

Solomon—the uses and abuses of wisdom, power, and love

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Where we are

- David—we finished the study of his life
- To review:
- David trusted God from his youth—killed lion, bear, Goliath
- Anointed as king when very young
- Had to wait 10-15 years before he became king
- As king, united all Israel—military and organizational success
- Sinned, but repented and forgiven
- Later years, preparation for every part of the Temple

Solomon, his successor

- God's choice
- Bathsheba's second son; 10th son overall
- Loved by God from his birth
- *Then David comforted Bathsheba; and when he slept with her, she conceived and gave birth to a son and named him Solomon. And the Lord loved the baby, and sent congratulations and blessings through Nathan the prophet. David nicknamed the baby Jedidiah (meaning, "Beloved of Jehovah"). 2 Samuel 12:24-25 (TLB)*
- His name Solomon, Hebrew: *Shēlomoh*, comes from the word "*shalom*" meaning peace, a wholeness of peace of body, mind, and soul
- He had every gift and more were to come

Solomon becomes King

- God's and David's choice to be king
- After some intrigue and an attempt by a brother, made king
- David's charge to him:
- *"I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: **Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go and that the Lord may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.'** 1 Kings 2:2-4*
- He knew God's requirements from the start and that obeying his law was to be the non-negotiable foundation of his life.

He started well

- Solomon becomes the greatest king of Israel in

terms of wealth.

- He started with immense amounts of wealth given to him by his father for the construction of the temple
- Then God appears to him and tells Solomon to ask for anything he wants
- He asks for wisdom and God gives it to him, plus the promise of every material blessing
- He builds the Temple
- Plus palaces, fortresses, other public works

His life progresses

- At various times in his life he writes Song of Solomon, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastics, plus Psalms 72 and 127
- These books mirror a progression of his life and we'll talk about that, but first....
- Brief overview of the major books
 - These books are part of what is known as the "Wisdom Literature" of the Bible
 - Job also part of this category (PLEASE go back and listen to the podcast on it)
 - Cautions on the book of Job apply here as well
 - These books are to be read as a WHOLE
 - Pulling verses of context is misleading and often ends in incorrect interpretation
 - Often the whole point of the book is not revealed until the end
 - Some specific notes on the various books

Song of Solomon, most likely written early in his life

- A picture of romance, love
- Sometimes taken as an analogy of the love of Christ for the church, but that can get a bit odd
- Better—the view of a young man truly in love
- Makes his later excesses with women all the more tragic

Proverbs

- Written later in Solomon's life
- Obviously when he was at the height of his reputation for wisdom
- Most common problem when we read the book today: Proverbs are NOT promises
- They are wisdom statements that if you do certain things based on a desire to serve God, there is a more likely chance you will have a positive outcome
- BUT NO GUARANTEES

Misinterpretation example

- *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* Proverbs 22:6
- Kids from good families sometimes turn out badly
- God does not interfere with free will
- But you have a much better chance of them turning out well if they are trained well as children—and if you live a godly life before them
- Be careful, but much good in Proverbs (so lacking today) and the next podcast we will focus on it

Life history continues

- Solomon becomes known for his wisdom, many in the world travel to hear him, bring gifts to him
- His building begins with his father's gifts
- Progressively he needs more wealth, begins trade, conscripts labor, begins to heavily tax the people

God appears to him a second time

- **This time a warning**
- *When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do, ² the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. ³ The Lord said to him:*
- *"I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.*
- *⁴ "As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, ⁵ I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, ⁷ then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name... ⁸ This temple will become a heap of rubble. 1 Kings 9:1-8*

His wealth and power increase

- King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules.
- Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem..... 1 Kings 10:23-26
- And he exported them to "the Hittites and the Arameans"

Sounds good.....but....

- A direct violation of God's commands
- *Deut. 17:16* The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." ¹⁷ He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

Things progress

- 1 Kings 11 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. ² They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. ⁴ As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵ He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁶ So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done.
- ⁷ On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁸ He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

God appears to him a 3rd time

- This time in judgment
- *1 Kings 11:9* The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. ¹⁰ Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. ¹¹ So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. ¹² Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

We then read about the rebellions against him and his death

- Hadad the Edomite
- Rezen Son of Eliada
- Jeroboam—who will become the first king of Israel when the Kingdom divides after Solomon’s death
- Constant trouble and rebellion
- And then Somewhere before his death he writes:
- “Meaningless! Meaningless!”
says the Teacher.
“Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless.”
- ³What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? ECC 1:3
- And the book of Ecclesiastes goes on and on about the futility and frustrations of life.

Ecclesiastics

- A testament to what happens when you’ve been given everything, but you use it all for your own pleasure
- Ends with
- *Remember your Creator
in the days of your youth,
before the days of trouble come
and the years approach when you will say,
“I find no pleasure in them”—. . . .*
- *Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.
For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil. Ecc. 12: 13,14*

What happened?

- How could someone who had so much end so sadly?
- We will look back at this life for cautions and lessons
- Solomon began well. . . . “except that.....”
- Sins from the beginning
- Sometimes referred to as “little” but they were not so little
- *Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, **except that** he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. 1 Kings 3:3*
- *Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter. 1 Kings 3:1*
- What was the problems with these early statements?

Forbidden Sacrifices

- First the passage, then comments:
- **Leviticus 17** The Lord spoke to Moses: ²“Speak to

Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites and tell them: This is what the Lord has commanded: ³ Anyone from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox, sheep, or goat in the camp, or slaughters it outside the camp, ⁴ instead of bringing it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to the Lord before His tabernacle—that person will be considered guilty. He has shed blood and must be cut off from his people. ⁵ This is so the Israelites will bring to the Lord the sacrifices they have been offering in the open country. They are to bring them to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting and offer them as fellowship sacrifices to the Lord. ⁶ The priest will then sprinkle the blood on the Lord’s altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting and burn the fat as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. ⁷ They must no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons that they have prostituted themselves with. This will be a permanent statute for them throughout their generations.

- ⁸ “Say to them: Anyone from the house of Israel or from the foreigners who live among them who offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice ⁹ but does not bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to the Lord, that person must be cut off from his people.

Why this was a problem

- God has always wanted to be worshipped in the way He requires
- From the oldest days following the Exodus, people were told to bring their offerings to a central place, to be offered by the appointed priests
- At times offerings were made at various places, but God’s requirement didn’t change
- Gibeon was where the bronze altar was and as the v.4 says, “it was the most important high place,” it was where Solomon went to offer 1,000 offerings and where He was given the promise for wisdom
- But first this.....a mention that he also made offerings of various “high places” something the law clearly forbade
- A “little sin” at the time maybe, but not the only one

Marrying a pagan wife

- A political practice, then and continuing through history
- But though expedient, against God’s laws

Along with the wives came the pagan practices

- **Deut. 7:** When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites,

Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—²and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.³ Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons,⁴ for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.⁵ This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire.⁶ For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

- He traded political alliances for obedience to God

What begins as a little sin can develop into a destructive life-style

- *But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites; from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. (1 Kings 11:1-4)*

But that wasn't all

- Was selfish in his gifts—all about him
- Ecclesiastics a constant repeating of I, I, I,in the Living Translation
- I said to myself, "Look, I am better educated than any of the kings before me in Jerusalem. I have greater wisdom and knowledge." Ecc. 1:16
- Ecc 2: I decided to try the road of drink, while still holding steadily to my course of seeking wisdom.
- Next I changed my course again and followed the path of folly, so that I could experience the only happiness most men have throughout their lives.
- ⁴⁻⁶Then I tried to find fulfillment by inaugurating a great public works program: homes, vineyards, gardens, parks, and orchards for myself, and reservoirs to hold the water to irrigate my plantations.
- ⁷⁻⁸Next I bought slaves, both men and women, and

others were born within my household. I also bred great herds and flocks, more than any of the kings before me. I collected silver and gold as taxes from many kings and provinces.

- In the cultural arts, I organized men's and women's choirs and orchestras.
- And then there were my many beautiful concubines.
- ⁹So I became greater than any of the kings in Jerusalem before me, and with it all I remained clear-eyed, so that I could evaluate all these things. ¹⁰Anything I wanted I took and did not restrain myself from any joy. I even found great pleasure in hard work. This pleasure was, indeed, my only reward for all my labors.
- ¹¹But as I looked at everything I had tried, it was all so useless, a chasing of the wind, and there was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

David his father in contrast

- *David now realized why the Lord had made him king and why he had made his kingdom so great; it was for a special reason—to give joy to God's people!* 1 Chronicles 14:2 (TLB)
- But for Solomon, it was all about him
- Nations came to hear him, give him gifts
- He could have given them a witness of the greatest of Jehovah God and invited them to worship him
- Instead, he worshipped their gods
- At the end of the book, he finally turns and affirms that living for and obeying God is what he should have done
- But it was too late—the nation would be divided

Important application

- We are given gifts to serve others
- We need to live to make God's greatness known, not our own
- In the OT Israel was blessed to be a blessing as are we
- *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 5:20*

Whatever we have or are is to be used for our Lord and his glory

- Earthly example: We don't think much of people who inherit wealth and act like they earned it
- How foolish of us to believe what we have is because we deserve or earned it
- And we aren't the only ones who suffer if we don't do our jobs
- Like the person above, if it is all for them, they will mistreat workers and their business ultimately will not accomplish all it could

- Even if it does in an earthly way, God will still judge them ultimately

An old hymn says it well

- How I praise Thee, precious Savior,
That Thy love laid hold of me;
Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me
That I might Thy channel be.
- ***Refrain: Channels only, blessèd Master,
But with all Thy wondrous power
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us
Every day and every hour.***
- Channels only—that’s what we are for Jesus to come through
- That’s what it means to be a witness—not just selected words we say, but how we live and that people give credit to Jesus because of that

Another old hymn

- *Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All his wonderful passion and purity,
O thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*
- Final application: for people to see Jesus....we also need to pray “all my nature refine”
- We aren’t naturally a very good reflection of Jesus
- But we can grow in it
- ***And we all, who with unveiled faces
contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being
transformed into his image with ever-increasing
glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
2 Corinthians 3:18***
- We look at Jesus in his Word, study, think about it, look for times to apply it and we’ll be refined to more and more resemble Him to a world that so needs it.
- That is a gift worth more than all the wisdom and wealth of Solomon!