

## Tuesday, June 16, 2020—1 Kings 5-7

Solomon was wise. God had given him knowledge and understanding like no other. Possessing wisdom is one thing. Putting it into practice is another. Solomon demonstrated wisdom when he appointed others to build the Temple. He knew the project was necessary, and he knew his limitations. Rather than seeking honor for himself, he used those whom God had gifted and skilled to do the vital task.

Solomon requested lumber from King Hiram of Tyre and provided foodstuffs as payment. He strengthened a bond his father had begun and brought joy to Hiram and glory to God (5:7). Adoniram was in charge of all the laborers who went to Lebanon, and foremen oversaw the quarry where crews obtained the foundation stones. Hiram of Tyre designed all the furnishings for the Temple (7:1-51). They worked together to provide the Temple materials. The outside was stunning. The inside, spectacular—rich wood, golden overlays, ornate carvings—and required seven years to complete (6:14-37).

This Temple was the dream of King David. This Temple was the culmination of God's promise to provide a home for His people, and Solomon began the work in his fourth year of kingship, 480 years after Israel left Egypt (6:1). God is faithful, but He is often not fast. He has to work through the stumbling, sinful, dull people He so deeply loves.

Thank God for His faithfulness. Thank Him for the gifts He gives for serving Him and others. Use your gifts and skills to build up others and bring honor to the Christ.

## Monday, June 15, 2020—Song of Songs 5-8

When God brings a man and woman together in marriage, they become one. They retain personal identity and gifting, but they have new potential as a couple. They reflect the relationship between Christ and His church as they serve and encourage one another.

The sexual union is a great gift from God and a most powerful bonding experience. This is why God reserves this for the marital relationship. That level of intimacy, vulnerability, and connection is not something to be practiced flippantly or carelessly. When Solomon and his bride were sexually united, they celebrated, and their friends celebrated the good thing God had done in bringing them together (5:1-2).

Sexual connection does not guarantee the health of the relationship. The communication, self-control, and self-sacrifice Solomon and his beloved practiced before marriage remained vital after the ceremony. When frustrations arise and schedules conflict, remembering the value of the spouse and the reason for being married in the first place can be of great benefit (5:10-16). Verbally affirming one another is a blessing to both the one who speaks and the one who hears it (6:4-9, 7:1-13).

Healthy marriages can speak wisdom to others. The beloved demonstrated the confidence that came from knowing she was loved. She encouraged her friends to remain chaste until marriage. She motivated her listeners to protect the innocent around them (8:1-9). Godly marriages bless the spouses and the community around them.

Thank God for the gift of marriage and sexuality. Pray for marriages to

demonstrate the character of Christ and to bless others.

#### Sunday, June 14, 2020—Song of Songs 1-4

“The Song of Songs That Is Solomon’s” is the full title for one of the most unique texts in Scripture. The song in poetry details the love between a man and a woman and provides a metaphor for the love between God and Israel and Christ and the church. The relationship stirs emotion and spurs action—self-control, sacrifice, and expression—for the benefit of the one deeply loved and for the witness of the community around them.

The young lady had friends who were excited about the growing relationship and the prospect of marriage, but the woman herself struggled with her self-image (1:5-6). Her friends encouraged her, but more importantly, she and the young man built a relationship on verbal communication and encouragement (1:9-2:2). There was a deep attraction between the two, but the young lady knew not to awaken their sexual relationship before the right time (2:7, 3:5). Her lover agreed they needed to be alert to the small compromises that could cause big problems (2:14-15).

On the day of their wedding, there was great celebration as the young man—King Solomon—made his way to the ceremony, adorned in beauty and splendor. Again, he built her up with his words (4:1-15). There was great anticipation between the two for the fulfillment of their desires and the prospects of growing their marriage relationship.

Christ has great love for His Bride, the church. He speaks daily words of encouragement. The church longs for the day He will return in majesty and honor. Thank God for the way marriage exemplifies His relationship with His people.

#### Saturday, June 13, 2020—Ecclesiastes 10-12

Ecclesiastes is wisdom literature. Its purpose is to define and describe the wisdom of God for man. Written as a collection of observations by the king of Jerusalem, Ecclesiastes has sections very similar to Proverbs—general statements about the way life works.

In previous chapters, the writer had repeatedly shared his seeming frustration that life ended the same for the righteous and the unrighteous. He wrestled with how to enjoy life and trust God when there were so many uncertainties. He concluded several times that the best course of action was to enjoy each day to its fullest.

In chapter 10, he moves from grappling with life’s uncertainties to observations that would help lead to daily enjoyment. There were definite differences between those who lived foolishly and those who walked in God’s wisdom. Even though he had frustrations, he knew the best course of daily life was walking wisely.

He knew generosity and being a blessing were wise actions (11:1-2) because hoarding was a selfish, closed-minded course. God’s wisdom and work is beyond anything we can imagine, so we are wise to rise each day and use our mind and skills to bless others. He urged his reader to align his life with the ways of the Creator while he was young (12:1) so that the difficulties that came as he grew older would not draw him away.

Fear God and keep His commandments. This is the call from God. Praise Him that He will one day judge everything and make it right.

#### Friday, June 12, 2020—Ecclesiastes 7-9

At times, the writer of Ecclesiastes seems so negative. That's usually because he had become bitter about life because he did not have a healthy relationship with God. Sometimes, however, he isn't bitter. He's realistic. He has gained solid perspective.

"A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth" (7:1). Isn't this negative and bitter? It certainly is unusual. Most people cheer at a birth announcement. Few cheer at a funeral, yet the writer knew that only at the end of life can one's life truly be assessed. Everyone has potential at birth. Only at the end can people know with certainty whether that potential was realized.

He had seen the wicked prospering and the righteous suffering, so he urged his readers to enjoy the good times (7:14, 8:14-15) and trust God was in control of everything. "Although a wicked man commit a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God" (8:12). He knew that no one was perfect, so no one could be overly critical of the mistakes and careless words of others (7:20-22). They needed wisdom, not self-righteousness.

Death was waiting for the righteous and unrighteous (9:1-2). That sobering reality moved the writer to urge his readers to make the most of each day (9:9-10) and gain wisdom along the way. "Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good" (9:18).

Ask God for increasing wisdom to fulfill your God-given potential.

#### Thursday, June 11, 2020—Ecclesiastes 4-6

Solomon was wise. God had gifted him like no other person before. His wisdom allowed him to see life through a lens that revealed the brokenness of man. Without God, man is twisted at the core.

Men without transformed hearts will oppress the people around them (4:1-3). Women without transformed hearts will see the success of others and grow jealous and never be satisfied (4:4-8). Riches are meaningless in themselves because, in reality, every person arrives on this earth with nothing and leaves with the same (5:16).

Wisdom teaches every person to value others—not to think less of self but to think of self less and to think of others more. Those transformed by the wisdom of God will see the benefit in being with others, relying on their strengths, and then serving others with the skills God has given (4:9-12). Wisdom teaches those who will listen to come before God in great humility. "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong" (5:1-2). Stand in awe of Him (5:7).

Wisdom moves people to make the most of each day. God gives health, wealth, and honor, but those will eventually pass—maybe before one expects it. If someone has those things and fails to enjoy them and thank God for them, what a tragedy that becomes. They were wasted.

Thank God today for all He has given—the simple and the profound. See how enjoying those things leads to praising Him.

#### Wednesday, June 10, 2020—Ecclesiastes 1-3

Worldview is the lens through which you see the life around you. Worldview answers the deep questions about origin, purpose, suffering, and redemption. Those answers affect the approach and attitude of daily life.

Solomon was one of the wisest and richest men who ever lived. He had at his disposal anything the world could offer for finding meaning and pleasure, yet he concluded life was meaningless. Trying to hold onto life was like grasping at vapor—it slipped through the fingers. Life goes on, and man can do nothing to stop it. More wisdom only brought more grief.

He tried pleasure. He tried wine. He tried great work projects. He tried gathering more possessions and making more money. “I denied myself nothing my eyes desired . . . yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done . . ., everything was meaningless . . .” (2:10-11). He wasn’t out of his mind. Wisdom was guiding him in this pursuit, yet he realized those things as goals left him empty. Whatever he gained he would leave for someone else.

Solomon had the God-given desire to be wise and prosperous, but if that desire does not ultimately lead to worship of Him rather than measuring success, the wisdom and prosperity turn up empty. They are not ends in themselves. They are means to know and worship God (3:14). God has put eternity in our hearts (3:11) so full satisfaction only comes in Him.

From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.