

Wisdom Books Part 5 of 5



The Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon comprise the Hebrew wisdom literature and form a unit. As such, they offer deep insights into the biblically legitimate ways to understand both life and the Author of life. This series will examine each book in successive order.

SONG OF SOLOMON

Song of Solomon is easily the most controversial book in the wisdom literature or perhaps in all of the Bible. If these books are a commentary on life, as I have suggested, then surely the message of this book is that life is about love. This accords well with the rest of Scripture. Paul writes to Timothy, “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5). But the love in Solomon’s Song is a very passionate love. And God built people for passion. Is Solomon teaching us that we must be passionate about God? If then, I have more passion for someone or something other than Christ, is that not idolatry? And if I am an idolater, what can I do but first declare myself the chief sinner, and then beg His forgiveness and plead that He would teach me to love Him with all my being.

It is no compliment to God that I or any of His creatures should be so deficient in loving Him, such that we by nature expend our passions more on the creation than the Creator. But this highlights another feature of the

love in Solomon's Song – its exclusivity. Song of Solomon and Job have in common this focus on exclusivity. Further, Job dilates on a mysterious question about this exclusive love, bringing us full circle within the wisdom literature. For Job raises the following disturbing question. Does the paltry love that I do have for Him exist because of what He does for me or is it because of who He is in Himself? It is a fearful question, whose answer I do not know. But the question haunts me.

Nonetheless, we find our consolation where we must and, as He seems to be merciful to the most despicable among us, it may be that the more despicable a man perceives himself to be, the closer he grows towards the pure love of God. Whether or not this is so, when at last we see Him face to face, it will be for us as it was for Job, a transformative moment. But the promise to see Him is to the pure in heart, who forswear all other love.

Here concludes our brief overview of the wisdom literature. It is only fitting that we end with a question. For if these books, which are meant to make us wise teach anything, then surely it is that life and God are ultimately a mystery. And mystery is necessary for spiritual health.

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