
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

LECTURE 16: SOLOMON

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The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

30 LECTURES

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21 CHAPTERS OLD TESTAMENT · 9 CHAPTERS NEW TESTAMENT

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2. Creation
3. Fall
4. Noah
5. Abraham
6. Patriarchs I
7. Patriarchs II
8. Exodus
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- 16. Solomon**
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Lecture 16

SOLOMON

Lecture Theme:

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, who is the Wisdom of God.

Text:

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42).

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 16

In every age the world reveres and listens to those they deem wise men. Wisdom is considered a valuable virtue. Likewise, no one wishes to be considered a fool by their peers or others, but herein lies a problem because the presence of sin in the world has distorted true wisdom. Paul says that the world considers God’s wisdom, which is real wisdom, foolishness, and he says the world’s pseudo-wisdom must be exposed as foolishness. When the Bible uses the word *fool*, it is not calling people names. Foolishness describes the character and nature of a person who does not fear God and submit to His Word. So, what is true wisdom? How does wisdom relate to the fear of God? What role did God give to Solomon in all of this? How did the wisest man produce a foolish son? Where did Solomon turn from wisdom to folly, and what were the consequences for Israel? How does Solomon relate to Christ? How is Christ the true depository of God’s wisdom? Where does the contemporary Christian turn to learn God’s wisdom today?

The Bible describes Solomon as the wisest man alive in his day. This was so significant at the time and still recognized today, but the name Solomon was synonymous with wisdom. It brought him international fame as a world attraction, but he did not embody perfect wisdom. He fell from the heights of wisdom and descended into an abyss of folly. We will explore some of the theology that God revealed during Solomon’s reign. First of all, let’s consider the historical context. The glory of Israel was secured through David’s reign, and it continued during the reign of his son Solomon. We read in II Samuel 12:24–25 that Solomon was given the name Jedidiah, which means loved by Jehovah. And of course, the name *Solomon* itself means *peace*. In I Chronicles 22:9, God promised David, “I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.” Whereas David was a man of war, Solomon enjoyed the fruits of peace during his life. God also provided unparalleled prosperity to Israel. Israel’s peace and prosperity

reached its climax under Solomon which would never be seen again in Israel's history. In I Kings 2, beginning at verse two and following, David charged Solomon to stand to God's covenant, depending on God's promise, and upholding God's law. You will notice in that passage how David brings together the Mosaic covenant and the Davidic covenant as two aspects of the one Covenant of Grace.

We have seen throughout this course that the works of the incomprehensible God are not simply historical accounts. The examples of godliness and ungodliness, blessings and curses, must be connected to God's intended future plans, signifying and testifying to Christ in the unfolding of God's grand plan of redemption. Well, Solomon began well but ended dismally. He began with wisdom and ended with folly. Those who went before Solomon, some of them, were known for wisdom as well, such as Joshua (Deuteronomy 34:9) and David himself (II Samuel 14:20), yet the Bible places greater emphasis on biblical wisdom in relation to Solomon than anyone else in Israel's history. In I Kings 3, we read that Solomon responded to God's offer of granting whatever he wanted by asking for wisdom. God's provision gave Solomon wisdom that exceeded everyone in the world, causing him to reach, as I say, international fame. It is seen in I Kings 4:30-34 where we read, "And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." Later on, it says, "and there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." The Queen of Sheba is an example of one attracted to his wisdom, and what she found exceeded all of her expectations. Solomon's reign was designed by God to influence and impact the nations, but soon the nations began to influence him.

Despite his bright beginning, he yielded to the temptation to turn from God's law and the demands of His covenant. He married pagan wives, contrary to God's prohibition. These wives brought an evil influence that led him into idolatry just as God had warned in Deuteronomy 7:3-4. All of this is described in I Kings 11:1-6, and though it's a little lengthy, it's worth us reading and hearing. It says, "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD as David his father."

In response to Solomon's idolatry, the Lord was angry and pronounced a judgment, namely, that God would rend the kingdom and give most of it to another. However, because of Solomon's father David and his covenant faithfulness, God would delay the judgment until after Solomon's death, and God would preserve one tribe to Solomon's son for David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake. But Solomon sins sowed the seeds of disintegration that produced evil fruit throughout the remainder of Israel's history. It paved the way for the division of the kingdom and the influences of idolatry in both countries, which we'll consider in Lecture 18 under the kingdom. Let's turn our attention now to some of the theological themes we must grasp in these portions of Scripture concerning the reign of Solomon.

And so, secondly, theological themes. First of all, the most obvious is the wisdom theme. Now we learn that God Himself is the source of all wisdom. It's not just that He has wisdom and displays wisdom. He is wisdom. Wisdom is an attribute of God, a description of His very being. He is described as "God only wise" (Romans 16:27) and "the only wise God our Savior" in Jude 25. In Isaiah 40:14, we hear this question, "with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" The answer, of course, is "no one." God has no equal. Since God Himself is wise, His Word also conveys wisdom. Remember Deuteronomy 4:6 says that the law of God was Israel's wisdom. It says, "keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." By way of contrast, man's corrupt mind is vain in imaginations, and his foolish heart is darkened. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," as we read in Romans 1. Isaiah 55 teaches that God's ways and God's thoughts are higher than man's ways and his thoughts, higher than the heavens are to the earth. True wisdom is

God-centered, and it is based on God's will found in His Word. So, wisdom is the ability to apply the Scriptures to practical areas of life by seeing things from God's perspective, understanding God's will, and following God's Word. But wisdom is also tied to the doctrine of covenant.

In Proverbs chapters 1 to 9, wisdom is personified in the covenantal language of marriage. She, that is wisdom, cries and calls out to God's people. They're called to hearken and not refuse. When heeded, "wisdom entereth into thine heart," it says, "to deliver thee from the strange woman, which forsaketh the guide of her youth and forgetteth the covenant of her God" (Proverbs 2:10, 16). Notice those words *forsaken* or *forsaketh* and *forgetteth*. These are words the prophets use a great deal. This covenant-breaking constitutes harlotry and adultery, a theme we will take up under our consideration of the prophets, but notice the way of the strange woman picturing folly in contrast to Lady wisdom. Notice how that way leads to hell and the chambers of death as we see in Proverbs 7:27. Wisdom is found in not forgetting God's law and in keeping God's commandments (chapter 3 verse 1). Notice in 3:18, it is a tree of life. That's language connecting us back to Eden and connecting us forward to heaven. Notice also that Hebrews 12 verse 5 and following refers to Proverbs 3:11–12 regarding those who are trained by the loving chastening of God. You see, the call to forsake folly and to flee to wisdom is the call to keep covenant with God. Solomon was initially praised for choosing wisdom, but it was intended for more than just himself and even more than just Israel. Notice in I Kings 10:23–25 it says, "So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon." It goes on, "and they brought every man his present." As we saw earlier, God intended Solomon's wisdom as a light to the nations, nations who would come to see God's glory and the wisdom of His law. The Psalms and prophets reinforce the point that God was intending this gift of wisdom to draw in the nations and to display His glory. And bringing the nations under the knowledge of God, He also gathered vast resources as an inheritance for His people and kingdom. The other nations contributed large sums of money that were used for the building of the temple. In fact, Israel's wealth exceeded that of any other kingdom so that silver became as common as stones in the street, and cups were made of gold.

Another theme is the fear of the Lord. Wisdom has its starting place in the fear of God, which you see several times in Proverbs. The theologian Geerhardus Vos says, "The fear of Jehovah remains throughout the Old Testament the generic name for religion." We cannot overemphasize the importance of the fear of God in Scripture. It is traced from the beginning to the very end as a dominant theme. As Professor John Murray wrote, "The fear of God is the soul of godliness." Look at the descriptions of the New Testament church: for example, Acts 9:31, the church is described as walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Now, there is a fear of dread and terror in the face of impenitent defiance of God. After all, He is a consuming fire. But God's people have a filial fear of reverence and honor and trust and awe. The fear of God includes a few things. It includes, first of all, the knowledge and sight of God. There's no fear of God without that. Secondly, it includes a sense of His presence and awareness that God sees all and is present in all our actions and behavior. And thirdly, it includes a knowledge of what He requires in His Word.

An absence of the fear of God is a sign of false religion. Romans 3:18 says, "there is no fear of God before their eyes," in describing unbelievers, but godly fear, on the other hand, promotes many good fruits. It promotes holy conduct, for example, II Corinthians 7:10. It is also a motivation for evangelism (II Corinthians 5:11). The fear of God motivates reverent worship. We sing about this in various places in the Psalms, but you see it in the New Testament in Hebrews 12:28–29. And the fear of God promotes vibrant pursuit of Christ in our callings. Consider Colossians 3:22–23, where the servant is told to conduct his business in the fear of God eyeing Christ, not man. The Lord delights in those who fear Him. Toward the end of the Old Testament we read in Malachi 3:16, "then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD and that thought upon his name."

Let me also mention briefly the theme of God's righteousness. This is another revelation of God given during this period. For the sake of brevity, notice for example that righteousness is mentioned 54 times in just six chapters of Proverbs, chapters 10 to 15. True wisdom mixed with the fear of God produces gospel righteousness: submitting to God's thoughts and walking in God's ways. Lastly, under this point we should say a brief word about Solomon's wisdom books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. Proverbs educates the believer in divine wisdom through the fear of God, providing practical instruction in godly living. It demonstrates that God requires conformity to His will in the smallest details of conduct. The fear of God is the basis for the whole

book. It opens with the fear of God and closes with the fear of God (chapter 1 verse 7 and chapter 31 verse 30), and wisdom is obviously the dominant theme, but the fountainhead of Proverbs is the moral law of God. Proverbs unpacks and applies the moral law to the details of daily life.

Ecclesiastes demonstrates the folly and vanity of life without God at the center. It provides lessons in contrast to persuade us to embrace God's wisdom rooted in the fear of God and His law. The conclusion proves this point. Ecclesiastes 12:13 says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

Thirdly, we have the Song of Solomon or the Song of Songs. This is a priceless book prized by all of the reformed writers of the past as a beautiful description of the relationship of the Church, Bride, to Christ, her Husband. If you are unfamiliar with this point, you need to devote concentrated study to this very important book. The marriage motif in describing God's covenant relationship with His people can be traced all through the Old Testament. You see many references to it, for example, in the prophets, and it is traced into the New Testament. We think of what Paul writes in Ephesians 5 or the description of the church in the book of Revelation as Christ's Bride. This book evokes passion and following, seeking, clinging to Christ with intense fervor and holy jealousy. Only the Christian can say of Christ, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." Song of Songs is not a romantic story about merely human love and marriage. It teaches us of the wisdom of loyal love to our heavenly Husband.

Thirdly, in our last major point, we need to consider New Testament fulfillment of what we find in the reign of Solomon. We find New Testament fulfillment under two categories. First of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. While wisdom was Solomon's glory, God's true wisdom did not find its fullest expression in Solomon who turned back to folly. Wisdom is displayed preeminently in Christ. He is the greater than Solomon. At the end of the first lecture in this course, we discussed the interchange between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. We read in Matthew 12:42, "the queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold a greater than Solomon is here." We saw how this pointed forward to the surpassing glory of Christ which will take away the breath of all who behold Him. Wisdom of Christ is foretold back in Isaiah 11:1-3, and you should read that text, and it is fulfilled at His coming in Luke 2:40. Christ is described as "the wisdom of God." He is the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:24), and Paul says that we find the depository of wisdom in Christ. Colossians 2:3 says, "in whom," that is Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

A second area where we find New Testament fulfillment pertains to the Christian. The world's false wisdom is, in fact, folly. I Corinthians 1:20 reads, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" The contemporary Christian continues to face the competing claims of the world and God's Word. James 3:15 and following contrasts worldly wisdom, which is described as earthly, sensual, and devilish, with the wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, and so on. The believer finds true wisdom in Christ alone. We study the Word of Christ to gain wisdom. Paul says to Timothy in II Timothy 3:15, "and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." In the Bible, we learn of Christ and the gospel. I Corinthians 1 verse 17 and following teaches that the preaching of the gospel, the preaching of the cross, is considered foolishness by the world, but it is the true wisdom of God. The contemporary believer continues to look to Christ to learn gospel wisdom leading to salvation. The fruit of that salvation includes walking in the fear of God, living in the light of God's law, and holding fast to God's covenant. This is why Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

In conclusion, the reign of Solomon teaches us that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, Who Himself is the wisdom of God. The greatest display of Solomon's wisdom was found in his most important work of all, namely, building a house for the name of God. In the next lecture, we will explore the theology of the temple.