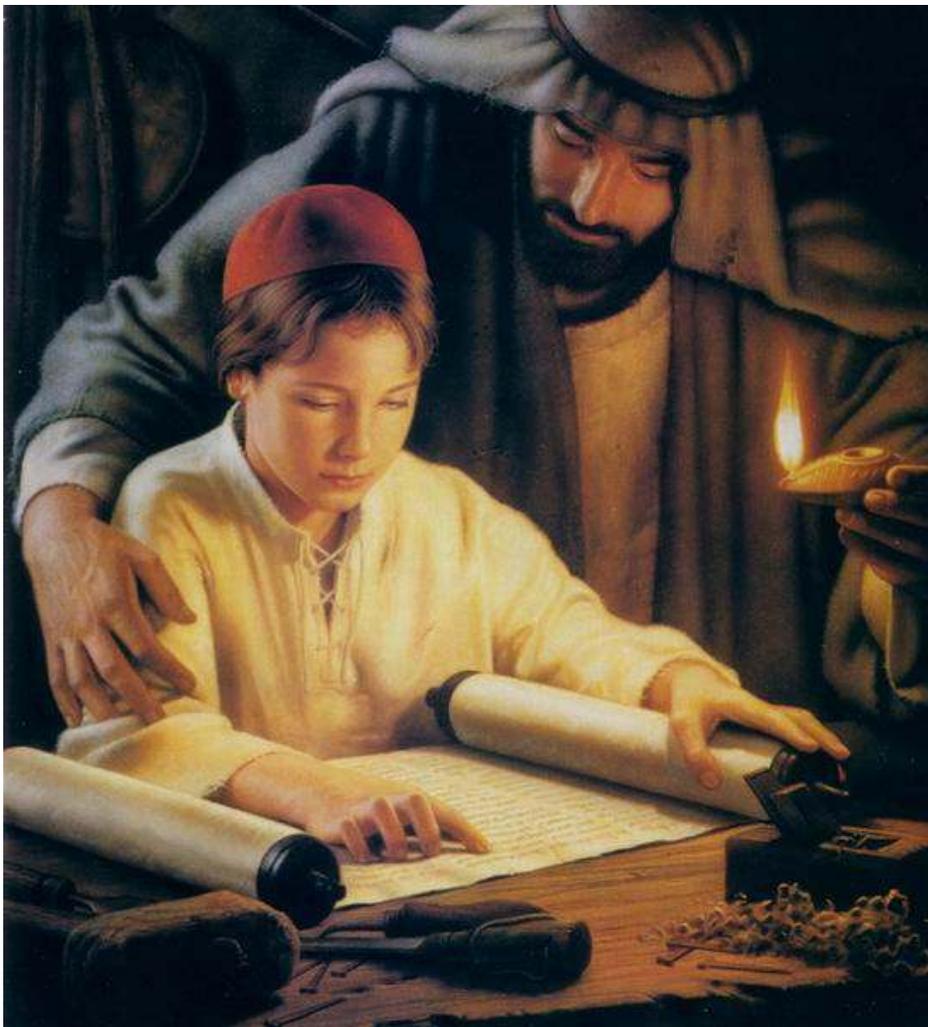


Old Testament Wisdom

A greater One than Solomon is here



Cosmin Pascu
Belfast Bible College

A greater than Solomon is here

Examining the two kings – King Solomon and King Jesus

To compare two people is quite easy, but when it comes to evaluate Christ and other kings, things get tough. The reason for that is because we can easily see that there is always a clash between that which is holy and that which is not holy. In this essay the subject will be discussed as a major theme, however we will not have time to enter into too many details. Bearing that in mind, we still focus our attention on two kings who shaped the world in different behaviour ways.

King Solomon, the king that brought the kingdom down

Solomon did everything that pleased him, but without using his mind in the work that he done, he displeased God¹. If we look at Solomon's life, we can see that his heart was robbed by the wives² he had (1Kings 11:1-8). Each one of them brought their own input into the kingdom; however, these contributions did not build his throne, but brought it down by building and worshipping other idols (other gods)³. Therefore, his own protection was under threat. The Midrash gives us an interesting account on Solomon's threat⁴. If Solomon was a wise king, nothing more could be said of him because the king was afraid of darkness itself. That shows how far he was from God (1Kings 11:9-10). Where was the heart of King Solomon? Was it with his people? Was it with his God? Was it in the interest of serving his people? His heart was in his trade and his buildings. No wonder his house was twice as big as the one of the Lord. In doing and building, Solomon ignored the basic legislations that a king should have kept. He failed to take care of his people. He forced and bought slaves to work for his desires⁵. Here we have a king who was so foolish that his heart was (with other gods) in the

¹ 1Kings 11:9-11 – See also Deut. 7:3-4

² DeVries J Simon says that “1 Kings 11:2 shows us that Dtr is thinking of the prohibition in Deut 7:1-5, which likewise forbids Israel to marry foreign women lest they seduce their hearts into idolatry”. DeVries J Simon – 1 Kings – WBC – Word Books, USA, 1985, p142

³ Provan says – “Solomon not only worships them (idols), he builds sanctuaries for them on the Mount of Olives (the hill east of Jerusalem, 1Kings1: 11:7) and elsewhere that rival the temple (he did the same for all, 11:8). His “turning away is truly spectacular”. Provan W Iain – 1 and 2 Kings – NIBC – Paternoster Press, UK, 1995, p92

⁴ Before Solomon sinned, he ruled over demons. After he sinned, he brought sixty warriors to protect his couch from the terror of night. As it says: “Behold Solomon's bed; sixty might men are about it of the mighty men of Israel”. (Song of Songs 3:7) – Cohn-Sherbok Dan – Judaism, Routledge, England, 2003, page 446

⁵ “First Kings 9:15-23 is another section that refers us back to 5:1-18, where we were told of the forced labour that Solomon conscripted to build his temple. Solomon did not use this 30.000 strong taskforce only for the temple but also for his new fortifications in strategically important cities”. Provan W Iain – 1 and 2 Kings – NIBC – Paternoster Press, UK, 1995, p86

wrong place. What was his life all about? What did he accomplish at the end? Where was his kingdom? Was his kingdom going to reflect unity and love?

Was Solomon a wise king?

Solomon is a man who in his early years was categorized as the wisest person in the Bible. However, how wise was Solomon to have lost everything?⁶ It is a question that we need to ask, because if we look at the commands that God gave to Solomon⁷, we soon realise that this wisdom alone did not help Solomon at all. Wisdom has to do with intelligence⁸, but when intelligence stands on its own, one needs to ponder the extent of its usefulness. Eaton says that *wisdom given by God, acted out in the presence of God, is allowed; autonomous, self-sufficient wisdom as a remedy to man's plight under the sun is disallowed*⁹. Solomon did not use his heart, and by doing that, he ignored the words of his Maker, which were presented before him in 1 King 9:1ff. His legacy is not that great. When King Rehoboam came to the throne, the people asked him not to rule¹⁰ in the same manner as his father Solomon¹¹. If for the Jews the God of the Universe was their heart, this evaporated in the presence and during the kingship of Solomon. Once the king died, so the unity of his people died with it. This unity was under threat, for when unity fades away chaos reigns, and when disorder reigns, God's testimony is under threat. There is a foundation which needs to be placed in order to restore that which was destroyed by the so called wise king. That restoration can only come in the person and presence of Christ, who is greater than Solomon.

Jesus, greater than Solomon

Solomon was to be the typology of Christ, the one who was to reflect the heart of his father David. However, as we have seen above, Solomon's heart was not with his people. In contrast to Solomon, the ministry of Jesus was different and we see that in the areas of His work

⁶ Read 1Kings 10 and 11

⁷ 1Kings 9:5-9

⁸ *"Thus it was not the case of having too much righteousness or wisdom; rather, it was the problem of self-delusion and the problem of having a superego that needed to have large doses of humility added. When people become too holy, too righteous and too wise in their own eyes, then they become too holy and too wise for everyone – not in reality, of course, but in their own estimation"* Inter Varsity Press Commentaries

⁹ Eaton A Michael – Ecclesiastes – Inter Varsity Press, England, 1983, page 47

¹⁰ *The forced labour says* Jagersma H, *can, moreover, rightly be seen as exploitation, as was clearly hated bitterly by the people. This kind of forced labour was also one of foremost grievance mentioned by the Israelites who did not want Rehoboam to be king after Solomon's death".* Jagersma H – *A History if Israel to Bar Kochba* – SCM Press, London, 1994, p 121

¹¹ 1 Kings 12: 1-15

among people, among the teachers and among the outcast¹². Much of His life is a task of service, building a temple formed of people and not of stones¹³. Jesus did not follow the steps of Solomon, but opposed the riches and the trade of the world. When He was tempted by Satan in Luke 4, He did not accept the ways of the world. Jesus indeed reflected some themes that were present in Solomon too, and they were: wisdom, which incarnated in Jesus¹⁴, the One that was able to say "***I am the Son of God***"¹⁵. Jesus was also a judge, a teacher, and prophet, and in all of this, He represented His Father in all the areas of His ministry.

The ministry of Jesus

Jesus was better known as the healer, the preacher and the Servant of God. Spurgeon in one of his messages said the following words. "*Any person who was really greater and wiser than Solomon would be the last man to claim such pre-eminence. A wise man would never think of it; a prudent man would never say it*". Further more, Spurgeon continued by saying: "*For men to compare themselves with one another is not wise, and Christ was wise, it is not humble, and Christ was humble*"¹⁶. Another angle was that: while Solomon was a person known and respected by most of the people, Jesus was not accepted by the teachers, the leaders and the high priest¹⁷. However, Jesus was accepted by those who followed him everywhere He went. He did not look for prestige, but served the people that God sent Him to. We can see that Jesus is the one who brings unity, healing¹⁸, and peace in the lives of people. Jesus made people acceptable to worship His Father. In some areas, we can see that Jesus was sending the

¹² Mark's record describes the feelings of people, the anguish of suffering and the relief of Jesus' touch: the "little daughter", the woman who "had spent everything she had on doctors and was not benefited at all", they "begged Him earnestly" to come and heal; when He did "they were amazed with great amazement", they said "we have never seen anything like this", or "they feared greatly" (Mark 5:21-43; 2:12; 7:37; 4:41) <http://www.domini.org/tabern/gospel.htm#Mark>

¹³ As a response to his disciples He foretold them the destruction of the temple: "*Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. (2) And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.*" Matthew 24:1-2

¹⁴ Maclaren says that "*Jesus is wisdom, other men are wise*". Maclaren Alexander - *St. Matthew 9-27* – Hodder & Stoughton – London, p198

¹⁵ Jesus is the Son of God, who identifies Himself using the words: I AM (Yahweh), a title given by God to Moses. For the people of Israel this was a holy name and they will have not mentioned it. These are some of the titles attached to the word I AM: I Am the Light of the World (8:12); I Am the Door (10:9); I Am the Bread of life (6:35-48); I Am the Resurrection of Life (11:25); I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life (14:6); I am the Vine (15:1); I Am the Good Shepherd.

¹⁶ <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1600.htm>

¹⁷ This comment was as a response to their sinfulness and unbelief. Green says: "*a second way in which Jesus meets this assault is by His reiterated claims: to be greater than David (4), greater than the temple (6), greater than Jonah (41) and greater than Solomon (42). There is nothing in the spiritual history of the world than which he is not greater*" Green Michael – *The Message of Matthew* – BST – IVP, England, 2000, p148

¹⁸ There are 35 specific miracles in the Gospels, Mark describes 20 with fine details: 17 physical treatments, 9 miracles on the forces of nature, healing of 6 possessed people, and the resurrection of three persons... but in addition, the gospels mention on 8 occasions, that the crowds brought many sick and possessed people to Jesus, and he healed them all!... "all"... it is the impressive word used, the good and the bad, the rich, the poor, Jewish, pagans... all! (Mk. 6: 53-56, Luke. 6:17-19, Mt. 4:23, 9:35, 15:30)

people back to the Temple to show themselves before the high priest. This was not a simple act, but more central in his work was to notice that Jesus was doing the work that the high priest should have accomplished. In the same way, we can see that the Lord Jesus was doing the work that Solomon should have done. He should have build God's temple, His people, in order to serve and reflect God's presence among the people.

Jesus, the builder of the Spiritual Temple

As I have mentioned above, Jesus ministry was focused around people and not on the building or exploiting the people. Maclaren`s view is worth mentioning for he writes:

“in this respect “a greater than Solomon is here” inasmuch as Jesus is Himself the true Temple, being for all men, which Solomon’s structure only shadowed, the meeting-place of God and man, in whom God dwells and through whom we can draw near to Him, the place where the true sacrifice is once for all offered”¹⁹.

Jesus did not turn His heart to other idols, but served His Father with all His life. The words that Solomon prayed to God in 1Kings 8, Jesus fulfilled them, yet Solomon failed to accomplish them. Solomon married many wives and his interest in marrying them was to expand his trading to the whole world. In distinction to Solomon, Jesus was greater because he did not forsake the principles that God brought before His people in the book of Exodus and Deuteronomy. With the help of the Gospels, we can picture Jesus in many ways, but we will not be able to write everything that Jesus has done for the world, in which from a King He became a scapegoat, being crucified for our sins. The authors of the Gospels, present to us an angle of Jesus ministry, and if we are to connect all these angles, then we will realize that truly, Jesus wasn't just a King but also a Saviour, a Saviour who served His people, but also His Father. He wasn't just a Son of Man; rather He was also the Son of God, through whom all things came into being. He was good for those people who saw Him as good, but for those who did not accept His ministry, He was a sinner, who joined in with the outcast world, and later become one of them. One of the things that help us today, as we reflect back to His entire ministry is that Christ's resurrection brought hope to the whole world. The result of His ministry was a world which was turned up-side down.

Conclusion:

The evidence placed before us reflects the necessity of Christ to replace King Solomon, who failed to accomplish the work that was given to him. The wisdom given to Solomon was a gift

¹⁹ Maclaren Alexander - *St. Matthew 9 -27* – Hodder & Stoughton – London, p200

from God, and that gift was not bad. However, what Solomon did with, it was his responsibility. God gives us many gifts, but if we use them for the wrong reasons, then our work will perish. As we have seen above, Jesus was different in His whole ministry than Solomon. Jesus could have easily practice the same things, but His work was to bring God's people before the heavenly throne. Jesus was greater than Solomon and because of that; we are able to identify with Christ before the Father. There is a challenge for us and that is: are we able to serve Christ and His people in the same manner as He did?

Bibliography

Cohn-Sherbok Dan – *Judaism* - Routledge, England, 2003

DeVries J Simon – *1 Kings* – WBC – Word Books, USA, 1985

Eaton A Michael – *Ecclesiastes* – Inter Varsity Press, England, 1983

Frank E Gaebelin – *Mathew, Mark, Luke* – T.E.B.C. – Zondervan, Michigan, 1984

Green B Joel – *The Gospel of Luke* – NICNT – Wm B Eerdmans – UK, 1997

Green Michael – *The Message of Matthew* – BST – IVP, England, 2000

Ecclesiastes - Solomon - Inter Varsity Press Commentaries – Electronic - CD

Jagersma H – *A History of Israel to Bar Kochba* – SCM Press, London, 1994

Maclaren Alexander - *St. Matthew 9 -27* – Hodder & Stoughton – London,

Provan W Iain – *1 and 2 Kings* – NIBC – Paternoster Press, UK, 1995

Websites:

<http://www.domini.org/tabern/gospel.htm#Mark>

<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1600.htm>