

'SMOKE & MIRRORS'

(Seeing Through the World's Facades with Biblical X-Ray Vision)

Studies in Ecclesiastes

'King Solomon's Mind'

There has always been mystique and fascination with *King Solomon's Mine(s)*, but were they real mines in the jungles of Africa from where he got his incredible treasures of gold and precious stones for the temple and other elaborate kingdom projects, or are they just an exaggerated myth? Although Solomon's mines remain a mystery, the fact is that the most valuable thing King Solomon possessed was a mind of wisdom, not mines of wealth.

We live in a rapidly degenerating world in which *'the mystery of lawlessness is already at work'* (2 *Thessalonians 2:7*). Despite a global plunge into sin, most are being led to think all is well and that God's Word is now relative and negotiable. Satan, his demonic fallen angels, and all people under their *spell* are experts at making this world, its selfishness and sin, seem fulfilling, lovely, and wonderful. Like clever magicians they deceive their foolish audiences from seeing through their *smoke and mirrors* performance.

The disappointing and tragic reality is that chasing after the temporary things of *'the world, the flesh and the devil'* (1 *John 2:15-17*) is vain folly in God's sight. Their unregenerate minds are darkened and deluded (*Ephesians 4:17-19*). What is needed today are people with King Solomon's mind; money, material things and self-indulgence lead astray – biblical wisdom from above is the only way to see through the *'smoke and mirrors'* folly and vanity of this temporary world to things that matter for eternity.

Becoming a Christian is a good start toward acquiring what's needed to see through the detours, decoys, and deceptions of this life. Wisdom from above, like the mind of Solomon, isn't automatic – it requires desire, Spirit-filled Bible study, and discipline to avoid becoming a *foolish brother or sister* in Christ (*James 3:15-17*).

1 Kings 5:15-16, 7:9-11 & 9:26-28 says King Solomon got his great riches from someplace where he was able to quarry immense quantities of precious stones and gold to construct the temple of God and make many of his other edifices and furnishings. Scripture says that he made silver as common as gravel in Jerusalem (*1 Kings 10:14-29*)!

But according to God, the greatest thing about Solomon wasn't the preview of the kingdom of God on earth he built, but the wisdom and insight God gave him in the very beginning of his rule (*1 Kings 3:1-14*). All of the amazing things Solomon made are gone now, but the grandest thing about him, his wisdom from above, remains in Scripture (*Psalms 127, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon*). King Solomon's mind, when under God's control, was/is a treasure trove of spiritual intuition, needed by everyone seeking wisdom from above to evade the *smoke and mirrors* foolishness of this world, here below. Magicians use *smoke and mirrors* to fool audiences into thinking they have supernatural powers to alter the nature of things to be something different, or even better. Of course, the real truth is that only gullible people actually believe all the theatric distraction, sleight of hand, curved mirrors and foggy diversions hiding their trickery.

In the spiritual realm, disappointment, devastation and even deadly consequences are the inevitable results of gullibility leading to foolish thinking and lifestyles (*James 4:15*). The Bible promises Christians who want God's wisdom (*1 Corinthians 2:6-12*) that we have something even better than Solomon's mind: *"...we have the mind of Christ"* (*1 Corinthians 2:16*).

Ecclesiastes is Solomon's exposure of the enemy's smoke and mirrors tricks he the does in the world. As we see through the fog of lies he uses, we, like Solomon, become free to see with wisdom from above, so needed for the *'abundant Christian life'* here below (*John 10:10*).

Ecclesiastes Background Information:

Ecclesiastes = Greek word for '**preacher**' (*one who speaks/ 'kal-le-oh'; out 'ek'*)
Related to the word for '**church**' (*ek-lay-see-aw / 'called out ones'*)
Hebrew title = '*Qo-he-leth*' (*one who calls or gathers the assembly*)

Author/ Solomon = Son of David and Bathsheba; 3rd king of Israel following David, his father, who succeeded King Saul. Like his father, David, Solomon also became king at age 30 and ruled for 40 years (*971 BC – 931 BC*)
(see David/ *2 Samuel 5:4-5*);
Solomon/ 20's – *1 Chronicles 22:5-16* (training to be king),
age 30 – becomes King for next 40 years (*1 Kings 2:1-4, 3:7-15*).
Both David and Solomon lived to age 70 (*Psalms 90:10*).
Solomon probably wrote **Song of Solomon, Psalms 127 & 128** early in his rule, the Proverbs throughout his life and Ecclesiastes later during his moral and spiritual failure near the end of his life (*1 Kings 11*)

Accomplishments = Dedication to God and His wisdom (*1 Kings 3*), territory increase, intellectual and academic brilliance (*1 Kings 3*), expertise in science, music, and scholarship (*1 Kings 3*). Temple construction (*1 Kings 4-6*). Other architectural wonders (*1 Kings 7*). Other grand achievements (*1 Kings 9 & 10*).

Other Scriptures = *Psalms 127* (and probably *Psalms 128*), *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Song of Solomon*

Key words = '**vanity**' (*used 37 times to express 'futile attempts for satisfaction w/o God'*)
(*also used to reflect 'emptiness', 'pointlessness', 'introversion', 'chasing after the wind'*); '**under the sun**' (30x) (*the sphere of observation – the meaning of this here & now life*)

Jesus' References to Solomon

Matthew 6:29 - Sermon on the Mount / *Jewish listeners*
Luke 12:27 - Refuting the greedy rich / *Gentile listeners*
Not in Mark - irrelevant to '*servants*' / *Roman listeners*;
nor John - irrelevant to '*belief*'

Solomon's Primary Audience

Ecclesiastes 11:8-12:1 ('*young adults*')

Solomon's Primary World View

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 ('*worship & obey God always*')

Discussion Groups Questions:

Read *Ecclesiastes 1:2-11*.

- Do you find these opening words of Solomon as negative or positive? (*Explain your thoughts*)
- How do these verses help you evaluate your plans, aspirations and goals for the future?
- Discuss the word '*vanity*' and give examples of it you have seen, heard about or done yourself.
- What would you do differently if you could do it over according to '*wisdom from above*' (*James 4:13-17*)?
- Discuss how *Ecclesiastes 11:8-12:1* affect the way you decide what you do or don't do from now on to avoid looking back on having lived in vain?