he put his wisdom into writing.

We are told, *He, Solomon, spoke 3000 proverbs and his songs numbered 1005.* 1 Kings 4:32.

All of these were stored with the scrolls of Jewish history. Of the 3000 **proverbs**, 915 **Proverbs** have been preserved in our Bibles. Out of the 1005 **songs** we have 2 Psalms and his best song, the **Song of Songs**. We also have his **memoirs** in the book of **Ecclesiastes**.

Solomon wrote **Song of Songs** in his first year as king, when he was 20.

He wrote **Proverbs** in the middle of his kingship, at the age of 40.

He wrote **Ecclesiastes** in his last year as king, at the age of 60.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Why David did not reunite the ark with the tabernacle, now known as the House of God. There seems to be several reasons.
1. Jerusalem was the designated site of the future temple. Placing the ark at Gibeon would easily have jeopardized this plan.
  2. It seems that the tabernacle was only moved after some disaster had happened to it (as at Shiloh and Nob). Public sentiment probably would otherwise have been opposed to a move.
  3. David had it in his heart to build a permanent house of the Lord and so considered the situation as temporary. With only a tent, everyone would feel a greater need for building the temple. *Expositors CD*

## Song of Songs

Before starting this lesson, read at least **Song of Songs 1, 2 and 5**. If possible read the whole book. You may find it helpful to read just the minimum chapters, go thru the lesson and then read the whole book. You will discover what works best for you.

This book is an eastern love song.

The literal name in Hebrew, Greek and Latin is **Song of Songs**.

This means it is the best of the 1005 songs that Solomon wrote.

In the past it was called **Song of Solomon**.

Another name is **Canticles**, which comes from the Latin, *Canticum Canticorum*.

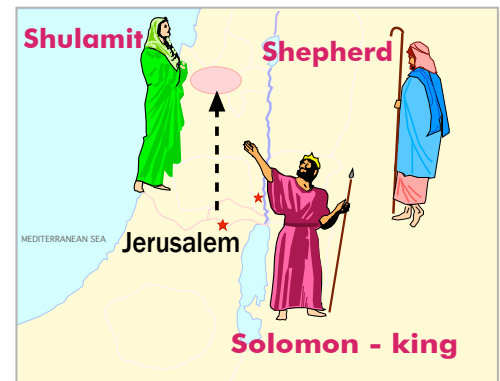
Most study books use the name Canticles and abbreviate it *Cant.* or *Ct.*

Thruout the centuries many have felt this book should not be in the Bible. Even today, the majority of believers are uncomfortable with it because it does not seem to fit with the rest of the Bible. The usual response is to say its meaning is spiritual. Yes, there are spiritual lessons. But when Solomon writes it, he is 20 years old. He is writing an eastern love song about himself and his first wife, a young bride whom he deeply loves.

To understand this love song we have to know the history behind it. From the 5 poems, we can piece the story together.

During his first year as king, Solomon goes to inspect his vineyards in northern Israel, near the town of Shulem. While there, he sees a beautiful girl working in the field of her family's vineyard. Her family includes her mother, two older brothers and a younger sister. Because her father is not mentioned, it means he has died and the older brothers are in charge of the family. When Solomon sees this girl, it is love at first sight. Her name is Shulamit, 6:13 which is the feminine form of the name Solomon. In English we might say Solomon and Solomina. But in our story it is Solomon and Shulamit.

Solomon knows he would frighten this young girl if he appeared in his royal robes, so he comes back disguised as a shepherd. He begins to visit her country home thruout the spring and summer.



But as winter approaches, Solomon remains in Jerusalem. All winter long they do not see each other. When spring arrives, Solomon again travels north to the vineyards, but especially to see her. Once again he disguises himself as a shepherd in order to court her. Eventually he wins her love and she agrees to marry him. He reveals his true identity and returns to Jerusalem. She remains at her home.

Just before the wedding, Solomon sends a group to escort her to his palace in Jerusalem. Once she arrives, there is the wedding, the wedding banquet and the wedding night.

During the next year or two, there is a problem in their relationship. This causes friction in the marriage and each pulls away from the other. But then, realizing how much she loves him, Shulamit does what she can to win him back. Solomon, because of his love for her, does his part and they work it out.

Another year goes by. Shulamit wants to visit her family. She longs to see the countryside once again. She also wants Solomon to enjoy it with her. They go back to the place where they met and recommit themselves to each other.

A few more years go by. One day as Solomon thinks back on all that has happened, he takes the facts and writes 5 poems about the various stages of their relationship. Being Jewish, they are not in chronological order. What makes this song unique is that he writes it from his wife's point of view. The 5 poems could be entitled, *Reflections of Love*

Their wedding day	1:1 - 2:7
Their courtship	2:8 - 3:5
Their wedding night	3:6 - 5:1
Their marital problems	5:2 - 6:9
Their recommitment	6:10 - 8:14

I am indebted to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum for the outline and background story. I have taken them from his book on *Song of Songs*.

I use material from Dr. Fruchtenbaum quite frequently in these lessons. Teachers repeat what they learned from their teachers who learned from other teachers. Unfortunately this means our Bible learning and studies come from one long line of western, Gentile teachers with Gentile, western views.

But the Bible is Jewish and from the Middle East. When teaching Jewish material, there is no better source than Jewish believers who are both scholars and professors. It is why I use Doctors Alfred Edersheim, Charles Feinberg and Arnold Fruchtenbaum. They had and have solid faith in Jesus as their Messiah; they are grounded in theology and qualified to give the Jewish perspective.

The book Song of Songs has a literal meaning because Solomon is writing about his marriage. But what does it have to do with us. Why is it in Scripture? There are **4 REASONS** why God included it.

First, so the Jews of Solomon's day and everyone after him, could appreciate **the purity and beauty of marriage** as God intended it. It is a sacred and wonderful gift from God.

It could then be a picture of **the purity and beauty that God the Father wanted in His relationship with the Jews**.

Thruout the Old Testament, the Jewish nation is pictured as the wife of God the Father.

While Solomon did not know about it, this book also pictures **the purity and beauty Jesus wants in His relationship with us, the Church, His Body**. The New Testament says we are the future Bride of Christ. One day there will be the marriage of the Lamb and the wedding feast. Paul says that even now we are betrothed or engaged to Him.

And finally, this song is a picture of **the purity and beauty of our individual relationship with Jesus**.

To show how it applies, I want to use 3 verses, first giving the **literal** meaning and then the **spiritual** meaning.

Chapter 1:6 Shulamit is speaking.

*My brothers were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected.*

In the **literal** story, *My own vineyard* means herself, her own life. Shulamit says she was so involved in working in the vineyard, she got sunburned and forgot to take care of herself. This is the literal meaning.

There is also a **spiritual** meaning for us

People can pressure us to do things or we can put pressure on ourselves. It may involve doing things for others or doing things for God. There is a danger in all our doing that we neglect our own life. It may be emotional, physical, mental or spiritual. When this happens, we need to stop and evaluate. We need to change our schedule and our priorities. Later in life, we do not want to have to say, *My own life - My own vineyard I have neglected*.

In the **literal** story, Solomon and Shulamit are walking together thru the vineyards. Suddenly she notices the vines have been damaged. She says in 2:15, *Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards; our vineyards that are in bloom*. As she sees the damage the foxes have done she knows how little things can damage her relationship with Solomon, that is just beginning. She knows it is important to deal with the problems right away.

For us, the **spiritual** meaning is similar. There are so many things around us or in our lives that can damage our relationship with God. So often it is just the little things that pull us away from God. We need to catch the foxes - we need to deal with and remove them, the **little** things.

In the **literal** story, Solomon had met Shulamit the previous year. During the winter they had not seen each other. Solomon comes back to see her in the spring. As he walks by the window of her house he calls out to her in chapter 2:14 *Show me your face; let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your face is lovely*.

Solomon is anxious to spend time with her. He wants to enjoy her beauty and have time to talk with her.

In the **spiritual**, the God of all the earth calls out to us, *I want to spend time with you. I want to hear your voice in praise, worship, prayer and conversation.* He is eager to talk with us thru His Word. He is anxious to hear our voice in prayer and praise – thru music and words. He says to **us**, *let me hear **your** voice; for **your** voice is sweet and your face is **lovely**.*