

FLOWERS and BIRDS of the BIBLE

By William B. Hallman

1. THE ROSE OF SHARON

Bible References: Song of Solomon; Isaiah 35:1-2

INTRODUCTION:

There are only two references to this rose in scripture. It is also called, The Flower of the Field because it grows so profusely on the Plain of Sharon.

In Isaiah Ch. 35 we have a beautiful picture of the kingdom blessings. It pictures Israel returning home. The desert through which the way led shall flourish like Carmel and Sharon (Vrs. 1-2). The weary receive strength (Vr. 3). The fearful encouraged (Vr. 4). Blind see (Vr. 5). The entire desert breaks forth in streams (Vr. 6).

In the preceding chapter (34) we have God's judgment upon the nations. There we have confusion, emptiness, thorns, nettles, and brambles (Vrs. 11,13).

In the Song of Songs we have the rose as a type of Christ and it is only Christ that will make the desert and the wilderness as the rose again.

I. THE ROSE – SCIENTIFICALLY

1. ITS NAME

The Hebrew word from which our English word "rose" is translated is Chabatsteleth, which seems to have two meanings: First, red; and secondly a bulb.

2. ITS SPECIES

Roses abound in Palestine. Hasselquist named four varieties. The principal roses of Syria and Palestine are the roses of Damascus or The Damask Rose.

3. ITS DESCRIPTION

It is said that the narcissus of our gardens give a good idea of this flower. "Its fragrant flowers are pushed forth from clusters of sheathing leaves, and it has a corona or crown in the center of the flower. It is found in Palestine and Syria, and is highly esteemed for its beauty and fragrance. It is one of the plants which deck the meadows in spring with their blossoms" (Balfour).

The Plain of Sharon is a long narrow and level tract of land along the Mediterranean Sea extending from Mt. Carmel on the north to Joppa on the south. We read of "Carmel's flowery field".

"In Carmel's holy grots, I'll court repose,
And deck my mossy couch with Sharon's deathless rose" - Pierpont.

Stanley says: "The roses in the valley of roses near Bethlehem are said to be a striking though solitary instance of a burst of fragrance". He further quotes, "Nazareth is a rose, and like a rose, has the same rounded form, enclosed by mountains as the flower by its leaves".

Otto Von Richter says of Sharon: "In the spring the ground is covered with roses, lilies, tulips, narcissus, anemones, and other flowers".

II. THE ROSE - SPIRITUALLY

The rose, in the beauty of its flower, and sweetness of its fragrance is an apt illustration of Christ.

“A rose shall bloom in a lowly place,
A wild shall echo with sounds of joy,
For heaven’s own gladness its bounds shall grace,
And forms angelic their songs employ.” - Brainerd

1. BY COMPARISON

- a. The rose, an offspring of good but dry root.

So is Christ – Isa. 11:1

- b. The rose, a flower of rare beauty.

Christ is the “fairest among ten thousand” (S. of Sol. 5:10). He is “altogether lovely”. He is the Chiefest in strength (Ps. 89:6-8). In holiness (Exod. 15:11). We may well exclaim: “Thou art worth ten thousand of us” (2 Sam. 18:3).

He is the High Priest (Heb. 4:14). He is the Great High Priest (Heb. 9:11). He is the good, the great, and the chief Shepherd (John 10:11; Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 5:4). He is the Great Rock (Isa. 32:2). He is the Chief Corner Stone (1 Pet. 2:6). He is the Prince of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). He is the true Light (John 1:1,9). He is the true Vine (John 15:1). He is the Head of the Body, the Church of the present dispensation (Col. 1:18). He is the true God (1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 5:20).

- c. The rose, a flower of fragrance.

Christ yields a lovely savor. His name is as ointment poured forth (S. of Sol. 1:3).

- d. The rose, a queen of flowers.

Christ excels angels and men. He is the Head and glory of all things (Ps. 45:2; S. of Sol. 5:10; Eph. 5:20-21).

- e. The rose, not only in a garden, but in open field.

So Christ is accessible to all (Isa. 55:1; Zech. 13:1; Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17; Rom. 10:13).

2. BY CONTRAST

- a. Roses delight the senses – Christ delights the heart (Jn. 16:22; Eph. 3:17).

- b. Roses bloom in summer only – Christ in winter too (John 14:1; 16:33; Prov. 17:17)

- c. Roses soon fade – Christ always the same (Heb. 13:8).

d. Roses plucked and presented to human hand – Christ given by hand of God (John 3:16; 4:10).

- e. Roses possessed by only one at a time – Christ by many (Heb. 9:28).

- f. Roses can be taken away – Christ always the same (Matt. 28:20).

Practical Lessons:

1. We all love flowers. Do we love The Rose of Sharon?
2. We sometimes adorn the house with flowers. Does Christ adorn our houses and our hearts? Have we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 1:27; 3:10)?
3. We often use the attar, the aroma of roses for perfume. Do we spread around us the fragrance of his lovely name and nature?
4. The Rose of Sharon is absolutely accessible to all. Will you, if you haven’t done so, stretch out your hand of faith and accept God’s Rose?
5. Weeds and roses don’t go together. Don’t mar Christ by any weeds of sin.

2. THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

Bible References: 1 Kings 7:19,22,26; 2 Chron. 4:5; Song of Sol. 2:1-2,16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2-3; 7:2; Hosea 14:5; Matt. 6:28; Luke 12:27.

Introduction: This study brings us to another of God's flowers used as a beautiful type in the Word of God.

“On these heights (above Beersheba) the lily abounded with grass and low shrubs between. I noticed that the camels did not touch the lily at all, but cropped what lay between. It reminded me of Song of Solomon 2:16 (‘My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies’). We did not here see any flocks feeding, or any young harts leaping; but in other places we had frequent occasion to notice the sheep and lambs browsing on the like pastures, among, not on the lilies. The place of the lilies would thus be the place of the richest pasture, as Solomon frequently indicated when, again using the figure, he speaks of the ‘young roses’ (S. of Sol. 4:5; 6:3). They grew in almost incredible numbers and luxuriance, often when nothing else flourished, corroborating (Hos. 14:5). Their tapering leaf is richly green, and hence the ‘heap of wheat, set about with lilies (S. of Sol. 7:2) would form by contrast, an object of no common beauty. Close by these lilies grew several of the thorn-shrubs of the desert; but above them rose the lily, spreading out its fresh leaf of green as a contrast to the dingy verdure of these prickly shrubs (S. of Sol. 2:2)”. -- Bonar, “Beersheba to Sidon”.

II. T H E L I L Y - S C I E N T I F I C A L L Y

1. Its Name

In the O.T. the Hebrew name is “Shushan” or “Shoshannah”. In the New Testament the name is “krinon”.

2. Its Species

It must have been a flower of commanding beauty, and bold form, as it was the model of an architectural ornament (1 Kings 7:19-26; 2 Chron. 4:5). There is also in the Song of Solomon allusions to feeding among the lilies.

As Solomon was connected by marriage with Egypt some think that the lotus of the Nile or water lily is the one mentioned here.

“When the waters have risen to their extremist height, and all the fields are overflowed there appears above the surface an immense quantity of plants of the lily species, which the Egyptians call the Lotus; having cut down these, they dry them in the sun. The seeds of the flowers, which resemble that of the poppy, they bake, and make into a kind of bread; they also eat the root of the plant, which is round, of an agreeable flavor, and about the size of an apple.”

3. Its Description

The Lotus flowers are large, white, striped with pink; grows in still waters, slow streams; the leaves are large, fragrant, and delightful.

The lily of the N.T. may be the lily of the field that is referred to. It flowers at the time the sermon of the mount is supposed to have been delivered. It is abundant in Galilee, and its fine scarlet flowers render it a very conspicuous and showy object, which would naturally attract the attention of his hearers.

II. THE LILY - SPIRITUALLY

1. A Type of Christ

The lily is a type of Christ: "I am the Lily of the Valley (S. of Sol. 2:1). The lilies are white in color. In Matt. 6:28 Christ might have named birds of gorgeous plumage, but He descends to flowers – and to white flowers. "My beloved is white" (S. of Sol. 5:10). Perfect, pure, and holy; with no flaw, no defilement, or infirmity.

- a. In His Person
"Without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). "Holy and harmless" (Heb. 7:26).
- b. In His thoughts
"knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21).
- c. In His words
"no guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22).
- d. In His Works
"who did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22). "went about doing good."

2. A Type of the Christian

- a. The Lily fragrant to us, so the Christian to Christ (S. of Sol. 4:7,10-14).
- b. The Lily white and pure; so the Christian should be and will be (Eph. 5:25-27). This is the clothing we need – Christ's pure spotless righteousness. White is the color of Heaven's robes, as it was Solomon's glory (Eccl. 9:8), and Christ's (Luke 9:29), and the angels at the resurrection and ascension (Matt. 28:3; Acts 1:10). This clothing is not gotten by toiling. It is God who clothes the Lily and man. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him (Luke 15:22).
- c. The Lily fruitful, so the Christian (Hos. 14:4-5).
- d. The Lily tall and conspicuous; so the Christian (Isa. 33:16; 2 Pet. 2:9).
- e. The Lily among thorns, so the Christian among the thorns of this world (Isa. 27:4).
- f. The Lily most gloriously adorned; so the Christian (Psalm 45:8,11,13-14).

Fresh springing from the emerald sod,
And beautiful to see,
As when the meek, incarnate God,
Took parable from ye.

Ye never toil'd with anxious care,
From silken threads to spin,
That living gold, refined and rare,
Which God hath clothed ye in. - - Strickland

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

1. Seek to have that beauty, fruitfulness, and fragrance, which the Lily typifies.
2. Let us be among others as the Lily is among flowers – one that the Savior might point to as an example (1 Pet. 5:3).
3. What is our adorning? If of God, then more beautiful and lasting than Solomon's whose robe, etc. were works of art.
4. Christ has prepared for us a robe of righteousness.

3. “THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD”

Bible References: Psalms 37:1-2; 90:5-6; 103:15-16 129:6; Isaiah 37:27; 40:6-8; James 1:10-11; 1 Pet. 1:24-25.

Introduction:

In our two previous studies of flowers of the Bible, we have seen the beautiful Rose and Lily. Now we are to see a flower which is considered of the very opposite character, “The Flower of the Field” or as it is also called, “The Flower of the Grass”.

It is a very insignificant flower, so insignificant that it is hardly thought of as a flower, and yet God created it and has used it to teach one of the most important lessons in all the world.

The comparison and contrast which God makes between this flower and His Word, His mercy, and His life are very necessary for us to see and to understand.

I. THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD - SCIENTIFICALLY

There are 243 species of true grasses in Palestine. But the Hebrew does not discriminate between them, and the other herbs which together make up the herbage of the Holy Land.

Thus from a scientific standpoint we have nothing to say concerning this particular flower.

II. THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD - SYMBOLICALLY

“The grass withereth, ... The flower fadeth.” These are pictures and symbols of decay, and teach us how frail the earthly life of man is. “He cometh up and is cut down like a flower.” “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower thereof.” (Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24-25)

What a striking picture is here given of all that concerns man’s earthly career, - his body, his achievements, his wealth, and his glory.

This is a symbol of all that is transitory, passing, mutable, and changing.

III. THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS – SPIRITUALLY

God makes a contrast and comparison of the Flower of the Grass with His Word and mercy or grace.

In the early spring-time this passage is brought to our minds by the sight and smell of the fields. One day they shine with the glory of the golden flowers, and in a little while the flowers are fallen, the grass is withered, and we are freshly impressed with the mutability of all earthly things.

Man changes, but God is the “same, yesterday, and today, and forever”; man removes, God abides, and His dwelling-place is as the everlasting hills; man dies, but God lives on forever and ever. From the changing, passing, transitory earth, we may look up to God, saying: “He liveth and blessed is my Rock”.

1. THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH

Isaiah in his fortieth chapter pictures the downfall of Israel as the grass, but he also speaks of her restoration. While all the glory of man fades as The Flower of Grass, yet God's Word concerning restoration and glorification will stand and in due time be revealed. "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 40:5).

We need always to be reminded of the abiding and enduring of the Word of God.

"But the word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Pet. 1:25). The flower from corruptible seed withereth and fadeth, but the flower of the incorruptible seed never fades away, and "this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

2. THE MERCY OF THE LORD ENDURETH (Psalm 103:15-17).

The mercy or grace of the Lord is set in contrast to the flower of the field. Man needs God's mercy and grace more than anything else. By grace we are saved, by grace we are kept, and by grace we shall some day see Him.

If all man's righteousness and achievements are like the grass, here today and gone tomorrow, what can man have in himself that will abide for eternity? Nothing. We cast ourselves helplessly on the grace of God, this grace which never passes away.

CONCLUSION:

1. The world seeks after meat, drink, dress, etc. But if we seek God's "Word and His grace first, all these things will come in due time.

2. If we fade like the grass and are "cut down", God shall some day clothe us with a resurrection body, which will be glorified, powerful, and eternal.

4. THE RAVEN – A Bird of Providence

Bible References: Gen. 8:7; Lev. 11:15; Deut. 14:14; 1 Kings 17:4-6; Job 38:41; Ps. 147:9; Prov. 30:17; S. of Sol. 5:11; Isa. 34:11; Luke 12:24.

Introduction:

In this our first study of Birds of the Bible, we are to think and meditate together on The Raven, The Bird of Providence.

Webster defines “Providence” as: “The evidence of universal foresight. An event ascribed to divine guidance”.

In the O.T. the word for Raven is “Oreb” and occurs nine times as seen in the above Bible references. In the N.T. the Greek word is corax and occurs only once in Luke 12:24.

The raven is the largest of the crow family, attaining as much as 2 ft. and 2 in. in length; its color is blue-black, and it lives to the old age of one hundred years.

The raven is the first bird mentioned in the Bible by name. It was sent by Noah from the ark and returned to or on the ark, but not into.

Ravens are classed among the unclean birds of the Bible; but to touch them did not necessarily render on ceremonially unclean (Lev. 11:15).

THE RAVEN – ITS LIFE

1. COLOR

The Hebrew word for raven is Oreb as we have seen and is derived from a root meaning “to be black”. This name was given to the raven by Adam (Gen. 2:19) and referred to by Solomon (Song of Sol. 5:11).

2. CHARACTER

Two things are brought out in Scripture concerning the character of the raven: Its Restlessness and its Loneliness.

Its Restlessness

“And he sent forth a raven, which went to and fro.” One might compare this with the dove which came back into the ark when there was no place for it to perch (Gen. 8:7,9).

Its Loneliness

It delights in solitude. It frequents the ruined tower or habitation (Isa. 34:11). It is most always seen in desolate places, and its very presence adds to the gloom of the place. Its perch is generally high on the edge of some jagged cliff, and its hoarse croak, which occasionally breaks the deep silence all around, increases the dreariness of the scene. No doubt much of the superstition which has gathered around the raven is due to this solitude and love of unfrequented places.

“The hateful messenger of heavy things,
Of death and dolor telling.”

3. CONDUCT

The raven is a beastly bird; by that we mean it is carnivorous (Prov. 30:17). It feeds on small animals and other birds. It begins its banquet with the eye. It is a bird of prey, and always finds the dead carcass on which to perch and feed. It must have found a dead carcass in the days of Noah and the Flood. (Cpr. Again the raven and dove). The raven must have found a place to rest in the waters, while the dove did not.

THE RAVEN – ITS LESSONS

We said that the raven was a bird of providence. We shall proceed to look at him as such and study this characteristic. In spite of his habitat and habits which we have just seen, God used him, and many are the lessons from his life in God's control.

1. PHYSICAL PROVIDENCE (1 Kings 17:1-7)

Here we see that God selected them for His commands; a bird that seems the most unlikely for the service of God in man's eyes.

What a precious word it is: "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there". The divinely appointed provision is always in the divinely appointed place. Elsewhere Elijah must have provided for himself.

2. SPIRITUAL PROVIDENCE

a. Man's Sinfulness

When Job and his friends had ceased to speak (Job 32:1-2) and Elihu had finished, then we read "the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind (38:1). One of His questions to Job was about the raven (38:41). Then later we note the effect that this had upon Job: "I am vile"; "I know that Thou canst do everything" (Job 40:1-4; 42:2). The raven becomes one of God's instruments to bring Job to see himself as God actually saw him.

b. God's sufficiency

"Consider the ravens"; "God feedeth them"; "The young ravens which cry" (Luke 12:24; Ps. 147:9).

If God can be interested in such a creature as the raven, "how much more are ye better than the fowls".

CONCLUSION:

1. The most ugly, useless, and unworthy animal can become useful in God's hand and control. His providence ruled over all.

2. As the first bird is a type of restlessness, so man in his first estate is a restless creature. He can only find rest and peace in Jesus Christ Who is our peace (Eph. 2:14).

5. THE DOVE: A Bird of Rest

Bible References: Genesis 8:8-12; Psa. 55:6-8; 68:13; S. of Sol. 1:15; 2:14; 4:1; 5:2; 5:12; 6:9; Isa. 38:14; 59:11; 60:8; Jeremiah 48:28; Ezek. 7:16; Nahum 2:7; Matt. 3:16; 10:16;(21:12); Mark 1:10; (11:15); Luke 3:22; John 1:32; (2:14,16).

Introduction:

In our last study we saw that the Raven was a Bird of Providence. In this study we are to take up the Dove as a Bird of Rest.

In the O.T. the Hebrew word for dove is “Yonah”. The word literally means: “The Diver” from the rapid rising and falling in the air of the dove.

In the N.T. the Greek word is “peristera”.

The dove in its character and conduct is just opposite to the raven. The raven is the first bird mentioned in the Bible. The dove is the second.

The raven was classed among the unclean birds and unfit for food; the dove was clean and used for food.

THE DOVE – ITS LIFE

In viewing the life of the dove as given to us in the Bible we shall see many beautiful and blessed things.

1. Physical Characteristics

a. Beautiful

(S. of Sol. 2:14) “Let me see thy countenance, and thy countenance is comely.”

b. Softness of eyes

(S. of Sol. 1:15; 4:1; 5:12) “Behold thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove’s eyes.”

“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks.”

“His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk, and fitly set.”

“There is a luxurious, delicious haze and indistinctness about such poetic extravagances, which captivates the oriental imagination. Nor is the comparison wholly extravagant; doves delight in clear water-brooks, and often bathe in them; and then their liquid, loving eyes, fitly set within a border of softest sky blue, do look as though just washed in transparent milk.” – Author unknown

c. Sweetness of voice

(S. of Sol. 2:14) “Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice.”

The dove has that gentle soothing sweet voice that reminds of grace and godliness.

d. Richness of plumage

(Psalm 68:13) “Thou ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

2. Personal Conduct

- a. Dweller in Rocks (S. of Sol. 2:14; Jer. 48:28)
- b. Herald of Spring (S. of Sol. 2:12) “turtle” here is dove.
- c. Harmless (Matt. 10:16)

THE DOVE – ITS LESSONS

There are many precious lessons which emerge from our study of the dove.

1. Type of the Regenerated Soul

In Gen. 8:7 we have the first mention of the raven, which sets forth our state by nature, “to and fro”; “cannot rest”; “There is no peace saith my God to the wicked” (Isa. 57:20-21).

The dove on the other hand would typify our state in Christ. The dove found no resting place in the world of judgment waters, but in the ark of Christ – type of Christ (Matt. 11:28-29).

2. Type of our Future Inheritance

In Gen. 8:10-11, we have the dove sent out for the second time, and then she returns with an olive branch plucked off. The olive grows on low slopes of hills indicating the end of the Deluge. Hence the dove and olive leaf are in emblem of peace, judgment abated. She had plucked the olive leaf, not found it floating on the waters. It speaks of new vegetation from the cleansed earth.

This is an illustration of our hope. The dove with the olive leaf is like “The earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:22).

Then in verse 12 the dove goes forth never more to return to the ark. This sets forth our fruition and entrance on the New Heavens and the New Earth. “Oh that I had wings like a dove!”

3. Type of the Holy Spirit

Matt. 3:16; John 1:32. It is pure, gentle, harmless, faithful, and Heaven-sent.

The work of the H.S. is to exalt Christ (John 16:14), so He makes Christ known as the true REST for wearied sinners.

He tells of peace made – Gen. 8:11; Eph. 2:14-15. He tells of judgment passed – Gen. 8:11; John 5:24.

4. Type of the Mourners

(Isa. 38:14; 59:11) The dove finds no rest in this present world. Its nature, character, and disposition finds no rest here. Sin that is everywhere is a cause for mourning.

The H.S. causes us to:

- a. Mourn during Christ’s absence – Isa. 38:14.
- b. Desire His coming – Ps. 55:6-8; Rev. 22:17.
- c. Assure us of His coming glory – Ps. 68:13.

5. Type of the Church hid with Christ in God

The dove seeks and hides in the rock (S. of Sol. 2:14). So the church has its “life hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

Practical Lessons: (1) Be harmless as the dove (Matt. 10:16). (2) Let the H.S. (of which the dove is a type) fill, lead, empower, and hide you in Christ. (3) Seek, like the dove, to live a quiet life, finding rest in God.

6. THE SWALLOW: The Bird of Wisdom

Bible References: Psalm 84:3; Prov. 26:2; Isa. 38:14; Jer. 8:7

Introduction:

In our two last lessons on Birds we have studied The Raven as The Bird of Providence and The Dove as The Bird of Rest. Now we are to take up The Swallow as The Bird of Wisdom.

The Bible tells us: “Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding” (Prov. 4:7).

Many folks have knowledge, they know what is right and wrong, but never do anything about it. Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. Knowledge will do us no good until we use it in a wise manner.

So the Swallow is going to teach us a lesson in true wisdom as God counts wisdom.

Name: The name Swallow occurs only in the O.T. hence we have only in the Bible its Hebrew name which is Deror and means The Bird of Freedom. Wisdom brings true liberty, freedom from bondage.

THE SWALLOW - SCIENTIFICALLY

First of all we will look at the Swallow and see its characteristics and manner of conduct. From the natural we will proceed to the spiritual.

“Swallow, the general name of a family of birds somewhat resembling the swifts, found in all parts of the world except the coldest regions. They have weak feet and legs, but long and strong wings and remarkable powers of flight. The tail is a little longer than the rest of the body and usually forked. The birds are exceedingly graceful on the wing, wheeling, dipping, soaring rapidly, skimming along near the surface of water and even drinking in flight. Some swallows are migratory. They travel in large numbers, resting at night in woods and marshes” (The AM. Educator V. 9).

1. Their size and shape

These birds are distinguished by their long and pointed wings, long head, slender wide bill, small legs and feet, and tail generally forked.

2. Their Plumage

The plumage of the common swallow is very beautiful, the upper parts and a band across the breast are glossy bluish black; the forehead and the throat chestnut, the lower parts white, and a patch of white on the inner web of each of the tail-feathers except the two middle ones.

3. Their Food

These birds are gregarious; they assemble in flocks, not solitary. They prefer well cultivated districts where there is water. They have great powers of flight and perch very little,

catching their food on the wing. Flies, mosquitoes, and gnats, as well as many insects injurious to crops form the bulk of their food.

4. Their Nests

The nest of the swallow was probably first built in caves. It is made of mud or clay, formed into little pellets and stuck together with straw and grasses, and lined with feathers. They may be called stucco nests. The eggs, four or five in number, are white, sometimes spotted with brown.

The barn swallow is our most common North American swallow.

THE SWALLOW – SPIRITUALLY

We have said that the outstanding characteristic of the Swallow is wisdom. God says it observes something (Jer. 8:7). It is God that gives the swallow wisdom.

1. They show wisdom in their migration

The swallow leaves the northern country ere the winter blasts sweep down and kill them, and they also as God says: “observe the time of their coming”. They know when to return.

This present world is now under judgment – (John 12:31; 1 Peter 4:5; Jude 14,15).

God has provided a way of escape – (Psa. 32:5; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; John 5:24; 1 John 1:9).

And so true wisdom is manifested in fleeing from the winter of judgment. The Lord says of the foolish people that they “knew not” (Matt. 24:39; Jer. 8:7).

God has appointed a day of judgment.

As the Swallow has her appointed time, so God has appointed a day in which He will bring judgment upon this world (Acts 17:31).

2. They show wisdom in their habitation

The swallow always builds her nest in a place of safety. In the barn, under a bridge, or in a cave. She makes provision for the welfare of her young.

“Yes, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God.” Psalm 84:3

The swallow’s nest in the Temple may have been a nuisance to the people, but God sees in this a picture of wisdom. The Temple was God’s dwelling place on earth, and the altar the place of sacrifice, blood shed, and cleansing from sin.

Conclusion – Practical Lessons

1. Are we wise as the swallow? (not worldly wise) Rom. 1:22; 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:19,20,27; 3:18-20.

2. “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom etc” Proverbs 3:13

7. THE EAGLE – The Bird of Strength

Introduction:

In our fourth study of birds of the Bible, we are to see the Eagle as a Bird of Power. In Isaiah 40:31 we read: “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.”

THE EAGLE – SCIENTIFICALLY

1. Its Names

In the O.T. the Hebrew name is “Nesher” or “neshar” as it sometimes is spelled, and it occurs about 28 times as follows: Exod. 19:4; Lev. 11:13; Deut. 14:12; 28:49; 32:11; 2 Sam. 1:23; Job 9:26; 39:27; Psa. 103:5; Prov. 23:5; 30:17; 30:19; Isa. 40:31; Jer. 4:13; 48:40; 49:16; 49:22; Lam. 4:19; Ezek. 1:10; 10:14; 17:3; 17:7; Hos. 8:1; Obad. 4; Mic. 1:16; Hab. 1:8; Dan. 4:33; 7:4.

Its N.T. name is “Aetos” and occurs but 4 times, as follows: Matt. 24:28; Luke 17:37; Rev. 4:7; 12:14.

2. Its Nature

The largest known eagle attains to 31/2 ft. from tip of bill to end of tail; and extent of wings 8 feet. (See Ezekiel 17:3-7; and Jer. 48:40).

It is a solitary bird, lives in pairs or single. It frequents mountainous and desolate places (See Job 39:27-28). Also lofty trees (See Ezek. 17:3-7). Its flight is very swift (Deut. 28:49; 2 Sam. 1:23; Jer. 4:13; Lam. 4:19). No other bird soars as high (See Prov. 23:5; Obad. 4). It lives on small birds and animals and with them feeds its young (Job 39:29-30). It generally kills its own food; it lives to a great age, and after molting, renews its vigor so rapidly that it is said figuratively to become young again (Psa. 103:5; Isa. 40:31).

It is considered the King of Birds. Many nations used Eagles’ wings as standards, and used them carved on shields, helmets, shoulders, for military ornaments. The Mohammedans, the French, the Romans, the Persians and the Assyrians.

THE EAGLE – SPIRITUALLY

1. A Bird of High Aspiration

The eagle is built for flight and supremely for upward flight. “They fly as an eagle toward heaven” (Prov. 23:5). Its anatomy combines strength, lightness, and power.

When the wings are spread in flight the tendency is upward, and the body is buoyed up in the air. It is so constructed as to overcome hostile forces and currents in the heavenly places. It far out-strips any bird in flight. This means to the eagle, Purer air, Clearer vision, Untroubled quiet, and rare landscapes.

2. A Bird of Lofty Solitude

Other birds go in flocks, the eagle never. He is lonely because he is lofty. No other bird can follow him and reach his height. The higher the ascent, the lonelier the flight.

To maintain integrity and high ideals one must often go along, and break with friends and companions.

3. A Bird of Double Vision

The Eagle is believed to have a peculiarity that no other bird has, a double eye lid. The inner one is transparent and always drawn over the eye. While other birds see in the light of the sun, the eagle is capable of looking right into the sun.

4. A Bird of Victory

An Eagle can overcome every air current in the skies. When small airplanes have been beaten back, the eagle has soared triumphantly on. The Eagle is the greatest enemy the serpent has on earth.

Practical Lessons:

Serve God in youth so that in old age thy youth may be renewed (Psa. 103:5).

Trust in Him who can nourish even in desert places of life (Rev. 12:14).

Let the flight of your soul heavenward be swift and strong, above the region of storm (Isa. 40:31).

“Bird of the broad and sweeping wing,
Thy home is high in Heaven,
Where wide the storms their banners fling,
And the tempest clouds are driven.
Thy throne is on the mountain top;
Thy fields, the boundless air;
And hoary peaks, that proudly prop,
The skies, thy dwelling are.”

By: William B. Hallman