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**What is Wisdom?** by Ben M.

**Genesis 2:5-25**

"What is Wisdom?" There are three things that I'm going to ask you to do this week: pray for wisdom, search the scriptures for wisdom and use the wisdom that God gives you this week.

In the Bronze Age c970 BC Solomon became king after the tumultuous years when David was king. Though united, Israel was in a very fragile state. There had been civil war between Judah and Israel. The kingdom was one in name but not in spirit. Solomon was given instructions from his father to deal with some of the more pronounced trouble-makers. He had found himself a wife in the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt forging an alliance between Israel and Egypt. All the local enemies have been subdued and there was great hope but they still had no temple from which the priests could oversee the spiritual life of the nation or a palace for the dispensation of justice and judgement. These buildings were important because they signified the unification of the kingdom of Israel.

Let's look at how God intervened. Surprisingly, Solomon fell asleep. Solomon, in an effort to unify the people, went to Gilboa, the most important sanctuary at the time and made lavish sacrifices. (1Kings 3:5) After the feast Solomon went to sleep. In his dreams the Lord asked him, "What do you want?" Solomon's deepest concern was that his job is too much for him. In the face of this overwhelming task of uniting Israel, he asked God for wisdom. The Lord said he would give Solomon a wise and understanding heart. Solomon woke up from a nice sleep and a nice dream and the next thing we read (3:16) there were two brawling women in a state of great distress over two babies, one living the other dead. They came straight to Solomon for justice. Solomon said, "Bring me a sword." He proposed to cut the living baby in two and give half a baby to each woman. Was Solomon the most bloodthirsty, vicious, impatient, king ever? This was not about who the mother was. It was about who would give the best love and care to this child. Solomon was able to solve this complex problem in a moment. What he heard in his dream seems to have happened. Suddenly they realised their king had a gift from God (3:28) that would help them solve the nation's problems. And there was contentment. Friends, we have a wise king. We can think of an infinite number of examples of the wisdom of Jesus. Think of the trick question, 'should we obey God or Caesar?' The answer was, 'give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.' What a wise king who balances the Palace and the Temple. Both have to be served properly and fully.

Solomon only had the writings of Moses and of his father David. Take Psalm 133:1 as an example. "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" Paul prayed continually and earnestly that God would give his people (you and me) the wisdom that the Spirit gives so we can live in unity. (Colossians 1:9) Jesus prayed that we would be one people. (John 17:21) The will of God doesn't just come about by itself. We need the intervention of the wisdom of God to bring it about. James recognised the danger of disunity among the scattered church and the need for wisdom. "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5) When we ask, wisdom

will be given and it will produce unity. What we witness in the story of Solomon is the out working of God's will for his people. He wants them to be able to eat, drink and be happy. He brought that about by giving wisdom to the king. Out of the complex situation of the two women, came an understanding. That is what we want in our churches, in our nation, in our families. It is Paul who urges prayers of thanksgiving and petitions for all people. (Tim 2:1-2) Do our national institutions, our Royal Family need wisdom? The world is changing; we need wisdom. Wisdom is a gift of the spirit from God. So, ask him for it. Pray for it. Who better to turn to than the one who judges perfectly?

The Bible, authored by the Holy Spirit, speaks of Jesus as 'the manifestation of the wisdom of God'. The whole of the Bible is full of God's wisdom including the wise sayings of Solomon. Wisdom is a gift but it is something you can study and apply yourself. As you start making better choices in keeping with the revealed will of God, you can expect a greater measure of unity and peace around you. Read your Bible. Read the wisdom books.

Solomon read the book of Genesis. In Genesis 2:5&6 we see the depiction of an empty dry barren desert where God took dust and made a man. God takes the man (v8) to a flourishing garden where there are rivers and plants and animals. His job is to care for it and respect the rules of that place. God gave him a wife to support and help him. Solomon found himself in a parallel situation with his new wife in a place where he has to work to bring the best out of the place. Adam's love poem in verse 23 is a precursor to the Song of Solomon praising the delight and unity between a man and his wife. What we have to be so careful of is that evil is real. Temptation really does come. If you believe the lie and are persuaded away from God, the consequences are devastating. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself." (Proverbs 26:4) That is, do not engage with a fool on his own terms or you'll become just like him. "We have an adversary. Satan will speak to you. Don't get involved in conversation with him. He is a fool because he is an enemy of God and his end is already written. His demise is certain and if you believe and follow him your end will be the same. The next verse says the opposite, "Answer a fool according to his folly, for he will be wise in his own eyes. In other words, deal with him. He needs to be taught a lesson. That lesson is as Jesus our wise king, said, "Get behind me Satan." That is what we need to do; it is the wisdom that we receive from the Bible. Proverbs 2:6 tells us the source of wisdom. Read your Bible and be wise.

Solomon needed wisdom to build the temple God provided him with a uniquely gifted and wise man named Hiram (1Kings 7:14) Acts 6:3 tells us of the seven men who were known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom to help build the church of God. This is what the church needs, people who study to show themselves approved, rightly dividing the word of truth. They understand the situation because they know God. They are prepared to serve Jesus with all their heart, mind and strength.

Wisdom is the building block from which the house of God is established. We need it and when we've got it we have to use it. (James 1:22) We are given a job to do and that is to build the house of God as a united people under our great King Jesus Christ.