

As the Curtain Rises

Now Playing: The Quest for Hidden Treasure – Part I

II Samuel 12 & II Chronicles 1

Introduction

I do not know about you, but the idea of hidden treasure has intrigued millions of people the world over. Treasure hunters have formed an entire subculture with group trips and websites and clues regarding famous sites where buried treasure has yet to be found.

Somewhere on a mountain ledge overhanging the city of Flagstaff, Arizona, there is the buried loot of a robbery still waiting to be discovered. In 1881, what would amount to a million dollars today, was stolen when a stage coach was robbed as it traveled westbound to California. Four canvas mail bags were taken by five masked bandits who surrounded the coach and stole the bags. A few hours later, a posse began the chase and eventually caught up with the outlaws in a log cabin. After a blazing gunfight, all five outlaws were dead. The cabin was searched, but no loot was found. The entire area was searched and dug up, but still nothing was discovered. The United States government eventually gave up the search, but not the property owner. He would spend the rest of his life – thirty years – searching, but he never found the money.

I read of a recent discovery of hidden treasure by an actual homeowner in the Middle Eastern town of Eshtemoa. The discovery was sixty-two pounds of exquisite, handcrafted silver jewelry that had been stored in earthen jars and buried. Worth tens of thousands of dollars – if not more, because of antiquity – it was discovered buried not in some remote place or in some elaborate tunnel or deep in a pyramid, but two feet underneath the floor of a home. It was found in a place that had been a home site over

the last 1500 years, buried roughly eighteen inches under the living room floor.

Imagine all the previous homeowners thinking, “If I had only known, I would have dug down and the treasure would have been mine!”

Imagine living so close to treasure.

Let me give something else to imagine. Robert Jeffress suggested this in his book on some of the Proverbs.

Imagine that you have purchased an old, fixer-upper house, built in the early 1900s. One Saturday morning, as you are cleaning out the attic of your home, you discover an old sheet of paper, yellowed and brittle with age, tacked to a ceiling beam in the corner. You carefully take it down and try to open it, but as you unfold it, it falls apart. However, the faded words, “buried treasure,” catch your attention.

Your heart begins to beat fast as you rush downstairs to the kitchen counter where you put the pieces of this note together and get out a magnifying glass. You read the note which says,

For some time now my grown children have given me the impression that they want their inheritance and would really like to be rid of me. Furthermore, I have come to the conclusion that my wealth would only deepen their greed for things and ultimately ruin their lives. Therefore, I have decided to bury my wealth for some future owner of this humble home. You will find a little more than one million dollars in cash, savings bonds and gold coins, buried in a small safe

in the back yard. Locate the exact middle point of the back property line, walk three paces toward the house and you will find buried two feet down the safe. I hope you enjoy your inheritance.

Yours Trulyⁱ

What would you do after reading this note?

Would you:

- Play a game of Monopoly with your kids?
- Throw the note in the trash can saying, “Can you believe somebody would actually think I’d fall for that?”
- Give the note to your neighbor and say, “I don’t have time for this. If you want dig around out back you can keep whatever you find.”?

No!

You would rush for your property map, grab a tape measure, and race for the back yard. You never know – you just might discover hidden treasure.

The truth is, as useful as a million dollars could be to you right now; as exciting as it might be to discover the buried loot in Flagstaff, Arizona, or to find silver buried under your living room floor, nothing will change your life more than finding hidden treasure offered to us from God Himself.

Our gracious Father also left us a note. In fact, He left a collection of clues and signposts along the way to lead us to the locations in life where wisdom lies waiting to be discovered, possessed, and applied.

Solomon told us, in Proverbs 2:4, we must,

. . . search for [wisdom] as for hidden treasures

He writes further, in Proverbs 3:13-15,

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.

For [he understands that] her profit is better than the profit of silver, and her gain better than fine gold.

She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.

If you want real treasure, then dig for wisdom. Ransack the treasure map of scripture to find where it is, how it acts, what it looks like, and how to have it in your life.

It is one thing to live rich – it is another thing to live right.

It is one thing to make great investments – it is another thing to have great insight in life.

This is the difference between someone who knows how to make a living and someone who knows how to have life worth living. The difference is this treasure called wisdom.

Throughout the book of Proverbs, Solomon invites us all to become treasure hunters – seekers of wisdom.

However, you need to know up front, the hidden treasures of wisdom are not for the curious, but for the serious.ⁱⁱ

One author said it this way, “Straw floats on the surface of the water, but the one who searches for pearls must dive below.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Now, before we take our first dive, let us go back to where Proverbs had its beginning.

The Drama of Solomon’s History

In order to appreciate the Proverbs that we hold in the Bible in our laps, the first thing we need to do is understand its narrator’s life. In fact, we really need to travel back in Solomon’s life to the delivery room where Solomon uttered his first cry.

Turn in your Bible to the book of II Samuel. As you are turning there, it occurred to me that from the very moment of Solomon’s birth, he was surrounded by drama; by royal intrigue.

In the twenty-four months before Solomon’s birth, his father, David the King, had admitted to adultery and murder. He had married the young widow to cover up the fact that the baby she was carrying was not her husband’s child – but his. David saw to it that her husband, Uriah, was killed in battle, and then he had put on a sham wedding to Bathsheba, who was already beginning to show.

Insiders knew the real story and the prophet Nathan eventually exposed the king and his new bride as evil conspirators who had kept terrible secrets.

Their baby was soon delivered, but died. In this covenant, it was a sign of God’s immediate judgment on David and Bathsheba.

The good news is that David confessed his sin to God. In fact, Psalm 51 records his agonizing and authentic confession and repentance before the Lord.

We have every reason to believe Bathsheba repented as well. In fact, instead of their marital relationship becoming strained by guilt, they

conceived again and Bathsheba bore the heir to the throne of David.

Let us pick up this drama in II Samuel 12:24.

Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. . . .

Solomon's names

Solomon actually had several names and in the days of the Old Testament more so than today, names were highly significant. Most parents named a child a particular name they prayed would be a name the child would grow to demonstrate.

1. David named his son Solomon.

The name Solomon is a derivative of "Shalom," or "peace". David trusted that Solomon would be free from the constant fighting in which he had been involved and that the kingdom would experience peace under the rule of his son.

2. The Lord even gave Solomon a name of Jedidiah.

According to II Samuel 12:24b-25,

. . . Now the Lord loved him and sent word through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah for the Lord's sake.

Jedidiah simply means "loved by the Lord".

Many believe that the wise prophet, Nathan, would become Solomon's tutor and friend and teach him in addition to his parents.^{iv}

Can you imagine growing up, hearing that you had been given your middle name by God, and the meaning of that name was "God loves me"?

You might think, "Man, if only I had that kind of word from God; that kind of prophetic attention, I'd have so few anxious feelings and discouraging times. I'd wake up every morning, rain or shine, rich or poor, sick or healthy and simply remember my name and sail off into whatever the day brought forth."

Oh? We have been given many names – Redeemed, Saint, Son, Child, Bride, etc. What difference will it make tomorrow?

Let me remind you that the name Jedidiah did not make Solomon wake up every day automatically reveling in the grace and goodness and providence of God. He still fought the same battles of temptation and materialism and lust and greed and anger that every believer wages war against. In fact, Jedidiah

will eventually resign from the fight in disobedience and despair.

3. Another name that appears in the book of Proverbs is the name Lemuel.

The famous Proverbs chapter 31 begins with the words (paraphrased),

This is what King Lemuel's mother taught him

Lemuel simply means, "unto God".

I would agree with the Old Testament scholars who believe Lemuel was a name of dedication, used by Solomon's own mother. It is a name she referred to even into Solomon's maturing years.

It was the testimony that Bathsheba had dedicated Solomon unto God – and she did not want Solomon to forget it. She had indeed repented and was herself following after God.

Additional evidence is seen in the fact that Solomon's proverbs repeatedly challenge us to listen not only to the advice of our fathers, but to our, what? Our mothers.

Every mother should take heart from the Proverbs – you are not left out; in fact, your instruction toward your children is given as much weight as the instruction of a father.

Let me read a few of the Proverbs. Listen to Solomon's words.

Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching; indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck.

(Proverbs 1:8-9)

The Message paraphrases Proverbs 6:20-23,

Good friend, follow your father's good advice; don't wander off from your mother's teachings.

Wrap yourself in them from head to foot; wear them like a scarf around your neck.

Wherever you walk, they'll guide you; whenever you rest, they'll guard you; when you wake up, they'll tell you what's next.

For sound advice is a beacon, good teaching is a light, moral discipline is a life path.

Take it from your father; listen to your mother.

What a wonderful implicit compliment Solomon gave, not only to his father David, but to his mother Bathsheba – parents with a past.

If there are principles in this for us, they would be:

- God’s grace can be found at work in the present, in spite of the past.
- Godly parenting can still take place in homes that have an ungodly past.

Solomon would learn, early on, that the living God of David and Bathsheba forgives sin and gives new opportunities to follow after Him.

It was that spirit that Solomon picked up. The heart of Solomon is ready for the hunt. His spirit is ready for the quest for wisdom.

One of the most fascinating reports of the encounter between God and newly crowned Solomon is recorded in II Chronicles chapter 1. This is a place you are least likely to have had your devotions, so un-stick the pages and look at II Chronicles 1:6.

Solomon went up there before the Lord to the bronze altar which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

This is at the tabernacle in Gibeon. Now imagine these words, in II Chronicles 1:7.

In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, “Ask what I shall give you.”

“Make a wish, Solomon. Name it and it’s your coronation gift – from Me to you. What would you like to have?”

Can you imagine this?

You might say, “This is as likely as me finding a note in my attic that buried treasure is in my back yard.”

I know! But it happened to Solomon. This was no pipe dream – this was for real.

“Make a wish, Solomon, and I’ll grant it.”

If you are like me, you would be tempted to say the same thing you did as a kid playing a game. Your friend said, “I’ll give you one wish. What do you wish for?”

You answered, “I would wish for three more wishes.”

If you played this game as a child, you know the other person always responded, “Okay, you can have three wishes, but the first two don’t what? Count.”

So, you make your one wish count.

Actually, there is no indication in the text that Solomon only had one wish. Notice II Chronicles 1:7b again,

. . . *“Ask what I shall give you.”*

Solomon responds, in II Chronicles 1:8,

. . . *“You have dealt with my father David with great loving kindness, and have made me king in his place.”*

Solomon’s response to God

Do not miss this – Solomon does not wish for anything at first. Instead, he responds in three ways. Let me give these.

1. The first thing Solomon does is give thanks for what he has.

If we were in Solomon’s sandals and we rushed into our first wish, it would have revealed our discontent and dissatisfaction.

Do not go past this initial response.

“Solomon, what do you wish for?”

“Well, Lord, first I want to thank You for what I have.”

I remember reading the story of an American oil company that began to work in another country. The people who worked for this company were relatively poor, but they really did not know it – until one day one of the workers happened to see a Sears Mail Order Catalog in the break room and thumbed through it, and then asked if he could take it home. Soon, all the employees had their own catalogs and every family was eventually in debt and frustrated with the wages they received.

These employees were better off when they did not know how much they did not have.

One author said, “Contentment is realizing that you are better off the way you are right now.”^v

As we head into the Christmas season, have you noticed that Christmas shopping has come even earlier than ever? The mission of Madison Avenue is to convince you that you do not have the one thing that you need – you need something else; something more; something better.

Solomon, on the other hand, because of his wisdom, wrote,

Two things I ask of You, O Lord . . .

. . . give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me the food that is my portion . . .

(This could be rendered, “with just enough for the daily portion I need”.)

Otherwise I may have too much and say, “Who needs the Lord?”

(Proverbs 30:7-9 Paraphrased)

It is amazing that Solomon would say this after having been born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He had developed balance and patience and gratitude.

In the Middle Ages, it was the custom for the godparents of a child to present that child with a silver spoon at his christening. From that moment, the child could be fed with a special spoon made of silver. However, children born to wealthy parents did not have to wait to be fed with the finest of utensils – they were born, so to speak, with a silver spoon already in their mouth. This is the history of this phrase that we use to this day to speak of the privileged few.

This was Solomon. In fact, he would grow up to eat only from utensils made of solid gold. This was an incredible kingdom and we might expect him, even as II Chronicles opens, to be spoiled and ungrateful.

However, not only does Solomon give thanks for what he has, he continues in a similar manner.

2. Secondly, Solomon gives the credit to God for who he is.

Look further at II Chronicles 1:9.

Now, O Lord God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king . . . of the earth.

Gratitude and humility are in the treasure chest where wisdom is kept.

First, Solomon gives thanks for what he has.

Secondly, he gives the credit to God for who he is.

3. Now, thirdly, Solomon asks God for what he needs.

Notice II Chronicles 1:10, as Solomon says, “Here’s my wish, Lord.”

Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?

The word translated “great” in “who can rule this great people,” can be rendered “heavy”. In other words, “Lord there is no way I can bear the burden of this people; I cannot carry the load of responsibility

that comes with my crown – I need divine assistance!”

Have you ever prayed something like this? “Lord, I can’t be the parent, or the teacher, or the employer, or the employee, or the student, or the spouse without divine assistance. I need help.”

Solomon would be thrilled to hear us say this kind of thing.

You might think, “What? I’m miserable!”

Oh no, wisdom only comes to those who know they need it! The first step in the treasure hunt for wisdom is admitting you have a need for it.

If any of you recognize that you lack wisdom, you can ask God for it and He will deliver what you need and not rebuke you for asking over and over again. (James 1:5 Paraphrased)

“Lord, I do not know how to live insightfully. I do not know how to walk wisely. I cannot serve You at this station in my life unless You give me wisdom.”

Remember, this is not for the curious – this is for the serious.

This encounter is also recorded in I Kings chapter 3. In I Kings 3:9, Solomon asked God for an “understanding heart”. Literally translated, this means, “a hearing heart,” which adds an interesting thought to his one wish from God.

What do our hearts hear? Can they hear? What are we listening to? What are our hearts tuned to hear?

In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is pictured as calling out to those who pass by, inviting them to knowledge and discernment. However, they pass on without hearing her.

Solomon said to the Lord, “Oh Lord, give my heart the proper antennae; tune my heart to hear from You!”

God granted Solomon’s wish.

Pastor Ed Young wrote a commentary covering much of Solomon’s life entitled, *Been There. Done That. Now What?* In this book, he told the story of two men walking together on a crowded sidewalk in Manhattan one afternoon. One of the men was a Native American Indian and the other was a born and bred New Yorker. The noise was incredible – cars, buses, horns, sirens, people talking loudly as they moved down the street. Suddenly, the Indian said, “Listen, I hear a cricket. Do you hear it?”

The New Yorker was incredulous, “No way! You couldn’t possibly hear a cricket on a Manhattan sidewalk during rush hour.”

“I’m serious,” his friend countered. And to prove it, he stopped, bent down, and retrieved a chirping cricket from between a crack in the sidewalk.

“How in the world could you hear that?” the New Yorker asked.

“Easy,” said his friend, “I’ve lived outdoors most of my life. I can hear a cricket over other noises because my ears are trained to hear those sounds. It’s really not that amazing. If you want to see amazing, watch this!”

With these words, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a quarter, flipped it up in the air and let it drop on to the concrete sidewalk. As soon as it hit the cement, heads began to turn. It seemed as if every New Yorker around heard that coin hit the ground.^{vi}

You might say, “Yea, that’s New York for you.”

The truth is that our ears are trained to hear certain sounds and ignore many others.

Have you ever slept through your alarm? Have you ever incorporated the sound of your alarm into your dreams – and slept on?!

Solomon is saying, “Lord, this is my wish – train my heart to hear the faintest whisper of insight; tune my heart to the sounds and the ways of wisdom. I want to hunt for hidden treasure that makes a man or woman truly rich.”

Conclusion

The curtain is about to rise on one of the most remarkable kings of Old Testament times and a young man who would rightly earn the nickname, “the wisest man who ever lived”.

As Solomon collects and composes some 3,000 Proverbs, he is at his best. When he eventually abandons his search for wisdom and the Proverbs he collected, he will be at his worst.

This leads me to emphasize at the outset of our search through Proverbs for wisdom, two principles.

1. Wisdom is not for those who want it – it is for those who cannot live without it.

Simply put – wisdom requires that we begin the hunt, with all diligence – as if we were racing out the back door of our homes with a tape measure and a map.

2. Wisdom is not for those who are willing to hear about it – it is for those who are willing to practice it.

The writer of Hebrews said this of the Christians, . . . *because of practice [they] have [learned] to discern [between] good and evil. (Hebrews 5:14)*

They have learned to discern – this is a word for wisdom seekers. They have learned to uncover the clues that determine what is good and what is evil.

It was late one evening and the entire royal household was already asleep deep inside the walls of Buckingham Palace. The year was 1837. Great Britain’s Lord Chamberlain, an officer who was considered the senior official of the royal household, made his way to the bedroom of an eighteen-year-old girl named Victoria. He awakened her and told her, as she rubbed her eyes and yawned awake, that her uncle had just died and that she was now the Queen of Great Britain – the empire upon which the sun never set. Then he opened the Bible he was carrying and, as she sat on her bed, read the account we have just studied, of Solomon’s rise to the throne of Israel and that he asked God for wisdom above everything. The young Victoria responded by saying, “If I am to be Queen, then I shall be good.”

Is it any wonder that the greatest days of Britain’s kingdom were under this Queen, whose throne was governed by the morals and directives of the scriptures, and whose own life was committed to the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

In the same way, Israel will see its finest days – for it had a king who made a wish, and began a quest for hidden treasure.

When you desire wisdom and you are willing to pursue it and practice it, you will discover wisdom for life.

As Solomon wrote,

For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding;

if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures;

then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.

For the Lord will give wisdom . . .

(Proverbs 2:3-6a)

Solomon invites us to join him in this life-determining, life-fulfilling quest for the treasures that show us how to live life at its highest level and for the greatest good, unto the glory of God.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 11/18/2007 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Robert Jeffress, The Solomon Secrets (Waterbrook Press, 2002), p. 9.

ⁱⁱ Warren Wiersbe, Be Skillful: Proverbs (Victor Books, 1995), p. 21.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jeffress, p. 8.

^{iv} John Phillips, Exploring Proverbs, Volume One (Kregel, 1995), p. 18.

^v Ray Pritchard, The ABC's of Wisdom (Moody Press, 1997), p. 62.

^{vi} Ed Young, Been There. Done That. Now What? (Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 29.