SUBJECT: Life

RESPONSIVE READING: Solomon's Prayer to God for Wisdom, and God's Response (I Kings 3: 5-14)

TIME LINE: @950 BC

"This [chapter] relates how Solomon, out of various gifts offered to him by the Almighty, chose wisdom, and adds an illustration of the use he made of the gift with which he was endowed." (Dummelow Commentary)

“God often gave revelation in dreams….However, this dream was unique—a two-way conversation between the Lord and Solomon.” (v.5) (MacArthur Commentary)

Solomon

Solomon was a child of David’s mature age with Bathsheba, and enjoyed all the privileges of being “born to the purple.” His name, Solomon, means The Peaceful, one whose reign was foretold to be a reign of peace and quietness. He was brought up in luxury and wealth and knew nothing of the hardships which developed much of the character of his father. He received a good education and was placed under the care and training of Nathan, an eminent Hebrew prophet.

Intrigue for the Succession. Solomon did not ascend to his father's throne without opposition. “As David grew old, his son Adonijah began to take steps to succeed his father with the support of several court officials, including the general Joab and the priest Abiathar.” (HarperCollins Dictionary) David honored a promise to Bathsheba and chose Solomon to succeed him because the other sons born in his warrior days were not fit for the throne. Until David’s death, it might be said of Solomon, as of many an adolescent, that he lived by his father David’s God. During Solomon’s reign the kingdom of Israel took its place among the great monarchies of the East. Large treasures, accumulated through many years, were at his disposal. He “reigned for forty years in the second third of the tenth century BC.” (Ibid)
**Solomon’s Prayer for Wisdom.** God revealed Himself to Solomon in a dream and asked Solomon what he most desired. Instead of asking for material riches, comfort, or pleasure for himself, Solomon prayed above all things that God would equip him for his task of leadership.

“One of Solomon’s first major feats was the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem as a place for worship of the God of Israel." (Who Was Who in the Bible) "No remains of these [Temple and palaces] have been found." (Oxford Guide to Ideas & Issues)

Solomon’s prosperity is portrayed in the fulsome description given in I Kings 4: 20-28 and 10: 14-29, in the marriage with Pharaoh’s daughter (and there was a considerable harem), in the international role indicated by his dealings with Hiram of Tyre and the visit of the Queen of Sheba, as well as the extensive international trade (a fleet at Eziongeber; “Tarshish” ships; trading in horses and chariots).

The Dedication of the Temple (I Kings 8: 22-53/II Chron 6: 12-42) The dedication feast coincided with the Feast Of Tabernacles. It was fitting that the temple was dedicated during one of the three yearly festivals, the Feast of Tabernacles.

Solomon formed alliances with other countries that improved the economic success of the kingdom. The most significant were with Egypt and Tyre. However, Solomon is best known for taking action on a dream of repentance when he chose wisdom as the gift of God in preference to wealth or long-life.

He was the author of much of the Book of Proverbs and perhaps also the author of the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes.


--"In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream," etc.
  • (Let us bear in mind that all is mind.)
    ---Gibeon means hill.
  • God spoke to Solomon while he, Solomon, was in a higher altitude of thought.
    ---In Solomon we see an advance beyond David.

--"What shall I give thee?"
  • Solomon's dream was a condition of Mind oblivious of externals.
    ---Abstracted from all outside influence, his thought is more definite.

--"And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto this servant David," etc.
  • Realization that he (Solomon) is in the right line of ascendancy.
---He recognizes himself as the continued offspring of David's thought, a realization that God radiates only mercy and love according as we walk before Him in Truth.


Give me an understanding heart,
   O Lord,—this is my prayer;
Thy healing strength would I impart,
   To ease earth's weary care;
   Clasp Thy kind hand,
   And understand;
Ah—this is my prayer.

Give me, I pray, the power to see
   The tears behind the smile;
To speak Thy word so tenderly,
   That hearts are healed from guile;
   So lives now sad
   May be more glad,
   And sweetly rest the while.

**SECTION II: Enoch Walked with God** (Gen 5: 23,24)

“The ages of these antediluvians is problematic….Various suggestions have been offered to explain them, from gematria (assigning numerical values to words) to astronomy (e.g., Enoch’s age 365=days in a year)….At present all that can be said is that they reflect the author’s belief that these people were real yet lived a long time ago.” (Eerdmans Commentary)

"It is noteworthy that the life of Enoch is the shortest mentioned in this [chapter]." (Dummelow Commentary)

**Enoch**

[ˈnek] ("dedication")

Adam
   Cain
   Enosh (Enoch?)
   Abel
   Seth
Enos
   Cainan
   Mahalaleel
   Jared (father)
Enoch = Edni
Methuselah (son)

The son of Jared, and father of Methuselah; descendent of Seth. His father was one hundred and sixty-two years old when he was born. After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch "walked with God three hundred years," when he was translated without tasting death. His whole life on earth was three hundred and sixty-five years. He was the "seventh from Adam," as distinguished from the son of Cain, the third from Adam. He is spoken of in the catalogue of Old Testament worthies in the Epistle to the Hebrews. When he was translated, only Adam, so far as recorded, had as yet died a natural death, and Noah was not yet born. Mention is made of Enoch's prophesying only in Jude.

"Traces of the legend are found in Hebrews 11.5, where Enoch has become a hero of faith. The brief reference in Genesis is further elaborated in Jewish Midrashic tradition; his wife's name was Edni, and he spent hidden years with the angels before he was taken up to heaven." (Oxford Guide to People & Places)

"A whole circle of apocalyptic literature was ascribed to him in the post-exilic days, which is embodied in the so-called book of Enoch." (Dummelow Commentary)


God must have been very real to Enoch.

For the timeless solitude
of empty desert and of trackless plain,
and underneath the quiet stars
aglow within the dim sky's magnitude,
or where the wind swept clean again
the sleeping hills and sun-baked rocks,
and also in the bustle of the camp,
amid the stir of mart and din of trade,
in all the flurry of the mingling flocks,
or chatter round the goods displayed,
did Enoch feel the presence of his God—
like wings of glory beating round his head,
like tongues of fire leaping in his heart,
like radiant light about the path he trod….

Among many wonderful lessons given us in the Scriptures, none is of more vital interest to Christian Scientists than the earthly records of those who are described as having learned how to walk with God.

- The term "walked with God," used in the Bible in reference to Noah and Enoch, has been defined as "a prophetic life spent in immediate converse with the spiritual world."

- The Scriptures tell us that Enoch, seeking divine guidance, walked and talked with God three hundred years, and "he was not; for God took him."

- His translation followed as a necessary result of his daily life, which he had chosen to spend in constant communion with God.

### SECTION III & IV: Elisha Prophesies a Son for the Shunammite (II Kings 4: 8-12,14-17)

**TIME LINE: @825 BC**

The verse 14 remark "implied two things: (1) she suffered the shame of being a barren woman…; and (2) her husband might die without an heir to carry on his name (Deut 25: 5-10." (MacArthur Commentary)

**Elisha**  
[ I 'sha] ("my God is salvation")

(Abbreviated [See 8.13.06 for full bio])

Elisha was an early Hebrew prophet who succeeded the prophet Elijah when Elijah’s time on earth was finished. Elisha ministered for about 50 years in the northern kingdom of Israel, serving God during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash. Elisha’s work consisted of presenting the Word of God through prophecy, advising kings, anointing kings, helping the needy, and performing several miracles.

There are two types of Elisha stories.

- One type is the lengthy narratives in which the prophet, sometimes with his servant Gehazi, is involved with the great figures of the day…..

  He is fed by the Shunammite woman and raises her son from the dead:

"Elisha came to live on Mount Carmel with an attendant called Gehazi." (Who's Who in the Old Testament) Elisha became a friend of a wealthy family in Shunem. The Shunammite woman displayed hospitality toward the prophet by regularly feeding him and building a room onto her home where he could lodge. Elisha repaid the childless couple by promising them a son. Later, when tragedy struck the child, Elisha, raised him from the dead.
Elisha finished the work of Elijah, destroying the system of Baal worship, completed the tasks assigned to Elijah of anointing Hazael and Jehu, and saw the final ruin of the house of Ahab and Jezebel. “Powerful enough to perform miracles and appoint kings, yet sensitive enough to weep over the fate of Israel (2 Kings 8:11,12), Elisha, disciple and successor to Elijah, proved to be both prophet and statesman.” (Holman Bible Dictionary)

You may notice a striking resemblance between Elisha’s works and Christ Jesus’ works; in his works there is a significant foreshadowing of things to come in Jesus’ ministry.

"a great woman"/The Shunammite

There are two “Shunammite” women mentioned in the Old Testament. Both were female natives or inhabitants of Shunem. The one in this week’s lesson is the one who befriended Elisha, and whose son was revived by him. Her story is told in II Kings, chapter 4.

MacArthur says that the reference to "a great woman" means that she "was great in wealth and in social prominence."

Gehazi

[Geh hah'zih] ("valley of vision")

Gehazi is a servant or younger associate of the prophet Elisha. “The Bible portrays him as a man of questionable character.” (Holman Dictionary)

He is first mentioned when Elisha asked how he could reward the Shunammite woman who had welcomed him into her home. "Gehazi suggested to Elisha the gift of a son to the childless woman and her husband as a reward for her extended hospitality to them." (Interpreter's Dictionary) A son was eventually born to the couple, but after a few years he died. The Shunammite woman sought Elisha’s help. In an attempt to show Gehazi that faith healed, and not magic, Elisha sent him to lay the prophet’s staff on the dead child’s head. Nothing happened. But when Elisha himself went to the child, the child revived.

Some time later Gehazi is in conversation with the king of Israel when this same woman appears seeking recovery of her property after a sojourn in Philistia. He did testify to the king of Elisha’s good deeds and helped the widow get her lands restored.

Gehazi’s true character came out in the story of Naaman, the Syrian whom Elisha cured of a skin disease. Elisha refused any reward, but Gehazi ran after Naaman to claim something for himself. He told Naaman that Elisha wanted a talent of silver and two changes of clothing for the needy. Because of
his greed, lying, and misuse of the prophetic office, Elisha cursed Gehazi with the same disease from which Naaman had been cured.


--Throughout the Bible there are instances of childless couples who had their deep desire for an enlarged sense of family fulfilled.

  • God, as our loving Father-Mother, is forever supplying man, His expression, with everything he needs for his completeness, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

--The story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman in the Bible is a beautiful example of this fact.

  • This woman's spiritual sense had recognized those Godlike qualities expressed by Elisha; she had welcomed into her consciousness, her mental home, the prophet's vision—the vision of spiritual reality that contradicts the material senses.

---On one of his visits to her home, Elisha, knowing that she was childless and had a great desire for a child, promised that this desire would be fulfilled.

---He said, "Thou shalt embrace a son."


--Elisha’s healing work was an outstanding mark of his career, and much can be gained from considering his association with the brave Shunammite who is described as “a great woman” (II Kings 4:8).

  ∞ She recognized him as “an holy man of God” (verse 9), welcomed him as her guest on repeated occasions, and, with her husband, provided a special room for the prophet’s use.

--Grateful for her generosity, and learning that she was childless, he assured her that within a year she would bear a son, despite the fact that her husband, a prosperous farmer, was well on in years.

  ∞ Elisha’s promise was at first more than she was prepared to accept, but in due course it was fulfilled.

--One morning, several years later, the boy, who had joined his father in the harvest field, was suddenly stricken by severe pains in his head.

  ∞ Although promptly returned to his mother’s care, about noon he passes away on her knee.

--Placing the child on Elisha’s bed, the Shunammite resolutely closed the door and set out to procure the prophet’s aid.

--Within a short time [after arriving, Elisha’s] prayers were answered, and he had the joy of returning the lad to his mother, alive and well.
--During his ministry in northern Israel, the prophet Elisha had occasion at times to pause at the little village of Shunem, which lies on rising ground at the eastern end of the plain of Esdraelon.

• Moreover, on each successive visit he was fed a light repast by one whom our Common Version significantly describes as "a great women" (II Kings 4:8).

---It is evident that her generosity matched the strength and noble dignity of her character.

• She was married, but, as in the case of Deborah, little is said with regard to her husband, evidently many years her senior (compare verse 14).

--Realizing intuitively that the prophet was no ordinary visitor, but "a holy man of God," she arranged for a room to be prepared and furnished expressly for his use.


--A Biblical expression of special interest to Christian Scientists is "the man of God."

• These words did not mean so much to them until through the study of the writings of Mary Baker Eddy they obtained a better understanding of man in God's image and likeness.

• Indeed, it is impossible to study Mrs. Eddy's writings with any very great degree of the spirit of Truth and Love in which they are given, without feeling that to be a "man of God," and to deserve to be thought of as such, is a most worthy aim.

• The world needs the healing influence of God's idea, man; needs to see this man expressed among us.

--Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha are among those to whom was given this distinctive identification in the Bible.

Elisha Revives the Shunammite's Son from Death (II Kings 4: 18-37)

MacArthur says, with respect to v.19, "the child probably suffered sunstroke. The cries of the boy, the part affected, and the season of the year ('reapers') lead to that conclusion. Sunstroke could be fatal, as in this case (v.20)."

While orthodox Christianity admits that the soul of man is immortal and can never die, and that death does not affect the spiritual man, nevertheless the fact that if the real man is immortal and has no ending, he must have had no beginning, has been generally overlooked, although this is taught in Christian Science.

- We learn, too, in Christian Science that no resurrection awaits the bones and dust that are put away in the grave, but that the resurrection comes hourly and daily, both here and hereafter, and that we are being resurrected when we overcome some sin, or fault of any kind.

---Every time we rise above a moral fault, or some fear which sits enthroned in our consciousness, we are rising above that much of sorrow or suffering, and consequently rising to some extent above what is called death, as death is nothing more than the culmination of fear, sin, suffering, and disease.

- Therefore, should death present itself to the one who is working faithfully to overcome evil, there will be much less of fear, less of suffering, if one has destroyed those elements of mortal belief; and if so, then that much less of death itself, for if we destroy the basic elements of a thing, we destroy the thing itself.

McCleery, Gladys Clara, ""Shut the door,"" Christian Science Sentinel (2 August 1941), p. 954.

The story of the Shunammite woman related in the second book of Kings is a narrative dear to the heart of Christian Scientists the world over.

- Its portrayal of the circumstances under which a son, an only child, was born to this woman, was later apparently lost to her through death, and finally restored to her in fullness of life, strikes a chord whose notes vibrate with mingled joy, compassion, and exaltation.

---We do not read of any yielding to grief, self-pity, bitterness, or despair on her part.

- We are told that she laid the child upon the bed of Elisha, "an holy man of God;" and that upon leaving the room she "shut the door."

--Surely the closing of the door was not without its significance.

- Was not this simple deed symbolical of the bereaved mother's shutting the door of her consciousness upon the gripping sense of fear, loneliness, sorrow, loss, and separation which would attempt to overwhelm her?

SECTION VI: The Rich Young Man (Matt 19: 1, 16-21)


TIME LINE: The last months, March, 30 AD at Perea

"one came…the young man"

One day an earnest, impulsive young man ran to Jesus and knelt on the road to worship him (Mark 10:17).
This story of the rich young man is told in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew alone describes him as young, and only in Luke is he a ruler. Matthew’s version is more objective, and scholars suggest that this is because Matthew did not wish to ascribe human emotion to Jesus.

"Luke calls the man a 'ruler' which means he could have been either a member of the Sanhedrin, or a ruler of the synagogue." (Dummelow Commentary) In v.16 he addresses Jesus as Good Master (or, Teacher), "this way of addressing Jesus does not necessarily recognize His deity. The young man simply means that Christ is righteous and a teacher from God who apparently has eternal life and might know how he could get it." (MacArthur Commentary)

"The incident is a striking example of the seductive power of wealth. The young man was so good, and so near to the Kingdom of God…and yet he failed, because though he loved the Kingdom much, he loved money more." (Dummelow Commentary)

**Hyzer, Mabel Reed, "Why callest thou me good?,"** Christian Science Sentinel (20 February 1926), p. 483.

--When one approached Christ Jesus with the inquiry, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus with his habitual promptness and clearness expressed a forcible truth that we should do well persistently to remember.

• Setting aside for the minute the question asked, he arrested the attention of the seeker at his first word, thus correcting and preventing further misapprehension of his own position.

---He said, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."

• Jesus never lost sight of the fact that all of the good he possessed and expressed came from God, and it was his recognition of this fact which enabled him to do daily those works which we as Christian Scientists are so desirous of emulating.


--Bunyan, in his incomparable allegory, presents his pilgrim as fleeing from the City of Destruction — from the materiality of mortal sense, from the baselessness of earthly pleasure, from the tyranny of evil, from the fear of death — and crying, "Life! life! eternal life!"

• And indeed these little words "life" and "death" stand for the heart-hunger and the perpetual fear of all the ages.
--But in the fullness of time there appeared on the earth a new teacher, one of unique personality and with a strange new message to stir and thrill the thought of a worn and weary world.

  • He never sat at the feet of any Zadoc or Ezra or Gamaliel, was never trained by rabbi or scribe or priest. No school of the prophets acknowledged him, no academic grove had instructed him, no alma mater was responsible for him.

    ---His immediate following was just a little company of the very common people.

  • And yet, with sublime disregard for all the traditions and conventionalities and proprieties of his race and age, and in the calm and undisturbed consciousness...he is uttering absolute and essential truth....

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Bibliography is provided only in the notes of the first Sunday of each month.

*The weekly Bible Lessons are made up of selections from the King James Version of the Bible and the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, who discovered Christian Science.