

Engaging Gospel Doctrine (Episode 103.2)

LESSON 26 (STUDY NOTES)

King Solomon: Man of Wisdom, Man of Foolishness

Hook	Solomon is known for his great wisdom... then why and how did he make such a mess of his life?
Goal	Class members should learn from both the good and bad in Solomon's example and use their gifts wisely
Overview	
Conclusion	

Manual purpose: To encourage class members to use their blessings wisely and to enter the temple worthily.

I. Sunday School

- a. "Ask what I shall give thee" (1 Kings 3:5) (What would you answer?) (go through the initial narrative in 1 Kings 3)
- b. Our gifts (what we inherit, what we develop, how we share them) (D&C 46)
- c. Solomon: Man of Wisdom (would make a good class activity)
 - i. Humble and earnest
 - ii. Gifted with knowledge and wisdom
 - iii. Administered at times with wisdom and justice
 - iv. Built the temple
- d. Solomon: Man of Foolishness (1 Kings X-X, important to look at 1 Kings 2 as well)
 - i. Wealth: Manual wording "excessively wealthy" (Kugel, p. 503)
 - ii. Exploitation! (see references to forced labor in the reading, led to collapse of united kingdom)
 - iii. Even worse, look at the purges before he became king, described in 1 Kings 2
 1. Adonijah, his brother, for wanting to marry Abishag
 2. Exiles his father's priest Abiathar
 3. Shimmei is killed for leaving house arrest to find his slaves (David tells Solomon to avenge him against Shimmei in 1 Kings 2:8-9)

- 4. Worst of all, Solomon sends Benaiah to assassinate Joab even though he was clinging to the altar of the temple, a place of sanctuary!
- iv. Wives and concubines “loved many foreign women”
- v. Betraying his religion
- e. Temple (review chapters 5-8)

II. Scholarship

- a. What manner of man was Solomon? (Return to the reading)

Review ABD

(Kugel's analysis on p. 504)

- b. Solomon in history

An interesting point Kugel makes is that the insistence the temple was built on the location of a “threshing floor” might be similar to the protest that Jacob “happened upon Bethel, that random place Bethel” (Gen. 28:11) Instead, he suggests plausibly that “Solomon’s temple was built quite intentionally on a site that had always been considered sacred, one that had been used by the Jebusites for worshipping their gods before David conquered their city.” (Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 521) As we have discussed, Zadok the priest may also have been associated with previous Canaanite worship in Jerusalem. Continuity is important... have you ever noticed Christian holidays line up with pagan celebrations? (why we have eggs and bunnies on Easter)

- a. A comment on Israelite religion and the Deuteronomistic History

Solomon is soundly condemned in 1 Kings 11 and elsewhere, but we have to remember all these accounts were put in their final form after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. There were monolatric/“Yahweh only” movements (such as Hosea, one of our earliest books written in the 700s)

Taanach stand: This is called the Taanach cult stand and dates to the 900s!



“Two pillars frame the stand’s top tier (tier 1), which depicts a horse (often thought to be a bull) with a sun disk above its back. On tier 2, growling lions flank two ibex that reach into a stylized tree. Two cherubim stand on the edges of tier 3, with an empty space between them. Tier 4 depicts a naked woman standing between two lions similar to those on tier 2. The lions visually link these two scenes, suggesting that tiers 2 and 4 are tied iconographically as well. The sides of tiers 2, 3 and 4 depict the flanks of the cherubim and lions that gaze out from the front of the stand. On the side of tier 1 are two griffins. The back of the stand is undecorated, except for two holes.

The images on the Taanach (a city SSE of Megiddo, in Northern Israel, Samaritan hill country) cult stand have recently been identified as representations of two Canaanite divinities: the god Baal and the mother goddess commonly known as Asherah. Baal is thus represented by a bull on tier 1, and Asherah is depicted as a nude woman on tier 4 and is symbolized by the tree of life on

tier 2. But author J. Glen Taylor argues that Yahweh—not Baal—and Asherah are the true subjects, making tiers 1 (a horse with a sundisk) and 3 (an “invisible” deity between two cherubim) the earliest known iconographic representations of Yahweh. In this interpretation, Asherah is understood to be Yahweh’s consort.”

<http://members.bib-arch.org/image.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=20&Issue=03&ImageID=05200&SourcePage=publication.asp&UserID=0>

Gods, Goddesses, Images of God in Ancient Israel pp. 399-400

1000-925, observations from archaeology:

- Older themes include anthropomorphic deities such as the “mistress of the animals” or Baal subduing the serpent
- Enthroned figure guarded by falcons represents son God or the king as his representative on earth
- Goddesses appear less frequently but the “enthroned, clothed mother-with-child makes her appearance”
- “trend of the time was to discard anthropomorphic images of deities in favor of substitute figures” (animals, moon, stars, and especially a tree with goats, representing a goddess)
- “all the decoration in the Solomonic temple is predicated upon the idea that this is the place of divine order and blessing, but the motifs are not gender specific or else are associated with a “male” royal god”

III. Study Notes

- a. Strengths and weaknesses (Part genetics, part choices, part specific context) (return to free will idea, as well as the idea that traits have both good and bad sides)
- b. Talk a bit about privilege (We desperately need points of comparison, because we assume how we were raised is normal, and that we deserve it), how that fits in with Solomon

Link to Sheldon’s lessons: