

Song of Solomon 5:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

Analysis

When asked by the daughters of Jerusalem what makes her beloved special (5:9), the bride begins an elaborate description: 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.' The terms 'white' (tsach, נָצַח, dazzling/radiant) and 'ruddy' (adom, אָדָם, red/rosy) describe healthy, vibrant appearance—probably fair complexion with rosy color, indicating vigor and vitality. Some translations render this 'radiant and ruddy.' The phrase 'chiefest among ten thousand' (Hebrew 'dagul merevavah,' דָּגוּל מֵרֵבָבָה) literally means 'distinguished among a myriad'—he stands out as preeminent among countless others. No one compares to the beloved; he is uniquely excellent and incomparable. This verse introduces the bride's detailed description (verses 10-16) of why her beloved surpasses all others. It teaches that covenant love sees the beloved as utterly unique and supremely valuable—not interchangeable with others but incomparably precious. Theologically, this anticipates Christ's unique excellency: He is 'the chiefest among ten thousand' (KJV), 'altogether lovely' (verse 16), without rival or equal (Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:18).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern poetry employed detailed physical descriptions (wasf) to celebrate the beloved's beauty. The Song follows this convention but elevates the beloved above mere human comparison—he is 'chiefest among ten thousand,' not just handsome but incomparably preeminent. The combination of white/dazzling and ruddy suggests health, vitality, and beauty according to ancient aesthetic

standards. The comparison to ten thousand (revavah) uses a large number (myriad) to emphasize uniqueness—even among countless rivals, he stands supreme. Church tradition immediately identified this with Christ. Charles Spurgeon's famous sermon 'The Best Beloved' based on this verse celebrated Christ as supremely excellent—'altogether lovely,' without peer or equal. The Puritans meditated extensively on Christ's excellencies, using this passage to fuel affectionate devotion. Modern readers see both the legitimate celebration of one's spouse as uniquely precious and the supreme application to Christ, who alone is truly 'chiefest among ten thousand,' worthy of ultimate love and devotion.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How is Christ 'chiefest among ten thousand' in your life—genuinely supreme and incomparable, or merely one priority among many competing allegiances?
2. What specific excellencies and beauties of Christ's character most captivate your affection and devotion?

Interlinear Text

יְדִידִי	צָהִב	וְאָדָם	דָּגֵל	מִרְבָּבָה:
My beloved	is white	and ruddy	the chiefest	among ten thousand
H1730	H6703	H122	H1713	H7233

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 45:2: Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

Psalms 45:17: I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

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