

Read a Sample Chapter

Take a sneak peek at the preview chapter, "Behold, He Comes," a meditation on the Song of Songs 2:8.

Behold, He Comes

Song of Solomon 3:6

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

We continue our contemplations on the Song of Songs. We read:

The voice of my beloved!

Behold, he comes

Leaping upon the mountains,

Skipping upon the hills.

Song 2:8

I have previously given a lecture on the voice of my beloved. Tonight we will consider Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains. The words Behold, he comes are reassuring and consoling. You do not feel lonely. Rather, you feel that your beloved, the Lord, is coming; He comes.

Regardless of the difficulties, tribulations, troubles and problems that you face; no matter how depressing, overwhelming and disheartening the world becomes, you can still hold unto the words, the voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes. The Lord will definitely come sometime, someday. Even if He seems to be late, He will come, if even during the late hours of the night.

These words are often mentioned in tribulations and difficulties. For example, I can imagine one of the disciples saying, Behold, He comes as they were wrestling with the tumultuous waves and turbulent sea, in a boat about to capsize and sink. As the disciple see Christ coming from afar, he won't feel forsaken or lonely in his predicament.

I also recall the people grunting under the heavy yoke of servitude and the humiliation of slavery at the hands of pharaoh. The words He comes must have been consoling and comforting. The Lord will hearken to the cries of the people and will come, even after a short while.

These comforting words are readily available to individuals, and also to the Church, as they encounter difficulties and hardships and face problems and tribulations. They can also prove uplifting and helpful for a person who has had a difficult time trying to rid himself of a certain sin. For example, someone may be torn apart by a particular sin that he

cannot shun or avoid. No matter how often he confesses his sin, he goes back to it. He calls upon the name of the Lord, Save me, O Lord, from this sin. The Lord's deliverance is at hand, and will soon hear an inward voice supporting and encouraging, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. He will never leave nor forsake you. He will come to rescue and save you from this sin.

I can also imagine these same words said by the lost sheep as he had gone astray. Journeying away from the fold and becoming lost and bewildered amongst the thorns, he reconsiders and deliberates, He comes. The Shepherd is coming. He definitely will. If He does not come today, He will come tomorrow. At a certain point and in a particular minute, I will find an uplifting hand pulling me up from amongst the thorns, and the lost sheep will chant, He comes leaping upon the mountains.

These words do not only lend themselves merely to situations where rescue and salvation are needed. They are symbolic and representative of visitations of love, as well. I can, for example, envisage Mary and Martha hearing the gentle hand of the Lord knocking at their door as He has come to spend some time and to speak and converse with them tenderly and encouragingly, Behold, he comes.

The words He comes are particularly relevant to the whole of humanity as it awaits salvation. They are pertinent to those who have already fallen asleep in hope of resurrection. Every soul beseeches and implores, For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption, (Ps 16:10). As these souls were waiting in Sheol, they witnessed the angel announcing the birth of Christ to St. Mary and they proclaim, Behold, He comes. The Lord is coming!

These were the same words that were in Simeon's mind and which found their way to his lips when he carried Christ, Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, (Luke 2:29-30).

The words He comes are loaded with hope and promise. A person who does not become overwhelmed with hardships and tribulations and does not fall a victim to despair and depression is one who is fortified and equipped with hope. He believes in He comes. The Lord will surely come at a particular moment. He will come to solve problems and work miracles. He will even make the impossible possible: He comes.

Nor should one think that the Lord will come when it is too late. No! He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills, indicates that He is coming swiftly. He is running. That is why we read these fitting, uplifting words in the Book of Isaiah, the prophet:

But those who wait on the Lord

Shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint

Is 40:31

Those who wait on the Lord renew their strength. When you feel that the Lord is definitely coming, you feel this certain internal strength empowering you. Your morale becomes high; you feel elated and jubilant and you experience joy and exuberance. You mount up with wings like eagles. God is coming. Do not lose heart or despair. The Lord will surely come.

Those who feel the Lord will never come are, unfortunately, victims of despair, dejection and a prey to weakness and gloom. They may seem alive, yet they are dead indeed.

The words He comes imbues power, instills courage and inspires hope. Think about the condition of the disciples as they witnessed the crucifixion and burial of Christ. Imagine their feelings as rumors started to spread around them, and as the Jews proudly and gloatingly mocked them. Consider their state as they were facing this predicament and difficult time. Yet, in the midst of all of these difficulties, they regard the Lord coming to them through closed doors. At a moment like this, they would say, He comes. The Lord has come. He has come to change everything; He has come to transform weakness into strength and despair into hope.

I wish that everyone of you would always keep this verse in their hearts. Always ponder on He comes. The Lord will definitely come; He will come at a particular time to accomplish great deeds, Now I will arise, says the Lord; I will set him in the safety for which he yearns, (Ps 12:5). Arise, O Lord God!

The verse He comes, Maranatha, was the form of greeting among Christians during the apostolic era. It was also used as when bidding farewell. Mar or mari means Master or Lord, Atha means come, and maran means our Lord. So, together maran atha means The Lord or our Master Jesus Christ is coming. They used to comfort and solace each other by acknowledging at the end of their messages or speeches that, The Lord is coming! Maranatha.

The promise entailed in He comes is both consoling and uplifting. It was used for the first time at the birth of Jesus Maranatha, He comes. He is coming to publicly accomplish salvation and to seek and redeem the souls of those who have perished. He is coming to restore the divine, godly image to man. Behold! He comes. To do what? He is coming to change this image that we currently have and transform it to a godly image. He is coming to restore unto man his first state and the dignity which he has lost. He is coming to bring salvation and redemption.

It was also said in His Resurrection. He came to overcome death and destroy it. He came to eradicate and eliminate Thomas's doubt and suspicion. He came to wipe out Peter's sadness and lighten his burdens. He came to put a stop to Satan's tricks, deception and treachery. I recall some of the verses that I wrote in the 1940s about Christ's Resurrection:

Arise and Satan destroy and obliterate,

his kingdom demolish and annihilate;

Arise! Your shepherds's faith fortify and make strong;

Gather Your scattered flock unto a mighty throng.

Peter's infirmities and weakness forgive and forget,

Wipe out Magdalene's tears, take away her fret.

Arise! It is a message that inspires hope. The Lord is coming. He is coming to perform great deeds and carry out wondrous accomplishments. He is coming to strengthen and fortify the faith of the shepherds. He is coming to gather unto His tender bosom His scattered, wretched flock. He is coming to forgive Peter's weaknesses and wipe out Mary Magdalene's tears.

He comes is a message that imbues power and strength. One feels that something great and magnanimous is about to take place; some miracle or wondrous deed is about to happen; something supernatural and incomprehensible is about to occur: Divine Providence and intervention is at hand, Maranatha!

The words He comes may also be a reference to the Second Coming of our Lord. Behold! He comes! He is coming with ten thousand upon ten thousand of His saints. He is coming on the clouds with the angels. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. He is coming to sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, (Mat 25:32).

Behold, he comes are words that please the saints and instill fear in the hearts of the ungodly, the unprepared. The saints will gladden and become joyful, I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, (John 16:22). So, the words Behold, He comes are a reference to the Lord's Resurrection and can also be used for His Second Coming.

Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also, (John 14: 3-4). These words should cause joy and happiness to those who are ready. The righteous become joyful and shout Amen. Come O Lord Jesus. We need You, Lord.

However, the ungodly will not experience this joy at hearing Behold, He comes. All the tribes of the earth will mourn and moan for their sake; they will bewail them. With the advent of Jesus, they shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' and to the hills, 'Fall on us, (Hosea 10:8). They will be utterly ashamed and exceedingly mortified. Where will they hide? The words Behold, He comes will be the cause of joy to some and sorrow to others.

This is reminiscent of the Resurrection of Jesus, an event that caused the disciples to become exceedingly joyful while at the same time alarmed and distressed the chief priests of the Jews. They became anxious and fearful; in fact, they were exceedingly frightened and terrified.

The words Behold, He comes can also be a reference to the life of every human being. There is a time when every one of us will pass away. We must remain spiritually alert. Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing, (Mat 24:46). Hence, the coming of Jesus was a cause of joy for the wise virgins on the one hand, and a source of anxiety and trepidation for the foolish virgins. Lord, Lord, open to us, (Mat 25:11). Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you, (Mat 25:12). How incredibly difficult to hear the Lord saying this? How harsh to hear the Lord saying, I do not know you upon His arrival?

As I mentioned earlier, Behold, He comes are words that can be regarded as a reference to Christ's birth and resurrection, the passing away of any human being, the general resurrection of the human race, or the Second Coming of our Lord. Yet, we cannot fail to realize that the words permeate with love. The words The voice of my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills express a visitation of love.

When Jesus came to the world, He did indeed come leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. We can trace this right from the beginning.

The first mountain was the mountain of Judea in which the Virgin carries Christ in her womb and heads to Elizabeth leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills.

Likewise, throughout His life on earth, Jesus kept moving from one mountain to the other. We first see Him on the Mount of Temptation where He spent time in prayer, worship, and fasting. There, having been tempted by the devil, we see Him coming out victorious and triumphant. The victorious Church in the heavens, likewise, beholds Christ and hails Him as He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. This is the first mountain that Jesus came to after the mount of Judea. He came out victorious.

After, we see Jesus on another mountain. It was the Mount of Preaching where Jesus went up a mountain to speak, preach and teach the thousands that had gathered to hear Him. People were greatly astonished at His teaching for He had taught them as one having authority, (Mat 7:29). The multitude marveled at His sayings, those awe-inspiring, sublime spiritual principles that humanity has ever come to know. Once again, we see the Lord leaping upon the mountains. Angels hail Him saying, The voice of my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains.

From the Mount of Preaching, the Lord went to the Mount of Olive. Having ended His teaching of the multitude, everyone went his way. However, Jesus went to the Mount Olive where He sought serenity and tranquility and where He

spent the whole night in solitude contemplating and praying to God the Father.

From there Jesus is seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Mount of Tabor, where humanity was mesmerized and awestruck. There His face shone like the sun. Even His clothes became as white as light, (Mat 17:2). His amazingly incredible appearance was like a token of our existence after our own resurrection for we will become like Him. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus gathered representatives of the whole of humanity around Him. There He united Moses the prophet, who represents family life, and Elijah the prophet, who represents celibacy. He gathered the two around Him at the same time.

Around Jesus on that mountain were the Law, as represented by Moses, and the Prophets, as represented by Elijah. On that mountain emblems of manhood and virility as well as symbols of senility and old age surrounded Jesus. While Moses lived for one hundred twenty years and represents senility and old age. Elijah symbolized vigor and masculinity. As Jesus stood on the Mount of Transfiguration, Elijah who represented the life of solitude, seclusion and contemplation on the Carmel Mount stood on one side. Moses represented the life of service as he ministered for hundreds of thousands of people, leading them for decades surrounded the Lord. Once again, we witness the Lord leaping upon the mountains there.

On the mountains, those like Moses who passed away as well as those who ascended to the heavens and remain alive as Elijah surrounded the Lord.

The Lord jumped from the Mount of Temptation to the Mount of Preaching and then to that of Olive. From there He moved to the Mount of Transfiguration and finally to the Mount of Golgotha. The Mount of Golgotha represents the life of sacrifice and pain, as the Lord gave Himself up as a sacrifice unto mankind. The picture that the Mount of Transfiguration offers us is utterly different from the one that is represented by the Mount of Golgotha. While the former shows the Lord in all His Glory and depicts Him in His brilliance and splendor, the latter portrays Him in His suffering, His pain and His passion on the Mount of Golgotha. Yet, the two pictures ought to be witnessed and taken together.

Leaping upon the mountains indicates that you will by no means be confined to one mountain only. Rather, you will have a taste of every one of them.

When the Lord left the Mount of Golgotha, He went to the Mount of Ascension where He ascended to the heavens in great glory; from one mountain unto another. In the meantime, the whole of humanity looks at the Lord in awe and proclaims my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

Yet there are other mountains in the history of mankind that the Lord has allowed us to witness and experience and which had also been a source of unexpected beauty. Perhaps the oldest and the most important among these mountains in the Mount of Ararat where the Lord provided humanity with an ark to grant us a new life after the death and destruction caused by the Flood. The voice of my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains.

Such are the sweet memoirs that the virgin in the Song of Songs recalls. She seems to mull over them one at a time. Having remembered the mount of Ararat, she reconsiders the Mount of Sinai where the Lord had provided the Law and instilled awe and fear. On that Mount the people pleaded with Moses to speak to them because they could not speak directly with the Lord. I wish they had maintained this spirit of awe and reverence. In that moment, the people experienced fear and were awe stricken. They were physically consecrated and sanctified. Yet, they could not directly speak with the Lord. They would rather have Moses talk to Him on their behalf. Sadly, however, after the awe and fear that engulfed them on Mount Sinai had worn away, every one of them went their way and did as they pleased.

Then humanity experienced another mountain, the Mount of Gerizim where blessings were continuously granted: Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out; Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herd, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks, (Deut 28: 4-6). The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains.

There is another mountain that we encounter in Song of Songs, Chapter four. It is mountain of myrrh and frankincense. The bitterness of myrrh is not necessarily what is emphasized here. Even though myrrh is bitter, it is a sort of fragrance. All Your garments are scented with myrrh, aloe and cassia, (Ps 45:8). It is true that myrrh is sour, yet it is sweet smelling

and fragrant. This is similar to spiritual life that may taste bitter as myrrh, yet is sweet in its incense and fragrance.

Let us consider myrrh and frankincense. Does frankincense not emit sweet smelling incense as it burns? The two processes take place simultaneously. The Lord has experienced the mount of myrrh and frankincense, and the Book of Songs abounds with instances of myrrh and frankincense. We will consider this in more detail later.

What is important, my dearly beloved, is to realize that we have been experiencing all of these mountains in our lives. For just as we behold our Lord and proclaim, The voice of my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, Jesus Himself also wants to look at us and proclaim, The voice of my beloved… He comes leaping upon the mountains. Which of these mountains have you experienced?

The Bible likens the Apostles to high mountains. Height is symbolic of ascension, the act of climbing and going up to the Lord. High mountains represent the peaks and those spiritual pinnacles that humanity has witnessed along the ages. They also symbolize the renunciation of the earth with all its hustle and bustle, problems and concerns. It is a journey upwards towards heaven and God.

When people found themselves incapable of reaching the tops of the mountains, they decided to build high minarets on top of each church to symbolize their desire to seek the Lord. Such minarets represent the desire to soar upwards, seek the heavenly and reach the Lord. The church with its symbolic minaret is but a representation in miniature of those high mountains pointing towards heaven.

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. What should you do if you want to hear His voice well? You should ascend with Him that holy mountain. Otherwise, if Jesus is on the mountain's top and you are at its bottom, or in the valley or the plains, you will hardly be able to reach Him. You have to ascend the mountains with Him.

While I cannot tell how you perceive the mountains from practical or symbolic perspectives, I would like to mention these two dimensions. From a practical perspective, one may want to consider how people regard the holy wilderness and those who dwell in them in the faith of God, and how the mountains effect their spirituality. Saint Isaac poignantly mentions that the mere contemplation of the wilderness dissipates even annihilates the heart's lusts for worldly desires. On the holy mountain, one is away from the world, its clamor and uproar, its hustle and bustle and its chaos and confusion.

Even though the notion and symbolism of the mountain is not readily accessible to everyone, I thought I might mention it to you. The seed may come to fruition in due time. When some decide to go to the mountains, hills and holy places, they board a bus with forty or fifty others. In so doing, they transplant the uproar of the world to the peace and quietude of the mountain. Rather than benefiting from and experiencing the serenity and peace of the mountain, they unwittingly cause commotion and uproar and disturb its peace and tranquility.

Yet, this is not the point I would like to stress here. What I want to emphasize here is this situation in which one goes to the mountain to seek the Lord in privacy. One wants to be with God alone, Lord, I have come to sit with you alone. Let us sit together, just the two of us on the mountaintop. Alone on the holy mountain. The Bible therefore declares, His foundation is in the holy mountains, (Ps 87:1).

These mountains are symbolic of the Apostles. They also stand for moving upwards, elevating and uplifting the self in an attempt to reach for and seek the Lord, I will lift up my eyes to the hills from whence comes my help, (Ps 121:1). I will lift my up eyes towards those saints who resemble these high mountains in their grandeur and magnificence. I lift up my eyes to them asking for their intercession and help from whence comes my help, for my help is with the Lord. These saints have come to know and experience the love of the Lord and they are, therefore, in a position to take from Him and enrich us with these blessings.

One is tempted to talk about the mountain of Scete, the mountains overlooking the Red Sea, and the many other mountains that abound with holy monasteries. Yet, I will not talk about them now.

The important thing here is to decide which of these mountains have you come to know and experience in your own life? Have you been to the Mount of Temptation? You may say, I have always been on that mountain. I have not seen the mount of the Transfiguration, or the Mount of Gethsemane. The only Mount that I have thus far experienced is that of Temptation.

Well! It would indeed be magnificent if you were on the Mount of Temptation provided that you are leading a victorious life there. There is nothing wrong in the Mount of Temptation per say. Jesus Himself was on that mountain. He faced one temptation after another, but through them all He had come out victorious and triumphant. On the Mount of Temptation, Jesus said, It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, (Matt 4:4). On the Mount of Temptation, He said Away with you, Satan, (Matt 4:10). There were temptations, but He was victorious.

There are people who feel burdened when they experience temptations. They regard temptations as tribulations. That should not be the case. For us, the Mount of Temptation is the Mount of Victory and Triumph over all manners of temptations.

Have you been to the Mount of preaching, the sermon on the mount? Do you always keep the Lord’s words in your heart? Do the beatitudes of Jesus resonate ceaselessly in your ears? Have you kept the Lord’s words well hidden in your heart? Or are you far away from that Mountain, from His teachings and commandments, His hidden manna? Does the Lord beckon to you and whisper in your ears every now and then as if He were on the Mountain of preaching? Have you reaped the benefits and blessings of the sermon on the mount from certain books or certain spiritual mentors or counselors? Or are you incapable of chanting, The voice of my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the Mountain of Preaching? Ask yourself!

Have you experienced the Mount of Olives in its serenity and tranquility? Have you enjoyed peaceful times of meditation there? And have you experienced the Mount of Golgotha in all its tribulations and suffering, and have you carried your cross in silence and patience everyday? If you can patiently wait, God will grant you the blessing of the Mountain of Transfiguration in the life to come. To us, this Mountain is to be experienced in the life to come, It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory… It is sown in a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body, (1Cor 15:43-44). This is the Mount of Transfiguration in the life to come.

However, this transfiguration may oftentimes materialize on this earth as well. Examples of this can be found in the revelation of some saints in the form of luminous and resplendent events that would oftentimes bring happiness and joy to many people. These revelations are indicated by light, shimmering and brilliant. These saints can now reveal themselves. We have all seen and witnessed the Virgin Saint Mary when she appeared in the form of radiant, glowing light on the Church of Zeitoun. These are examples of human nature as it transcends its humanity and attains glory and splendor.

Every human being can likewise attain such glory. This can only happen, however, if such a person walks in the same way and declares, The voice of my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains. The Lord is ready to reveal Himself as He did on the Mount of Transfiguration even before ascension. The only condition is that you should prove victorious on the Mount of Temptation, carry your cross on the Mount of Golgotha, lead a life of meditation on the Mount of Olives, and keep the teachings of the Lord on the Mount of Preaching in your heart.

The voice of my beloved. Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains. If the mountains are too difficult for you, you may at least try to jump over the hills in accordance with your ability. Or you may try to go upwards gradually, one step at a time as befits the spiritual growth that man should experience.

He comes. You may tell the Lord, You are coming. Your Grace is coming to strengthen and support me. It will provide me with the power that I need to climb up Your Holy Mountain. But to lead a life characterized by casualness and indifference will avail you nothing. Nothing good will come out of this attitude.

When Jerusalem was built a long time ago, it was built on the mountains. Mountains surrounded it. People used to climb up the mountain to get there. Hence, there are praises and spiritual songs that are called the songs of ascension. Some of these songs are mentioned in the evening vespers. They were used in chanting these praises as they were ascending the Holy Mountain.

I cannot forget that time when I was five or six years old when we attended the feast of Saint Mary at the mount of Drunca near Assyuit. We would climb up the mountains, on and on and on. We would leave in the middle of the night or at the crack of dawn. We would keep on walking and climbing up until we got there. Sometimes we would get there before the sun was up. This is my recollection of the image of going up the mountain to get to that church at the mountaintop at that young age. What an image! It is simply unforgettable. The image of climbing up that holy mountain has persisted throughout the years.

It so happens that the Lord may oftentimes allow concrete images to cast spiritual projections and inclinations. For example, He allows the mountain with its height, its altitude, its prominence, its pointing forth towards God and heaven in order to meditate on how we can likewise attempt to go upwards, ascend and get to the high peaks and elevated pinnacles that the Lord desires us to reach. If you can climb up the mountains, you may be able to reach the mountaintop of the mount of Gerizim. There you will find someone announcing and declaring: Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out, (Deut 28:7). He will also bestow upon you all the various blessings that are mentioned on the Mount of Blessing in Deuteronomy 28.

The voice of my beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. These verses also give us an idea about spiritual growth; one ought not to stop at a certain stage. Rather, one ought to keep on ascending and reaching to the highest peaks. There are people who become satisfied and content, even complacent, at reaching a certain spiritual position. This is not suitable. The Lord is leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. If we are to meet the Lord, we must try to reach Him over there on the Holy Mountain. This is what our Lord and Master Himself used to do. He would take His disciples and climb up the mountain with them. There He would spend time with them. And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, (Matt 5:1-2).

Go! Climb up the mountain with Jesus.

May God have mercy upon us and bless us, and make His face shine with His Countenance upon us and have compassion upon us. With the prayers and intercessions that are raised on our behalf by the Mother of God, the Pure Saint Mary, and all the angels and apostles, and the prophets, and the martyrs, and the confessors, and the anchorites, and the saints who we ask to pray for us for peace at all times, and the blessings of the saint of this blessed day, and the blessing of Saint Mary first and last, may their holy blessings and the prayers and intercessions be with us all. Amen. Peace be with you all. May God make us worthy to say, Our Father…