

15. Jesus in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon

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A. JESUS IN PROVERBS

We are living in the information age. You can get just about any kind of information in a matter of a few seconds through internet, e-mails, TV or radio, etc. As far as I can tell, we do not lack in knowledge or information, but wisdom is a different story, because it only comes from God alone. This Book tells us where to get it, how to get it and how to use it. It is about priorities and principles, not get-rich-quick schemes or success formulas.

We see that the cumulative message of the OT is that a Savior is coming who is the great King, the greatest High Priest, the greatest Prophet, and the greatest Teacher. And the Book of Proverbs majors in that last category.

The Book is a divinely inspired revelation of wisdom written largely by Solomon, the wisest man in the world. But like all the other 38 Books in the OT, this Book also points to Jesus Christ in the overall, not necessarily in connecting verses, though there is one portion in the Book.

If OT believers or NT Christians want to describe Jesus from the OT Books in a few words, it might go in this way:

The Creator from Genesis; the Emancipator from Exodus; the High Priest and Sacrifice from Leviticus; the Guide from Numbers; the Covenant Maker from Deuteronomy; the Captain of the Lord's army from Joshua; the Judge from Judges; the Kinsman Redeemer from Ruth; the King from Samuels, Kings, and Chronicles; the Rebuilder from Ezra and Nehemiah; the Innocent Sufferer from Job; the Worship Leader from Psalms. But what about the Book of Proverbs? How about Mr. Wisdom?

1) Jesus as a wise Son

One-third of the Book of Proverbs contains a father's words that appeal to his son. I don't believe that the ancient Israelis thought that king Solomon was speaking to his own sons in the Book, rather God speaking to His national son, Israel.

The nation, of course, was far from being a faithful and loyal son of its God and Father, but Proverbs surely held out the prospect of someone who would come and fill that role perfectly. That is our Lord, the wise Son of God the Father.

2) Jesus as a wise Teacher

In this Book, wisdom is referred to as a female who was calling sinners on God's behalf, teaching them in God's name, and pointing them to God for everything. She is concerned about every detail, not only for the ancient Israelis, but also for the followers of Jesus Christ who are living now.

Through wisdom this timeless Book tells us how to live for Christ. Our Savior was the embodiment and personification of wisdom. Yes, He was the wise Man par excellence.

As a wise Teacher, Jesus employed the parables as one of His primary teaching methods. The Greek word of 'parable' is 'parabole' and in Hebrew 'masal' which

means 'proverb.' As a matter of fact, it seems that the style of Jesus' teaching has been consciously shaped by this Book. The literal translation of 'masal' is "to be like." I am sure that you know this one:

Matthew 13:31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,

In just Matthew alone, there are 13 occurrences of this phrase. We are going to start studying "the Sermon on the Mount" from this coming Sunday. In His first public sermon, Jesus quotes or alludes to the Book of Proverbs numerous times. Someone who didn't have anything better to do counted 7 times in the first 30 verses.

3) Jesus as a wise Creator

No ancient Israelis would argue that God didn't create the world. They all knew it. But what they didn't know was the central role in the creation was done by God the Son until Proverbs chapter 8 was written. We who have the NT knew it through John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1.

Proverbs 8:22-28 "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. 23 I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; 26 While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world. 27 When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep

B. JESUS IN ECCLESIASTES

If you and I read the Book of Ecclesiastes without any anointing that comes from the Holy Spirit, we would consider it a Book of pessimism. Some people consider it as unworthy of the authorship of the Holy Spirit due to the hopelessness and despair by the author king Solomon who had everything under the sun and has done everything.

Some have interpreted Solomon's writing as the product of a midlife crisis. It's probable, though, that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes toward the end of his life as he reflected on all his accomplishments and failures while he wrote the Book of Proverbs when he was much younger.

King Solomon was looking at a life that had been mostly wasted, pursuing things other than God. As a result of this turning from God, he had become jaded, cynical, and disillusioned. In his later years, life had become empty and unfulfilling, as the pursuit of pleasure and riches crowded God out of his life. Thus, this Book presents a graphic depiction of what life looks like apart from the Lord and missing the meaning in the life comes from being in an obedient relationship with God. That's wisdom. But to his last breath, Solomon didn't turn to the Lord. If he did, we would see it somewhere in the Bible that he did.

A great theologian of yesteryear C.I. Scofield has written, "It is what man, with the knowledge that there is a holy God and that He will bring everything into judgment, discovers of the emptiness of setting the heart upon things under the sun."

There is no direct connection, or typology, or prophecy of Jesus in this Book. But it gives a stark contrast to the obedient Son of Man Jesus who left His riches in heaven

to become poor for our sakes and this disobedient king who had everything under the sun, only to find himself that he had nothing in his life without God.

Matthew 16:26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

C. JESUS IN SONG OF SOLOMON

The author of this Book is none other than Solomon, the lover boy of Israel who had 700 wives and 300 concubines. The opening verse of chapter one makes the authorship clearly known to us.

Scripture tells us that Solomon not only composed 3000 proverbs, but also 1005 songs according to 1 Kings 4. This Book is also known as the "Song of songs". It was on Jerusalem Billboard Chart No. One for a long time as a love song.

In an attempt to discover the meaning of the Song of Solomon, the students of the Bible can take one of four styles:

1) Allegory

It has many tendencies to dismiss any literal meaning and believes that this Book is a parable of God's love for Israel, or Christ's love for His church, or Christ's love for the individual believer and try to dissect this in verse by verse allegorical manner.

Allegorical interpretation is NOT a good way to study the Bible. Once you start to take the texts to the place where it is no longer connected to the original intention of God's Word, it becomes extremely dangerous. Allegorical interpretation will lead you to do that.

As I've said many, many times before and will repeat this continuously – "Any text out of context is pretext." I like what Mart DeHaan said about interpretation of the Bible: "If the literal sense makes sense, seek no other sense; lest you come up with non-sense."

2) Typology

It believes in the literal meaning as well as a great spiritual meaning that points to our marriage relationship with God.

We are going to take a few typology interpretation approaches in this Book. I really don't think that it is necessary to go over a verse by verse literal interpretation because it is what it says – it is a song between a husband and a wife. Nothing complicated.

3) Satire

It follows the story line of the dramatic view, but puts more bite into Solomon's rejection.

4) Literal

It sees the love of two actual people, Solomon and the Shulamite, being celebrated in poetic form, nothing more and nothing less.

Here are some typological interpretations that point to Jesus :

1) The Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys

Song of Solomon 2:1-2 I am the rose of Sharon, And the lily of the valleys. 2 The Beloved Like a lily among thorns, So is my love among the daughters.

You may have heard someone describing Jesus with this phrase. However, the Bible does not use the rose of Sharon or the lily as a symbol for Jesus, but this phrase obviously has had tremendous resonance in our Christian culture.

2) The little foxes that spoil the vines

Song of Solomon 2:15 Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes.

Often it is the little things that weaken a marriage. The slow leaks, not the blowouts. The insidious “pests” we seldom even consider that cut away at the heart of a home until finally it crumbles.

We need to watch out for those “foxes” which are always present, always ready to devour the blossoms of our relationship within our families.

This also applies to our relationship with Jesus. We may not have any immediate cracks in our spiritual lives, but one backsliding would lead to another. At the end, we will see how far we walk away from the Lord. That is the reason why I say to you guys that it is important for us to keep a short account with the Lord. When we sin against Him, we immediately must take care of it by confessing it to Him and ask for His forgiveness. By doing so, He will mend the crack we cause between Him and us.

3) I sought him, but I could not find him

Song of Solomon 5:2-6 I sleep, but my heart is awake; It is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, “Open for me, my sister, my love, My dove, my perfect one; For my head is covered with dew, My locks with the drops of the night.” 3 I have taken off my robe; How can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; How can I defile them? 4 My beloved put his hand By the latch of the door, And my heart yearned for him. 5 I arose to open for my beloved, And my hands dripped with myrrh, My fingers with liquid myrrh, On the handles of the lock. 6 I opened for my beloved, But my beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart leaped up when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

If someone tells you that they have such a perfect marriage that they never disagree or argue, either they are lying through their teeth or one of them is not thinking at all.

The ecstasy of the preceding section is replaced by deep apprehension. Love brings its joys, but those joys seldom last long. We are such flawed and fragile creatures, and interpersonal relationships contain such subtleties. We often take our relationship with our spouses or friendship with our close friends for granted, thinking that it would be there all the time, and even neglecting them.

Once we may have tight intimacy with our Lord Jesus, but whether we are doing God’s work or our own work, we start to neglect our daily time with Him and think that He would be there no matter what we do. Of course, He always is there, but in reality, we are the ones who drift away from Him by not anchoring ourselves to Him firmly.

I wouldn’t be surprised this text was in the mind of Jesus in the Book of Revelation 3:20 in His letter to the Laodicean church.

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

I also believe that this image was in the background of Jesus' parable of the foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

Matthew 25:8-10 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

4) Clear as the sun

Song of Solomon 6:10 Who is she who looks forth as the morning, Fair as the moon, Clear as the sun, Awesome as an army with banners?

The Lord sees the church as His bride, pure, clear, and without blemish. Is it because we are so good and righteous? Absolutely not. Our God sees us shining brightly in that way because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

5) I am my beloved's

Song of Solomon 7:10 I am my beloved's, And his desire is toward me.

I just love the way this was written. Such a sweet intimacy between a husband and wife is described here.

Jeremiah 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

That is what the Lord wants us to have with Him. From Genesis to Revelation, God declares this 16 times. Yes, He is the God of all nations and the universe. At the same time, He wants to be our individual personal God so that He can show His love, grace, mercy, and hope to us eternally.