

Sibyls' Service

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Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

(Mass in Blue, Will Todd)

Confession

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just,
and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalm 118:1–9

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever!

Let Israel say,

‘His steadfast love endures for ever.’

Let the house of Aaron say,

‘His steadfast love endures for ever.’

Let those who fear the LORD say,

‘His steadfast love endures for ever.’

Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me
and set me in a broad place.

With the LORD on my side I do not fear.

What can mortals do to me?

The LORD is on my side to help me;

I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put confidence in mortals.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put confidence in princes.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

Benedictus

Blessed is He Who cometh
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

(Mass in Blue, Will Todd)

Song of Songs

The Hebrew language has no superlative. It says “vanity of vanities” for “the most worthless vanity” or “the heaven of heavens” for “the highest heaven.”

The Song of Songs means “the greatest song” in Hebrew.

The Babylonian Talmud records Rabbi Akiba saying: “No day in the history of the world is so precious as the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the other Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is holiest of all.”

Song of Songs

The song is much more than a simple love story, and has for many centuries been interpreted as a poetic depiction of the love of God and the people of Israel, or Christ and his Bride the Church, or Christ and the soul of the believer, along with other, more fanciful and elaborate, allegorical interpretations.

It has been described as “a sacramental word that uses visible and tangible things to point us to things that are invisible and immaterial.”

“He is a God who is repeatedly approaching his people, wooing his people, speaking love to his people, drawing them to himself with the cords of love.”

(Liam Goligher)

Song of Songs

Paul writes “I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor 11:2)

In Rev 21:9 the church is “the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

Jesus told the Pharisees that the Bible is all about him: “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me” (Jn 5:39)

To the disciple on the road to Emmaus, he showed them “the things about himself in all the scriptures” (Lk 24:27)

In this song the Lord speaks directly as a lover who longs for his beloved and desires to bring her into his presence.

Song of Songs

Origen, (c185–c253) wrote of the Christian allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa (c335–c394) wrote fifteen Homilies on the Song of Songs. In them, he compares the bride to the soul and the groom to God.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1113) wrote eighty-six sermons on the first two chapters of the Song: “O strong and burning love, O love urgent and impetuous, which does not allow me to think of anything but you. . . . You laugh at all considerations of fitness, reason, modesty and prudence, and tread them underfoot.”

C. H. Spurgeon preached 84 sermons on the Song of Songs.

Song of Songs

The book has the title “The song of songs, which is Solomon’s”, so it has often been assumed to have been written by King Solomon.

But this title should not be taken to imply authorship by Solomon; it may mean something like “dedicated to” or in some other way “associated with” the biblical king. This title is usually considered a secondary addition and not part of the first lyric;

Various factors such as the Aramaic influence, the similarity to Mishnaic Hebrew, the influence of the spoken idiom, the foreign loan-words, suggest that the Song was written down in post-Exilic times, most likely in the Hellenistic period, around the third century BC.

Song of Songs

“The prominence of women in the Song, and the unusually sympathetic rendering of a woman’s perspective, has led some readers to wonder whether the author might have been a woman.... women are associated to some extent with poetry and song in the Bible. Women traditionally sang songs of victory and mourning probably composing them as well. ...

“It is possible, then, that some of the individual lyrics of the Song were composed by women, or that a woman poet was the author of the final version.”
 (“The Song of Songs A New Translation with an Introduction and Commentary”
by Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch)

Song of Songs

The poem is set in early spring, with its intimations of ripening. The rains of the winter season have just ended, the vines are in blossom, the air is alive with scents and birdsong. The setting is the city of Jerusalem with its outlying vineyards and pastures.

Song of Songs

In 2:1 the beloved declares “I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.”

(The same two flowers are mentioned in prophetic visions about the restoration of Zion, in Is 35:1–2 “The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the rose it shall blossom abundantly” and Hosea 14:5 “I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon.” These flowers are the very epitome of blossoming in the symbolism of the Bible.)

Song of Songs

I have selected some of the statements that the lover (Jesus) makes about his beloved (us).

Several of the translations are taken from “The Song of Songs: A New Translation with an Introduction and Commentary” by Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch, 1998

Song of Songs

1:2 your love is better than wine

(The word *dodim* which occurs six times in the Song, including the opening verse “Your *dodim* are better than wine” is almost always translated as “love,” though it refers specifically to sexual love.)

Heb 12:2 says that Jesus “for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame”. The joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, is our love for him.

Song of Songs

1:15 And you, my beloved,
how beautiful you are!
Your eyes are doves.

Song of Songs

2:10 Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away

2:14 My dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the shadow of the cliff,
let me see you, all of you!
Let me hear your voice,
your delicious song.
I love to look at you.

(Once the Cure d' Ars, a French saint of the eighteenth century, asked an old peasant what he was doing sitting for hours in the church, seemingly not even praying; the peasant replied: "I look at him, he looks at me, and we are happy")

Song of Songs

4:1 How beautiful you are, my love,
my friend! The doves of your eyes
looking out
from the thicket of your hair.

Your hair
like a flock of goats
bounding down Mount Gilead.

Song of Songs

4:7 You are all beautiful, my love,
my perfect one.

Song of Songs

4:9 You have ravished my heart,
my sister, my bride,
ravished me with one glance of your eyes,
one link of your necklace.

(“my sister, my bride” implies a relationship with God that is analogous to every kind of intimate human relationship, not just erotic love)

Song of Songs

4:10 How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!
how much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

Song of Songs

5:2 Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one

Song of Songs

6:4 You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah,
majestic as Jerusalem,
daunting
as the stars in their courses.

Song of Songs

6:5 Your eyes! Turn them away
for they dazzle me.

Her eyes are: like doves / ravishing / dazzling

Song of Songs

6:9 One alone is my dove,
my perfect, my only one,
love of her mother, light
of her mother's eyes.

Song of Songs

6:10 Who is that rising like the morning star,
clear as the moon,
bright as the blazing sun,
daunting as the stars in their courses!

Song of Songs

7:6 How beautiful you are, my love, how sweet, how delightful!

Song of Songs

The song ends on a note of longing:

8:14 Hurry, my love! Run away,
my gazelle, my wild stag
on the hills of cinnamon.

which is also reflected at the end of Revelation:

Rev 22:20 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Just (After Song of Songs)

Two extracts from *Just (After Song of Songs)* by David Lang which uses phrases from the Song of Songs.

He writes “According to Jewish tradition the Song of Songs is a metaphor for our passion for the Eternal, so the words themselves become very important.”