

Dr. Lloyd Carr, Song Of Songs, Lecture 1

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This series of four lectures will be given by Dr. G. Lloyd Carr. Dr. Carr received his Ph.D. from Boston University and taught and oversaw the Biblical Studies department at Gordon College for several decades. He has written a classic commentary called *The Song of Solomon* in the Tyndall Old Testament Commentary Series edited by D.J. Wiseman.

This will be the first of four lectures on *The Song of Songs* by Dr. G. Lloyd Carr. *The Song of Solomon* is a very interesting little book in the Old Testament. It is one of a series of books that are usually classified as Wisdom Literature.

You know from your earlier studies that there are three basic parts in the Old Testament. There is the Torah, which is the foundation, the law, the first five books of Moses, the foundation which sets the stage for everything else that follows in the Old Testament. Then there are the historical books, Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Chronicles, those books that deal with the civic and political life of the nation.

The prophets fit into that category as well. They build on the Torah. The nation is the expansion, the unfolding of the effects of the law in the Torah as God gave it to the people.

Then there is the wisdom literature. That is the rest of the books. Books like Psalms, Proverbs, *The Song of Solomon*, and Ecclesiastes.

These books are also based on the Torah, but these are practical books. They don't deal so much with the big issues of God dealing with the law and setting out the structure of the government. These don't deal with God's activities in the life of the nation, the political, and the military structure.

These are concerned with the people and they deal with the very ordinary day-by-day activities of the Israelite community. The wisdom literature is probably the closest the Hebrews ever came to what we would call in the Western world, philosophy. It deals with the big questions.

Why are we here? What's life all about? Where are we going? How do we relate to one another? How do we relate to God? What's the good life? What's the bad life? How can we avoid the bad and keep the good? These are all the issues that the philosophers in Greece dealt with. These are the issues that the wisdom writings in ancient Israel dealt with. These are the issues that we need to face today in our own ongoing society and our own culture.

It's to those issues that the wisdom literature speaks specifically. The focus in the Song of Solomon is one part of that big issue and that's what we're going to be looking at over the next few minutes and perhaps over the next couple of hours depending on how things work out here. First off, the book itself I'm using here is the Revised Standard Version, and the title in the book, in this version, is the Song of Songs which is Solomon's.

Now that's just a good fancy way of saying this is the greatest song that was ever written. The Hebrew idiom, Song of Songs, is the superlative. It's the best there is.

It's like the holy of holies, the most holy place. And this, according to the title of this book, is the greatest song that was ever written and it's ascribed to Solomon. Now we'll come back to Solomon in a minute but we'll need to look at that in the context of the book itself.

It's also known by a number of other titles. It could be just the Song and it's often identified as that. The Latin version of it is the Canticles which of course is the Latin word for song.

So, it's the Canticle of Canticles. And sometimes in the literature, you'll see it identified simply as Canticles. Or it may be just the greatest song.

That title has been used on some of the versions. But whatever it is, it's a song and it's set to music. At least that's some of the ideas that it's done to music in a number of cases.

Now there's actually a fairly recent production by a Toronto scholar by the name of Calvin Seerveld who did this as an oratorio. He actually wrote some music for this whole book and he staged it, it's been done two or three times, as an oratorio. Choirs and soloists sing the words of this particular song.

Now Song of Songs which is Solomon's. And that immediately raises a question for us. One is, is Solomon the author of this book, which is one of the good possibilities, or if he's not, do we have any idea who is the author? Or related to that, do we have any idea precisely when this book was written? Now if it is Solomon, that nails it down pretty tight for us.

Solomon was king in Israel after his father David died and he came to the throne in 981 BC and reigned until the 930s. And if this is his book, actually written by him, then it comes somewhere in that period in the mid-900s of the first century of the BC period. Now there's some question, a lot of scholars would reject that idea, partly on grounds of some vocabulary, partly on the grounds of some of the theology in the book and other things.

And so, you'll find dates for the book all the way from Solomon's time, the 900s, right on down to the first or second centuries BC. You've got to be a little careful about coming too far down because there were some fragments of this book found at the excavations in Qumran, the Dead Sea Scrolls people, and those go second century BC, so you can't come much later than that as the earliest, the latest date rather, for the writing of these books. Most of the scholars seem to put it in the post-exilic period, sometime after the exile, perhaps in the 400s or even down into the 300s.

And there's no real agreement among the scholarly community as to which is the best date for these. Partly it comes from some of the questions of the unity of the book, and we'll get into that a bit more fully a little bit later on. The book itself is either a collection of shorter poems that have been organized and structured in some way into this overall picture, or as a number of scholars have suggested, it is a unity written by one person and therefore comes from one particular time.

Now there are lots of ideas of course, and the idea of poetry like this goes back not just to Solomon's day but long before that, so there may be some roots going back pre-Solomonic, and there may be some editing or some working over the text as we come on down into the middle of the period of the kingdom or the post-exilic period. My own personal position is that it is probably written in the period of Solomon, although it may have been edited in the next 100 years or so, and so somewhere between the 7th century and the 10th century BC is a reasonably good date for the material here in this little book, The Song of Solomon. Now if this is Solomon's song, there are a couple of issues.

One, was it written by Solomon? Well, that's a good possibility. The text would allow that, although it doesn't require it. A couple of other possibilities.

This is a book which is attributed to Solomon. He didn't actually write it, but he was sort of the great king, the king of the golden age of Israel, and so the song would be given in his name for a variety of reasons. One, the fact that he was the great king, this was the golden age, and Solomon was recognized as a writer of proverbs, he was a writer of songs, he had certainly the leisure and the wealth to be able to pursue these kinds of activities.

A third alternative, or a third option, is that the song is dedicated to Solomon, and it may be in that case that someone else wrote it, and Solomon, as the great king, would be the one who would get this song dedicated to him. Now, a couple of reasons for that. Solomon, of course, was the great king, but he was also the great lover of ancient Israel.

You know the passage in the Book of Kings which says he had 700 wives and 300 concubines, that's a pretty big harem. And Solomon was sort of the Don Juan of the ancient Israelite community. So, if this book, which seems to be related to human

love and those kinds of things, and love is certainly a key element in the song, if this is a series of love poems or a single love poem, then Solomon would be the obvious person to dedicate it to.

After all, he was the great lover in the nation of Israel. And so, Solomon is the author, possibly, Solomon as the one to whom it is dedicated, another possibility, and this one, Solomon the great lover, who is sort of the image of what the Song of Songs is all about. Now there are a number of references to Solomon in the text, and we'll look at those for a minute, to see if this gives us any clue as to whether or not he was the writer or the recipient of the poem, or the one to whom it was dedicated.

The reference to Solomon occurs in the beginning of the book, in the first chapter, in the title obviously, which is here. Now that may or may not mean anything directly, because most of the titles in the biblical material were not original, they were added somewhere along the line. This has every mark of an early edition, but it probably is not an original title.

So, Solomon's name there is pretty much irrelevant to this question, whether or not we need to identify him from the context of the book. In chapter 1, fifth verse, there is a reference to Solomon where the speaker, the woman in this case, says, I am very dark, but come ye, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. She's talking here about the building, the structures, and the curtains of Solomon are the kind of draperies or hangings which would be very beautiful, or perhaps dark as she is herself, but beautiful in that context.

The reference here may be to something that this particular person was aware of in the temple or in the palace of Solomon, but more likely this is just kind of an expression that these are very beautiful curtains and very beautiful hangings, and she's like that, dark, woven hangings which have all sorts of beautiful tapestry effects in them. Nothing directly here that would identify the author of the book in that context. Now, there's another series of references in chapter 3, but I'll come back to those in a minute.

Over in chapter 8, the eleventh and twelfth verses, this is right at the end of the book, and again there is a comment from the woman who is speaking, and beginning at the eleventh verse, she says, Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Haman. He let out the vineyard to keepers. Each one was to bring in its fruit for a thousand pieces of silver.

My vineyard, my very own, is for myself, and you, O Solomon, may have the thousand and the keepers of the fruit two hundred. And she goes on to talk about those who are dwelling in the garden with her. Now, does this reference suggest that Solomon is one of the protagonists in the book? It may, but it doesn't necessarily.

This again may simply be a matter of Solomon as the great landowner, the king, who had huge vineyards and other possessions. The woman here is setting up the contrast. Her own personal vineyard, which in the context is probably her own body, her own physical being, this is her own.

She's going to do it as she pleases. Solomon may have his thousand, seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, but she's got her own. The reference here is not so much a specific comment to Solomon, but just the general idea, okay, the king's got it all, but he's not going to get this and take it from there.

Solomon was there as the great landowner. The other passage where Solomon is mentioned here is in chapter three. His name appears a number of times, starting in verse six.

This is a little account, six through eleven in the passage, which describes a parade, a procession, coming up out of the desert. Let me just read it for you. What is that coming up from the wilderness like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon.

About it are sixty mighty men of the mighty men of Israel, all girt with swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh against alarms by night. King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of Lebanon. He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple.

It was lovingly wrought within by the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of heart. Now that little unit stands by itself in the third chapter.

It's in the midst of a search motif where the woman is searching for her lover, goes up, gets around the city streets, looking for him, and then she ends up this unit with verse 5 where she warns the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up love or waken it until it is ready, until it, please. And then it goes into this description of the wedding procession. And that's apparently what it is.

The great palanquin, the cart that was carried on the shoulders of the slaves, was beautifully designed, with silver posts, a golden back, purple seat, all designed, and decorated inside. And this is the palanquin that Solomon, the king, is coming up with the crown on the day of his wedding. Now some of the commentators suggest that this passage is related to the marriage that we know from the book of Kings that Solomon made with one of the Egyptian princesses.

Interesting little passage that the king, king of Israel, a relatively small nation, would get an Egyptian princess as a wife. Well, according to Kings, that happened. It was very unusual for that to happen.

There's one of the articles in the Egyptian literature that says no princess of Egypt was ever given to a foreign king. But we do have the record here and there are instances apart from that where that did happen. So maybe this is the wedding of the Egyptian princess and Solomon, the king.

No proof of that. It's simply one of the possible suggestions. They're coming up out of the wilderness, across the desert, coming up to Jerusalem.

And it's a great procession. It doesn't tie in specifically with the rest of the poem. This just seems to be a kind of an interlude in the story.

And many of the commentators think that it doesn't even belong here at all. My own idea is that it probably is set up as a picture of the glory and the mighty wealth and splendor and the power of the king and the fact that he could have any woman he wanted and probably got. But in comparison to the passage in chapter 8 that we've just looked at, the girl in the Song of Solomon is not going to fall for his wiles.

So, she can see this gorgeous procession coming up and say, isn't that beautiful? But she said, it's not for me. Now those are a couple of the possibilities for Solomon and this idea of the royal wedding coming out of this perspective. Now, what do we know about Solomon in this context? Well, perhaps it is a book that's related to this royal wedding.

It could be. It does have some marks of a wedding celebration. Talk about that a little bit later.

Some of the commentators suggest that Solomon in this story or this collection of poems is really a kind of a literary fiction, that he had nothing to do with it. But because he was who he was, the great king, the great lover, his name had to appear. You, after all, couldn't have a great love poem without Solomon's name in it.

And so just to make it work, they dumped Solomon's name in in these several places. That's a possibility. I'm not sure it holds much water, but at least it's out there.

The third option on the use of the name here, and this will get us into another issue of interpretation, is whether Solomon here is simply being identified in some sort of allegorical perspective. He is the great king. Samuel talks about a descendant of David being the redeemer of the nation, and Solomon, the immediate descendant of David, was that in the early days.

Perhaps it's looking ahead to the ultimate development, the ultimate salvation of the nation with the coming of the Messiah. And if that's the case, then perhaps the message here, Solomon that the great king, the great lover, the one who is bringing power and prestige and wealth to the nation, is picturing the future Messiah. So, Solomon here is simply kind of an allegory, a hint of something bigger, better, which is about to come.

Well, that's the perspective, or some of the perspectives, on the nature of Solomon and whether this is his book. Again, as I said a few minutes ago, my own perspective is that it probably was not from his pen directly, although it certainly comes from the period of Solomon, and he may be the one to whom the book was dedicated. I don't think these references in the book would require anything more than that when we're looking at the book, which is Solomon's, as it's called there in the first line of the first verse.

Now the next problem or issue that comes up with the book of the Song of Solomon is how do we interpret it? What's the point of it? How do we get at what this book is about? And there are about four standard approaches to this. I'll try to summarize them fairly simply and then move to what I think is the most likely of the four. The first one is one I've already mentioned, the idea of allegory.

Allegory is a very, very common perspective for interpreting ancient literatures, and particularly for the Bible. Word comes to us from two Greek words, one of which is the word to talk or to speak, you know about the agora in Athens where the philosophers gather to discuss particular issues. Well, that's the last half of the word.

The first half of the word allegory comes from the Greek word which means other, different. And the two words together mean to say one thing but mean something else. So, in allegory, you take an idea or you take a statement from a piece of literature and read it and then you say, oh, it doesn't mean that it means this.

Now, where did that idea come from? Well, it goes way back into the 500s BC and it's a Greek idea. The first record we have of it is from a fellow by the name of Theogenes from the city of Regium in Greece. About 520 BC, he was one of the leading philosophers, and spokesmen in the golden age of the Greek culture.

And Theogenes, like many of the other philosophers, had a major problem with the literature that was the kind of religious literature of the ancient Greeks, particularly the writings of Homer, the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the writings of Hesiod who was a little bit earlier. The problem there was that these stories of the gods and the goddesses and the actions of the Greek community were not very nice. The ancient Greek gods were a pretty unloving group.

They were vindictive, they were cruel, they mocked, they cheated. They were certainly not the kind of beings that you would want to identify as good role models for the population. Well, the philosophers saw that they realized there were some major problems with these characters, and so they said, well, they're so ingrained into the culture that we can't really pull them out.

I mean, if we dumped Homer, we'd lose the basis of our whole religious culture, so we can't just dump them. What we'll do is we'll reinterpret them. We'll make them say something different from what they say.

They allegorize them. Say one thing means something else. And so the Greek philosophers went through the writings of Homer and the others, and they made them say things, interpreting them in such a way that the message that came across was all this great new stuff the philosophers were thinking up.

It didn't have anything to do with the gods and goddesses. It had to do with what we were saying as philosophers. So, the method, the allegorical method and allegory gets its roots here in the Greek philosophers in the 500s BC.

Now this method of interpretation, and method of study, was focused on the Greek community in these early years. Then, of course, Alexander the Great came barging through Palestine in the 300s and conquered Jerusalem, moved on down to Alexandria in Egypt, and established a great university there in Alexandria. Alexandria became the second most important educational center in the Roman Empire and the Greek Empire.

Athens first, Alexandria second. Incidentally, Tarsus, where Paul came from, was the third most important center for education in the Roman Empire. So Alexandria is a big study center.

All the philosophies, all the ideas out of Greece came to Alexandria. And by the 200s and down into the 150s, and 160s BC, a lot of Jews from Jerusalem, from Palestine, moved down to Alexandria. Three-fifths of the city, three of the five-quarters were primarily Jewish in the first century BC.

So, there was a large Jewish population in Alexandria, and Alexandria became the place of a big study center. Translations of the scripture, commenting on the scripture, those kinds of things. Alexandria became a focal point of religious study in the Greek-speaking community of the Jews.

It was in Alexandria that the Jews learned about allegory, and they started applying it to their own scriptures. They had some of the same problems. Some of the teachers didn't like what was going on in the Torah, so they wanted to change it.

They didn't like what was going on in the rest of scripture, so they wanted to change it. And so, they began this allegorical method, primarily through the influence of the Alexandrian schools. And it began in Alexandria and in the Jewish literature.

First, about 160 BC, with a man named Aristobulus, and the allegorizing of the scriptures and the other religious literature began to take root in Palestine. Well, it spread from there to two other key figures. One was a fellow by the name of Philo, who was a contemporary of Jesus.

He was born in 20 BC, so he was 20 years older than Jesus. He died in 40 AD, so he lived 10 years after Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead. But Philo was one of the ones who really took hold of this allegorical method and applied it to much of the biblical material that he was working with and he was studying.

And one of the books that he applied it to was the Song of Solomon. And that became then a very important work in the study, in the interpretation of the biblical material was Philo's activity. Time to get down to the end of the first century AD.

It was quite evident that there was a big debate going on in the circles of the rabbis as to which was the correct way to interpret the Song of Solomon. One of the great rabbis said that whoever sings the lyrics to the Song of Solomon in the taverns and pubs is not worthy of a life to come. Well, that tells us one thing.

Some people were singing these words in the taverns and pubs and this particular rabbi didn't like that idea. His perspective was that this was a commentary on God's dealings with the people. And there's a great deal of literature on this sort of thing.

Now let me just give you a couple of examples. Chapter 1. Twelfth verse. While the king was on his couch, my nard, my perfume, gave forth its fragrance.

Verse 13. My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En Gedi.

She's drawing a picture here from perfumes from the blossoms in En Gedi, the vineyards there, and the springs and the beauty of that place. But verse 13. My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts.

What do we do with this to allegorize it? Well, on the surface it looks to be a fairly straightforward comment that she wants to hold her beloved in her arms against her breast and that's just the way she wanted to do it. But that was a little bit too risqué for these rabbis who wanted to allegorize this. And so they interpreted it in a little different fashion.

The beloved, in this understanding, is the glory of God, the Shekinah glory, the pillar of cloud and fire that stood over the mercy seat, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. That's God. And this presence of God lies between the two cherubim on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant.

You say, how in the world did they get that over there? I have no idea. But that was the understanding. The presence of God, the pillar of cloud between the two golden angels on the Ark of the Covenant is what this verse means.

That's allegory. That's taking it to a pretty big extreme, but that's one example of many, many, many other examples of allegory and the allegorical method. There's a second one.

Let me just back up a moment. The allegory here then would reject any historical or literal understanding of the passage and insert into its place these spiritualizing ideas which in many cases may have some connection to the text, but in many cases are completely, totally removed from any connection with the material which is here in the text before us. Allegory then would reject the basic historical perspective.

The second possibility or method of interpretation is what's known as typology. Type is the Old Testament comment or statement or historical event that is being described in the biblical text and then in some kind of interpretive addition to that, whether it's a New Testament perspective or a rabbinic idea, there is what's called the anti-type which is the fulfillment of the original prophecy. A few minutes ago, I made the comment, the reference to the passage in the book of Samuel where the son of David will rule over the people and will bring redemption to Israel.

Well, the type would be Solomon who was the immediate descendant of King David who became the king and brought in the Golden Age. But there's more to that story than appears there in Solomon's lifetime. Get over to the New Testament and you find a reference to Jesus as the descendant of David.

The promise was made to Mary by the angel that he would sit on the throne of his father David and would bring redemption to the nation. Well, Jesus here is the fulfillment, if you will, of the original messianic prophecy in Samuel. Samuel is the type.

Jesus is the anti-type. So, the typical interpretation of that particular passage is Jesus is the fulfillment of that original idea. Now what's that got to do with the Song of Songs? Well, not a great deal directly.

But there is one point that does give us a little bit of a clue on this. One of the other passages in the Old Testament which is a love song is Psalm 45. It's identified in the title as a love song.

And it goes on at some great length to this great song. Let me just read a couple of verses at the beginning. My heart overflows with a goodly theme.

I address my verses to the king. My tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. Okay, introduction.

First stanza. You are the fairest of the sons of men. Grace is poured out on your lips.

Therefore, God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty. Now, over in verse 6 in Psalm 45, we read this.

Your divine throne endures forever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity. You love righteousness, hate wickedness.

Therefore, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh, aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces, stringed instruments make you glad.

Daughters of kings are among the ladies of honor. At your right-hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. Middle stanza out of this 45th Psalm.

Now, the important idea here is not the fact that we are just looking at a love song, but over in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews, the first chapter, Hebrews chapter 1, beginning at the 8th verse. But of the Son, he says, this is the author of Hebrews now talking about God who spoke through the prophets and now has spoken through the Son. Of the Son, he says, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.

The righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness beyond thy comrades.

Quotation from Psalm 45. And here in the book of Hebrews, that passage is applied to Jesus, the Son. Now, Jesus as the anti-type, the fulfillment, Solomon or perhaps some other king back in Psalm 45 as the type, the one for whom it was first said, now brought to fulfillment in the coming of Jesus.

Now, that's a legitimate position that the scripture itself sets out. Now, a couple of problems with taking that principle though and applying it across the board. Where the biblical text of the New Testament does not make those specific applications, we need to be a little bit careful.

For instance, Psalm 45 verse 9 talks about the daughters of kings among your ladies of honor. At your right-hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. Now that sounds very nice.

The problem is the word that's translated there as queen really means the favorite from the harem. She might not have been the queen at all, just the girl he had his eye on at that particular point. So, to take that passage and make it into a type of Jesus, you get yourself into all kinds of problems.

Typology is a useful method where it's clearly spelled out in the biblical account, Old and New Testament, but it can be very dangerous if it's taken beyond what the scripture itself permits. Okay, allegory, say one thing, mean another. Allegory rejects the historical.

Typology accepts the historical as valid but then adds a second meaning, an extended meaning. And of course, that's very common and quite often done.

The third option is to see this book as a drama. It's a stage play of some sort, perhaps some kind of cultic ritual that was being acted out. We'll talk a bit more about that a little later on, but there are a couple of things we need to identify here. First, this idea that it's a drama being spelled out is pretty ancient.

It goes all the way back to Origen, who was living in the early 200s AD. He identified it as a drama and therefore this could come into a kind of a liturgy or a ritual kind of thing that was being used by the religious authorities. Quite possible, although there's no evidence for that.

The idea of this being a drama is a little confusing. Origen's idea was picked up, it sort of disappeared for quite a long time and the allegorical typology method took over for many, many centuries. But in the 1900s, a German scholar by the name of Franz Delitzsch, a great Old Testament scholar, picked up the idea of the Song of Solomon as a drama.

In his commentary on this book, he elaborates at some length on the dramatic structure of the Song of Solomon. I mentioned a while ago Calvin Seerfeld, the Toronto scholar who took this and made an oratorio out of it. Same sort of thing.

Drama is a little bit different from just liturgy or ritual. It's the kind of thing that we need to take a fairly close look at. The suggestion that the Song of Solomon is a drama runs into some major difficulty.

The first is that there is no real plot in the book. It doesn't go anywhere. It goes around in circles.

It doesn't start, move through, and come to a conclusion. Aristotle in his Poetics made the comment that a good drama has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The Song of Solomon doesn't.

It just sort of drops in the middle of the thing. It circles around for eight chapters and you come back out to the same place you went in. There's no progress in the story.

The second thing is drama as a literary form is not known much before the Greek literature. There are some little bits and little bits of pieces of ideas that some goes back, some of them possibly as early as the 11th century in Egypt. There's an interesting little myth of Horus drama that fits and comes from about the 11th century.

There are some Mesopotamian and ancient Near Eastern cult dramas having to do with the worship and the liturgy, but those are not very clear. There are some suggestions, but there are a lot of problems with those. The difference in both of those, in Mesopotamian literature and in Egyptian literature, is they're quite evidently dramas.

There are speeches assigned, there are speakers identified, and there are actual stage directions in the sequence. For instance, one of the Mesopotamian pieces, it says, you go down from the palace to the temple and on the way say these words. This act is to be done at this point and then they will describe that and then it will move on.

Same thing with the Egyptian myth of Horus drama. There are specific stage directions. There's none of that in the Song of Solomon.

The speakers here are not clearly identified. Some of them are quite obvious, others are not. We'll come back to that shortly.

But there's no clear identification of speakers, there's no plot as such, and there are no stage directions. There are things that are descriptors, but they don't fit the pattern of stage direction. I've had considerable experience in directing drama, and directed the drama program at the college for a number of years, and I know from experience that this simply would not make a good stage play.

So, drama, is pretty much rejected as a possibility, although it still surfaces periodically. The fourth one is to take this as what it appears to be. Some commentators call it the literal approach.

I don't really like that word because if you take it literally it doesn't give you any room for figures of speech and those kinds of things. So many of the commentators identify it simply as the natural approach. What does this appear to be? And simply

reading it, it appears to be a love song, a love poem, describing the relationship between a man and a woman, their interactions, the things that they're thinking, the things they're going through, the things that they are doing.

And that this is essentially a treatment of a very normal human relationship, a man and a woman, and their love as they are starting to share it. Now we'll get into this in a little more detail in some more supportive material in the next round. This was the first of four lectures on the Song of Songs by G. Lloyd Carr.