

The Beauty of Jesus in Poetic Description

(Songs 5:10–16)

A. Introduction

1. Song of Songs 5:10–16 is the greatest poetic description of Jesus' beauty in Scripture. Together with Revelation 1 and 19, it gives us the most complete and clearest picture of the Beauty of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Revelation 1 reveals the fully unveiled and glorified Son of Man. There are 24 descriptions of the literal appearance of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.
 - b. Song of Songs 5:10–16 gives us a magnificent and poetic unveiling of the splendour of Christ Jesus. There is no higher description in Scripture of Jesus through poetry than in this passage.
 - c. Revelation 19:11–16 reveals the beauty of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. It fully displays the beauty of Jesus as the passionate Bridegroom, transcendent King and righteous Judge.
2. Song of Songs 5:10–16 is an outstanding statement of love for God and the challenge for all of us is to take sufficient time to learn the language of this passage.
 - a. This passage of Scripture is meant to equip our souls to effectively worship in times of testing, trial and persecution. It is essential for empowering the heart of the Church at the End-of-the-Age.
 - b. This is a "must" passage for us to master while on our journey to growing in mature bridal affection for Jesus. This is not a passage to be content to read without deep meditation. This is one that has to be repeatedly studied, read and searched out.
3. In this passage, the Bride (i.e. Shulamite woman) uses three metaphors to convey ten attributes of Jesus's leadership, personality and deeds.
 - a. The full meaning is hidden in the language of romantic poetry. She gives a very poetic and dynamic statement of the beauty of Jesus.
 - b. She describes ten parts of the human body using agricultural images together with references to Solomon's temple. She was familiar with agricultural images (speaking in the language of her heart), and she referenced the temple of Solomon (speaking in the language of King Solomon's heart).
 - c. The Bride gives 12 descriptive statements of Jesus. She begins with a general statement of Jesus' incomparable beauty (5:10), then proceeds to develop ten attributes of His excellencies (5:11–15) and ends with a summary statement (5:16).

- d. She describes ten attributes of Jesus, each of which have two descriptions.
4. The daughters of Jerusalem (referring to immature believers) essentially asked, “*How can you worship Him under such duress?*” This gives us the knowledge she possessed that which equipped her to worship God. Knowledge of these ten attributes stabilises us in the midst of the storms of life.

B. General description (Song 5:10)

1. The Bride starts with a general statement about Jesus. There are four-fold aspects to this general statement.
2. “*My Beloved*” — Jesus is her beloved. She is lovesick for Him. She maintained her love for Jesus through her recent season of testing, and she was not offended by Him.
 - a. She does not say that Jesus is “the Saviour of my soul”, “the King of my life”, “the Master of my destiny”, or “the Lord that I submit to”. Instead, she calls Him “*my Beloved*”.
 - b. She reveals the posture of her heart through the first two words she utters: “*My beloved*”. This is the spiritual reality and primary position from which she relates with Jesus. It is about love: Jesus loves us deeply, and we love Him wholeheartedly.
 - c. Calling Him “*my Beloved*” reveals the depth of intimate relationship that she has with Jesus. When we call Jesus as “our beloved”, this implies that we know and walk intimately with Jesus.
3. “*He is white*” or, as the NIV translates, “*He is radiant*”. The NAS translates this phrase as “*He is dazzling*”, while other versions translate it as “*He is brilliant*”.
 - a. The Hebrew word translated as “white” (in the NKJV) means either radiant, dazzling, brilliant or “shining white”.
 - b. The idea is that Jesus is stunning and dazzling to her, as He is “brilliant in His loveliness” or “radiant in His splendour”, abounding with unapproachable light that dwells around His throne.
 - c. She is talking about the dazzling splendour of His person. She is emphasising the “dazzling splendour” of God’s Person. The very colours, lights, fragrances, power, sounds, and music express the splendour that surrounds His Person.
4. The Bride cries out that “*He is ruddy*”. Ruddy refers to having a reddish complexion.
 - a. King David was ruddy in appearance. This spoke of his reddish complexion. When somebody is healthy on the inside, their cheeks are ruddy, and their appearance appears healthy. David’s ruddy complexion indicated that he possessed internal health.

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- b. The combination of everything inside Jesus' personality is healthy. The Bride is saying that all of Jesus' attributes are perfectly combined in Him in a healthy, spiritual balance. They work together in perfect harmony.
 - c. Ruddy does not refer to one characteristic, but rather a combination of the ten attributes that make up His spiritual complexion.
5. He is both dazzling and ruddy. Thus, He possesses brilliant splendour and yet has complete balance and perfect health in His inward qualities. In the fullest sense of the word, He is the only whole person who ever walked the earth. He perfectly "balances" every attribute within Him.
- a. He is not ruddy because of the perfect unity of all His parts, but because of His absence of parts. He fully possesses each of His attributes at 100% — i.e. He is 100% righteous and 100% merciful. It is this "absence of parts" that distinguishes Him.
 - b. The emphasis is on His perfectly balanced personality, which makes Him incomparable to all others. For example, Jesus has a perfect balance of mercy and judgement in all that He does, as He is 100% merciful and 100% just at all times.
6. A secondary meaning of "white and ruddy" is that He is fully God and fully man.
- a. "White" speaks of His Divine nature. He is fully God. "Ruddy" speaks of His blood or His human nature. As a human high priest, He offered His blood. He is fully man.
 - b. His glory is so unique because He combines both Divine and human attributes. He is the only One in heaven or on earth who has — at the same time — the fullness of humanity and the fullness of Deity. God the Father is not like that, and neither are the angels, nor any of the apostles.
 - c. His beauty springs forth from the "balance" of the two. He is both the lion and the lamb at the exact same time. He perfectly expresses all the elements of His personality without any contradiction. He serves in the meekness of a lamb and He roars with the authority of a lion.
7. *"Chief among ten thousand"*
- a. Chief (in the NKJV) has the meaning of "*distinguished*". He is the One who stands out among the masses.
 - i. He is the centre of attention like a large banner in a marching army. He is incomparably superior to all people.
 - ii. He is so excellent He can instantly be distinguished when compared with everything else in the created order. He is the One carrying the banner that can be instantly recognised in a crowd. There is no need for discernment to figure out that He is the greatest of all.
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- b. The phrase “*ten thousand*” refers to His incomparable greatness.
 - i. The number 10,000 is not to be understood as literal. It simply means an extremely large number. “Chief among 10,000” is a metaphor to say that He is the greatest of all and has absolutely no rival.
 - ii. The main point is that nobody else can compare to Him. God has given Him the pre-eminence above all things (Col. 1:18).

C. His head — His sovereign leadership over all (Song 5:11a)

1. The head is the most prominent part of the body. It is what sets the direction for the rest of the body. The head speaks of His personal sovereignty. Jesus’ sovereignty speaks of His headship over all creation (Eph. 1:10–21).
2. “*Gold*” speaks of the Divine nature or Deity. Gold is the material of highest value, and gold of the highest quality is the most valuable of all building materials. It speaks of Jesus’ leadership that is tremendously valuable and extremely rare.
3. “*Finest gold*” refers to the highest degree of quality and excellence. In Hebrew, it means the “finest of the finest gold”. Finest gold has no mixture. His golden headship or sovereignty has no impurity in it. Nothing can be added to it, and it cannot be improved. There is no deficiency in His love, wisdom, power, or kindness as He leads.
4. Jesus’ leadership is valuable to His people. She is saying that His leadership is so excellent that it is of the finest gold imaginable. It is perfect and divinely inspired wisdom.

D. His locks — His dedication to God and to the Church (Song 5:11b)

1. His hair speaks of His dedication to God and to His people.
 - a. The NIV translates “*His locks*” as “*His hair*”. The hair makes reference to the Nazarite vow of dedication. The Nazarite vow of consecration forbids the cutting of one’s hair.
 - b. The NIV translates “*wavy*” hair as “*bushy*” hair. She understands that Jesus’ hair is thick and wavy, as bushy or wavy hair is thick.
 - i. Thick and wavy hair is the hair of a young man in the prime of life, as contrasted to an old man whose hair has lost its vitality and fullness. Baldness is the opposite of wavy hair.
 - ii. She understands His dedication to be like wavy hair full of vigour. His dedication to God and the church has vigour in it. God does not have bad moods. We never have to be concerned whether it is a good time to approach God.
 - c. Young men have black hair in contrast to the grey hair of old men. Thus, black hair speaks of Jesus’ youthful and energetic zeal, which is the opposite of decay and a lack of vigour.

- i. Jesus' dedication to us is eternally vigorous. He forever flourishes as if in His prime. His youthfulness and vigilant dedication continue forever.
 - ii. Jesus' hair is also described as white. This speaks of eternity or His eternal nature (Rev. 1:12).
2. Jesus' dedication never grows old. It is always wavy and vigorous.
 - a. God never grows emotionally weary (Isa. 40:28). He never changes (Heb. 13:8). All other "beloveds" grow old, decay, and eventually die. He never does. His Bride is secure because she has no fear that His dedication will grow old or die.
 - b. His hair is eternally black. His dedication is fresh as well as vigorously beautiful. His dedication is vigilant, youthful, and continues to flourish throughout all eternity. Jesus is forever in His prime. He is always at the highest place of His love, passion, and dedication.
 3. This is her second confession even when His presence was lifted from her. She knows that He has not changed the way He feels. She would not receive the accusations that He was no longer dedicated to her in the way that He said He would always be.

E. His eyes — His omniscience (Song 5:12)

1. His eyes speak of His omniscience.
 - a. Eyes speak of the ability to see or discern. His eyes speak of His omniscience, which is His ability to know everything. Omniscience means perfect knowledge and perfect wisdom. He has total clarity and fullness of insight into every dark secret. Everything is totally clear and discernible to the Lord.
 - b. The all-seeing eye of God discerns both our negative and positive qualities. His eyes see the yes in our spirit when we fail, even more clearly than we do. God sees the cry in our heart to obey Him (Heb. 4:13; Prov. 5:21; 15:3; Rev. 2:18, 28).
2. "His eyes are like doves" refers to His singleness of vision.
 - a. He rejects everything displeasing to His Father. He gave her the same affirmation in Song of Songs 1:15 and Song of Songs 4:1.
 - b. He had those loyal eyes of a dove. His eyes are loyal to God the Father. His eyes are loyal to His Bride.
 - c. Having eyes like doves speaks of His keen perception and loyalty. Doves have amazing eyesight. They also mate for life. Pairs of doves are tightly knit and work together as a team. They watch each other and mirror each other's actions. They are commonly referred to as "love birds" that are symbols of love and faithfulness.
3. "doves by the rivers of waters" — This refers to the waters where the doves bathe themselves and become clean. They go to the rivers and bathe themselves in the water, after which they are clean. This means that Jesus views things through the cleanness of His heart.

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- a. Jesus' eyes are not just all-seeing but are pure and innocent like clean doves that have just bathed. He interprets the knowledge gained from what He sees through the cleanness of His heart.
 - b. A judge may know all the facts about a case. However, if he has an unclean heart, he will misinterpret the information. Jesus' interpretation of what He sees has no distortion.
4. Jesus' eyes are clean like a dove "*washed with milk*". Milk, which is white, refers to purity and cleanness.
- a. This speaks of the purity of His discernment. His vision is completely clean, with pure and loving motives.
 - b. His interpretation of what He sees is not like that of a wounded, dysfunctional, sinful judge. His ability to interpret His information is through the cleanness of His heart and purity of His motives.
 - c. Milk also refers to the simplicity and the innocence of childlikeness. While Jesus is not childish, He has the ability to be infinitely complex while maintaining the simplicity and innocence of childlikeness.
5. His eyes are "*fitly set*". This metaphor refers to a jewel that is fitly set by the most skilful artist who is making a very expensive piece of jewellery.
- a. Eyes "*fitly set*" means that there is no deformity in them. His eyes are perfectly set — not too deeply, nor do they protrude in an unlovely way.
 - b. There is thus no exaggeration. This speaks of beauty and order in His discernment instead of deformity with exaggeration. There is no exaggeration, but rather absolutely perfect discernment.
6. Our knowledge of His omniscience persuades us against evil because it is vain to attempt to hide evil before the eyes of our omniscient King. God sees our every private act of righteousness. He sees when we endure trials without giving up. He not only sees the negative, but He also sees the positive.
- a. Paul teaches us that we cannot fully see our own sincerity in the way God does. God will give us praise on the last day for things that we do not see about ourselves now (1 Cor. 4:5).
 - b. He rewards every small act of obedience, especially those hidden from the eyes of others (Matt. 6:1–6, 16–18). He remembers and rewards all because He sees all (Heb. 6:10). Even small acts, such as giving a cup of cold water, do not go unnoticed by the Lord (Matt. 10:42).
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F. His cheeks — His diverse emotional makeup (Song 5:13a,b)

1. His cheeks reveal His emotional beauty.
 - a. His cheeks reflect the countenance of the face that reveals His emotional makeup.
 - b. The cheeks are the windows to the emotions. The cheeks enable us to discern whether a person is joyful or sad.
2. Jesus' emotional life is like a bed of beautiful fragrant spices in a garden.
 - a. As a garden filled with delightful fragrances, so is the condition of Jesus' emotional life. His affections are fragrant and refreshing to our souls as long as we can discern them.
 - b. We have to have a right image of God. We need to see the pleasures and passions in His heart for us. A bed of spices brings tremendous fragrance to those who are near.
3. The delights of God are as abundant and diverse as banks of sweet-smelling herbs.
 - a. The "banks of scented herbs" speak of the extravagant fragrance in Jesus' affections.
 - b. His cheeks are not just like a bed of spices; they are like banks — heaps of scented herbs. It refers to an extravagant amount and diversity of all types of scented herbs.
4. God has so many different types of emotions that are fragrant and pleasing to us. A lot of people think the only emotion God has is joy when they get saved, followed only by anger and wrath. However, His emotions are heaps of diverse and sweet fragrances.
 - a. Jesus' emotional makeup is filled with passion, delight and longing for us.
 - b. Jesus also has passion for His Father, His creation, His holiness, His kingdom, His truth, His angels, etc.
 - c. His inward emotional state is like a bed of spices. There is a diversity of passions, pleasures and delights.

G. His lips — His Word (Song 5:13c,d)

1. "His lips" refer to His speech or His Word, which have power. There are two aspects to His Word:
 - a. The first is the *logos*, which is Scripture, the written Word of God.
 - b. The second refers to the prophetic word that the Holy Spirit speaks directly to our hearts.
 - i. This prophetic word can be spoken directly to us, or it can come through someone else.
 - ii. His speech comes through the prophetic ministry, as well as in the ultimate prophetic ministry, which is the written Word of God.

2. There are two different features of the lips that are highlighted:
 - a. *“His lips are lilies”* speak of the sweet and satisfying Word of God. Lilies speak of fragrance, innocence and purity. Jesus’ affirming words are tender and sweet like lilies.
 - b. They are *“dripping liquid myrrh”*. This means that He also knows how to speak tough love. There are no lilies in nature that drip myrrh.
 - i. Myrrh is a burial spice that speaks of suffering and embracing death to self. There is nobody who speaks with the kind of tenderness and kindness that Jesus does. Yet, at the same time, He is at total war against that which hinders our lives from growing in love. He speaks directly to areas that need correction.
 - ii. *“Dripping”* refers to consistent, small quantities that eventually lead to abundance. For example, a beehive that drips honey eventually fills the entire jar with an abundance of honey.

H. His hands — His divine activity (Song 5:14a,b)

1. His hands (or arms) refer to His activities and the way He accomplishes His work.
 - a. His hands are skilful in doing everything good with perfect power.
 - b. He is omnipotent, thus possessing the ability to accomplish anything He pleases, both in the natural creation and in the spiritual realm.
2. *“His hands are rods of gold”* speaks of Divine character accomplishing His work.
 - a. Gold often refers to Divine character. All His work is accomplished with the strength of godliness and purity.
 - b. The works of Jesus in our personal lives, throughout all history, in natural creation and spiritual creation, are skilful and filled with Divine power, purity, and wisdom.
3. *“Set with beryl”* — A beryl is a jewel; a specific, designed activity is required when something is “set.”
 - a. Being deliberately “set” by the hand of God is in contrast to arbitrary activities. All His works are skillfully set like beautiful jewels in gold. The work of the cross was done with infinite skill (Eph. 2:7).
 - b. The works of Jesus in our lives and in all creation throughout all of history are skilful, precise, and filled with Divine power, purity, and wisdom (Rom. 8:28).
4. The Bride trusted in the invisible work of God. She was saying that, *“All of His actions are rods of gold set with beryl”*. The confession of her heart was essentially, *“I will be more mature in love and more humble, leaning on my beloved in a greater way at the end of this dark trial”*.

I. His body — His tender compassion (Song 5:14c,d)

1. She magnifies God's tender mercy towards weak, sinful people. This speaks of His tender compassion.
 - a. "*His body*" is translated as "*His belly*" in the KJV. The belly speaks of tender compassion.
 - b. The Hebrew word (i.e. *me'eh*) used here communicates the idea of yearning or compassion (Isa. 63:15; Jer. 31:20; Songs 5:4).
 2. Some of the greatest distinguishing features of Jesus are His feelings towards those who are weak, sinful and incompetent. He has such feelings of compassion.
 3. Compassion is more than just His emotions in general. It is specifically the yearning of His heart towards weak people. God has extravagant compassion in His dealings with His people (Ps. 103:10–14; Exo. 34:6).
 4. "*His body is carved ivory*" ("*bright ivory*" in the KJV; "*polished ivory*" in the NIV)
 - a. Ivory is clean and white, yet expensive because it is rare. Carved and polished ivory is even more unique.
 - b. His compassion and patience are described as rare and expensive like ivory.
 - c. How remarkably true is this of God's personality. Carved ivory is but a dim shadow of the uniqueness of the compassion of God.
 - d. God's ways of mercy are as high above man's as the heavens are above the earth. There is no one on earth who forgives weak people like God does (Isa. 55:7–8).
 5. "*Inlaid with sapphires*"
 - a. The sapphire is a stone in Aaron's breastplate and in the foundation of the New Jerusalem. The way sapphires are used in God's design reveals the extent of their beauty and the preciousness of the stone (Rev. 21:19).
 - b. "*Inlaid*"
 - i. Mounting inlaid jewels, like sapphires, in ivory takes great skill, creativity and precision. He has great discernment in the administration of His compassion (Phil. 1:9–10).
 - ii. He possesses a skilful mercy that brings about purity and wisdom. This mercy is not an unsanctified mercy, but one that has godly fruit.
 - iii. Jesus' compassion is not arbitrary or random but is skilfully manifest like ivory inlaid with sapphires.
 6. We need a new paradigm to understand this aspect of God's personality. It is so unique that nothing on earth can compare.
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J. His legs — His walk and administration of His purposes (Song 5:15a,b)

1. God's plan is executed with strength, dignity and order.
 - a. *"Legs"* speak of the ways that we take in order to fulfil our purposes. Psalm 147:10 says the LORD takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. Man's legs speak of his own strength to fulfil his activities (Ps. 103:7; Rom. 11:33; Eccl. 11:5).
 - b. *"Pillars of marble"* — God's ways are strong, lovely, permanent, orderly, and durable. God's ways do not fail or vacillate; He does not waver (Rev. 2:19).
 - i. *"Pillars"* speak of great strength, dignity, and orderliness or endurance under pressure.
 - ii. *"Marble"* is a strong, beautiful and permanent type of building material. It is a beautiful type of rock. His strong legs are like marble, which cannot be manipulated or overpowered.
 - c. *"Set on bases of fine gold"*
 - i. Gold speaks of divine character. Fine gold is the most pure and valuable because it has been refined by fire.
 - ii. These pillars are set on bases of most fine gold. The ways and the activity of God are portrayed as being set on refined gold (i.e. divine character)
 - iii. The Lord's way in the midst of His people is always refined like pure gold. His ways are just and true, as all the paths of the Lord are truth (Rev. 15:3; Ps. 25:10).
2. God's plans are executed with strength, dignity and order. They have endurance and do not fail under pressure.

K. His countenance — Jesus' impartation to His people (Song 5:15c,d)

1. *"His countenance"* speaks of the impartation of God to His people.
 - a. David prayed, *"Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us"* in Psalm 4:6. This prayer is for a discernible impartation of God's light to shine upon His people.
 - b. This is a prayer for God to intervene with the impartation of discernible manifestations of Himself to His people. When the light of God shines on the human heart, God is imparting things into the heart.
2. The Father wants to impart the graces of godliness. He has an infinite power to impart to us godly traits like wisdom, purity and passion. He especially wants to impart His affections for Jesus.
3. *"Lebanon"* speaks of being pleasing and strong. Lebanon is symbolic of that which is glorious, stately, and honourable (Song 4:8,11,15).

4. *“Excellent as the cedars”* — Cedars are tall, strong trees with excellent fragrance. The pleasure and power which comes from the countenance of God is as strong and excellent as the cedars.
5. When God shines His countenance on our hearts, He is imparting His manifest Presence. There is nothing more satisfying and pleasurable to the human makeup than the release of the countenance of God on the soul.

L. His mouth — Intimacy with Jesus (Song 5:16)

1. *“Mouth”* speaks of intimate relationship with God. His mouth does not refer to His words or His speech as signified by His lips in verse 13.
 - a. His mouth speaks of intimate communication because the Bride longed for the kisses of His mouth (Songs 1:2). The mouth was defined at the very beginning of the book as related to the kisses of intimacy.
 - b. Lips are related to speech and the communication of words. She was not being redundant.
2. *“His mouth is most sweet”*
 - a. Jesus wants to enlarge our capacity to receive more of God. This is the tenth and final attribute that she is extolling here. This is a statement of her desire for intimacy with Him, which is greater than everything else.
 - b. *“His mouth”* speaks of intimate communication with Him as in *“the kisses of His mouth”* in Song of Songs 1:2. In this verse, the mouth is the vehicle of kissing and refers to intimacy with God.
 - c. *“Is most sweet”* means that such a manifest union of our hearts with Christ is the sweetest and most pleasing experience to the human makeup. Nothing delights the Bride’s soul more than spiritual intimacy with Him. It is literally the *“most sweet”* experience that we can have.
3. She ends her description of Jesus with this crescendo of saying, *“Intimacy with God is the sweetest thing I can know and have”*. That is how she ends her description of Jesus’ attributes. There is nothing that delights her soul more than intimacy with Jesus.
4. She was remembering former times of intimacy because at this hour, the discernible presence of God had lifted from her. She was speaking from her remembrance of it. Even the remembrance of it held her steady, and that was her confession

M. He is altogether lovely — His comprehensive beauty (Song 5:16b,c,d,e)

1. She has given ten attributes of His beauty and now she offers her final summary statement. All of Jesus’ attributes flow together in perfect unity and make up the loveliest person imaginable.

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2. *“Yes, He is altogether lovely”*
 - a. *This is who Jesus is in reality.* The Jesus depicted by the religious world is so different from the Jesus depicted by the Bride. It is impossible to comprehend His matchless beauty.
 - b. We desire to see all of Jesus’ different faces — He is affectionate, silent, awesome, terrifying, humorous, playful, happy, grinning, aggressive, aloof, parabolic, etc.
 - c. When she says, *“Yes,”* she is speaking of Him with great passion, urgency and feeling.
 3. *“This is my Beloved”*
 - a. She magnifies Christ after the question, *“What is your beloved...”* in Song of Songs 5:9.
 - b. With overflowing gladness, she presents Him as the glorious answer to their question. In essence, she says, *“This is the One that you asked about and I have described Him for you. You can see now why I am not offended at Him in times of difficulty”*.
 4. *“And this is my Friend”*
 - a. He is not only infinitely magnificent as the sovereign God, but He condescends to embrace us as friends (Jn. 15:14). Blessed is the person whose friend is the Lord.

N. Application

1. As we become familiar with these truths, we are able to speak them to Jesus to express our love for Him, to the devil when he lies to us about the nature of God, to ourselves in times of temptation and discouragement, and to others who need encouragement to trust Jesus.