Solomon's Experiment
September 22, 2019

King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom 1 Kings 10:23

In 1 Kings 3:5-13 the story of Solomon, son of David and King of Israel is told. There we find that Solomon was offered a unique gift by God; he would have more wisdom and knowledge and wealth and honor that any other man in the world. In 1 Kings 4:29-34 we are told that his wealth and wisdom drew people from all over the world, and was unparalleled. He was knowledgeable not only in judicial wisdom but in science and matters of the world.

Why would God give him this enormous gift? Perhaps it was actually for our benefit (1 Cor. 10:11). We often have questions about meaning in life. What is the meaning of life? How can I find happiness in life? What do I need to have purpose in life? People have sought to answer these questions through life experiences, but find that their means limit their accomplishments. In other words, they lack the means to use everything at their disposal to properly find meaning in life. *"I don't have enough money to be happy" or "I don't know enough to be content" or "I am not powerful enough to have purpose"* all reflect the truth that none of us, not one, has EVERYTHING that we need to pursue to the utmost the meaning of life in terms of worldly ability. But one time in history a human had the maximum amount of power, money and wisdom to find out.

Solomon is unique in world history in that he had the wealth, the knowledge and the honor to seek to the utmost the meaning of life by the things of life. Therefore, Solomon set out a grand and singular experiment: can the purpose of life be determined by the things of the world. He alone in history had all of the resources (knowledge, wealth and power) to look into this matter. Here is what he found.

KNOWLEDGE: Ecclesiastes 1:12-18 tells us that his first experiment was with knowledge. He sought out to know everything. His conclusion was that knowledge did NOT offer contentment. Remember, this is not the conclusion of someone that just did not get it, this is the most knowledgeable man in history. His experiment proved knowledge of worldly things alone is not enough.

PLEASURE: Ecclesiastes 2:1-12 tells us that his second experiment was in pleasure and enjoyment. He had the ability to enjoy everything and anything, and for a time he did. Yet he found that this too failed to satisfy. His conclusion was that indulgence only brings emptiness. While most of us strive for the ability and opportunity to enjoy things, the one man who had it all found nothing was really enough.

SUCCESS: Ecclesiastes 2:13-23 tells us of the next experiment, his attempt at success for a legacy of eternal lasting. This man, who wrote much and knew all, came to find that even success in all things is not enough. He realized that none of it was eternal; nothing lasts, no matter how grand. Solomon concluded that success too was meaningless.

CONCLUSIONS: Solomon realized that there is nothing fair about this life (Ecclesiastes 3:16, 4:1,8), and it is only fairness (justice) that makes anything real or worthwhile. Yet he also knew that men still desired these things, things that were right/just and eternal/everlasting. His conclusion was "what hope does man have" if EVERYTHING in the world could not bring justice, satisfaction or everlasting accomplishment?

Solomon's conclusions may have sounded bleak, but his purpose in his experiment was to demonstrate a rather simple point: if all there is to life is the things of life, then there is neither purpose, justice nor satisfaction of any kind. Therefore, there must be something more. His concluding statements in Ecclesiastes 12:12-13 suggest that the answer is not here, in this life. Sadly, Solomon's experiment cost him his relationship with God. *Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice* - 1 Kings 11:9. By seeking all things in worldly ways, he was led astray.

What is necessary to understand is that Solomon lacked information in his experiment that we have. Ephesians 3:1-5 tells us this; Paul says that the knowledge of the Gospel, the New Testament, was not known to previous generations (including Solomon). This divine knowledge is supernatural, meaning it does not arise from the world, but comes from God, and can be understood without miraculous knowledge or ability. Speaking to the concept of the grand experiment, Paul says in Galatians 5:22-25 that those who walk in this message, that is, walking by faith (which comes by the word of God, Rom. 10:17) offers the spiritual satisfaction of fulfillment, and an eternal reward.

Unique among men, Solomon could attempt to find meaning in life and an eternal substance with everything available in this life and world. He found that it was impossible, because NOTHING satisfied his emptiness. Ultimately, this experiment broke him. But the value of his experiment is not lost for us, who now know that purpose and eternal rewards are not found through wealth, power, success or worldly knowledge, but through the Gift of Jesus Christ.