

# CHAPTER 6

In this chapter,

- I.** The daughters of Jerusalem, moved with the description which the church had given of Christ, enquire after him (v. 1).
- II.** The church directs them where they may meet with him (v. 2, 3).
- III.** Christ is now found of those that sought him, and very highly applauds the beauty of his spouse, as one extremely smitten with it (v. 4-7), preferring her before all others (v. 8, 9), recommending her to the love and esteem of all her neighbours (v. 10), and, lastly, acknowledging the impressions which her beauty had made upon him and the great delight he took in it (v. 11-13).

## SONG OF SOLOMON 6:1-3

### ENQUIRING AFTER CHRIST

Here is,

**I.** The enquiry which the daughters of Jerusalem made concerning Christ, v. 1. They still continue their high thoughts of the church, and call her, as before, the *fairest among women*; for true sanctity is true beauty. And now they raise their thoughts higher concerning Christ: *Whither has thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?* This would be but an indecent, unacceptable, compliment, if the song were not to be understood spiritually; for love is jealous of a rival, would monopolize the beloved, and cares not that others should join in seeking him; but those that truly love Christ are desirous that others should love him too, and be joined to him; nay, the greatest instance of duty and respect that the church's children can show to their mother is to join with her in seeking Christ. The *daughters of Jerusalem*, who had asked (~~259~~ Song of Solomon 5:9), *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* wondering that the spouse should be so passionately in love with him, are now of another mind, and are themselves in love with him; for,

**1.** The spouse had described him, and shown them his excellencies and perfections; and therefore, though they have not seen him, yet, believing, they love him. Those that undervalue Christ do so because they do not know him; when God, by his word and Spirit, discovers him to the soul, with that ray of light the fire of love to him will be kindled.

**2.** The spouse had expressed her own love to him, her rest in that love, and triumphed in it: *This is my beloved*; and that flame in her breast scattered sparks into theirs. As sinful lusts, when they break out, defile many, so the pious zeal of some may *provoke many*, <sup><406></sup>2 Corinthians 9:2.

**3.** The spouse had bespoken their help in seeking her beloved (<sup><218></sup>Song of Solomon 5:8); but now they beg hers, for they perceive that now the cloud she had been under began to scatter, and the sky to clear up, and, while she was describing her beloved to them, she herself retrieved her comfort in him. Drooping Christians would find benefit themselves by talking of Christ, as well as do good to others. Now here,

**(1.)** They enquire concerning him, “*Wither has thy beloved gone?*” which may must we steer our course in pursuit of him?” Note, Those that are made acquainted with the excellencies of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, cannot but be inquisitive after him and desirous to know where they may meet with him.

**(2.)** They offer their service to the spouse to accompany her in quest of him: *We will seek him with thee*. Those that would find Christ must seek him, seek him early, seek him diligently; and it is best seeking Christ in concert, to join with those that are seeking him. We must seek for communion with Christ in communion with saints. We know *whither our beloved has gone*; he has gone to heaven, *to his Father, and our Father*. He took care to send us notice of it, that we might know how to direct to him, <sup><417></sup>John 20:17. We must by faith see him there, and by prayer seek him there, with boldness *enter into the holiest*, and herein must join with *the generation of those that seek him* (<sup><426></sup>Psalms 24:6), even with *all that in every place call upon him*, <sup><411></sup>1 Corinthians 1:2. We must pray with and for others.

**II.** The answer which the spouse gave to this enquiry, v. 2, 3. Now she complains not any more, as she had done (<sup><218></sup>Song of Solomon 5:6), “He is gone, he is gone,” that she knew not where to find him, or doubted she had lost him for ever; no,

**1.** Now she knows very well where he is (v. 2): “*My beloved* is not to be found in the streets of the city, and the crowd and noise that are there; there I have in vain looked for him” (as his parents *sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, and found him not*); “but he has gone down to his garden, a place of privacy and retirement.” The more we withdraw from the hurry of the world the more likely we are to have acquaintance with Christ, who took his disciples into a garden, there to be witnesses of the agonies of his love. Christ's church is a garden enclosed, and separated from the open common of the world; it is *his garden*, which he has planted as he did the garden of Eden, which he takes care of, and delights in. Though he had gone up to the paradise above, yet he comes down to his garden on earth; it lies low, but he condescends to visit it, and wonderful condescension it is. *Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?* Those that would find Christ may expect to meet with him *in his garden* the church, for *there he records his name* (<sup>(172)</sup>Exodus 20:24); they must attend upon him in the ordinances which he has instituted, the word, sacraments, and prayer, wherein he will be with us *always, even to the end of the world*. The spouse here refers to what Christ had said (<sup>(281)</sup>Song of Solomon 5:1), *I have come into my garden*. It is as if she had said, “What a fool was I to fret and fatigue myself in seeking him where he was not, when he himself had told me where he was!” Words of direction and comfort are often out of the way when we have occasion to use them, till the blessed Spirit brings them to our remembrance, and then we wonder how we overlooked them. Christ has told us that he would *come into his garden*; thither therefore we must go to seek him. *The beds*, and smaller *gardens*, in this greater, are the particular churches, the *synagogues of God in the land* (<sup>(181)</sup>Psalms 84:8); the *spices* and *lilies* are particular believers, the planting of the Lord, and pleasant in his eyes. When Christ comes down to his church it is,

**(1.)** *To feed among the gardens*, to feed his flock, which he feeds not, as other shepherds, in the open fields, but in his garden, so well are they provided for, (<sup>(212)</sup>Psalms 23:2. He comes to feed his friends, and entertain them; there you may not only find him, but find his table richly furnished, and a hearty welcome to it. He comes to feed himself, that is, to please himself with the products of his own grace in his people; *for the Lord takes pleasure in those that fear him*. He has many gardens, many particular churches of different sizes and shapes; but, while they are his, he feeds in them all, manifests himself among them, and is well pleased with them.

(2.) *To gather lilies*, wherewith he is pleased to entertain and adorn himself. He picks the lilies one by one, and gathers them to himself; and there will be a general harvest of them at the great day, when he will send forth his angels, to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever glorified and admired in them.

2. She is very confident of her own interest in him (v. 3): “*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine*; the relation is mutual, and the knot is tied, which cannot be loosed; for *he feeds among the lilies*, and my communion with him is a certain token of my interest in him.” She had said this before (<sup>216</sup>Song of Solomon 2:16); but,

(1.) Here she repeats it as that which she resolved to abide by, and which she took an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction in; she liked her choice too well to change. Our communion with God is very much maintained and kept up by the frequent renewing of our covenant with him and rejoicing in it.

(2.) She had occasion to repeat it, for she had acted unkindly to her beloved, and, for her so doing, he had justly withdrawn himself from her, and therefore there was occasion to take fresh hold of the covenant, which continues firm between Christ and believes, notwithstanding their failings and his frowns, (<sup>488</sup>Psalm 89:30-35. “I have been careless and wanting in my duty, and yet *I am my beloved's*;” for every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant. “He has justly hidden his face from me and denied me his comforts, and yet *my beloved is mine*;” for rebukes and chastenings are not only consistent with, but they flow from covenant-love.

(3.) When we have not a full assurance of Christ's love we must live by a faithful adherence to him. “Though I have not the sensible consolation I used to have, yet I will cleave to this, *Christ is mine and I am his*.”

(4.) Though she had said the same before, yet now she inverts the order, and asserts her interest in her first: *I am my beloved's*, entirely devoted and dedicated to him; and then her interest in him and in his grace: “*My beloved is mine*, and I am happy, truly happy in him.” If our own hearts can but witness for us that we are his, there is no room left to question his being ours; for the covenant never breaks on his side.

(5.) It is now her comfort, as it was then, that *he feeds among the lilies*, that he takes delight in his people and converses freely with them, as we do with those with whom we feed; and therefore, though at present he be withdrawn, “I shall meet with him again. *I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*”

## SONG OF SOLOMON 6:4-10

### THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THE CHURCH

Now we must suppose Christ graciously returned to his spouse, from whom he had withdrawn himself, returned to converse with her (for he speaks to her and *makes her to hear joy and gladness*), returned to favour her, having forgiven and forgotten all her unkindness, for he speaks very tenderly and respectfully to her.

**I.** He pronounces her truly amiable (v. 4): *Thou art beautiful, O my love! as Tirzah*, a city in the tribe of Manasseh, whose name signifies *pleasant*, or *acceptable*, the situation, no doubt, being very happy and the building fine and uniform. *Thou art comely as Jerusalem*, a city compact together (<sup><4C1B></sup>Psalm 122:3), and which Solomon had built and beautified, *the joy of the whole earth*; it was an honour to the world (whether they thought so or no) that there was such a city in it. It was the holy city, and that was the greatest beauty of it; and fitly is the church compared to it, for it was figured and typified by it. The gospel-church is *the Jerusalem that is above* (<sup><4B0B></sup>Galatians 4:26), *the heavenly Jerusalem* (<sup><3C22></sup>Hebrews 12:22); in it God has *his sanctuary*, and is, in a special manner, present; thence he has the tribute of praise issuing; it is his rest for ever, and therefore it is *comely as Jerusalem*, and, being so, is *terrible as an army with banners*. Church-censures, duly administered, strike an awe upon men's consciences; the word (the weapons of her warfare) *casts down imaginations* (<sup><470B></sup>2 Corinthians 10:5), and even an unbeliever is convinced and judged by the solemnity of holy ordinances, <sup><4B0B></sup>1 Corinthians 14:24, 25. The saints by faith *overcome the world* (<sup><4B0B></sup>1 John 5:4); nay, like Jacob, they have *power with God and prevail*, <sup><4C2B></sup>Genesis 32:28.

**II.** He owns himself in love with her, v. 5. Though, for a small moment, and in a little wrath, he had hid his face from her, yet now he gathers her

with very surprising instances of *everlasting lovingkindness*, <sup>(2518)</sup>Isaiah 54:8. *Turn thy eyes towards me* (so some read it), “turn the eyes of faith and love towards me, *for they have lifted me up*; look unto me, and be comforted.” When we are calling to God to turn the eye of his favour towards us he is calling to us to turn the eye of our obedience towards him. We read it as a strange expression of love, “*Turn away thy eyes from me, for I cannot bear the brightness of them; they have quite overcome me*, and I am prevailed with to overlook all that is past;” as God said to Moses, when he interceded for Israel, “*Let me alone, or I must yield*,” <sup>(2520)</sup>Exodus 32:10. Christ is pleased to borrow these expressions of a passionate lover only to express the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, and the delight he takes in his redeemed and in the workings of his own grace in them.

**III.** He repeats, almost word for word, part of the description he had given of her beauty (<sup>(2514)</sup>Song of Solomon 4:1-3), her *hair*, her *teeth*, her *temples* (v. 5-7), not because he could not have described it in other words, and by other similitudes, but to show that he had still the same esteem for her since her unkindness to him, and his withdrawals from her, that he had before. Lest she should think that, though he would not quite cast her off, yet he would think the worse of her while he knew her, he says the same of her now that he had done; for those *to whom much is forgiven will love the more*, and, consequently, will be the more loved, for Christ has said, *I love those that love me*. He is pleased with his people, notwithstanding their weaknesses, when they sincerely repent of them and return to their duty, and commends them as if they had already arrived at perfection.

**IV.** He prefers her before all competitors, and sees all the beauties and perfections of others meeting and centering in her (v. 8, 9): “*There are*, it may be, *threescore queens*, who, like Esther, have by their beauty attained to the royal state and dignity, *and fourscore concubines*, whom kings have preferred before their own queens, as more charming, and these attended by their maids of honour, *virgins without number*, who, when there is a ball at court, appear in great splendour, with beauty that dazzles the eyes of the spectators; but *my dove, my undefiled, is but one*, a holy one.”

**1.** She excels them all. Go through all the world, and view the societies of men that reckon themselves wise and happy, kingdoms, courts, senates, councils, or whatever incorporations you may think valuable, they are none of them to be compared with the church of Christ; their honours and

beauties are nothing to hers. *Who is like unto thee, O Israel!*

<sup>(4529)</sup>Deuteronomy 33:29; 4:6, 7. There are particular persons, as *virgins without number*, who are famed for their accomplishments, the beauties of their address, language, and performances, but the beauty of holiness is beyond all other beauty: “*My dove, my undefiled, is one*, has that one beauty that she is a dove, an undefiled dove, and mine, and that makes her excel the queens and virgins, though they were ever so many.”

2. She included them all. “Other kings have many queens, and concubines, and virgins, with whose conversation they entertain themselves, but *my dove, my undefiled*, is to me instead of all; in that one I have more than they have in all theirs.” Or, “Though there are many particular churches, some of greater dignity, others of less, some of longer, others of shorter, standing, and many particular believers, of different gifts and attainments, some more eminent, others less so, yet they all constitute but one catholic church, are all but parts of that whole, and that is *my dove, my undefiled*.” Christ is the centre of the church's unity; all the children of God that are scattered abroad are gathered by him (<sup>(4152)</sup>John 11:52), and meet in him (<sup>(4111)</sup>Ephesians 1:10), and are all his doves.

V. He shows how much she was esteemed, not by him only, but by all that had acquaintance with her and stood in relation to her. It would add to her praise to say,

1. That she was her mother's darling; she had that in her, from a child, which recommended her to the particular affection of her parents. As Solomon himself is said to have been *tender and an only one in the sight of his mother* (<sup>(3106)</sup>Proverbs 4:3), so was she *the only one of her mother*, as dear as if she had been an only one, and, if there were many more, yet she was *the choice one of her that bore her*, more excellent than all the societies of men this world ever produced. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, are nothing, in Christ's account, compared with the church, which is made up of *the excellent ones of the earth, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, and more excellent than their neighbours*.

2. That she was admired by all her acquaintance, not only *the daughters*, who were her juniors, but even *the queens and the concubines*, who might have reason to be jealous of her as a rival; *they all blessed her*, and wished well to her, *praised her*, and spoke well of her. *The daughters of*

Jerusalem called her the *fairest among women*; all agreed to give her the pre-eminence for beauty, and every sheaf bowed to hers. Note,

(1.) Those that have any correct sense of things cannot but be convinced in their consciences (whatever they say) that godly people are excellent people; many will give them their good word, and more their good-will.

(2.) Jesus Christ takes notice what people think and speak of his church, and is well pleased with those that honour such as fear the Lord, and takes it ill of those that despise them, particularly when they are under a cloud, that *offend any of his little ones*.

**VI.** He produces the encomium that was given of her, and makes it his own (v. 10): *Who is she that looks forth as the morning?* This is applicable both to the church in the world and to grace in the heart.

1. They are amiable as the light, the most beautiful of all visible things. Christians are, or should be, the lights of the world. The patriarchal church *looked forth as the morning* when the promise of the Messiah was first made known, and *the day-spring from on high visited* this dark world. The Jewish church was *fair as the moon*; the ceremonial law was an imperfect light; it shone by reflection; it was changing as the moon, did not make day, nor had *the sun of righteousness yet risen*. But the Christian church is *clear as the sun*, exhibits a *great light to those that sat in darkness*. Or we may apply it to the kingdom of grace, the gospel-kingdom.

(1.) In its rise, it *looks forth as the morning* after a dark night; it is discovering (<sup>3882</sup>Job 38:12, 13), and very acceptable, *looks forth* pleasantly as a clear morning; but it is small in its beginnings, and scarcely perceptible at first.

(2.) It is, at the best, in this world, but *fair as the moon*, which shines with a borrowed light, which has her changes and eclipses, and her spots too, and, when at the full, does but rule by night. But,

(3.) When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory then it will be *clear as the sun*, the church *clothed with the sun*, with Christ *the sun of righteousness*, <sup>611</sup>Revelation 12:1. Those that love God will then be *as the sun when he goes forth in his strength* (<sup>0163</sup>Judges 5:31; <sup>4133</sup>Matthew 13:43); they shall shine in inexpressible glory, and that which is perfect will then come; there shall be no darkness, no spots, <sup>2315</sup>Isaiah 30:26.

2. The beauty of the church and of believers is not only amiable, but *awful as an army with banners*. The church, in this world, is *as an army*, as the camp of Israel in the wilderness; its state is militant; it is in the midst of enemies, and is engaged in a constant conflict with them. Believers are soldiers in this army. It has its *banners*; the gospel of Christ is an ensign (<sup>23112</sup>Isaiah 11:12), the love of Christ, ch. 2:4. It is marshalled, and kept in order and under discipline. It is *terrible* to its enemies as Israel in the wilderness was, (<sup>23134</sup>Exodus 15:14. When Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes, by their standards, with colours displayed, he said, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!* (<sup>23145</sup>Numbers 24:5. When the church preserves her purity she secures her honour and victory; when she is *fair as the moon*, and *clear as the sun*, she is truly great and formidable.

## <sup>23111</sup>SONG OF SOLOMON 6:11-13

### THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THE CHURCH

Christ having now returned to his spouse, and the breach being entirely made up, and the falling out of these lovers being the renewing of love, Christ here gives an account both of the distance and of the reconciliation.

**I.** That when he had withdrawn from his church as his spouse, and did not comfort her, yet even then he had his eye upon it as his garden, which he took care of (v. 11): “*I went down into the garden of nuts, or nutmegs, to see the fruits of the valley, with complacency and concern, to see them as my own.*” When he was out of sight he was no further off than the garden, hid among the trees of the garden, in a low and dark valley; but then he was observing *how the vine flourished*, that he might do all that to it which was necessary to promote its flourishing, and might delight himself in it as a man does in a fruitful garden. He went to see whether *the pomegranates budded*. Christ observes the first beginnings of the good work of grace in the soul and the early buddings of devout affections and inclinations there, and is well pleased with them, as we are with the blossoms of the spring.

**II.** That yet he could not long content himself with this, but suddenly felt a powerful, irresistible, inclination in his own bosom to return to his church, as his spouse, being moved with her lamentations after him, and her languishing desire towards him (v. 12): “*Or ever I was aware, my soul*

*made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib; I could not any longer keep at a distance; my repentings were kindled together, and I presently resolved to fly back to the arms of my love, my dove.” Thus Joseph made himself strange to his brethren, for a while, to chastise them for their former unkindnesses, and make trial of their present temper, till he could no longer refrain himself, but, *or ever he was aware*, burst out into tears, and said, *I am Joseph*, <sup>(-HE)</sup>Genesis 45:1, 3. And now the spouse perceives, as David did (<sup>(-END)</sup>Psalm 31:22), that though she *said in her haste, I am cut off from before thy eyes*, yet, at the same time, he *heard the voice of her supplications*, and became *like the chariots of Ammi-nadib*, which were noted for their beauty and swiftness. *My soul put me into the chariots of my willing people* (so some read it), “the chariots of their faith, and hope, and love, their desires, and prayers, and expectations, which they sent after me, to fetch me back, as chariots of fire with horses of fire.” Note,*

**1.** Christ's people are, and ought to be, a willing people.

**2.** If they continue seeking Christ and longing after him, even when he seems to withdraw from them, he will graciously return to them in due time, perhaps sooner than they think and with a pleasing surprise. No chariots sent for Christ shall return empty.

**3.** All Christ's gracious returns to his people take rise from himself. It is not they, it is his own soul, that puts him into the chariots of his people; for he is gracious because he will be gracious, and loves his Israel because he would love them; not for their sakes, be it known to them.

**III.** That he, having returned to her, kindly courted her return to him, notwithstanding the discouragements she laboured under. Let her not despair of obtaining as much comfort as ever she had before this distance happened, but take the comfort of the return of her beloved, v. 13. Here,

**1.** The church is called *Shulamite*, referring either to *Solomon*, the bridegroom in type, by whose name she is called, in token of her relation to him and union with him (thus believers are called *Christians* from *Christ*), or referring to *Salem*, the place of her birth and residence, as the woman of *Shunem* is called the *Shunamite*. Heaven is the Salem whence the saints have their birth, and where they have their citizenship; those that belong to Christ, and are bound for heaven, shall be called *Shulamites*.

**2.** She is invited to return, and the invitation most earnestly pressed: *Return, return*; and again, “*Return, return*; recover the peace thou hast lost and forfeited; come back to thy former composedness and cheerfulness of spirit.” Note, Good Christians, after they have had their comfort disturbed, are sometimes hard to be pacified, and need to be earnestly persuaded to return again to their rest. As revolting sinners have need to be called to again and again (*Turn you, turn you, why will you die?*) so disquieted saints have need to be called to again and again, *Turn you, turn you, why will you droop; Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*

**3.** Having returned, she is desired to show her face: *That we may look upon thee*. Go no longer with thy face covered like a mourner. Let those that have made their peace with God *lift up their faces without spot* (~~4226~~ Job 22:26); let them come boldly to his throne of grace. Christ is pleased with the cheerfulness and humble confidence of his people, and would have them look pleasant. “Let us *look upon thee*, not I only, but the holy angels, who rejoice in the consolation of saints as well as in the conversion of sinners; not I only, but all the daughters.” Christ and believers are pleased with the beauty of the church.

**4.** A short account is given of what is to be seen in her. The question is asked, *What will you see in the Shulamite?* And it is answered, *As it were the company of two armies*.

**(1.)** Some think she gives this account of herself; she is shy of appearing, unwilling to be looked upon, having, in her own account, no form or comeliness. Alas! says she, *What will you see in the Shulamite?* nothing that is worth your looking upon, nothing but *as it were the company of two armies* actually engaged, where nothing is to be seen but blood and slaughter. The watchmen had smitten her, and wounded her, and she carried in her face the marks of those wounds, looked as if she had been fighting. She had said (~~2116~~ Song of Solomon 1:6), *Look not upon me because I am black*; here she says, “Look not upon me because I am bloody.” Or it may denote the constant struggle that is between grace and corruption in the souls of believers; they are in them *as two armies* continually skirmishing, which makes her ashamed to show her face.

**(2.)** Others think her beloved gives the account of her. “I will tell you what you shall *see in the Shulamite*; you shall see as noble a sight as that of two armies, or two parts of the same army, drawn out in rank and file; not only *as an army with banners*, but as *two armies*, with a majesty double to what

was before spoken; she is as *Mahanaim*, as the two hosts which Jacob saw (<sup>431</sup>Genesis 32:1, 2), a host of saints and a host of angels ministering to them; the church militant, the church triumphant.” Behold *two armies*; in both the church appears beautiful.