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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, November 9, 2008
"Whose Wisdom – God's Or Man's?" (Solomon)
I Kings 3:3-15

Automaker Henry Ford asked electrical genius Charlie Steinmetz to build the generators for his factory.

One day the generators ground to a halt, and the repairmen couldn't find the problem. So Ford called Steinmetz, who tinkered with the machines for a few hours and then threw the switch.

The generators whirred to life--but Ford got a bill for \$10,000 from Steinmetz. Flabbergasted, the rather tightfisted car maker inquired why the bill was so high.

Steinmetz's reply: For tinkering with the generators, \$10. For knowing where to tinker, \$9,990.

Ford paid the bill.

Wisdom. All of us need wisdom.

Our biblical personality, Solomon, whose name means "peaceable" we are considering today, also recognized his need for wisdom. For what did our text in I Kings 3 tell us about Solomon, the new king of Israel, when God came to him in a dream asking Solomon what he wanted God to give him.

"Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who cannot be numbered, or counted for multitude. So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (I Kings 3:7-9).

What was God's response?

Solomon's words were pleasing in the sight of the Lord. Solomon wanted wisdom in order to be able to serve his people with righteousness and truth.

God's words to Solomon were as follows:

"Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold I have according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, or shall one like you arise after you." (I Kings 3:11-12).

Then God added, "I have also give you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as hour father David walked, then I will prolong your days." (I Kings 3:13-14).

Obviously, God was telling Solomon that he would receive incredible wisdom from the LORD first of all unlike anyone before Solomon or after Solomon.

The first instance of Solomon displaying the wisdom that God gave him is recorded in I Kings 3:16-28. It so happened that two women who were harlots gave birth to a child. They lived in the same house. One of the babies died because the woman laid on the baby in the night. So she arose in the middle of the night and switched the babies with the woman who was sleeping. When the other woman awoke in the morning, she realized that the baby with her that was dead was not her baby. The other woman who had switched the babies said that the baby that was alive and with her was her baby.

The two ladies came before the king pleading their case. The one woman saying that the living child was hers, and the other woman saying that the living child was hers. Solomon directed that a sword be brought to him. He directed that the sword be used to divide the living child in half – giving one half to the one woman and the other half to the other woman.

The first woman said to give the living child to other woman. But the second woman said that the child would not be mine nor yours, divide him. Solomon immediately recognized that the first woman who said give the living child to the second woman was the child's mother. He gave the child to his mother, who said give the child to the other woman.

The text in I Kings 3:28 tells us that when Israel heard of King Solomon's decision they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

Yes, God blessed Solomon with incredible wisdom.

Go ahead with me to I Kings 4:29 – 34.

"Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol (unknown wise men in that day); and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. (Most of Solomon's proverbs are in the Book of Proverbs – He also wrote Ecclesiastes and the wrote Song Of Solomon – Song of Songs). He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom."

If you take the time to read the verses, I Kings 4:4:20-27, before the above passage, you will discover the wealth of Solomon and the extent of his kingdom during his reign of 40 years.

But let's look a little closer at the man Solomon, known as the man of wisdom, yet Christ said that even Solomon was not clothed like the lilies of the field in his glory (Matthew 7:28-29). God's creative ability certainly surpasses the wisdom and riches that God gave Solomon.

First let's ask this question?

1. What does the word, wisdom, mean?

Wisdom in the Hebrew culture was very practical stuff. It was taking knowledge and putting it into the shoe leather of life, of applying knowledge to how one thinks, how one loves, and how one acts.

- (1) For true wisdom to exist, then, there must be true unchanging and unlimited knowledge.
- (2) This means there must be a true source for knowledge.

This kind of knowledge can only come from the eternal God who is all-knowing (Psalm 139), not from man who is finite and limited in his knowledge. There must be truth that is God's truth as the Psalmist penned, "Your word is truth, and everyone of your righteous ordinances is everlasting" (Psalm 119:160).

That's why when God spoke to Solomon in a dream, Solomon knew that the God speaking to him was the One and only true Source of wisdom.

2. How did Solomon obtain the wisdom of God?

Notice what was involved in Solomon receiving wisdom from the Lord.

****Solomon loved the LORD – He knew that God was the Source of Wisdom.**

Note I Kings 3:3 – Now Solomon loved the LORD walking in the statutes of his father David. He worshipped the LORD on the high places because the temple had not been built yet. He offered many sacrifices to the LORD there. Later these places became an abomination because they worshipped false gods there.

In the Old Testament economy Solomon had placed his faith in the LORD. He had a personal relationship with the Creator and Redeemer by faith based upon the Old Testament sacrificial system.

Solomon already had a holy reverence for the LORD and knew that He was the Source of Wisdom. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 9:10 that the fear (the reverential trust) of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

****God loved Solomon.**

God made a revelation of himself to Solomon concerning what he would want from God as Solomon began reigning as king over Israel.

Why did God make a revelation of Himself to Solomon as he began his reign as king over Israel?

God loved Solomon and wanted him to be the best king of Israel that he could be. God also loved his people Israel and wanted the best for them because of Davidic covenant made with David his father.

In fact Solomon recognized God's love for his father, David, and for him, when he said to the LORD who came to him, "You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness that you have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day." (**I Kings 3:6**).

****Solomon asked God for wisdom (I Kings 3:7-9).**

(1) Solomon asked God for wisdom because he realized who he was before the LORD and the people.

- He realized he was immature – lacking in experience – I am but a child – perhaps Solomon was in his 20's at this time.
- He knew his knowledge was limited – I do not know how to go out or come in.
- He wanted to be able to serve the people and give the right direction to discern righteousness and truth from evil – good from evil. Solomon had a heart for God's people to help them to live to please the LORD.

We see here the humility of Solomon. His dependence was not on himself but on God.

(2) Solomon asked God for wisdom because he realized who God was.

- He knew God was a God of lovingkindness, of mercy and grace who would not condemn him if he asked for wisdom. – You have shown great lovingkindness (I Kings 3:6; 8:23). Solomon knew the LORD was a God of lovingkindness because of His personal relationship with the LORD through faith.
- He knew God kept his covenants- He was trustworthy – a God of His word (I Kings 8:23).
- He knew God was the only God (I Kings 8:23).
- He knew God was infinite – that God was limitless, He knows no bounds. He is measureless – His wisdom has no end. His ways judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Thusly, the house Solomon would build for the LORD would not contain HIM (I Kings 8:27).
- He knew God had involved Himself in the lives of His people, available for prayer, was holy yet would forgive sin, and deal in grace with his people when they repented of their sin.

Knowing who he was, finite, and God was infinite, Solomon knew that when God asked him what he wanted God to give him, Solomon quickly replied, above all else, I need wisdom, I need an understanding and discerning heart to be your king of Israel.

What a wise young man Solomon was. He knew in order to rule as king over Israel, he needed the wisdom of the self-existent God to carry out his responsibilities in righteousness and truth.

Oh, that our new president elect would have a heart like that. We need to pray that he will fall on his knees before the true and living God and ask for His wisdom, opening his heart for God's salvation in Christ, and then recognizing that the wisdom of men is limited and without the biblical God's involvement in his governing, he can never solve the immense problems in our country and world.

****God answered Solomon's prayer or request (I Kings 3:11-12).**

God answered Solomon's prayer for wisdom endowing him with wisdom that no one before him or after had as a human being.

Then the LORD told Solomon, as mentioned, that He would bless him materially, which Solomon had not asked for.

All of this happened making Solomon a very wealthy and popular king, as he extended the boundary of the kingdom of Israel more than any other king of Israel (cf. I Kings 10:14-26).

God also gave Solomon the privilege to build the temple for the ark of the covenant, which construction of the temple was a mammoth undertaking. When the temple was finished, the ark of the covenant was brought into the temple, and the glory of the LORD, His presence filled the temple, signifying God's approval of building the temple and that He would meet with His people there.

What a great kingdom God used Solomon to establish for the nation of Israel --A kingdom that honored God -- A kingdom that was blessed by God spiritually and materially. One writer suggested that Solomon was worth about \$830 billion – A kingdom that was recognized in the then known world. In fact the Queen of Sheba came from the southern part of Arabia, travelling 1200 miles on camelback to visit Solomon having heard of the fame of Solomon (I Kings 10). Yes, and Solomon sent ships to Tarshish (in Spain) bringing back gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks (I Kings 10:22). Solomon also had a fleet of ships in the Red Sea (I Kings 9:26) – his Navy.

But there is a third question we must ask.

3. Did Solomon continue to be faithful to the LORD during his entire 40 year reign as king of Israel? I Kings 11 provides us the answer.

Solomon did not always use the wisdom that God gave him, turned to his own wisdom, and the false wisdom of other gods (I Kings 11:1-13).

Notice the text with me.

"Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh (twin brother of Molech) the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech (to which god, human sacrifices were offered) the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods."

These are amazing verses in the light of how Solomon asked the LORD for wisdom and his heart was in tune with God before chapter 11 of I Kings.

(1) Solomon's Downfall (I Kings 11:1-8).

What happened to Solomon? The same thing that happened to Samson, Solomon's father, David, and now Solomon himself.

Solomon did not follow the wisdom of the LORD and disobeyed HIM. What was the wisdom of the LORD?

God's wisdom is found in His Word, the Bible. That's why Psalm 119:98 says that "Your commandments make me wise than the ancients, for they are ever mine."

In Deuteronomy 7:3, God told Israel that when they went into the land they were not to intermarry with those in the land lest they turn them to serve other gods, or their gods.

In Deuteronomy 17:17 God gave instructions to those who would be kings of Israel. One of those instructions was not to multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away (from God). He was also not to imitate the royal courts of other nations by multiplying horses and money (which Solomon had done (I Kings 4:26)).

Solomon then did not follow the LORD's wisdom in His word particularly about multiplying wives for Himself. His love for them caused him to start to turn away from the LORD's wisdom and start worshipping their man-made gods. **Solomon's love for foreign women caused him to commit idolatry.**

Solomon let the false wisdom of the world cause his heart to reject the true wisdom of the eternal God. As a result, Solomon committed idolatry. Yes, he may have still worshipped at the temple, but God will not accept a divided heart. It is sin before God.

What's also happening here is that the sins of the father were passed unto his children. For the text told us that Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.

Solomon could have broken that chain of sins of the fathers being passed unto their children, if he had obeyed God's wisdom in His word. But he let his love for women replace his love for God, disobeyed Him and committed idolatry, slapping in the face the true God who gave him HIS wisdom.

A sad state of affairs to say the least. How did the LORD respond to Solomon's turning away from Him to idolatry?

(2) The LORD's response to Solomon rejecting His wisdom and turning to idolatry (I Kings 11:9-13). Look at the text with me.

Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded. So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

God had sternly warned Solomon in I Kings 9 not to turn away to other gods, to idolatry. If he did, God would bring His judgment, Israel would go into captivity and the temple would be destroyed.

But as God told David in Psalm 89:30-37 – Although punishment would come because of disobedience, the covenant with David would stay in tack, and the eternal seed would come through David's posterity, which would be the Lord Jesus Christ.

Solomon knew what would come if he rejected God's wisdom and followed the wisdom of false gods going into idolatry. Solomon disobeyed in spite of what he knew. God could only bring his punishment, his judgment upon Solomon to whom He had appeared to twice.

Solomon, then would not see God's punishment in his day of the Kingdom of Israel being divided into the northern kingdom of 10 tribes which became known as Israel – the first king – Jeroboam, and the southern kingdom which was Judah – the first king Rehoboam. The division of the kingdom came about 930 B.C. Eventually the northern kingdom was taken captive by Assyria in 721 B.C, because of the nation of Israel's idolatry. The southern kingdom was finally taken captive in 586 B.C. by Babylon and the temple was ransacked, and burned – the walls of Jerusalem broken down (just as God said it would be destroyed if Solomon disobeyed the LORD, and those after him did the same – cf. I Chronicles 36:16-19). The tribe of Judah went into captivity because of their idolatry. Of course 70 years later God through Cyrus would give permission for God's people to

return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple. God was not done with His people, and the line of the Savior must continue.

Then, we must ask one more question.

4. What can we learn from the life of Solomon the greatest king of Israel who fell into idolatry at the end of his life?

(1) The biblical God is the true source of wisdom for our lives today (Romans 11:33; 16:27).

Solomon understood that, for that is why he asked the LORD for wisdom when He came to him and asked Solomon what he wanted Him to give him. That's why Solomon penned in Proverbs 9:10 – "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."

Romans 11:33 says: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Then quoting from Isaiah 40:13, "For who has known the mind of the LORD, or who became His counselor?"

Romans 16:27- "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever, Amen."

The biblical God is the only wise God because He is truth itself. He knows everything actual and possible. Acts 15:18 – "He makes these things known from long ago." Read Isaiah 40 and Psalm 139 to appreciate again the omniscience of our God.

(2) The biblical God provides His wisdom for us in two ways.

1. In His Son, the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 1:30 is a phenomenal verse in the Bible. Here is what it says.

"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

God is telling us here that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of wisdom. Yes, Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. He is the embodiment of truth - ultimate objective unchanging absolute knowledge – true reality. But since He is truth, the embodiment of knowledge, **Christ is also the embodiment of wisdom, of putting knowledge into the shoe leather of life.**

Thusly, when we see Christ in action in the four gospels teaching, healing, confronting sinners, forgiving sinners, pointing individuals to Himself and to God for eternal life, this is true eternal wisdom in action, carrying out His heavenly Father's will, which is true genuine eternal wisdom in alive and displayed in the life of our LORD.

Where do we find true wisdom in action today – truth put into the nitty gritty of a life? We need to take a look at Jesus Christ. Yes, we need to study the person, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The ultimate display of wisdom in Jesus Christ, though, is not in his life and ministry, rather it is in His death, burial and bodily resurrection.

Paul puts it this way in I Corinthians 1:23ff –

"For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God; God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. . . . But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

God made the ultimate display of His wisdom in His Son's death, burial, and bodily resurrection to provide forgiveness and eternal life as the final sacrifice for the payment of our sin which is death.

The world says foolishness – That is ridiculous and absurd wisdom, for man thinks he can please God with his so-called good works which are polluted by his different sins.

God says the crucified, buried, and risen Christ is wisdom, because it provides for man the forgiveness and eternal life that he needs, which he can't provide himself. God meets man in the nitty-gritty of life to provide Him an eternal relationship with Himself through faith in Jesus Christ. God can't get any more practical than that!!!

2. In the written Word of God.

That's why we quoted from Psalm 119:98-99 – **"Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers for your testimonies are my meditation."**

Psalm 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

That's why Jesus in His high priestly prayer asked His heavenly Father to sanctify His disciples and we who would yet believe in Him, sanctify them with His Word (John 17:17) - - That is let the word of God get into the every day thoughts, attitudes, and actions of God's people. Let the wisdom of God's word change their lives into becoming like the Lord.

Paul in II Timothy 3:16 – All Scripture is inspired (God breathed – comes from His heart) and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

God's word provides us wisdom for all facets of life on planet earth, even foretelling what is going to happen in the future.

(3) God's wisdom in Christ is available to each of us today.

(1) For salvation.

Solomon in the Old Testament had to respond to the LORD in faith in the information that was given to him. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Accepting Him for salvation was the beginning of Solomon's trust in the LORD.

Today, since Christ has come, died on the cross, was buried, and rose again to provide us forgiveness of sin and eternal life, we have to make the choice to accept Christ as our personal Savior (Romans 10:9-13). I trust you have accepted Jesus as your personal Savior.

As LORD – the Master of the believer's life.

Solomon submitted to the LORD as master of his life when he asked the LORD for wisdom when the LORD asked what he wanted Him to give Solomon. Then Solomon put that wisdom to use in his daily life.

Christ becomes the active Master of our lives as we submit to Him as revealed to us in the written Word of God by relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit – for the Word of God is the wisdom that comes directly from God's heart.

Romans 13:14 tells believers to put on the LORD Jesus Christ (be clothed – once for all action) and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

James even tells us how we can distinguish between God's wisdom and wisdom that is against His wisdom (James 3:13-18).

****James calls it wisdom from the earth, natural, and demonic even.**

It's the kind of wisdom that displays jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance, lies against the truth, causes disorder, and does evil of all kinds.

****Then James talks about wisdom from above.**

It is pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, and not hypocritical – is genuine, what you see is what you get.

The wisdom of God's word is clear.

It names thoughts, attitudes and actions which are sin. God says if you have these thoughts, and display pride, jealousy, untruthfulness, gossip, etc, you are not using my wisdom but that which is against me, even such things are demonic. You need to confess these to me, and start living for me.

Then God's word tells us the wisdom that is Christ-like, purity of thought, seeking to be a peacemaker, having an understanding spirit, not intimidating people, and seeking to be genuine in ones' life with Christ.

Of course, then, there are decisions that we as believers have to make, and there isn't necessarily a specific verse we can find for the exact direction that we need.

That's why James exhorts us in the first chapter of his letter, that if any one lacks wisdom let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5). Then James adds that asking for wisdom must be done in faith, not wavering.

Do we realize how much God wants us as followers of Jesus Christ to use His wisdom given in His Word, the Bible, and then to come to Him for wisdom when we need direction in some area of our lives? He is there cheering us on by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and just waiting for us to ask His wisdom when we need it.

God is ready of help us at all times, to give to us generously.

But for God's Word and help to be there at all times we must do one more thing.

(4) We must obey the LORD always and not waver in using God's wisdom as given in His Word and coming to Him for wisdom in time of needing direction.

That one word in James 3:17 is the key for enjoying God's wisdom to us in His word and finding our direction in Him.

"Unwavering" is the word. It means to distinguish between God's wisdom and the wisdom of the world and Satan. Yes, it means to be always certain about God's wisdom. It means to always have discernment about the difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. When one stops discerning how God's wisdom is the only wisdom to follow, one will veer from God's wisdom by starting to let the wisdom of the world influence one and thusly get involved in idolatry and following the wisdom of the world which is really coming from Satan.

That's what happened to Solomon. He wavered from God's wisdom because he didn't obey God's wisdom in God's word. He no longer used the discernment that God's wisdom gave him.

That's what happened to Samson, and David, and others who don't end well in their life with the LORD.

May in the power of the Holy Spirit, we be strong in the LORD and in the power of His might, and obey God's wisdom in His word this week.

For God wants to show through us to the world His wisdom at work in us (Ephesians 3:10). God wants to show through His church, through you and me, His manifold wisdom of God – which is really the Christ living His life out through us!

How great is that. May it be so this week in each of our lives.

May others see something of Jesus in our lives each day!!

That's God's wisdom in shoe leather!

And sometimes that wisdom is learning to submit to the Lord in our lives and be taught by others even our children.

Bruce Larson tells of the time he was having a very difficult time with a wonderful Christian man.

The man would seem to judge and criticize Bruce no matter what he did. One day, he wrote Bruce a long letter. Bruce said that he was furious and brought it home to his wife. He told her, "How can I answer this?" His wife made a few suggestions as to how he might answer the letter, but Bruce didn't think that she understood the devious nature of the man's heart.

Finally, Bruce's wife turned to him and said, "Why don't you take the advice you're so free to give all the rest of us?" He writes that he knew something was coming.

"What is that?" Bruce asked.

"Why don't you admit in your heart that you have no love in your heart for this man, and ask Him to change you."

"That's ridiculous," Bruce shouted, and stumped out of the room to read the evening paper until dinner was ready.

That night in saying prayers with his 10 year old daughter, he no sooner got on his knees that he had to face what he knew God had been trying to say to him through his wife. He asked the LORD's forgiveness in his daughter's presence and asked God to change him.

His daughter concluded her prayers by saying, "Lord, you know that Father is a difficult man to change, and yet we know You can do it, and I ask You to give him Your love for this man."

He said this was not the role he had chosen, but he was learning that even through his family he could become more like the LORD.

May others see something of Jesus in us this week, His wisdom coming through us to others.