

Who Is As the Wise Man?

Who Knoweth the Interpretation of a Thing?

“Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man’s wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.”

Ecclesiastes 8:1

Introduction:

1. *This short study is an overview and sample of Bible wisdom to provoke you men to desire and seek it.*
2. The title is from Eccl 8:1, where the wise man is presented as incomparably excellent to other men.
3. It is the Lord’s goal, my goal, and should be your goal to be like the men of Issachar (I Chron 12:32).
4. What is wisdom? It is being circumspect and understanding what the will of the Lord is (Ep 5:14-17).
5. How do we get? Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!
6. What is my duty? To preach, warn, and teach Christ and wisdom with all my might (Col 1:28-29).
7. What is your duty? To desire wisdom, to separate from distractions, and to intermeddle in it (Pr 18:1).
8. Young men! The Lord wants you! I want you! You will bury us older men. Will you be wise men?
9. You cannot be wise without emphasizing and prioritizing the study of God’s word in your daily life.
10. You cannot be wise without prioritizing the hearing of God’s word (I Thess 5:20; Mal 2:7; Jer 3:15).

What is wisdom?

Wisdom is the power of right judgment ... knowing how to respond to any situation so as to please God by righteousness and men by peace and profit (I Sam 18:5,14,30).

What Bible men were wise?

It should be easy to think of Joseph, David, Daniel, and Jesus among many others. These are excellent men and incomparable to other men. They were exceptional and should be our goal.

What is knowing the interpretation of a thing?

The ability to assess and analyze a situation in light of circumstances to know what ought to be done, as 200 men of Issachar did in a time of political upheaval (I Chron 12:32; John 7:24).

Wisdom is subjective and situational.

Wisdom is more an art than a science, though its subjective application to situations depends on the very objective and absolute written words of scripture (Pr 22:17-21). Much of Bible wisdom is principles gathered from precepts and examples to be applied. Situation ethics (the Joseph Fletcher variety) looks to man for authority, but Christian ethics to the Bible. Because each situation in life is more or less unique, wisdom is the flexible solution set provided by the Bible.

Lady Wisdom wants you!

Solomon used a powerful personification in Proverbs to present wisdom to his son and readers as Lady Wisdom, a wonderful woman seeking men to dine at her table and partake of the wisdom she freely offered. He set her in stark contrast to Lady Folly and the strange woman, with whom most men spend their lives to their own destruction (Pr 1:20-33; 3:13-18; 4:6-13; 8:1-36; 9:1-18).

The wisdom we want.

There is academic, professional, natural, relational, and spiritual wisdom. We want them in reverse order! We want wisdom that knows God's will (Eph 5:17; Col 1:9,28; Jas 3:17). We want wisdom taught in the Bible (Ps 19:7; 119:128-130; Is 8:20; II Tim 3:16-17). We want wisdom of God's mysteries (Matt 13:10-17; I Tim 3:16; I Cor 2:1-13).

David and the shewbread.

How did David know he could eat the shewbread, which was only for the priests (Ex 29:32-33; Lev 8:31; 24:9)? The only Bible verses on the subject strictly prohibited him from eating it. How did he do it? He knew Hosea 6:6 long before it was written! Solomon also wrote it (Pr 21:3). Jesus used this event for a principle (Matt 12:1-7). Note how he helped Ahimelech see his perspective (I Sam 21:1-6). We can apply this principle in many matters of conflicting authority.

Hezekiah and the Passover.

Hezekiah held a Passover with at least two violations – they observed it at the wrong time, and all the people were not properly sanctified for it (II Chron 30:1-27). Hezekiah asked the good LORD to pardon every one with a prepared heart, and they presumed on the mercy of God by understanding that they kept it 11 months early, rather than 1 month late! God heard and blessed. Their hearts were right, and God mercifully accepted their desire to not wait to worship Him!

Some sticks, a rock, and the Ark.

What happened to a man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath (Num 15:30-36)? To Moses for smiting a rock (Num 20:1-13)? To Uzzah for steadying the Ark (II Sam 6:1-11; I Chr 15:13)? Why did they miss God's mercy like David eating shewbread and Hezekiah violating the Passover? They presumed against knowledge, without the right heart, and/or without necessity. If the Lord has specified a matter, unless there are mitigating circumstances, His word is final.

Jesus and Caesar's money.

Jesus, superior to the men of Issachar, proved a *de facto* government over Israel by asking to see the tribute money, which negated their *de jure* government from Moses (Matt 22:15-22). We can do the same to the anarchists (self-proclaimed patriots), who claim the U.S. Constitution is their king, yet they pass Federal Reserve Notes as money in contradiction to Article 1; Section 10. The Bible is incredibly wonderful, and the scorners marveled at our Lord's answer to their dilemma.

Finding wisdom in the Bible.

1. Genealogies contain an emphasis on men, family trees, jewels, etc. (I Chr 4:9-10; 12:32-33).
2. The Sermon on the Mount of our Lord is packed full of great wisdom (Matt chapters 5-7).
3. Christian liberty teaches wise discretion in matters allowed by God (Rom 14; I Cor 6,8,10).
4. The Law of Moses contains statutes that were the envy of the whole world (Deut 4:5-8).
5. The life of Christ in the gospels provides a wide variety of events illustrating His wisdom.
6. The epistles of Paul show inspired reasoning by a wise man to persuade various audiences.
7. The historical books show God in world events and let us see men relating to God and men.
8. The poetic sections of scripture contain the reasoning and thoughts of godly, holy men.
9. Proverbs is a collection of more than 500 pithy statements of pure, inspired wisdom.
10. Ecclesiastes is God's inspired book of philosophy for a general overview of human life.

Why do bad things happen to Christians?

The Bible gives examples and principles to know that God may be doing something for His own glory (John 9:1-3); may be trying a man's faith to make him better (Jas 1:2-4); may be chastening for sin (Heb 12:5-13); or may be bringing the natural consequences of foolishness to bear (Pr 11:6; 13:15; 29:15; etc.). Of course, God may have 1 billion other purposes in mind.

Libertarianism and "victimless" crimes.

Libertarians have many good ideas about limiting government to those areas where they serve a profitable purpose, freeing the private sector to operate unhindered according to the rules of human action. However, libertarianism also weighs in on moral matters by espousing freedom and liberty in areas like adultery, bestiality, fornication, prostitution, sodomy, etc. Are you able to see past terms like "consensual sex" or "two consenting adults" to see God and the Bible? Mrs. Potiphar was consenting, but Joseph would not lie with her due to his loyalty to God!

Two sides to every coin.

Never believe only one side of a relationship, unless the person speaking is near apostolic character and reputation! As every coin has two sides, so does every relationship. This is especially true in marriage, where the husband and wife may have very different stories. Solomon judged by listening to both sides and discerning the good and the evil (I Kgs 3:16-28). The Bible further helps in this minor point of wisdom by requiring at least two witnesses.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

Be not deceived! Be not deceived! If you allow, tolerate, or compromise with yourself, your wife, or your children associating with carnal Christians or worldly sinners, you will be guilty for destroying souls and lives. Wisdom cannot and will not exist or grow around such persons. You must keep yourself and your family away from all such persons (I Cor 15:33; Pr 23:20). It is your duty to protect your family and help them prosper by cutting off all fools, carnal Christians, scorners, and worldlings. We are strangers and pilgrims here, and children can learn it early.

Voting – Principle or Prudence?

Some Christians vote by so-called principle, rather than prudence. Though we live in a two-party system, they vote for a candidate without a chance anywhere. They call it principle, but they end up voting by default for the worst of the two real candidates. By voting for Ross Perot, they elected Bill Clinton twice. The world's profane organizations tell us who to vote for – the opposite their choice! Paul showed us what to do, choose the lesser of two evils (Acts 25:9-11).

Divorce and remarriage.

We do not believe in divorce, except for fornication (Matt 5:31-32; 19:1-9) or desertion (I Cor 7:12-16). For believers, every marital problem can be solved by each spouse submitting to God's word for their duties in the fear of God. We have not had a divorce of believers in our 26-year history. However, we would justify divorce for extreme marital violations (like physical abuse, sexual defrauding, etc.), on the basis of mercy and intent (Matt 12:1-7; Mark 2:23-27). Divorce questions are too hard for most churches, because they do not have Bible wisdom. Any divorce that can be justified by the Bible, precept or principle, also allows for remarriage.

Necessary association with evil.

We cannot go out of the world, which means we live and work with pagans. The Bible allows this, unless they make a thing a matter of conscience (I Cor 5:9-10; 10:27-28). God knows you must do things indirectly connected to false doctrine, idolatry, or paganism. Remember Joseph (Gen 47:18-26), Naaman (II Kgs 5:15-19), Esther (Esth 2:8-18), and Daniel (Dan 1:17-21).

Principle of mercy.

David knew he could eat the shewbread, though against the Law, because he understood mercy was more important to God than ceremonial or ritualistic sacrifice and service. Hosea would write of it later (Hos 6:6), but David may have taught it to Solomon (Pr 21:3). Jesus declared it (Matt 9:13; 12:1-7). We apply it in church attendance, divorce and remarriage, charity, etc.

Principle of materiality.

Actions should be weighed by their relative significance. Moses' law taught this principle (Deut 23:24-25; Matt 12:1,7). Consider tax returns, an employer's copy machine, copyrights, the speed limit, etc. There are obvious limits e.g. God's hatred for pilfering. And we avoid evil appearance.

Principle of intent.

The spirit of the laws of God is more important than the strict letter. Jesus taught this relative to the Sabbath, though it was one of the most highly regarded statues in the Law (Mark 2:23-28 cp Ex 23:12 cp John 7:22-24). This principle is precious. Consider the net result of any proposed action. Is all deception "against" your neighbor? Authorities may be rejected to keep godliness. We could justify a divorce for very extreme conditions without fornication or desertion.

Principle of specificity.

Specific laws for a given situation overrule general laws. The law against killing is overruled by the law of judgment (Ex 20:13 cp 21:12). The laws for the priests overruled the law requiring Sabbath rest (Matt 12:5). The command to preach overruled the Jewish rulers (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

Principle of acceptance.

Applicable law is determined by its level of acceptance. Jesus argued the *de facto* government of Rome had more validity than Israel's *de jure* government. Paul appealed to provisions in Roman law to save himself (Acts 22:24-30; 25:9-12). The Jews appealed to Cyrus's decree (Ezra 5).

Principle of suffering.

Abuse of rightful authority does not relieve our responsibility. Servants must obey their masters, even if and especially if they are froward men (I Pet 2:18-20). Our Lord and Paul taught us to accept and submit to any offences that can be easily accommodated (Matt 5:38-42; I Cor 6:7).

Principle of offence.

Our conduct must minimize avoidable offence (I Cor 10:32). Jesus, having legal exemption, paid temple tribute (Matt 17:24-27). Of course, there are times and individuals that we do not care if we offend (Matt 15:12-14). Daniel and Paul were perfect without offence (Dan 6:4-5; Ac 26:31).

Principle of tempting.

Ignoring available means to “trust God” is not faith – it is folly and sin. Jesus did not rely on God’s promises from Psalm 91:11-12, when He could get down from the temple roof another way. The angel of the LORD protects God’s children, but look at the superscription for Psalm 34:7! How did God defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for David (II Sam 15:31-34; 17:14)?

Principle of prudence.

Discretion is better than valor. Open resistance may not work. A prudent man will foresee evil and hide (Pr 22:3; Eccl 10:4). Wisdom considers the odds (Luke 14:28-32; Prov 25:8). Abigail did not immediately tell Nabal (I Sam 25:19). Paul escaped in a basket (Acts 9:23-25). Gideon did not openly rebel against Moab (Judges 6:11). Righteous men sometimes hide (Pr 28:12,28; I Kings 17:1-3). Elijah did not know about 7000 others in Israel like himself (I Kings 19:18).

Miscellaneous Jewels of Wisdom.

1. There are limits to dealing with fools and scorners (Prov 9:7-8; 14:7; 23:9; 26:4-5; Matt 7:6).
2. Authority is sacred and to be violated only in extreme cases where God’s commandments or life is at stake (Ex 22:28; Eccl 10:5-7; Rom 13:1-7; Eph 5:22-24; 6:1-3; Titus 2:9-10; I Pet 2:12-23).
3. Soft answers and mercy work (Prov 15:1,18; 19:11; 25:15; Eccl 10:4; Matt 5:21-26,38-48; 18:15).
4. Priorities teach wisdom, and the Bible has many of them (Ps 37:16; 69:30-31; 84:10; Pr 3:14; 8:11; 15:16-11; 21:3; Ec 7:1-5; Matt 5:19; 23:23; Mark 12:28-34; etc., etc.).
5. Real success is simple, for any man to choose (I Tim 6:6; Rom 14:17-18; 12:1-2; Jas 1:27).
6. Submission to abuse is thankworthy for conscience sake (I Pet 2:18-23; Exodus 2:23-25).
7. Severity in judgment will work (Deut 21:18-21; 25:11-12; Pr 19:18; 20:4; II Thess 3:10).
8. Even buying and paying are covered (Lev 19:13; Prov 11:26; 16:11; 20:10,14; Jer 22:13).
9. Argue even on single words (Mat 22:32,44; Jn 8:58; 10:35; Gal 3:16; 4:9; Heb 8:13; 12:27).
10. Tenderness is godly, even toward animals (Deuteronomy 22:6-7; Ex 23:19; Proverbs 12:10).
11. Self-defense and revenge are defended, but are also limited (Ex 22:2-4; Num 35:15-34).

Apparent contradictions.

God’s laws may come in conflict with each other, and it requires wisdom to rightly divide the scriptures and reconcile all verses to support one unified body of righteousness and truth (II Chr 19:5-11; II Tim 2:15). Consider these examples:

1. Killing is prohibited, but killing in war, capital crimes, and self-defense is also justified.
2. Nakedness is condemned, but circumcision was required, and midwifery was honorable.
3. Knowing a sister-in-law sexually is condemned, but also commanded to raise up children.
4. False witnessing is condemned, yet God told Samuel to deceive Saul about anointing David.
5. God forbids lying, but God highly commended Jehu for lying to Israel’s Baal worshippers.
6. These examples can be multiplied extensively, and the Lord expects us to sort out the truth.

How to get Wisdom.

1. *Fear God* (Prov 1:7; 3:5-6; 9:10; 15:33; 21:30; 29:25; Psalm 37:4; 91:14-16; 112:1-10; Jer 9:23-24).
2. *Seek it* (Prov 2:1-9; 4:5-8; 5:1; 8:17; 16:16; 17:16; 18:1,15; 23:23; II Thess 2:10-12; Matt 12:42).
3. *Love Scripture* (Deut 4:5-8; Ps 19:7; 119:98-100,105,128-130; Pr 1:1-6; Is 8:20; Matt 7:24; II Tim 3:16-17; Is 8:20).
4. *Pray for it* (James 1:5; Proverbs 2:3; I Kings 3:5-15; 4:29-34; Matthew 7:7-8; Eph 1:15-17).
5. *Hate sin* (Proverbs 3:7; 8:13; 14:16; 28:7; 24:9; Eccl 10:1; John 7:17; Hebrews 3:13; James 1:27).
6. *Hate self* (Prov 4:18; 12:15; 21:8; 23:4; 26:12,16; 28:26; Eccl 10:1; Mark 7:20-23; Rom 1:22; I Cor 1:19-21; 3:18-19).
7. *Be a learner* (Pr 1:5; 8:33; 9:9; 10:8; 12:15; 13:1; 14:6; 17:10; 19:20; 21:11; 22:17; 29:15; II Cor 10:3-6; Heb 5:12-14).
8. *Slow down* (James 1:19-20; Prov 4:18; 14:17,29; 16:32; 19:2; 25:8; 28:20; 29:11; Eccl 7:9).
9. *Exercise it* (Job 32:6-14; Prov 28:11; Heb 5:14; II Pet 3:1; Psalm 119:11; Deut 6:6-9).
10. *Wise companions* (I Sam 18:1-4; Ps 101:6; 119:63; Pr 9:6; 13:20; 24:6; 27:5-6,9-10; Jer 3:15; Mal 2:7; Heb 13:7; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:16-17; Col 2:3; I Cor 15:33).

Conclusion:

1. Do you desire to be the incomparably excellent man of Eccl 8:1 through wisdom and understanding?
2. You can only achieve that glorious goal by giving daily time to reading and studying God's word.
3. You will only grow if you take the wisdom you learn and apply it every issue in life (Heb 5:12-14).

For Further Study:

1. "Why Bad Things Happen," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/why-bad-things-happen.pdf>.
2. "The Mysteries of Hidden Wisdom," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/mysteries-of-hidden-wisdom.pdf>.
3. "Proverbs Verse-by-Verse Commentary," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/proverbs.php?chapter=1>.
4. "Bible Priorities," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/priorities2.pdf>.
5. "Proverbs is for Real Men," ... not available at this time in electronic format.
6. "Ecclesiastes Outlines," ... not available at this time in electronic format.
7. "The Law of God – Christian Ethics," ... not available at this time in electronic format.