

Survey of the Bible part 93

The Proverbs have always been associated with those writings of Solomon that display his wisdom and knowledge as he encourages his readers to consider how they might apply these sayings to their lives for their own good and God's glory.

We know for example that God granted Solomon wisdom that exceeded those of past, present and future generations.

Does anyone remember why God granted Solomon such wisdom?

1 Kings 3:7-15 ⁷ "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ "Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. ⁹ "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" ¹⁰ It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, ¹² behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. ¹³ "I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. ¹⁴ "If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days." ¹⁵ Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

God granted such wisdom and discernment to Solomon to specifically rule over his people with justice and mercy. In fact, the very next verses in 1Kings 3 go right into the two women who gave birth, and while one of the children died, both claimed the surviving child to be theirs. Solomon would deal with the situation with wisdom and equity.

And so, what we see in this is that the wisdom and discernment that Solomon possessed was a supernatural wisdom given to him by God that was specifically designed by God to rule over His people; not a supernatural wisdom that made Solomon omniscient or without fault, but a wisdom that was added to the wisdom he already possessed.

And it would be a wisdom that the surrounding world would acknowledge to be very special and to which no one possessed before or after Solomon in exactly the same way.

1 Kings 4:30-34 ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was *known* in all the surrounding nations. ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³ He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. ³⁴ Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

So, what we see here is that the wisdom which Solomon possessed, which was given to him by God to rule His people, was not limited to simply ruling wisely, but was extended to the natural world around him to include such things as horticulture, animal husbandry and the use of these resources, both animal and plant, to extend the kingdom of Israel.

And it was understood by Israel that this was God's wisdom given to Solomon to be employed in ruling rightly.

1 Kings 3:28 ²⁸ When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

But it also appears that people, specifically kings from all over the world, came to him to listen to his wisdom concerning these things.

By the way, what does this tell us about Solomon's willingness to give this wisdom and knowledge away to kingdoms beyond Israel?

It shows that Solomon was not interested in hiding this wisdom and hoarding it only for Israel but was willing to let the rest of the world know this wisdom, not simply to gain an advantage to using

the wisdom to advance their own kingdoms, but to allow them to see the God of Israel's willingness to reach the world with this God-given wisdom to use it to God's glory.

And so, there is a sense in which the grace of God is given beyond the borders of Israel to include the whole world. In a sense this is a picture of the Kingdom of God extended to the world to display His glory in all things.

With the glorious reign of Solomon we see a glimpse into the glorious reign of Jesus Christ, and in fact we see it fulfilled when Christ returns to set up His kingdom forever and ever.

Speaking of the New Jerusalem on the New Earth John records these words.

Revelation 21:23-26 ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;

Notice that the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

What glory of the kings of the earth will be brought into the presence of the Lamb of God in the New Jerusalem?

There are a couple of ways we can look at this and both could be true.

It appears in Rev. 21 that there will be literal kings of nations upon the New earth who would bring their glory into it.

This would not be unusual since there will still be culture and government on the new earth. Both require leadership and both assume order with someone, (Christ being the Head), leading others to walk in this new order in the Kingdom of God.

And so, the kings of the earth in the days of the new earth could be leaders appointed by Christ to rule well in the nations that are under their care and as such the products of those nations, under the wisdom that God gives them, will be brought before the Lord to give Him glory in the process.

But there is another sense in which the kings of the earth in the days of the New earth bring their glory into the presence of Lamb

and that has to do with the kingship of every believer. Paul touches on this when writing to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 4:5-8 ⁵ Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. ⁶ Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. ⁷ For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? ⁸ You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, *I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.*

Here Paul speaks of the future glories that every believer will possess and which we possess today by faith as that hope and future reign will one day be fully realized.

But Paul's point is that they are already the recipients of the promise which includes being filled, being rich and kings, which is figurative language looking to the future reign with Christ.

And this reign will finally be realized on the new earth that John addresses in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 5:9-10 ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

And so there is the sense that on the new earth we will all be designated as kings in the general sense that come to bring our glory before the throne of God as we worship before the Lamb of God who has made us priests and kings who reign with Him.

And so, when we look at the reign of Solomon who dispenses the wisdom of God to the world there is a sense in which He is a type of Christ who rules over His people with all wisdom and the world, albeit the new world or new earth, as it is filled with the glory of God.

And so, when we come to the Proverbs, this would be a natural outworking of what God has already given to Solomon as he desires to dispense this wisdom and discernment to Israel in particular and the rest of the world in general to display the wisdom of God.

Now when we think of the Proverbs there is usually only one person who comes to mind as to who wrote the Proverbs and that would be Solomon himself. But the truth is that Solomon was using the wisdom given to him by God along with other wise one's before him as he presented these truths.

In fact, we are told that the book of Proverbs contains the wise sayings of other wise one's in the opening verses of Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:1-7 ^{NAU} The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: ² To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, ³ To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; ⁴ To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, ⁵ A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, ⁶ To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles. ⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

You'll notice at the end of verse 6 that Solomon includes the words of the wise and their riddles. The word wise in the Hebrew is plural and denotes wise one's other than Solomon, which is why the NJB puts it this way.

^{NJB} **Proverbs 1:6** for perceiving the meaning of proverbs and obscure sayings, the sayings of the sages and their riddles.

And so, Solomon is borrowing the wisdom of other wise people with their wise sayings and incorporating them into this compilation of works which Solomon is wisely putting together in a particular order.

Of course, there were other wise people mentioned in the Bible who came before Solomon, some of whom he may have used.

1 Kings 4:30-32 ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was *known* in all the

surrounding nations. ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.

We'll get back to the amount of Solomon's Proverbs in a moment, but the point here is that these people were recognized around the world for their wisdom as they are mentioned here.

Ethan the Ezrahite for example was a contemporary of David and may have been a contemporary of Solomon himself as he penned psalms.

Psalm 89:1 ^{NAU} A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite. I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever; To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.

And with his mouth, as he penned those words, his wisdom was displayed and Solomon recognizes it.

Calcol is an unusual name and it appears only one other time as he is designated an offspring of Judah, a son of Zerah, who would have grown up in Egypt before they came out in pursuit of the promised land.

Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol, were all Israelites from the tribe of Judah who lived in Egypt during the time after Joseph before being delivered from that slavery.

And of course, Joseph himself was considered to be very wise.

Genesis 41:39-41 ³⁹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ "You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." ⁴¹ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

This brings me back to the amount of Proverbs that Solomon wrote and how he wisely compiled the wisdom of others along with his wisdom into a condensed version of probably the best sayings.

We're told in 1Kings 4:32 that Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs, but there are only a total of 915 verses to the entire book of Proverbs. So, it is apparent that not even all of Solomon's proverbs are contained here, but rather he has carefully compiled the best of his and others and we are told as much in the other book he wrote called Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 12:6-10 ⁶ *Remember Him* before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; ⁷ then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. ⁸ "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!" ⁹ In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. ¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly.

By the way, this passage puts the Proverbs into their proper setting as the Preacher, that is Solomon, may be able to compile the best wisdom concerning our life in this world, but even the best knowledge and wisdom man has to offer pales in comparison to that of God and the fleeting life we have here.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2 ^{NAU} The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. ² "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

Jesus Christ Himself deals with the wisdom of this world and how the "wise" seek for signs instead of truth which demonstrates the vanity that man lives in.

Matthew 12:38-42 ³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² "The Queen of *the* South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Solomon himself recognized that with all his wisdom it is still vanity because in the final analysis there is no real wisdom without the fear of the Lord, that is to say, without submitting to the Lord's wisdom which says, repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

And this is precisely how Solomon introduces these wise sayings to us in the beginning of Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:7 ⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

All of the rest of Proverbs hinges on this one verse and how not taking this into consideration results in nothing but vanity.

You can take all your wisdom and wow the crowds but as we know you can gain the whole world and yet forfeit your soul. What is that worth? It's all vanity.

But for the child of God, wisdom, that is true wisdom, is supernatural as it is freely given to those whom God chooses to enlighten to the truth as we are given eyes to see and ears to hear and a new heart, and we then are able to heed the words of wisdom to fear the Lord and submit to His will.

And every day of our lives we are still given that wisdom in the power of the Spirit to be His witnesses. Stephen is a classic example of this when he was being confronted by the wise men of his day as they tried to refute the wisdom and truth of God's salvation found in Christ alone.

Acts 6:7-11 ⁷ The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. ⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, *including* both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹ Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God."

What was the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen was speaking?

It was the simple gospel as Stephen took the O.T. Scriptures and showed them Jesus as the Messiah and then showed how Jesus fulfilled all that the prophets said concerning this Messiah.

But these wise men twisted what Stephen said as Stephen simply reminded them what Jesus said.

Acts 6:13-15 ¹³ They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us." ¹⁵ And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

But what does Stephen do? He continues to give them the wisdom of God.

Acts 6:15 - 7:3 ¹⁵ And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel. ^{NAU}

Acts 7:1 The high priest said, "Are these things so?" ² And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

And starting with Abraham Stephen gives them the entire history of Israel and how through this nation the Messiah would come to redeem a people for Himself. He then ends with Solomon, that wise man who understood what the law pointed to, a Messiah who would come and establish a kingdom made without hands.

Stephen made it clear to these "wise" leaders that their carnal minds only allowed them to see the vanity that is found in thinking that God's plan was to raise up the physical national Israel from the ashes and here's how it ended.

Acts 7:47-56 ⁴⁷ "But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. ⁴⁸ "However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says: ⁴⁹ 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?' says the Lord, 'OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE? ⁵⁰ 'WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?' ⁵¹ "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. ⁵² "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³ you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it." ⁵⁴ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him.

⁵⁵ But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Wisdom is something Solomon spoke of and as we study through some of the Proverbs we will see this wisdom as he compiled it, but it must always be put in the context that leads to life, not this life, though the wisdom of God allows us to live out life here to His glory, but the life to come that shows how only the wisdom that counts should be embraced each day of our lives.