

1 Kings 3:4-9, 16-28
The Wisdom of Solomon?
WRCoB 10.30.22

Wisdom is depicted in the Bible as a woman.

Her pronouns are feminine.

Proverbs 8:1-2 CEV

**8 With great understanding,
Wisdom is calling out
² as SHE stands at the crossroads
and on every hill.**

In Proverbs, Wisdom is with God from the very beginning.

Proverbs 8:22-23 NRSVUE

²² **“The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
²³ Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.**

How does Wisdom’s presence in the beginning
Jive with the creation story found in Genesis?

There is no mention of her in Genesis.
Or is there?

Genesis 1:1-2 NLT

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Some suggest this Spirit of God
Is none other than Lady Wisdom.

To complicate matters, what about John's pronouncement
That Jesus was there as well?

John 1:1-2 NRSVUE

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God.

The Word becomes flesh and is Jesus.

So now we have Wisdom and the Word
Competing for a place in the creation story.

It seems to me then
What we're really talking about
Are the three differing aspects of God, Trinity

Trinity (God as)

Father	Son (Jesus)	Holy Spirit
God	Word (Logos)	Wisdom (Sofia)

We have the more familiar
Masculine, patriarchal, anthropomorphic version
In the three persons of the Trinity

God as Father, God as Son, and God as Holy Spirit

And then we have the less familiar
More spiritual, mystical, and feminine
To describe the Trinity

God, Word (Logos), and Wisdom (Sophia)

It is easy for us to imagine God as a he
What with the use of all the masculine pronouns.

It does us good Scripture reminds us of Divine Wisdom

That God is neither solely male or female
But in some mysterious way, both.

Genesis 1:27 Common English Bible

**²⁷ God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them
male and female God created them.**

Also, according to Scripture

There is this Wisdom that is divine.

And then there is wisdom which is human.

Wisdom is wonderfully depicted in poetry in Proverbs 8.

Proverbs 8:20 NRSV

**[She] walks in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,**

James, in the NT, describes her this way.

James 3:17 CEB

**¹⁷ What of the wisdom from above? First, it is pure, and
then peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and
good actions, fair, and genuine.**

This is she who is from above.

And then we have human wisdom.

James 3:14-15 CEB

**However, if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition
in your heart, then stop bragging and living in ways that
deny the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes
down from above. Instead, it is from the earth, natural
and demonic.**

With wisdom in mind
Let's consider Solomon
Thought to be the wisest of kings.

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Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba
Took the throne after his father's death.

He built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem
To house the Ark of the Covenant
And a lavish palace to live in.

He had all the power, and the fame, and the fortune
His father had and so much more.

He became so well known throughout the land
That even the Queen of Sheba from Ethiopia
Came to pay her respects to Solomon.

If the biblical account is accurate with its statistics
King Solomon was the richest king to ever live.

The reference is here in 1 Kings 10.

1 Kings 10:14 CEV.
Solomon received almost 23 tons of gold a year.

He was king for forty years.

Forty years at 23 tons of gold per year.

According to wealthresult.com
He would have been worth in today's money, \$2.1 trillion

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Unfortunately, he acquired all this fame and fortune
Off the backs of the people of Israel
Who suffered immensely under his reign.

He taxed his people excessively
He conscripted them into forced labor
And he drafted them as soldiers into his army.

In fact, for the people of Israel
There didn't seem to be much difference

Between their years in bondage in Egypt
And their years under King Solomon's rule.

He married women from other nations
Not only to satisfy his voracious appetite
But for political ambitions.

In fact, he built an alliance with Egypt
By marrying Pharaoh's daughter.

According to Scripture
He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

That certainly causes you to wonder
Just how wise Solomon truly was.

I'm not the only one left wondering.

There's this wonderful debate
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Between Huck and his runaway-enslaved-comrade, Jim.

Huck tells Jim that when things get a little dull
And kings tire of whacking people's heads off
They go hang out at the harem.

Jim asks Huck what a harem was.

Huck said that was where kings kept their wives.

Jim said it must have been some rackety times
In the nursery.

And he reckoned the wives argued considerably.

Jim then questioned Solomon's wisdom.

He asks Huck if he knew the story about Solomon
Going to chop a child in two?

Huck says of course he did.

Jim says now, take that stump over there
Let that be one of the women.
Let you, Huck, be the other one.

And this here dollar, let it be the child.

Jim says, I'll be Solomon.

Both you and the stump claim the dollar.

Jim says, do I go around and ask the neighbors
Which one of you owns the dollar?

And then when I find out who the rightful owner is
Hand the bill over safe and sound?

No, Jim says, I take and whack the bill in two
And give one half to you
And the other half to the stump.

Jim says, what good is a half a dollar bill?
You can't buy anything with it?

And what's the use of a half a child?
Jim wouldn't give anything for a million of them.

Huck jumps in and says

*“But Jim, you’ve missed the point!
You’ve missed it a thousand miles!”*

And Jim responds, *“Go along with your points.”*

*I know sense when I see it
And there ain’t no sense in this.”*

The real point Jim says is further down.

The real point is in the way Solomon was raised.

Jim says

You take a man that’s got one or two children
Will that man be wasteful of them?

No, he can’t afford to.

He knows to value them.

But you take a man,

That’s got about 5 million children
Running around the house and it’s different.

He’d as soon chop a child in two as a cat!

There’s plenty more where that came from!

A child or two, more or less,

Wasn’t a concern to Solomon!

Huck says you just can’t talk sense into Jim.

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Though Solomon may have been

The richest and most powerful king ever in Israel.

Though he may have been the wisest man who ever lived.

Every powerful person has a weakness.

Solomon's harem of wives and concubines
Distracted him to such a degree
That things fell apart rapidly.

Frederick Buechner writes

*Wisdom is more than riddles and wisecracks and courtroom
coups, and in most things that mattered King Solomon was
among the wisest fools who ever wore a crown.*

Not only did Solomon have to satisfy
A thousand women's physical needs
(imagine Valentine's Day!!)

He had to satisfy their spiritual needs too.

1 Kings 11:4 NLT

**⁴In Solomon's old age, THEY turned his heart to
worship other gods instead of being completely faithful
to the Lord his God, as his father, David, had been.**

God bestowed upon Solomon a discerning heart
To govern a great nation.

But over time the cacophony of voices
Vying for his attention
Overpowered the One voice he needed to hear

And Solomon's wisdom swept away
By the competing interest groups he catered to.

It wasn't long after Solomon's death that the kingdom split
And never again regained its glory days.

Following the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Harry Truman was installed as President of the USA.

At the end of his first address to Congress on April 16, 1945
He spoke these words.

At this moment, I have in my heart a prayer. As I assume my heavy duties, I humbly pray to Almighty God, in the words of Solomon:

“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”

I ask only to be a good and faithful servant of my Lord and my people.

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Next Tuesday, November 8

We have our midterm elections.

We need to pray the right candidates will be elected.

We need to pray that those who run for office
Seek the blessing of Divine Wisdom
As did Solomon, as did Harry Truman.

We need to pray their words would utter truth.
That there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

In today’s politically divisive atmosphere
Our candidates could do with a bit of heavenly wisdom.

And so, may the cacophony of voices
That seek to distract be silenced

And may the candidates hear when Lady Wisdom speaks.

Proverbs 8:8 CEV

⁸Every word [she] speaks is honest, not one is misleading or deceptive.

This is my prayer.

May it be so.