

“OT Survey: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon”  
(Overview, Purpose)

- I. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon in the Covenant.
  - A. Wisdom literature.
    1. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are included in this category.
    2. Highly poetical, many figures of speech.
  - B. Place in the covenant.
    1. Their purpose is to teach true wisdom: how to walk in the ways of the Lord.
    2. They help us to apply the stipulations that we might inherit the blessings.
- II. Proverbs.
  - A. Name.
    1. The word “proverb” is the English translation of the Hebrew word *mashal*, which means “a brief, pithy saying which expresses wisdom” (Young, 311).
    2. “It is, strictly speaking, a representation or comparison” (Ibid.).
  - B. Authorship.
    1. Most of the book was written by Solomon.
      - a. “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel” (1:1).
      - b. “The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother” (10:1).
      - c. “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed” (25:1).
      - d. “Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was *known* in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kings 4:29-34).
    2. 22:17-24:34 are called “the words of the wise” and were probably written by Solomon.
    3. Chapter 30 was written by Agur, a man of wisdom at the time of Solomon.
    4. Chapter 31:1-9 by Lemuel, whom some suppose to be Solomon, the name meaning “for God.”
    5. 31:10-31 was written by an unknown author.
  - C. Structure: The book is divided into six sections:
    1. 1:1-9:18: The Praise of Wisdom.
      - a. Wisdom personified as the faithful woman: “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table; she has sent out her maidens, she calls from the tops of the heights of the city: ‘Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!’ To him who lacks understanding she says, ‘Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake *your* folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding” (9:1-6).

- b. Folly personified as the adulterous woman: “The woman of folly is boisterous, *she is* naive and knows nothing. She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city, calling to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight: ‘Whoever is naive, let him turn in here,’ and to him who lacks understanding she says, ‘Stolen water is sweet; and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.’ But he does not know that the dead are there, *that* her guests are in the depths of Sheol” (vv. 13-18).
- c. The basic question is, Whom will we embrace? Wisdom and life, or folly and death.

- 2. 10:1-24:34: Miscellaneous proverbs of Solomon.
- 3. 25:1-29:27: The proverbs of Solomon Hezekiah’s men transcribed.
- 4. 30:1-33: The words of Agur.
- 5. 31:1-9: The words of Lemuel.
- 6. 31:10-31: An alphabetical acrostic proverb extolling the virtuous woman.

#### D. Purpose:

- 1. To teach wisdom:
  - a. “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion, a wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles” (1:1-6).
  - b. It is for the instruction of the naïve.
  - c. It is for the further instruction of the wise.
- 2. That we might inherit the blessing and avoid the curse.
  - a. Wisdom: “Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast” (3:16-18).
  - b. Folly: “Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death” (7:25-27).

### III. Ecclesiastes.

- A. Name: Hebrew *Kohleleth*, meaning “one who addresses an assembly” or “Preacher.”
- B. Authorship: “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1) or Solomon.
- C. Purpose:
  - 1. To show us the vanity of pursuing worldly pleasure as an end in itself.
  - 2. To encourage us to pursue obedience to obtain the true blessing, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (12:13-14).

### IV. Song of Solomon.

- A. Name: Song of Songs, or the most excellent of songs.
- B. Authorship: Solomon: “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s” (1:1).
- C. Purpose:
  - 1. Some see it as an allegory of Christ’s love for His church.
  - 2. Others, a song expressing the beauty and blessing of the marital relationship.