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THE BIGGEST FOOL ON EARTH

Who was the most foolish man in the Bible? Who was the wisest man of the Old Testament?

Most Christians have been taught that King Solomon was the wisest man ever to live on earth. That was true in his youngest years as King. That all changed as he grew older. He became the biggest fool of all time.

All the known world lauded him for his wisdom. They showered him with great riches to gain favor and to hear his words of wisdom. I believe it likely was pride that began to change him.

When Solomon ascended to the throne, God personally appeared to him (II Chronicles 1:7) and asked, ***“What shall I give thee?”*** Desiring to rule over God’s people well, he replied. (II Chron. 1:10), ***“Give me now wisdom and knowledge...”*** to which God replied (II Chron 1:12), ***“Wisdom and knowledge are granted unto thee” and because he had not asked selfishly for (vs. 11) riches, wealth, honor, the life of your enemies, neither...long life”*** I will also add to you ***“riches, and wealth and honor”*** greater than any other before or after you (said God). His request had in itself shown wisdom.

Solomon promptly began amassing great quantities of gold, silver, horses, and chariots. In the fourth year of his forty-year reign, he set forth to build the Temple of God as was commissioned by his father, David. He used slave labor to do it. According to the census David had (unwisely) taken, Solomon found 153,600 “strangers” (non-Jews) in Israel to become “bearers of burdens”, hewers of stone or wood, and overseers (supervisors) to do the work. It was built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. It was completed in Solomon’s twentieth year.

Upon the Temple’s completion, Solomon staged a fabulous dedication and gave a great prayer. Afterward, God personally appeared to him a second time (II Chron. 7:12-22) and spoke a promise to establish his throne in perpetuity. However, it also came with a warning. God said that if Solomon turned away to serve other Gods (vs. 20) that God would remove him and his house out of His sight and make him and his house ***“a proverb and a byword”*** of astonishment (ridicule) among the nations.

God clearly had foreknowledge of how Solomon’s later years would turn out badly. Solomon took many heathen wives, often to make political alliances rather than trusting God for peace. He established groves of pagan idols for these wives and led the Israelites into idol worship and child sacrifice. He foolishly did everything God had warned him against. The “wisest man” had turned into the “biggest fool” ever. How could this have happened to a man to whom God had personally appeared not once, but twice? Pride? Arrogance?

The apostasy of Solomon can also be seen in the book of Ecclesiastes ascribed to him. In Eccl. 1:2 he says, ***“Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”***

This sense of vanity is defined from the dictionary as the following:

1. A lack of real value, worthless
2. A useless, idle, or worthless thing
3. A thing of which a person is vain
4. A lack of effect or success.

All that God had done for him he now counted to be vain (i.e., of no use or value). Solomon said in verse 1:12, ***"I gave my heart to seek and search wisdom"*** but now (vs. 1:16), ***"I communed with my own heart, saying, 'Lo, I am come to great estate'"*** and (2:3) ***"to give myself unto wine...and to lay hold on folly..."*** acknowledging his foolishness in drowning in alcohol and acting foolishly. He was totally backslidden.

A man blessed enormously by the God who had twice appeared to him had now become the biggest fool on earth. We all are human, born with a depraved nature. Christ gives us a new nature (Galatians 2:20). May we guard our hearts so as not to be deceived like Solomon.

Tomorrow: The wisest man.