

Preaching Christ from the Song of Solomon

One of the most accessible devotional commentaries on the Song of Solomon available today is Henry Law's little work, first published in 1879. Rev. Law (1797-1884) was an evangelical Anglican clergyman. He wrote his verse-by-verse commentary for families, he says in the Preface, to cultivate warm Christian affection for the Lord Jesus and to encourage prayerful communion with Him.

Law took a very deliberate approach, avoiding technical, linguistic, and historical analysis, and focused on practical devotional lessons. The framework for Law's reading of the text is allegorical; he says, "allegory follows on to allegory." What makes Henry Law's commentary so indispensable, however, is its Christological depth.

First, Law's fundamental premise is that the Holy Spirit intentionally gave the Song of Solomon to reveal Christ. For Law, the vivid imagery of kisses, the garden imagery, the natural beauty in the descriptive poems, and the mutual love were tools of the Holy Spirit to help us focus on Christ.

Second, Law interprets the Song of Solomon primarily through the lens of marriage. The image of the bridegroom and the bride in the Song of Solomon depicts "how Christ loves the Church and gives himself for it; and how the Church loves Christ and gives herself to him."

Third, using this marriage relationship, Rev. Law develops it in two directions. First, he emphasises the beauty and excellence of Christ and his intense love for his people. He speaks of the offices of Christ, the attributes of Christ's holiness and love, and his tenderness towards his people.

Second, Law highlights the believer's deep experiences and relationship with the Lord Jesus, their knowledge of the covenant union, and the importance of feeling that union. He draws out their inexpressible joy in his nearness, their spiritual longing for communion and closeness with the Lord, and the intense longing felt in his absence.