

Subject: *Know Your Bible – Part 6*

Scripture: *Proverbs 1:1-9*

Summary of Job through Song of Solomon:

- Job – the problem of human suffering and God’s sovereignty
- Psalms – the hymnbook of private and public praise
- Proverbs – the sourcebook of godly wisdom
- Ecclesiastes – the search for purpose and meaning in life
- Song of Solomon – a poem about love and marriage

Book of Proverbs:

The English word, *proverb*, means a short pithy statement. Reading a proverb takes just a few seconds, but applying it takes a lifetime. We are familiar with other non-Biblical proverbs such as: “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” These are unforgettable nuggets that contain practical wisdom; however, we should be careful with such proverbs because they sometimes contradict each other. For example, “Look before you leap” contradicts “He who hesitates is lost.” “You get what you pay for” contradicts “the best things in life are free.” God’s proverbs never contradict because they are inspired by God. Proverbs are serious instructions from God, not just clever sayings.

The Hebrew word, *mashal*, means a comparison. There are three main types of proverbs: 1) contrasting (“but”); 2) comparing (“as, so, better than”); and 3) complementing (“and”).

Proverbs uses imagery or word pictures such as the net spread to catch a bird (Pr. 1:17), the lot cast into the lap (16:33), a knife put to the throat (23:2), and the bite of a serpent (23:32).

Proverbs also uses personification to depict virtues such as the call of wisdom (Pr. 1:20-33) and the invitation to wisdom’s banquet (Pr. 9:1-6).

Solomon wrote or compiled most of the proverbs. He ruled from 970-930 BC. His life and reign are recorded in 1 Kgs. 2-11 and 2 Chr. 1-9. No man was better qualified to write such a book. He asked for wisdom (1 Kg. 3:5-9) and God granted his request (1 Kg. 4:29-30). Solomon’s wisdom was legendary. Many people including heads of state came to hear his wisdom (1 Kg. 4:31; 10:1-8). J. Vernon McGee observed that Solomon wrote about three subjects in which he was an expert: wisdom (Prov.), folly (Eccl.), and love (Song.). Solomon spoke some 3,000 proverbs (1 Kg. 4:32), of which over 500 are in the Book of Proverbs, and he wrote 1,005 songs of which only one is in the Bible (Song of Solomon). It is tragic that Solomon failed to apply many of the things he understood and wrote in Proverbs.

Proverbs is a book of wisdom (Heb., *hokmah*) or skill for living. It is perhaps the most practical book in the Bible. Proverbs teaches wisdom through vivid contrasts:

- Wisdom and folly (moral rather than mental issues)

- Righteousness and wickedness
- Good company and evil companions
- Diligence and laziness
- Humility and pride

Proverbs describes godly character and conduct. The main theme is the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 31:30). Proverbs challenges us to be alert, compassionate, consistent, courteous, dependable, discerning, disciplined, gentle, honest, humble, industrious, loving, loyal, objective, patient, punctual, submissive, tactful, teachable, thorough, thoughtful, and unselfish. Proverbs tell us to do what is right and avoid what is wrong. Some proverbs describe the way things *ought* to be. Others describe the way things *are*.

Proverbs are general statements rather than blanket promises. An example is Proverbs 22:6. Some parents have raised their children right, yet when their children grew up they turned their back on God. This verse is not a blanket promise without any exceptions. Proverbs 22:29 is another example. Many hard-working men do not literally stand before kings, although it is generally true that a diligent worker will tend to be recognized and rewarded.

Book of Ecclesiastes:

Ecclesiastes means a preacher or speaker to an assembly. This is how the writer identifies himself (Eccl. 1:1, 2, 12; 7:27; 12: 8, 9, 10). The human writer is Solomon, the son of David.

This book reveals the emptiness of life without God.

The key word is vanity (worthlessness). Solomon describes how he squandered his life seeking his own desires rather than living for God's glory. This book looks back with regret for wasted time and worldly pursuits. Solomon's experience teaches us not to follow his example, but to learn from his mistakes. In John Bunyan's classic book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the world is called "Vanity Fair" because it is attractive and empty. The key phrase "under the sun" is found 30 times. This phrase describes daily life on earth. Solomon describes life from the human perspective and declares that it is empty without God.

Ecclesiastes 1: The statement that all is vanity

Ecclesiastes 2-6: The proof that all is vanity

Ecclesiastes 7-12: The counsel for living with vanity

Solomon's conclusion is to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). Although most of the book is negative, Solomon presents the positive truth of overcoming the world by fearing God who is both good and sovereign (Eccl. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13).

Ecclesiastes reveals the certainty of God's future judgment (Eccl. 3:17; 11:9; 12:14).

Ecclesiastes is not quoted in any other Bible book.

Song of Solomon:

Also called the Song of Songs, this is a beautiful love song of a groom and his bride.

This book is arranged like scenes in a drama with three main speakers: the bride (Shulamite), the king (Solomon), and a chorus (daughters of Jerusalem). There are sudden changes of speakers that are not identified in the text.

This book has been traditionally read during the Feast of Passover.

Song of Solomon may have three different levels of meaning:

- *Historically* it describes the romance of Solomon and his bride
- *Figuratively* it illustrates the relationship of God and Israel
- *Prophetically* it anticipates the love of Christ and the Church

In the Old Testament, Israel is regarded as the bride of Yahweh (Isa. 54:5-6; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 16:8-14; Hos. 2:16-20). In the New Testament, the church is described as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-25; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9).

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Proverbs describes _____

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The key phrase “under the sun” is found 30 times and describes daily life on earth. From the human perspective Solomon concludes that life is empty without God.

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Solomon’s conclusion is to _____ and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13)

Although most of the book is negative, Solomon presents the positive truth of overcoming the world by fearing God who is both good and sovereign (Eccl. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13).

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