

# **"Here is the Conclusion of the Matter" - Ecclesiastes 12**

## **November 23, 2008 - Skip MacMillan**

### **Introduction:**

Difficult book: honesty of God in Scripture, for God to include such struggles and questions in the Bible.

Questions and thoughts of ours but we don't speak.

Yet the simplicity of turning to God; simple does not mean shallow.

He stands at the edge, the limitations of material life and human ability, and wonders what might be outside this world, life beyond the sun.

### **Difficult or awkward sayings:**

It confronts "easy belief-ism," forcing us to go to a greater depth with our relationship with God. "A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything" (Eccl. 10:19).

Eccl. 4:13-16 - succession.

"All achievement springs from man's envy of his neighbor" (Eccl. 4:4).

"Meaningless, meaningless, says the teacher. Everything is meaningless" (Eccl. 12:8).

### **Authorship**

Solomon and a writer, or "one man reporting the wisdom material of another man" -Eaton.

"Or is a man presenting himself and adopting the dual role of wise man and editor of his own material?" -Eaton.

**Three layers: Solomon's words, scribe's pen and God's inspiration.**

### **Solomon the Man**

#### **Three Names**

**Solomon** = "peaceful", "to be quiet", given by David and Bathsheba.

Least warlike of all the kings of Israel or Judah, very different than David (1 Chronicles 22:8-10).

**Jedidiah**, "loved by God", given by God (via Nathan the Prophet).

**Shillumah**, "Shillumah," denoting "compensation".

Solomon is the result of David and Bathsheba, (who was married to Uriah) (2 Sam 11).

Could Solomon be compensation for the loss of their first son? Or the kingdom given to him as compensation for David's sin against Bathsheba?

#### **Rising to the Throne - 1 Kings 1-11**

##### **Different approach:**

Saul was elected by the people, David was elected by the people, but Solomon was selected by the King; no prophet anointing or people voting.

##### **His Reign**

The bright day of Solomon's glory ended in clouds and darkness. His decline and fall from his high estate is a sad record.

"The kingdom of Solomon," says Rawlinson, "is one of the most striking facts in the Biblical history. A petty nation, which for hundreds of years has with difficulty maintained a separate existence in the midst of warlike tribes, each of which has in turn exercised dominion over it and oppressed it, is suddenly raised by the genius of a soldier-monarch to glory and greatness. An empire is established which extends from the Euphrates to the borders of Egypt, a

distance of 450 miles; and this empire, rapidly constructed, enters almost immediately on a period of peace which lasts for half a century. Wealth, grandeur, architectural magnificence, artistic excellence, commercial enterprise, a position of dignity among the great nations of the earth, are enjoyed during this space, at the end of which there is a sudden collapse. The ruling nation is split in twain, the subject-races fall off, the pre-eminence lately gained being wholly lost, the scene of struggle, strife, oppression, recovery, inglorious submission, and desperate effort, re-commences" -Historical Illustrations, Easton's Bible Dictionary.

In the end he exploited his country, forced labor and the country reached a boiling point at his death. He gave no foundation for his successor, Rehoboam, his son.

### **What is missing from Solomon personally?**

#### **Full picture of God**

1. God is developed in chapter 3, provides beauty, eternity, satisfaction, etc.  
God enables a man to enjoy life, 5:18-20.

2. Transcendent, his approach to God is at arm's length. God is unapproachable and impersonal.

Lacking the immanence of God.

No Exodus 34, a compassionate, forgiving and knowable God.

No David kind of relationship, Psalm 25:16-22.

No yearning, struggling, questions, passion, no deep meaningful communion with God.

Solomon talks about God but not WITH God.

Built the Temple of God but has a professional relationship at best.

#### **Scripture**

1. Never quoting, referencing, or acknowledging.  
Is he ignorant of the Scripture?

2. Concepts, the Fall: "God made man upright but man has gone off in search for many schemes" (Eccl. 7:29).

3. Consequences:

Lack of knowing the Scriptures may lead to misconceptions about God, life, Christianity, and personal despair.

He allowed his personal experience to define his life more than Scripture.

Emphasizing the importance of you picking up the Bible and reading it or you may be living under some false idea of God and life.

#### **Did Solomon walk with God?**

### **Solomon's Struggles: Wealth, Women and Wisdom**

#### **Wealth:**

Self-centered: "It has been remarked that if Solomon had had anything like the military genius of David and his enthusiasm for the religion of Yahweh, he might have extended the arms of Israel from the Nile to the Tigris and anticipated the advent of Islam. But his whole idea was to secure himself in peace, to amass wealth and indulge his love of grandeur with more than oriental splendor" -International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

Taking from the masses, he accumulated great wealth in Jerusalem. Draining the national resources, exhausting the people, began long term forced labor and as soon as he died the people rebelled.

He was king, with an empire, buildings, a Temple to God, gardens, armies, thousands of staff, wives and women, conquered, explored, and still nothing, left in despair. His prosperity was killing him, entertaining him to death. He bought time but was unable to understand the times.

**Jesus'** only remarks about Solomon have to do with his splendor of clothing.  
***Wealth wasn't his problem according to the Scriptures.***

#### **Women:**

Women pulled him away from God, 1 Kings 11:3-4.

So he writes the book of Proverbs.

No mention of one Israelite wife, "Bad company corrupts good morals".

1 Kings 11:3-6 - "He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Disonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done."

He learned first to tolerate and then to imitate their heathenish ways. He did not, indeed, cease to believe in the God of Israel with his mind. He did not cease to offer the usual sacrifices in the temple at the great feasts. But his heart was not right with God; his worship became merely formal; his soul, left empty by the dying out of true religious fervour, sought to be filled with any religious excitement which offered itself.

#### **Wisdom:**

**Confusing:** given by God, said to have been a good request, nothing negative surrounding it. Solomon asks for wisdom, 1 Kings 4:29-34.

Wisdom = 1 Kings 3:9 "hearing heart," understanding heart, discerning heart and to distinguish between right and wrong (NAS discerning between good and evil).

He did not ask for long life, wealth for himself or the death of his enemies but for discernment and God praises him for this.

Yet:

Mismanages Israel.

Left no foundation for the next generation.

The country falls apart at his death.

Women led him astray, wrote Proverbs about the adulterous women.

While this wisdom offered much, it ended up being a type of curse for Solomon.

Wisdom was given to govern life "under the sun".

Limited in ability to give meaning and contentment to his life.

Solomon did not move beyond wisdom into faith in God.

**What kind of wisdom?** Practical wisdom, shrewdness, knowledge of this world, under-the-sun wisdom.

The trouble is that it sounds close to the The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

What did this tree do to Adam and Eve?

He climbed the ridge of wealth, women and wisdom and found it wanting and meaningless. Finding himself all alone, empty.

## **Does Solomon get it?**

His words "meaningless, meaningless says the Teacher, everything is meaningless" (Eccl. 12:8).

Grasshopper: "the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred" (Eccl. 12:5). Exhausted from his life of plenty, he lays his head down, defeated.

Three short verses tell his end, 1 Kings 11:41-43.

We don't know.

What we do know is that he was loved by God (2 Sam. 12:24-25, 1 Kings 10:9, Neh. 13:26).

One Lesson: God's unconditional love, mercy and grace towards Solomon and you!

What if he had walked with God?

What would have been Israel's future?

Him personally, how would that have affected his life and his end?

What would have been the effect of the gospel around the world? Solomon had a huge stage.

## **People in the Church today**

Know about God, observe God, stay intellectual, arm's distance, transcendent.

No devotion to God, no mingling with, no resting in, no genuine, real, heart to heart.

Chapter 5, stay back, don't approach, sense of being unsure about God.

Our understanding: "I know that it will go better with God fearing men, who are reverent before God" (Eccl. 8:12). Good morals, good standing, reverent but not personal.

Trying to enjoy what we have been given, but struggling to do so (eat, drink, work, spouse) (Eccl. 9:7-10).

What if you walked with God?

## **God said, "Ask for whatever you want Me to give you."**

If you could ask for anything, what would you ask for?

### ***After seeing the life of Solomon, did he get it right?***

Would he ask for wisdom again?

Would he have asked for something else if he were to do it all again?

### ***If God came to you and gave the same offer, what would you ask for?***

"Be careful what you ask for."

**Jesus:** Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13 - "your kingdom come, your will be done".

Gethsemane, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39).

## **Purpose of this book:**

### **Skeptic**

Ecclesiastes is "the opening sentence of an evangelistic message" -Eaton.

### **The Church**

To awaken the Church, wake us up from apathy, taking for granted the things of God.

Wake us both up from a life under the sun, more than knowledge, it's about faith for salvation and faith for each day of life.