

A WISE MAN WHO BECAME FOOLISH**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

Solomon (whose name means *pacific*) was the son of David, second king of Israel, and Bathsheba. He was the rightful heir of his father's throne and Jehovah, in a remarkable interview with David shortly before the passing of the "sweet singer of Israel," made such known to him (1 Chronicles 22:6-12). Solomon, soon after his ascension to the throne, went to Gibeon to sacrifice there and Jehovah appeared to him in a dream and said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee."

The implication of this question was clear: it indicated to the young king that he would be given whatever he asked. His reply was a thoughtful and worthy one. "And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great lovingkindness, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great lovingkindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Jehovah my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge thy great people?" (1 Kings 3:4-9).

Solomon was both grateful and humble in having been elevated to the throne of Israel. He was fully aware of the responsibility that was his in directing the affairs of the people of God and he felt as helpless as a little child. His statement, "I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in," is not to be literally construed; he was approximately twenty years old; by it he simply meant that he knew nothing about governmental affairs and he was wholly without experience essential to the proper handling of the weighty problems certain to confront him soon. He wanted above all else to be able to rule his people in the manner God would approve, and to do this it was necessary that he have the ability to "discern between good and evil." His request was a noble and an unselfish one; it had, as its design, the highest interests of the people, and the honor of Jehovah.

Were we privileged to make such a request of God, would we have been as generous and as unselfish? Solomon might have asked for length of days, for vast material wealth, for the acclaim of the world and the powers which attend it; instead, he asked for wisdom, and God gave him all the rest! Here, Solomon was at his best. It reveals the wholesome heart and the basic goodness which characterized him at the time. God blessed him beyond all other of his age; his wisdom exceeded that of all others preceding him (1 Kings 4:29-34). But, it did not always keep him humble and faithful to Jehovah; there is not always an increase of goodness with knowledge.

Solomon's annual income was six hundred sixty-six talents of gold, and each talent was worth tens of thousands of dollars. This income represented only a small portion of his extensive holdings (1 Kings 10:14-29). His court was one of the most magnificent of ancient kingdoms. He daily lived and moved in the most luxurious fashion; he had the most beautiful quarters, and the most dazzling display of royalty and wealth ever possessed by a king of Israel. Moreover, because God gave Solomon "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore" (1 Kings 4:29-34), his fame spread far abroad, "and all the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart." He wrote three thousand proverbs and a thousand and five songs on many themes; his wisdom exceeded that of "all the children of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt." So great was his knowledge that people came from distant places to profit from the wis-

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

dom which flowed from his lips. When the Queen of Sheba came to visit him, and to observe, at firsthand, his vast wealth and remarkable wisdom, she who had been ever accustomed to great luxury was amazed, and said, Behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard” (1 Kings 10:1-10).

Solomon is another name in the lengthy list of men who began well, but who turned away from the path of righteousness and whose latter life was marred by wickedness and sin. He married many wives, some of whom were heathen women, and they led him into idolatry. It is doubly said to note that his did not occur as a folly of youth, but in full maturity and in full realization of the sin involved: “It came to pass, *when Solomon was old*, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of David his father” (1 Kings 11:4). Sin begins in the heart; Solomon’s heart was not right, being filled with the affairs of the world and the pleasures of this life. Neither age nor wisdom kept him from sin.

Solomon’s greatest achievement, during his reign, was the building of the magnificent temple—a project David, his father, desired greatly to do, but was forbidden by Jehovah to build it because he was a man “of war.” Solomon’s reign was a glorious one; the kingdom, under his direction, attained the zenith of its power, prestige, and wealth; but the last days of his rule did not fulfill the promises of its beginning. He who began with such great promise, turned his attention and interests to material things and to fleshly ways, disregarded his responsibility to God, and to his people, and thus ruined his life. He, like so many others of the human race, began well, but ended in disaster. The sweet, unpretentious, child-like disposition which he evidenced when first he came to the throne—his request for wisdom and understanding instead of wealth and fame—thrill our hearts, and thus make more poignant his later failure.

-Guy N. Woods

“I BELIEVE GOD WANTS ME TO BE HAPPY”

Earlier this year I was in a conversation with a fellow Christian who made the following statement, “I believe God wants me to be happy.” It was the second time I remember hearing those exact words coming from a fellow Christian, and the circumstances and topic of discussion were exactly the same—both men were divorced for reasons other than fornication and looking for an “out” from Matthew 19:9 so they could remarry.

Where did anyone ever get the idea that our personal happiness is God’s greatest desire? While sermonizing not too long ago, I made mention of evangelical sensation Joel Osteen and his brazen refusal to speak about sin, repentance, or hell. Many have rightfully identified him as nothing but a “feel good” preacher. No one ever leaves one of his services with any inclination that they need to repent or amend their ways. Tragically, this attitude toward preaching and so-called Christian living has found its way into the hearts and lives of Christians. But think about the ramifications of this type of thinking.

Such thinking says God is willing to overlook and worse still, condone sin for the sake of one’s personal happiness. But God is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon wickedness (Habakkuk 1:13). Is God so desirous of your happiness that he will condone adultery? How then will “for whosoever shall divorce his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery” (Matthew 19:9) be reconciled with “know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). These two passages can never be reconciled under the influence of this thinking. Speaking of heaven, John wrote, “nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false” (Revelation 21:27 ESV).

But what other sins will God overlook in order to ensure our happiness? If God is willing to overlook sexual sins for the sake of my happiness, then he most certainly will overlook the drunkard and his love for the bottle. No doubt he will ignore the gambler whose high stakes poker games bring him much joy. Without question he will disregard the foul language of the man who finds much pleasure in regaling his co-workers with the latest jokes and off-color tales. Where will it end?

It ends with God’s word as given to Saul: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams...” (1 Samuel 15:22-23). More than our happiness, God desires our faithfulness. Jesus came to give us an abundant life, but that life is not one of guaranteed joy. The early church was persecuted and her members tortured and slain for their faith (Acts 26:9-11). All such sacrifice was a needless waste had they only known they could deny the faith to ensure their happiness.

-Todd Clippard

THE GREATEST MATHEMATICAL PROBLEM IN THE WORLD

Dr. Danny Kellum wrote, Moses and the people were in the desert, but what was he going to do with them. They had to be fed. According to the Quartermaster General in the Army, it was reported that Moses would have had to have 1500 tons of food each day.

Do you know that to bring that much food each day, two freight trains, each a mile long, would be required! Besides you must remember, they were out in the desert, so they would have to have firewood to use in cooking the food. This would take 4000 tons of wood and a few more great trains, each a mile long just for one day.

And just to think, they were forty years in transit, and oh yes, they would have to have water. If only they had enough water to drink and wash a few dishes, it would take 11,000,000 gallons each day, and a freight train with tank cars, 1800 miles long, just to bring in water!

And then another thing! They had to cross the Red Sea at night. (They did?) Now, if they went on a narrow path, double file, the line would be 800 miles long and would require 35 days and nights to get through. So there had to be space in the Red Sea, 3 miles wide so that they could walk 5,000 abreast to get over in one night.

But then, there is another problem. Each time they camped at the end of the day, a campground two thirds the size of Rhode Island was required, or a total of 750 square miles long...Think of it! These spaces just for nightly camping.

Do you think Moses figured all this out before he left Egypt? I think not! You see Moses believed in God. God took care of these things for him.

Where is our trust? Do we trust God? “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not into thy own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). Now many times do we refuse to do something because we don’t have everything figured out? Remember Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:44). How often do we fail to give liberally because we don’t know where our next dollar is coming from? How often do we say, “We can’t support that missionary because we don’t have the money?”

Elders many times refuse to launch out into a good work until they have every detail worked out and are assured that they have the money. When God gives us a command, He also provides a way for us to do it. Remember the Great Commission? “Go ye therefore and teach all nations...”(Matthew 28:19). Whether it be our local community or a foreign mission work, God will provide the resources. God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac. He took Isaac and headed for the land of Moriah (Genesis 22:2) and Isaac asked a question, “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering” (Genesis 22:7)? Abraham replied, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering” (Genesis 22:8). Maybe Abraham remembered the words of God, “Is anything too hard for the Lord” (Genesis 18:14)?

Jesus told his disciples “launch out into the deep” (Luke 5:4). Peter, like us, questioned the Lord’s command, but when he obeyed, they caught a great multitude of fish. When we obey, we too, will catch a great multitude of fish.

Do you suppose Moses laid awake at night wondering how “HE” was going to feed all those people? I doubt it. He trusted God. Do you?

-Larry Acuff

THREE THINGS YOU WILL NOT HEAR ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The concept of a coming Day of Judgment is not a fantasy or fable. It is a fact. Paul told the people in ancient Athens that God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31). All people that have ever lived on the earth will be brought before the throne of God, and His glorious Son will judge each one of them (Matthew 25:31-33). Some things will be missing on that great day, so do not expect to see or hear them.

1. On the Day of Judgment, no one will say, “There is no God.” According to the Bible, that is what fools say while living in this world (Psalm 14:1). However, on judgment day this truth about God will be clear to all: “He is” (Hebrews 11:6). “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

2. On the Day of Judgment, no one will say, “One religion is as good as another.” On that day all will know without a doubt that only through Jesus can people come to the Father (John 14:6). All will see that only those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb are redeemed from past sins (Revelation 5:9), and the only way for His blood to keep on cleansing a person is for that person to continue to walk in the light of His word (1 John 1:7).

3. On the Day of Judgment, no one will say, “I regret that I did my best to follow Jesus faithfully.” Friends, the crown of life is for the faithful—period! (Revelation 2:10). It is the good and faithful servant who will hear on that day, “Well done...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25:23). Regret such a reward? Never! Every service attended, every prayer offered, every minute spent in Bible study, every visit made, every mile driven or walked for the Cause—all of this and so much more will make us think, as the old hymn says, “Heaven will surely be worth it all.”

May we all give diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10-11).

-Roger Campbell