

King Solomon

James 1:2-18, Ecclesiastes 1

- Introduction

- When I think of the beginning of wisdom, which Solomon says lies with fear of God, I see that fear and that wisdom coming from brokenness within a person. Our recognition of our own brokenness allows us to see how much we need salvation and God's guidance in our life. Solomon grieved his failure because he saw the destruction of sin in his life, but his pride kept him from seeking the Lord instead of himself. This should make us want to process the pride in our own lives, to ask, "Is my pride keeping me away from growing in the wisdom of God?" What would wisdom from the Lord look like in your life? Again, it begins with the fear of God, with acknowledging our sin and our need for Christ as our Lord and savior. Only then are we able to joyfully trust in the Lord through every trial, and see the fruit of the Spirit grow in our lives.

- Leader Prep Help

- Solomon is another Old Testament (OT) figure of Christ in many ways. In 2 Samuel 12:7-17, we see what theologians call the Davidic Covenant, meaning God's promise to David, Solomon's father. We can see clearly that God is promising these things with Solomon in mind, but also that Jesus would be the one to really fulfill these words--the eternal king, God's Son, who suffers for iniquity, but dwells with the Spirit everlastingly. Prophecy of Jesus is usually this way, where a short-term fulfillment serves as the promise of the perfect fulfillment in Christ to come, leading to the fullness of the promise everlastingly in a renewed earth. You can think about OT prophecy as a tree bearing the fruit of reconciliation, planted with Adam and Eve, growing through the reiterations of the promise throughout the OT, and finally bearing fruit in Christ—we'll rest beneath it in peace in the new earth and be satisfied by its fruit forever.
- Solomon's faults are clear from the beginning of his kingship with his marriage to the princess of Egypt. Whereas David writes, "Some trust in chariots or horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God," Solomon does whatever he can, including breaking the laws of God and marrying among the people groups of Canaan and Egypt, to shore up his political power. At the end of his life, we see this sin full-grown as he turns to worship the gods of his wives.
- There is a great irony in the number of Solomon's wives. In that day, having many wives was a status symbol—it meant you could afford to have a large house—as much as it was a

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move to build legacy. With over 1000 women having your children, your line is assured to live on, the kingship secured for your family. The irony is that God has already promised that Solomon's throne would be eternal, and by going after the gods of his wives, he abandons both his status as a godly king and the Lord who would secure his throne everlastingly.

- Solomon's double-mindedness, split between love for the lord and selfishness, is in many ways is the cause of the splitting of the kingdom of Israel upcoming in next few chapters of 1 Kings (see 1 Kgs. 11:31). The same end comes to both the man and the nation, in that the people and the sin they did not conquer among themselves would eventually cause their utter destruction.
- It's tempting, given the course of Solomon's life, to disregard the promises made to him in 1 Kgs. 9 and elsewhere as a hopeful future lost to sin, but I would encourage you to look to the new and better Solomon—Jesus Christ—to see the word of God coming true. The benefits described are ours now, in this life, in the kingdom of God. We have a just king who reigns over us in compassion, and God dwells among us unceasingly. We look forward to a redeemed earth, described in these same promises to Solomon, when these present realities will be made manifest in the world.

- Discussion Questions

- Read James 1:2-18
- A Divided Heart Leads to Regret
 - Notice the contrast between verses 3-4 and 14-15 in James 1. Have you experienced this in your life, where both sin and steadfastness grow into something else over time? How do we see this in Solomon's life, and what can this tell us about how to deal with small sins in our lives?
 - How do you navigate finding joy in trials while also admitting and emotionally dealing with hardship in your life? How is it possible to follow James' instruction in verse 2, to seek joy through trials, without being false to yourself?
 - How can we as a community feed our mutual desire for holy things, for wisdom and steadfastness? What does this have to do with our joy through trials?
 - Notice in verses 9-11, we see some verses that sound a lot like the book of Ecclesiastes, where Solomon ponders the brevity and meaninglessness of his life. Pastor Matt also began his sermon with thoughts of dying. What does thinking about the end of life

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have to do with wisdom? What comes to mind when you think about not wasting your life?

- What things have lasting significance in this life? How do we practically begin to turn our lives toward these things?
- Do you steward well the gifts God gives you, or do you worship them? Things like wealth, wisdom, intelligence, talent, and power—how do you balance responsibility in saving, enjoyment of the gifts God has given you, taking care of your family, and generosity in giving?
- Solomon's Life
 - In Ecclesiastes 1:2, Solomon writes, "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Why do you think Solomon came to see all of his accomplishments as vain, or worthless, and have you ever questioned whether or not the things you've done in life have lasting value?
 - Where does Solomon fit into the larger story of the Bible? Why is he important to the gospel, and how does he compare to Jesus? What about the temple? What significance does it have for us today?
 - Solomon teaches us that double-mindedness isn't always obvious—even to the wisest men. How can Christian community help us identify the ongoing sins in our life that we do not see? What can we do to seek wisdom and correction in community?