

A Study of Solomon

Son of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:24-25) - a.k.a. Jedidiah

^{10th} son of David (1 Chr. 3:1-9)

^{3rd} king of the United Kingdom of Israel (1 Kg. 2:12)

Reigned for 40 years (970-930 BC – 1 Kg. 11:42)

Quotes about Solomon to help us get a frame of reference...

- *“his everyday sensuality made him in the end a castaway”*
- *“seemed to rule more for his own aggrandizement and not for the welfare of the people”*
- *“no record of his repentance”*
- *“we have his remorse, discontent, disgust, and self-contempt”*
- *“his wisdom did not teach him self-control”*

At David’s death, Adonijah, his ^{4th} son (by Haggith), presumed the throne (1 Kg. 1).

David’s charges to Solomon:

1. Obey God – 1 Kg. 2:1-4
2. Kill Joab – 1 Kg. 2:5-6
3. Show kindness to Barzillai – 1 Kg. 2:7
4. Kill Shimei – 1 Kg. 2:8-9

Solomon’s politics and prayer (1 Kg. 3:1-15; 2 Chr. 1:1-12).

- Deuteronomy 7:1-4
- Deuteronomy 17:17
- Solomon was given a wise and understanding heart (1 Kg. 3:12).
- He was also given riches and honor (1 Kg. 3:13).

Solomon’s practical wisdom (1 Kg. 3:16-28).

Solomon’s administration (1 Kg. 4:1-19; 2 Chr. 1:13-17).

Solomon’s wealth and wisdom (1 Kg. 4:20-34).

Preparations for the temple (1 Kg. 5; 2 Chr. 2-5).

Construction of the temple (1 Kg. 6).

Buildings and furnishings (1 Kg. 7).

The completion and dedication of the temple (1 Kg. 8; 2 Chr. 5:2-7:11).

God appears to Solomon after his prayer (1 Kg. 9:1-9; Chr. 7:12-22).

Solomon’s other achievements (1 Kg. 9:10-28; 2 Chr. 8).

A visit from the Queen of Sheba (1 Kg. 10:1-13; 2 Chr. 9:1-12).

Solomon's wealth (1 Kg. 10:14-29; 2 Chr. 9:13-28).

Solomon's departure (1 Kg. 11:1-13).

Solomon's adversaries (1 Kg. 11:14-25).

Jeroboam's revolt (1 Kg. 11:26-40).

Solomon's death (1 Kg. 11:41-43; 2 Chr. 9:29-31).

A Study of Ecclesiastes

This book seems to be an account of Solomon's pursuit of meaning in life through nihilism.

Nihilism – “the rejection of all religious and moral principles, in the belief that life is meaningless.”

9:9 seems to be a defining thought found throughout the book.

Vanity is used 36 times and *vain* is used twice (6:12; 9:9).

Chapter 1

1:1-8 – Everything is the same, from one generation to the next.

1:9-11 – Nothing new under the sun.

1:12-18 - “I set my heart” - 1 Kg. 3:12 and Ecc. 7:25

Chapter 2

2:1-3 – Solomon's search for meaning in pleasure, entertainment, and alcohol.

2:4-8 – His search for meaning in work and ownership.

2:9-11 - “I did whatever I wanted.”

2:12-16 – One thing happens to the fool and the wise.

2:17-23 – All of his efforts led to despair.

2:24-26 – Solomon's cynicism.

Chapter 3

3:1-8 – A time for everything under the sun. 14 observations that have a negative side and positive. Seems to be a discussion of the counter balances of life.

3:9-15 – What is, is what has been and God is on control.

3:16-17 – In the matter of human affairs, it is often the case that there is corruption and wickedness in the realm of justice. God will rectify that one day!

3:18-22 – What happens to animals happens to men. We all die.

Some lessons...

1. Human life is full of change and wise preparation is necessary.
2. There is a Divine order that pervades life and it is proper and wise to accept it with meekness.
3. Living well can be difficult because of the uncertainties of life.
4. Humanity has not changed with the passing of time.

Chapter 4

4:1-3 – Oppression under the sun.

- It's not just that there is power, but it seems to be the case that the more power is accumulated by a government, the more oppressive it becomes. No government gets smaller and more honest the longer it exists.
- We are all familiar with Nazi Germany, Hitler, and the "*Final Solution*" for the less desirable population. What about Stalin and Mao? "*From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.*" Marxism and Communism – and their consequences - were on full display in the 20th century.
- 1 Kings 12 and Rehoboam.

4:4-8 – Envy and loneliness.

- Apart from God, life can be simply a race to the top through either selfishness or envy.
- The *fool* is the envious man (v. 5). Solomon wrote a lot about a man who *folded his hands*. Proverbs 6:6-11.
- On verse 6 – Proverbs 15:16-17.
- A vain thing Solomon observed was a man, all alone, who spent his life in effort, is never satisfied, and has no one to pass it on to.

4:9-12 – Two are better than one.

- The value of companionship should not be underestimated.
- Genesis 2:18-20.

4:13-16 – A better condition.

- It is always better to be humble and wise than to be arrogant and unteachable.
- No matter how much you do, you will die, and the next generation will come along and forget about you (v. 15-16).

Chapter 5

5:1-7 – The lips of a fool.

- Watch your step when you come into the house of God! Contextually, that would be a reference to the temple that Solomon built. The book of Proverbs is replete with warnings to the fool and his mouth – 10:19; 12:23; 13:16; 15:2; 29:20.
- Principle applies in the church, too – 1 Timothy 3:15.
- Verses 4-5 – Matthew 5:33-37.

5:8-9 – The reality of oppression in the world.

- “*Watches over*” and “*over*” is the idea of using one’s power for personal gain.
- 1 Samuel 8:10-18 and 1 Kings 5:13-18.

5:10-17 – The vanity of the pursuit of wealth.

- Verse 10 is the definition of covetousness. Luke 12:15.
- More product/produce, more to take care of (v. 11). Or, the higher your cost of living, the more you’ll have to work.
- This section covers the overall concept of the insatiability of the covetous person.

5:18-20 – The benefits of work.

- Work is commended throughout the Bible.
- Colossians 3:22-25; Ephesians 6:5-8.

Chapter 6

This chapter is a discussion of the apparent vanity of a successful, wealthy man who will eventually die.

Define “*wanteth (lacks – NKJ) nothing*” in view of the biblical teaching on wealth accumulation and the uncertainty of life (1 Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19; Jas. 5:1-3).

This is a very dark and pessimistic chapter!

Chapter 7

7:1-10 – Things that are better.

- *Better* is used 8 times in this section.
- Good character is a better fragrance in the world than the most expensive perfume (v. 1a).
- From the larger context of Ecclesiastes, death is better than birth because you are now through with the evil, suffering, and oppression in the world (v. 1b).
- The house of mourning is better because it can/should cause the living to reflect on the direction of their life (v. 2). It seems verses 3-4 continue the thought of self-reflection in times of sorrow as opposed to looking at life as if it were one big party.

- Wisdom is better than foolishness (v. 5-7). Wisdom exceeds entertainment and the quickly-gone source.
- Verses 8-10 – The bad (or good) of things are best judged at the end (Pro. 14:29).

7:11-12, 19 – The benefit of gaining knowledge and wisdom (Pro. 8:10-11).

7:13-14 – Life is full of good and bad. Man cannot change God's arrangement of things.

7:15-18 – General observations from Solomon's life. It seems to be a general warning against extremes in life (Pro. 25:16).

7:20 – A general truth about the presence of sin (1 Kg. 8:46).

7:21-22 – Don't get caught up in the talk (gossip) of others. You've probably done the same thing!

7:23-26 – Solomon's experience in the constant pursuit of knowledge apart from God.

7:27-29 – This text reveals Solomon's cynicism (*believing that people are motivated by self-interest; distrustful of human sincerity or integrity*). Verse 29 shows that man seeks out his own path, generally speaking.

Chapter 8

8:1 – Wisdom gives insight and changes one's outlook on life.

8:2-9 – Wisdom will keep the king's commands and not forsake his duty to him. Wisdom teaches us how to walk in this life, even before the most unjust rulers. The child of God is to behave as a child of God, regardless of what governing authorities may do.

8:10-15 – Death is the lot of us all (v. 10) but, at times, there is injustice in life. Wickedness not immediately dealt with encourages further wickedness. There will be consequences eventually (v. 12-13). Injustice in the world is a reality and the child of God need not be naïve about its existence.

8:16-17 – You can dedicate your entire life to knowing everything that God is doing and you will still fall short. Romans 11:33-35.

Chapter 9

9:1-6 – The race we're all in. God is in control and we are not Him! The madness of v. 3 is man's continual experimentation with all the things he thinks will satisfy him. It all ends in death. Then what?

9:7-10 – Keep working and fulfill your domestic responsibilities. The Bible teaches a work ethic – Ephesians 6:5-8.

9:11-12 – On time and chance. It is impossible to determine the success and duration of one's life. James 4:13-17.

9:13-18 – True wisdom is better than physical strength and wealth. 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

Chapter 10

This chapter continues the thought of the benefit of wisdom in life from 9:13-18.

10:1-3 – A little folly in the life of a good person can destroy a reputation, just like an expensive container of perfume could be ruined by a dead insect. The right and left are used in other Scriptures to indicate good versus evil (Matt. 25:33). The fool makes himself evident as he travels through life.

10:4-7 – Wisdom in dealing with a ruler. If he is angry with you, don't lose control of yourself. One person said this means, "*Don't run when accused, they might think you're guilty.*" This section seems to be inspired commentary on rulers and how they should exercise great caution about who they elevate to positions of power.

10:8-11 – Proceed carefully in life when doing things that can be risky. Perhaps a spiritual application of verse 11 – Psalm 58:3-4.

10:12-15 – Wisdom vs Foolishness. One version of verse 12 reads, "*The words of the wise are heart-winning, and those of the fool are self-destructive.*"

10:16-17 – Foolish vs Wise rulers.

10:18 – In context, the building probably represents the state.

10:19 – The drinking and feasting are the result of the money. Be careful how you use it!

10:20 – Be careful what you say in confidence to others.

Chapter 11

11:1-2 – About generosity. Solomon has noted the danger of the wealthy hoarding his stuff for himself. 5:13-15. The NT teaches the same principle – 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

11:3 – The continued cycles of life on earth, 1:3-8.

11:4 – Man cannot fail to act in life because of uncertainty.

11:5-6 – Man cannot explain everything he sees on earth, but he must continue to work even though he cannot tell what will come.

11:7-8 – Old age is coming!

11:9-10 – How the young should conduct themselves in view of the fact that holding on to youth is like grasping for the wind!

Chapter 12

The thought is continued from 11:9.

The warning is that old age and death are coming and no one is exempt.

The KJV says, “*while the evil days come not.*” The NKJ says, “*before the difficult days come.*” Old age is not evil, but it certainly can be difficult!

12:2 – loss of sight.

12:3 – weakening of arms, legs, teeth, eyes.

12:4 – loss of hearing.

12:5 – fear of falling, loss of hair, strength, and appetite.

12:6-7 – some believe this is a description of the final decay of the body after death (12:5b).

12:9-12 – 1 Kings 4:32. Even though he was endowed with a great amount of knowledge, he failed to live by it.

12:13-14 – the conclusion of Solomon’s life-long experiment.