

CHAPTER 8

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon

As we continue our trip through the Old Testament we come to three more poetical books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. All three of these books were written by the same man. Who was this man? (To find the answer, read the very first verse of each of these three books.) _____

To really understand these three books, we need to know some things about the man who wrote them:

King Solomon, the Author

Who was Solomon's father (1 Kings 2:1-3)? _____ What kind of a king was David (1 Kings 15:3,5)?

Solomon had a godly father who feared the Lord and served the Lord well. When David was an old man he gave his son Solomon some very important advice (read 1 Chronicles 28:9). David told Solomon to do three things:

1. KNOW THE LORD
2. SERVE THE LORD
3. SEEK THE LORD (and do not forsake Him)

Would Solomon follow his father's advice? At first he did; later he turned away from God and His Word, but at the end of his life he turned back to God.

After David died, Solomon became king over all of Israel. What does the Bible say in 1 Kings 3:3 that shows us that Solomon started off well? _____ In 1 Kings 3:5 God made an amazing statement to Solomon. He said something like this: "**Solomon, you ask and I will give. What do you want me to give to you? Ask whatever you wish!**" If God were to say this to you, what would you want God to give you? riches? long life? friends? happiness? popularity? possessions? What did Solomon ask for (1 Kings 3:9-12)?

_____ Did God grant his request (1 Kings 3:12)? _____ What else did God give him as a bonus (1 Kings 3:13)?

An example of Solomon's wisdom is given in 1 Kings 3:16-28. If you had been in Solomon's place would you have thought of this solution? Did the Lord Jesus speak of the wisdom of Solomon in Matthew 12:42? _____ Was Solomon able to use his knowledge and wisdom to answer very difficult questions (1 Kings 10:1-3)? _____

In this chapter we will be considering the books which Solomon wrote. We need to remember

that the author of these books was a man who had been given great wisdom by God. Just as God gave the Apostle Paul much wisdom to write at least 13 New Testament books (see 2 Peter 3:15-16), even so God gave Solomon much wisdom to write these three Old Testament books.

Solomon's Downfall

The Lord knew that Solomon's heart was sinful and God gave him a strong warning in 1 Kings 9:6-9. What was Solomon told not to do (1 Kings 9:6)?

Would Solomon heed this important warning?

At the end of his life Solomon made this wise statement: "For there is _____ a just man upon earth, that doeth _____ and _____ not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Solomon was not an exception to this. He too fell into sin and great was his fall! We learn about Solomon's downfall in 1 Kings chapter 11. Did Solomon's downfall take place when he was a young man or an old man (1 Kings 11:4)? _____ Did he follow the Lord fully like his father David (1 Kings 11:6)? _____ Was Solomon obedient to the Lord (1 Kings 11:10)? _____ We can also read about Solomon's sin in Nehemiah 13:26.

Even though Solomon fell into very deep sin, he learned from this terrible experience. It is bad enough to sin, but it is even worse not to learn from our sin! God wants to teach us even through the sin and bad experiences of life. When we fall into sin do we let God teach us valuable lessons that will help us and others in the future? Solomon was not smart to fall into sin, but he was smart enough to learn from it, and the valuable lessons that he learned are found in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Proverbs--A Book of Practical Wisdom

We have already seen that Solomon was the author of this book (Proverbs 1:1). King Solomon wrote most of the book, but not all of it. For example, the last two chapters in Proverbs were not written by Solomon (see Proverbs 30:1 and 31:1).

What is a Proverb?

A proverb is a short and wise saying which is used for a long time by many people. We have many common proverbs in English. Here are two examples:

1) "Haste makes waste"

Can you think of times in your life when haste has made waste?

2) "Better safe than sorry"

This is a good rule for driving a car!

The book of Proverbs is a collection of short sayings. It is a book filled with wise sayings. Each chapter contains many proverbs. Usually each verse is a proverb in and of itself. Thus in Chapter 13 there are 25 verses and 25 proverbs! How many proverbs did Solomon speak (1 Kings 4:32)? _____ The book of Proverbs has many of Solomon's proverbs, but not all (Solomon

spoke 3000, but there are only 917 total verses in the book of Proverbs). The Lord knew which proverbs should become a part of His Bible. See also Ecclesiastes 12:9 where we are told that Solomon "set in order many _____."

A proverb is a short saying. It is a truth said in a way that is easy to remember. It is easy to remember things that are short and clever. Also proverbs are **moral** in their teaching. This means that each proverb makes it clear what is right and what is wrong. Consider Proverbs 15:1. What is right? _____ What is wrong? _____
Consider Proverbs 15:18. What is right? _____ What is wrong? _____

There are as many chapters in the book of Proverbs as there are days in most of the months (most months have 31 days, although five months have less). If you read one chapter in the book of Proverbs each day, you will finish the book in exactly one month!

Practical Wisdom

A proverb is a short saying which should regulate and govern the life of a believer. The proverbs teach us how to live: what to do and what not to do. The *theme* of the book of Proverbs is WISDOM. The book deals with practical wisdom--wisdom that is "down to earth" and which helps us in our day to day living. Some wisdom is not practical at all. Some of the things that are taught in the colleges of our land are not practical at all. Someone has said that a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) is one who learns more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing! This is not the kind of wisdom that we find in the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs hits us right where we live and deals with such practical topics as these:

1. money
2. eating
3. sleeping
4. losing one's temper
5. speaking
6. working
7. how to be happy
8. friends
9. parents
10. laziness

and many other topics!

Wisdom Described as a Person

In the early chapters of Proverbs **wisdom** is often described as if it were a person (a female person!). **Wisdom** is described as a woman! We can see this in Proverbs chapter 9. In this chapter we learn about two women. There is the foolish or **WORLDLY WOMAN** described in verses 13-18 and there is the **WISDOM WOMAN** described in verses 1-5. Both of these women are inviting men and saying, "**Please come to me and let me be your companion!**" What female companion does God want us to have (Proverbs 8:1-12)?

Suppose you have the **WISDOM WOMAN** walking by your side as you go down the road. Suddenly you come to a place where the road deviates (one part goes straight and the other part deviates and goes the wrong way). Where is **WISDOM** going to go?

As you are about to turn and go the wrong way, your **wisdom companion** would say, "Sorry, I can't go that way, and neither should you!" Then you must make a choice: "Should I continue walking with my **companion** or should I leave her and start walking alone?"

If you keep wisdom as a companion, then you will be H _____ (Proverbs 3:18). God says we should not let her _____ (Proverbs 4:13) but we should E _____ her (Proverbs 4:8)!

When we turn to the New Testament we discover that **WISDOM** is all wrapped up in the Person of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:2-3)! He is our wisdom! He is the Companion Whom we are to walk with down life's road! Those who find Christ find life (compare Proverbs 8:35-36 with 1 John 5:12)!

The Key Verse

The key verse in Proverbs is found in the very first chapter, verse 7: "The _____ of the LORD is the _____ of knowledge but _____ despise wisdom and instruction." Can you find a similar verse in Proverbs chapter 9? Verse: _____

These verses speak of two kinds of people--those who fear God and those who do not:

THOSE WHO FEAR GOD

Afraid to displease God

Aware and conscious of God

Include God in their thoughts & plans

Respect and honor God because of who He is

Take God's Word seriously

THOSE WHO DO NOT FEAR GOD

Care only about pleasing self

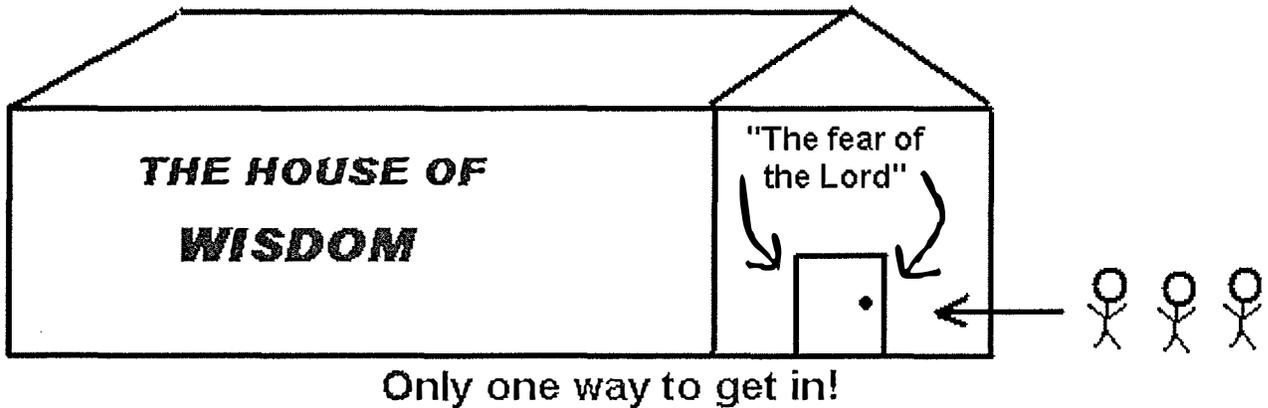
Ignore God

Leave God out of their thoughts & plans

Try to pretend that God does not exist

Care nothing for God's Word

If a person wants true knowledge and wisdom, he must begin with the fear of the LORD. The fear of the LORD is the door that leads into the house of wisdom:



A person cannot get into **the house of wisdom** unless he goes through the door! Those who refuse to fear the Lord and who refuse to go through the door are called F_____ (Proverbs 1:7). These foolish people are also described in Proverbs 1:29: "For that they _____ knowledge, and did not choose the _____ of the LORD." Have you entered into the house of wisdom? Have you chosen the fear of the LORD? Have you chosen **WISDOM** as your **COMPANION** for life?

Those who go into the house of wisdom will find that the book of Proverbs is filled with much help and practical wisdom for daily living. Those who refuse to go into the house of wisdom will have little use for the book of Proverbs. To them it will be nothing more than a collection of brief sayings that mean very little! *To know wisdom one must know the God of all wisdom!*

Ecclesiastes--Making Sense out of Life

The author of this book is described in the very first verse. Who is the only man who fits this description? _____

The Preacher

The word "**Ecclesiastes**" is taken from the word that is found in verse 1: **preacher**. So whenever you think of this big word, it should make you think of Solomon who calls himself **the preacher**. This means that Solomon was a preacher or a teacher, one who teaches an assembly. What kind of a preacher was he? In Ecclesiastes 12:9 we learn that "the preacher was _____." We have already talked about the wisdom of Solomon, and in Ecclesiastes 12:11 we learn that he got his wisdom "from one _____," that is, from God Himself! God Himself gave Solomon the wisdom needed to write the book of Ecclesiastes, and "that which was written was _____, even words of _____" (Ecclesiastes 12:10). This book is filled with wisdom and truth from the Lord!

Solomon wrote this book towards the end of his life. It was probably written after Solomon's terrible fall into sin. Solomon had to learn many lessons the hard way. He learned "how not to be happy." He learned what really satisfies the human heart and what does not satisfy. He learned the wonderful secret of what makes life meaningful. This is what the book is all about.

Solomon was certainly qualified to write such a book. As king, Solomon personally tasted power, riches, women and fame. These are the very things that most people think will lead them to true happiness. Solomon learned by his own experience that none of these things can ever satisfy the human heart or give real meaning to life.

The Vanity and Meaninglessness of Life

One of the key words found in this book is the word "VANITY." How many times is this word found in Ecclesiastes 1:2? _____ In the entire book this word occurs 37 times. Vanity means "that which is empty, that which is without value and meaning, that which never makes sense and never satisfies." **All is vanity!** All the activities of life can be summed up in one word: VANITY! All the activities of life (eating, drinking, working, studying, living, dying, etc.) are meaningless! Why is this so? What did the Preacher mean by this?

One of the key phrases found in the book occurs in Ecclesiastes 1:3--"under the _____." This phrase is repeated often throughout the book (about 30 times). A similar phrase is found in Ecclesiastes 1:13--"under _____." What does this mean? Under the sun and under heaven there is much activity going on! You will find people eating and drinking and working and playing and living and dying. But none of these activities have meaning and satisfaction by themselves. If a person goes "above the sun" and "above the heaven" he will find God! God is the only One who can give meaning and value to the things of life! Most people leave God out of their activities and these activities are all vanity (meaningless and of no value). Solomon wants us to see *life without God* as it really is. Instead of burying our heads in the sand, Solomon wants us to lift up our heads and take an honest look at the vanity of life without God at its center. Thus the book of Ecclesiastes shows the emptiness and disappointment of life when God is left out. Apart from Christ (who is the Son of God and who is called the "SUN" in Malachi 4:2), man can never be satisfied no matter what he does or tries.

Apart from God, life is meaningless. Think about it! A person is born, grows up and gets into a daily routine. He gets out of bed, dresses, eats, brushes his teeth, goes to school or work, comes home, eats, goes to sleep and does the same thing day after day, year after year. Finally he drops dead and goes back to dust (Ecclesiastes 3:20). **What profit is there?** (The word "profit" is another key word in this book.) Is there any meaning to one's daily, monotonous routine?

Think of a puzzle that has one large piece in the center and numerous other pieces all around it. Let the large puzzle piece represent God and let the other pieces represent all the activities of life. Without the large puzzle piece in the center none of the other pieces make sense. They all seem meaningless. But as soon as the large puzzle piece is placed into position, then all the other pieces suddenly fall into place and make sense. So it is with life. As soon as a person lets God be in the center, then all of the activities of life (eating, drinking, sleeping, working, living and dying) suddenly make sense and have much meaning.

When God is allowed to be in the center, then the person can begin to enjoy all of life as a precious gift from God! Again and again the Preacher tells us that the things of life (such as eating and drinking and working) can be enjoyed as gifts from God and as coming from His gracious Hand (see Ecclesiastes: 2:24; 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9). The message of good news found in the book of Ecclesiastes is that man can truly enjoy the things of life once God is put in the center.

A Key Verse

One key verse is found in Ecclesiastes 3:11. In this verse the word "world" should be translated "eternity." Thus the verse reads like this: "He (God) hath made everything beautiful in His time: also He hath set (put) the world (eternity) in their _____, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." God has put eternity into the hearts of men. Apart from God all the things "under the sun" (even the good things which God has given) do not fill the human heart that was made for God. Man wants to find meaning in life--from the beginning to the end--but he cannot find this meaning until he comes to know the One who is his Creator (see Eccl. 12:1). Only in coming to know and fear God can one begin to find the key to questions of meaning, purpose, value, enjoyment and destiny.

The Conclusion

As we come to the last two verses of the book, Solomon gives us his final conclusion. Apart from God who alone can give meaning to life, we would have to reach the conclusion that **all is vanity!** But is this Solomon's conclusion? _____ Solomon has a much more positive and satisfying conclusion: "Fear _____ and keep His _____, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Thus, Solomon's conclusion is very wise and very simple! He was saying something like this: ***Make God and His Word the very center of your life and in this way all of the activities of life will take on rich meaning and the human heart will be satisfied because the heart is filled with God! All is not vanity! All is beautiful*** (Ecclesiastes 3:11)! Yes, there is no real substitute for God! God has made us for Himself (Revelation 4:11), and man will never understand the reason he was created until he comes into a right relationship with His Creator.

Song of Solomon--A Love Song

This book of the Bible is called by several names. It is often called the Song of Solomon because Solomon wrote the song (see 1:1). It is also called "the song of _____" (see 1:1). This means that it is the chief or best song. How many songs did Solomon write (1 Kings 4:32)? _____ Out of all of these songs, God chose one and made it part of His Word! It is the "song of songs," the best song of all. Sometimes the book is also called CANTICLES. This is just another word that means "song."

The Song of Solomon is a love song. It tells us about the love between a man (Solomon) and a woman (the Shulamite maiden). The key word is "beloved" and it is found 32 times. Can you find some of the places where this word is found?

As we read this book we are reminded that marriage (the God-ordained relationship between a man and a woman) is something that is holy, wonderful, right and pleasing to God (Hebrews 13:4). We are living in days when a right kind of marriage and a right kind of relationship between a man and a woman is a very rare thing. Many today look down upon marriage. Many couples live together without ever having been married, which is sinful in God's sight (compare John 4:17-18). And for those who do get married, often they try to practice marriage their *own* way and do not try God's Way. God (the Author of marriage) and His Word must not be left out if marriage is to be successful and fulfilling. Divorce is not what God intended and it leads to more and more problems. The real and right kind of relationship between a man and a woman is rare today! The right kind of love songs are not often heard today!

A key verse in the Song of Solomon is found in 6:3: "I am my _____ and my beloved is _____." These are words that speak of a wonderful relationship: **"I AM HIS AND HE IS MINE!"** Another key verse is found in 8:7: "Many waters cannot quench _____, neither can the floods _____ it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned (despised)." In other words, true love cannot be quenched, drowned or bought! Nothing can kill it! Many today say, "I'm in love!" and then the next day they are not in love! Something is wrong! This is not true love! And true love cannot be bought ("Here's a million bucks, please love me!"). If you get a person because of money, it is because the person loves money and not because the person loves you!

As we think of the man-woman relationship we are also reminded of that far greater love relationship between the believer and His God! The believer can cry out and say,

"I AM HIS and HE IS MINE!"

I AM HIS child		HE IS MY God!
I AM HIS precious possession	A	HE IS MY Saviour and Shepherd!
I AM HIS sheep	N	HE IS MY Lord and Master and Head!
I AM HIS bodily member	D	HE IS MY King!
I AM HIS pearl of great price		HE IS MY dearest Friend and Companion!

The marriage relationship was intended by God to be a wonderful picture of the relationship between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 5:22-33). Do you have a wonderful love-relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you able to join other believers and say with them: "We _____ Him, because He first _____ us" (1 John 4:19)?

Those who trust in the Lord God with all their heart find that they are a delight to God and God becomes a delight to them!

The Persistent Sculptor

