

Song of Solomon 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

Analysis

The bridegroom speaks to the bride: 'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.' The doubled declaration 'thou art fair... thou art fair' (Hebrew 'yaphah,' יָפָה) emphasizes emphatic affirmation and delight. The word 'behold' (hinnakh, הִנֵּךְ) is an exclamation drawing attention to beauty that captures the speaker's complete focus. The comparison 'thou hast doves' eyes' employs the dove, symbol of purity, gentleness, and faithfulness in ancient Israel. Doves' eyes are soft, tender, and singularly focused—they don't dart around but gaze steadily. This suggests the bride's undivided attention and devoted focus on her beloved. The bridegroom delights not merely in physical beauty but in the bride's inner character—her purity, gentleness, and exclusive devotion. This verse demonstrates how covenant love includes aesthetic appreciation ('thou art fair') and character affirmation ('doves' eyes'). The church fathers saw Christ declaring His Church 'fair' despite her sinfulness, made beautiful through His cleansing (Ephesians 5:26-27). The dove eyes represent the Spirit's presence and the believer's single-minded devotion to Christ.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern love poetry frequently employed nature imagery—doves, gazelles, cedars, lilies—to celebrate beauty. However, Israel's poetry connected such imagery to covenant faithfulness, not merely physical attraction. Doves were used in temple sacrifice (Leviticus 1:14), associated with purity and dedication to God. The dove symbolized the Holy Spirit at Jesus's baptism (Matthew 3:16),

reinforcing the typological reading of this verse as Christ delighting in His Spirit-filled Church. Early church fathers like Origen emphasized that believers become 'fair' through sanctification—not inherently beautiful but made so by Christ's transforming grace. The Puritans taught that spouses should actively cultivate verbal affirmation, taking seriously the biblical mandate to delight in and affirm one's beloved. Modern application includes both the literal practice of celebrating one's spouse's beauty and character, and the spiritual reality that Christ sees His redeemed people as beautiful, adorned with His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's declaration that His Church is 'fair' transform your understanding of your identity and worth in Him, despite your remaining imperfections?
2. In what practical ways can you cultivate 'doves' eyes'—undivided, faithful focus on Christ—amid life's many distractions?

Interlinear Text

תְּהִלֵּה	תְּהִלֵּה	תְּהִלֵּה	תְּהִלֵּה	תְּהִלֵּה	תְּהִלֵּה	תְּהִלֵּה
H2005	Behold thou art fair	my love	H2005	Behold thou art fair	eyes	H5869

וְתַּחֲנִמְתָּ
thou hast doves
H3123

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 4:1: Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

Song of Solomon 5:12: His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

Song of Solomon 4:7: Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org