

Books of Poetry—Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

First, Solomon's: Song of ('Songs' in Heb Bible) Solomon; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes

Perhaps as a young man, Song of Solomon; As a man in his prime, Proverbs; as an old man, worn out, a little jaded, but still wise, Ecclesiastes.—see I John 2:15-17...

The young man's song:

- :: **SONG OF SOLOMON: One of 1005 songs written by Solomon (I Kings 4:32)**
- :: **Very important book to the Jews, as it demonstrated God's covenant with them.**
- :: **Solomon, the faithful suitor/husband (obviously before 700 wives, 300 concubines)**
- :: **Likely written as a young romantic**
- :: **Love story, likely of real (not just made up) people for sake of the allegory**

PROBLEMS— How'd it get in the Bible? Don't feel like the other books....

- **Language is intimate, even graphic**
- **Translation: 11% of Heb words in the Song are not found anywhere else**
- **Lots of local customs referenced, not easy for all cultures to 'get'**

Who's it for? The Jews? Married couples? Us Christians, the Church?

Plot: King (Solomon) meets and falls in love with a 'blue collar' woman from a

lower social caste. She is lonely; they fall madly in love.

He loves her, and she him, and he demonstrates through speech and actions an unconditional (covenantal) love. Courtship, then marriage follows, along with all the usual snags—distance, fear, apathy.....

By cultural standards, though she is undeserving, loves her 'just because', as an allegory for how Christ loves us first, then wins us.

Suggestions for reading the Song:

- **I'm thinking it was a literal event, but with allegorical levels**
- **Don't let all the intimate talk turn you off, so to speak**
- **Use commentaries, esp when talking about cultural references like 8:1, ref to 'brother', or, reference to mares/stallions, 1:9-11; or, ref to her 'vineyard' as a metaphor for her body... **AGAIN, HERMENEUTICS****
- **Remember underlying theme, the king's undying, unconditional, and covenantal love for his bride.**

Favorite verse: 5:16—He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, my friend.

Proverbs—Wisdom and the Fear of the Lord; the book of Values

:::Authors-- Mainly Solomon, with a few from Agur and King Lemuel (ch 30, 31), of whom we know little, except that they were Gentiles. Again, I Kings 4 says Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and had (wrote) 1005 songs. He was the most prolific writer of O.T. next to Moses.

:::Time—In the prime of Solomon’s life at the height of his power , more than likely, after he has experienced some of the fruit of both righteousness and sin. It is a ‘collection of collections’ (greatest hits, if you will) of proverbs, or wise sayings that have God at their root. It is a compilation, with the bulk of it written around 950 bc or so.

:::Unifying Theme—*The fear of the Lord* is the beginning of both WISDOM (9:10) and KNOWLEDGE (1:7). Those without reverential fear have ‘manufactured’ wisdom.

:::Key Word—WISDOM “*the ability to judge and act according to Godly principals*”

- It is from God and begins with a good, healthy fear of Him
- Available to any who asks (James 1:5); Counsel is CRUCIAL (20:5)
- Is purposeful: it is intended to extend (in all ways) our lives and those around us
- Keeps us tethered to God—cannot be achieved without understanding him
- Is transferable, or Solomon would not have bothered to communicate it
- Is definitely connected to righteousness/right living—not enough to preach it
- Righteousness follows you; evil, however, follows you, too

:::Audience: Largely written to ‘my son’... Has a definite fatherly tone, especially when it comes to dealing with the opposite sex. Everyone, however, can connect with it.

This book, too, described Jesus, as He “was the wisdom of God” and “became for us wisdom” (I Corinthians 1:24, 30)

::: Good book for Youth—much of it is aimed at not doing the same dumb things your parents did, and how to identify evil when you are approached by it.

Favorite Portion: Ch 25-29.

Favorite verses: 22:6 (*train up..*) and 27:17 (“*as iron sharpens iron*”)

Suggestion: One chapter a day with your other reading. It will help ‘connect’ your day

Ecclesiastes— words from the Preacher
--Another book about Values—

:Authorship: Likely Solomon near the end of his life, beat up by life, philosophical, not as idealistic, but very, very human.

:Recurring theme: The emptiness of ‘things’/ accomplishments and the need to emphasize those things in life of actual worth (**again, 1 Jn 2:15-17**)

:Recurring phrases: “*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity..*”
“*There is nothing new under the sun..*”

:Tone: Dark at times, almost cynical. Yet, the seasoned Word placed in Solomon’s heart years before shines through in places, reminding us of God’s goodness. This is a very *human* book.
It balances our own reaping/sowing with God’s grace to us.

:Difficulties with the book: *How could God authorize a not-so-close-to-God Solomon, seemingly a little jaded and negative, to get in His Bible? How do we filter out what is Solomon being ‘a downer’ from God’s words of wisdom, which is interspersed throughout?*

:Response Again, God does not ‘sanitize’ life to make it easier to swallow. We are to live in reality, understanding that we are subject to a greater, eternal reality because His Spirit lives in us. Happiness is in the alignment of our lives with what He has given us to do. He intends for us to be content, and therefore happy.
See Chapter 3:9 -14; 5:18-20; 9:7-10 for good examples of this.

Conclusion: Jesus says in Luke 12:15 to beware of covetousness; life does not consist of the things we possess. Ecclesiastes echoes this, that possessions are neither good nor bad, but without God’s imprint in our lives, it will ultimately be empty and unsatisfying. God gives us the capacity to enjoy what He has given, and what we work for.

Note: *Keep the ‘big picture’ in mind before you start reading this book--- pay attention to who’s talking, man or God speaking through a man.*

Favorite passage: 3: 9-14, which shows how God interacts with us