

What Good Is Wisdom?

If you use wisdom to examine all works under heaven, what shall you find?

Ecclesiastes 1.12–18

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Scripture Reader and Reading: Paul Hannan – Proverbs 4.1–7

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Aaron Glider

Prelude:

I. If you use wisdom to examine all works under heaven, what shall you find?

II. Concerning wisdom Solomon himself had written,

**7 Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting, get understanding.**

– Proverbs 4.7

III. Yet, listen to what he will say about wisdom in Ecclesiastes 1.12–18.

Persuasion:

I. Ecclesiastes 1.12 • The Preacher-King

12 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

A. Solomon was a preacher who happened to be the king of Israel in Jerusalem.

1. He lived as a preacher first, and
2. worked as a king second.

B. Since he thought like a preacher,

1. having knowledge and wisdom, and
2. worked as a king,
 - a) having unlimited resources,
 - b) he wanted to figure out something.

C. Solomon wanted to know the same things that you want to know.

II. Ecclesiastes 1.13 • The Tool of Wisdom

13 And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.

- A. Functioning more as a preacher than a king,
 - 1. he set his heart to examine
 - 2. all that is done on the earth,
 - a) using the telescope and microscope of wisdom.
 - b) God had given Solomon wisdom beyond compare.
 - (1) He wanted to use it to look at everything done under heaven.
 - (2) What would he find in all the things done on the earth?
- B. When he searched he discovered
 - 1. that his knowledge and wisdom
 - 2. led to a heavy burden.
 - a) With his vast knowledge and wisdom
 - b) he found things he wished that he had not found.
 - (1) We will even hear him make a negative statement
 - (2) about knowledge and wisdom before we finish our text today.
- C. Using wisdom to search out all that is done under heaven
 - 1. seems like, well, a wise thing to do!
 - 2. Gaining more wisdom is something
 - a) we desire for ourselves and
 - b) God desires for us, but
 - (1) separated from
 - (a) the main ingredient of life and
 - (b) forgetting the great event that is coming,

(2) makes wisdom and knowledge instruments of grief.

III. Ecclesiastes 1.14–15 • All Works Are Vanity

14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

**15 What is crooked cannot be made straight,
And what is lacking cannot be numbered.**

A. After using wisdom to seek and search out all that is done under heaven,

1. what did Solomon find?
2. All of it is vanity and grasping for the wind.
 - a) Try grasping for the wind or chasing after it.
 - b) You will say it is useless,
 - (1) a waste of time, because
 - (2) it cannot be done.

B. Solomon discovered in his search in all things done under heaven

1. that what is crooked you cannot make straight and
2. what is lacking you cannot number.
 - a) All that man has done
 - (1) to make straight the crooked
 - (2) has not worked since the beginning of time.
 - b) Every government program and every other effort of man,
 - (1) has not stopped evil.
 - (2) Why does one generation not learn from the previous generation
 - (a) that evil does not profit?
 - (b) Every generation thinks it will be the exception.
 - c) As Solomon also said in verse 15,
 - (1) how do we count what is lacking?

- (2) The more we learn
 - (a) the more we learn
 - (b) what we do not know.
- (3) How can we count what is lacking
 - (a) if we do not know it is lacking in the first place?
 - (b) When we get knowledge we find more areas that we to study.

IV. Ecclesiastes 1.16–18 • Wisdom Brings Grief

16 I communed with my heart, saying, “Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge.” 17 And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.

**18 For in much wisdom is much grief,
And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.**

- A. Solomon talked to himself, reminding himself
 - 1. that he had attained greatness,
 - 2. that he had gained more wisdom than anyone before him, and
 - 3. that his heart had understood great wisdom and knowledge.
 - a) Solomon did not boast, but
 - b) he could see and acknowledge things as they were.
 - (1) If you read First Kings 10, you will see
 - (a) why the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon, and
 - (b) how she reacted to what he had.
 - i) He knew why she was there and
 - ii) he heard her response.
 - (2) He did not attribute his greatness to himself, but to God.

1 Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon

concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. 2 She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. 3 So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain it to her. 4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 5 the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her. 6 Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. 7 However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard."

– 1 Kings 10.1–7

- B. Knowing then what God had given him,
1. Solomon set his heart to know,
 2. not only all that was done under heaven, but also
 - a) to know wisdom, and
 - b) to know madness and folly.
 - (1) He looked at everything.
 - (2) He made a balanced approach,
 - (a) looking at and hearing both sides,
 - (b) regardless of their extreme positions.
- C. All of that,
1. just like all that is done under heaven,
 2. he discovered is grasping for the wind.
 - a) How could that be?
 - b) Should not seeking after wisdom and

- (1) the knowledge that comes with it,
- (2) be one of the highest pursuits of humanity?

D. Here is the problem.

1. Much wisdom brings much grief.
 - a) The more wisdom you have,
 - b) the more you see how people ruin their own lives, but
 - (1) they will not fix their lives by the wisdom freely available to them.
 - (2) They stubbornly cling to their self-destructive paths.
2. And that grieves the man or woman of wisdom.

53 Indignation has taken hold of me
Because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.

– Psalm 119.53

- 1 “Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
- 2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.
- 3 Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.

– Isaiah 55.1–3

- 5 Thus says the LORD:
“What injustice have your fathers found in Me,
That they have gone far from Me,

Have followed idols,
And have become idolaters?

- 6 Neither did they say, 'Where is the LORD,
Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
Who led us through the wilderness,
Through a land of deserts and pits,
Through a land of drought and the shadow of death,
Through a land that no one crossed
And where no one dwelt?'
- 7 I brought you into a bountiful country,
To eat its fruit and its goodness.
But when you entered, you defiled My land
And made My heritage an abomination.
- 8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?'
And those who handle the law did not know Me;
The rulers also transgressed against Me;
The prophets prophesied by Baal,
And walked after things that do not profit."

– Jeremiah 2.5–8

- 13 "For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,
And hewn themselves cisterns—
Broken cisterns that can hold no water."

– Jeremiah 2.13

3. The increase of knowledge increases sorrow.

a) What you have learned

b) you discover was not enough.

(1) You learn things that you wish you did not know, because

(2) you have learned new dangers that you did not know before.

(a) For example, germs

E. Therefore, even wisdom and knowledge by themselves

1. are vanity and chasing after the wind.

2. Two things make wisdom and knowledge profitable:
 - a) Someone with to whom we must give account and
 - b) a great event that is coming.
 - (1) However, Solomon did not tell us yet
 - (2) what those two things are.
 - (a) We will have to wait and
 - (b) continue with him on his journey.

Exhortation:

I. In 1.4–8, Solomon tried science.

- A. Yet, that did not reveal the purpose of life.
- B. Nor does science reveal the super great event that is coming to all humanity.

II. In 1.12–18, Solomon tried wisdom.

- A. Yet, wisdom by itself only leads to nothingness.
- B. However, wisdom can lead us to the two great things Solomon will show us.

III. If you use wisdom to examine all works under heaven, what shall you find?

- A. You shall find that nothing reveals the purpose of life.
- B. You shall find that even wisdom itself will lead you to emptiness.
 1. Keep listening to the Book of Ecclesiastes.
 2. You will be relieved when finally you discover what Solomon discovered.

IV. If you want wisdom and knowledge, I will tell you now

- A. that there is a place you can go
- B. to discover all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
 1. In Colossians 2,
 2. Paul wrote of his experience, but
 - a) he related it to the source of true treasure,

b) showing why he suffered for others:

1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

– Colossians 2.1–3

c) You can find the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ.

V. You do it this way...