

INTRODUCTION

Wisdom is a valuable commodity in every country of the world. In China, they basically follow the wisdom and philosophy of Confucius who lived 2,500 years ago. Even in Texas we have our own kind of insight, often referred to as Cowboy Wisdom:

1. Never slap a man who’s chewin’ tobacco.
2. Lettin’ the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than puttin’ it back in.
3. If you get to thinkin’ you’re a person of some influence, try orderin’ somebody else’s dog around.
4. Never kick a cow chip on a hot day.
5. If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin’.
6. Don’t ever squat with your spurs on.
7. Never miss a good chance to shut up.
8. Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.
9. There’s two theories to arguin’ with a woman. Neither one works.

Some people call that kind of wisdom “horse sense.” I like horse sense because it usually produces stable thinking.

If you asked someone who knows the Bible, “Who is the wisest man who ever lived?” They may reply, “Solomon.” But as wise as Solomon was, someone else in the Bible surpassed his wisdom. Let’s read about it beginning in Luke 11:29:

As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.”

At this point in his ministry, Jesus was being investigated, castigated, and scrutinized by His enemies. Everyone wanted a sure-fire “sign” or miracle to prove He really was the Son of God. Jesus said the only sign they would get would be the sign of Jonah (next week’s lesson). Then in verse 31, He makes the audacious claim “One greater than Solomon is here.”

Surely when His enemies heard this claim they must have laughed. Perhaps they said something like, “Solomon? You’ve got be kidding! Why Solomon was a great king and you are only a peasant preacher!” It was a bold claim when you think about the two individuals. Solomon was born in a palace, the son of the great King David. But Jesus was born in a stable as the son of a peasant woman and a common carpenter (or so they supposed). Solomon was born in the great city of God, Jerusalem, and Jesus was born in tiny, unimportant Bethlehem. Solomon was wealthy, dressed in royal robes and drank from golden goblets. Jesus lived in poverty and his only possession was His seamless robe and He had to request water from a harlot. Solomon lived

in magnificent palaces he built; Jesus had nowhere to lay His head. Solomon led a mighty army and rode around on the finest stallions. Jesus had a rag-tag bunch of fishermen and misfits following Him and He walked everywhere or rode a donkey. Solomon sat down to eat with the kings and VIP’s of the world. Jesus ate with publicans and sinners. It would seem there is no comparison, and actually, Jesus *is* incomparable. However, since He claimed to be greater than Solomon, I want to show you five ways in which the greatness of Jesus far exceeds the greatness of Solomon.

1. Jesus is greater in wisdom

When Solomon became king after David’s death, God allowed him to ask for anything—and instead of asking for riches or power, Solomon asked for wisdom. God was so pleased by this request He granted it, as well as riches and power. By the way, we are told in the first chapter of James if we lack wisdom, we can ask God and He will graciously and generously give it to us. Instead of begging God for a lot of material blessings, try asking Him for wisdom! We read in 1 Kings 4 about Solomon’s great wisdom:

Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man ... He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life ... He taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world who had heard of his wisdom.”
(1 Kings 4:30-34)

Solomon knew three thousand proverbs. You can read many of them when you study the book of Proverbs in our Bible. For many years, I’ve tried to read a chapter from Proverbs every day. It’s easy to keep track because there are 31 proverbs. Since most months have 31 days, just read the chapter number from Proverbs that coincides with the day of the month. For instance, today is November 18, so this morning, I read the eighteenth chapter of Proverbs. It was wonderful! In fact, I believe “a Proverb a day will keep the blues away.” The Proverbs reveal the divine wisdom God gave to Solomon.

Solomon was a great student of creation. He studied plant and animal life. He was considered an expert in these matters because he was so wise. But Solomon wasn’t as wise as Jesus.

Solomon wrote down many of the “Words of God.” But Jesus *is* the Word of God. In the first chapter of John we learn Jesus is the Word, the *logos* of God has been made into flesh. A word is simply the expression of a thought. I can think a thought, but until I give you a word, you don’t know what’s in my mind. The same is true of God. The only way we can know the mind of God and the heart of God is to hear the “Word” of God, and Jesus is the “Word” that was in the beginning. The Word was with God and the Word was God. Solomon spoke the wisdom of God but Jesus *is* the wisdom of God. Solomon studied creation, but Jesus *is* the Creator. Colossians 1:16-17 says, “For by him [Jesus] all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Solomon studied animal life, Jesus *created* the animals. Solomon studied plant life, but Jesus *created* the plants.

Jesus not only created this universe, He holds everything together. What is it that makes the planets in our solar system circle around the sun in such predictable orbits? Why don't they just go flying off into space? Jesus holds the solar system and the universe together. Matter is comprised of a combination of molecules made up of atoms made up of sub-atomic particles. What keeps the molecules in this pulpit together? Why don't the molecules just "unjoin" from each other? Why don't the electrons in the atom go whizzing off into space? Jesus holds everything together on the cosmic scale and on the sub-atomic scale. Even if you feel your life or your family is falling apart—if you allow Him—He can hold your life together, He can keep your family together. He is the Creator, so His wisdom is vastly superior to Solomon's.

Many of you are desperately seeking wisdom and knowledge. Education is wonderful, but someone once said the one problem in American is we have too many people who have been educated beyond their intelligence! You know a lot of things, like Solomon, but if you don't know Jesus, all your knowledge is wasted. You can know botany, but if you don't know the Rose of Sharon, you've missed the point. You can know geology, but if you don't know the Rock of Ages, it's all worthless. You may know modern medicine, but if you don't know the Great Physician, your learning is empty. Solomon was wise, but One greater than Solomon is here today.

2. Jesus is greater in construction

Solomon has been called the greatest builder in Jewish history. In 1 Kings 10:4-5 we read: "When the Queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, the food on his table ... and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the Lord she was overwhelmed."

Not only was his personal palace magnificent, he built a beautiful Temple that sat like a brilliant jewel on the top of Mount Moriah. This building was so beautiful it was considered one the seven wonders of the ancient world.

This beautiful building in which we worship pales in comparison to the Temple Solomon built. It took almost three years to build this building, and over 500 men working here. Solomon had 183,000 workers and it still took them 7 ½ years to build his temple! People came from all over the world to visit Solomon's temple. When they arrived they weren't disappointed. There were 4,000 ushers and over 4,000 members of the orchestra. The gold gilding the exterior of the white stone made everyone think of a huge diamond sparkling in the sunlight. By the way, the building code in modern-day Jerusalem requires every building have an off-white sandstone exterior. I've been told that this is color code makes the brilliant white of the third temple stand out in contrast.

Solomon was a great builder, but One greater than Solomon is here. Solomon could only build on earth, and Jesus is involved in heavenly construction. In John 14:2, Jesus said, "in my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." Solomon's temple was only a small pattern of the dwelling place of God in heaven. If you will trust Jesus as your personal Lord, He has a place reserved for you in

heaven. He is building it (preparing) it for you right now. Whatever Solomon built has long since crumbled and turned to dusty ruins. But Jesus is building us an eternal home.

Jesus is also building something marvelous on earth right now as well. In Matthew 16:11 He said to Peter, “Upon this rock, I will build my church.” Jesus is building a church, but the construction process doesn’t involve bricks or steel. In fact, we must always remember this building in which we gather is *not* a church—it is a center where we gather to worship. This (building) is not the church; This (people) is the church. The church is both the body of Christ and the building of Christ. Each of us is a “living stone” comprising the larger church. But as individuals we are also Temples of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, Solomon built a temple for God’s people. That temple has long been destroyed. Today, Jesus is building a people for God’s temple. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; You were bought with a price, therefore honor God with your body.”

If you are a real Christian, don’t ever say, “This is my body, I can do with it what I please!” No, you have been purchased and you belong to God: spirit, soul, and body.

I thank God we have a lovely, large building where thousands of people can come and meet Jesus and worship God! But one day, this building will fall down, just like Solomon’s temple. But One greater than Solomon is here! Jesus is building something that will still be healthy, alive and beautiful a million years after the stars have been plucked from the sky. What a builder!

3. Jesus is greater in His sacrifice

As king, Solomon offered more sacrifice to God than any other man recorded in the Bible. On the day in which the new temple was dedicated, “King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple.” (2 Chronicles 7:5)

Each bull would have been as valuable to them as a Cadillac is to us. That would be like you donating 22,000 Cadillacs in one day! Can you even imagine the space 120,000 sheep and goats occupied waiting to be sacrificed? Each of these animals were killed on the temple mount and their blood used as a sin offering, then the flesh of the animals were burned. A virtual river of sacrificial blood flowed down from the Temple. Solomon’s temple was built on Mt. Moriah, the ancient site where Abraham took his only son, Isaac, to sacrifice him to God. At the last moment, God provided a male lamb to be used as a substitute for Isaac. The ram was killed and Isaac lived. From this time forward, God was giving Israel an object lesson. Each year as the high priest killed a lamb on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, God was preparing Israel to receive His real plan—the Lamb of God who would be His Son.

When Jesus started His ministry, John the Baptist cried, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) Up until that day, thousands of bulls and sheep had been sacrificed on the Temple hoping sins would be forgiven. Jesus was God’s ultimate sacrificial lamb. Jesus was crucified on the western slope of Mt. Moriah, a few hundred yards from where temple sacrifice was still being practiced. Like with Abraham and Isaac, Jesus is our Substitute

who takes away our sin and allows us to live. His one sacrifice did so much more than the thousands Solomon made. "But those sacrifices (Old Testament) are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Hebrews 10:3-4) Solomon made thousands of these sacrifices and it was *impossible* for them to take away sins. Jesus is greater because we read a few verses later, "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:10)

We all have a sin problem. We desperately need forgiveness. There is a line from an old hymn that says it best: "Not all the blood of beasts/On Jewish altars slain/Could give the guilty conscience peace/ Nor wash away that stain." One greater than Solomon is here because only His blood can wash away the guilt and shame of our sin!

4. Jesus is greater in wealth

The Queen of the South heard reports of Solomon's great wealth, so she traveled to see if any of the reports were true. We read: The Queen of Sheba said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth, you have far exceed the report I heard." (1 Kings 10:6-7)

In today's dollars it is impossible to equate the material wealth Solomon possessed. Here are a few scriptures that speak of his amazing riches: "King Solomon was greater in riches than all the other kings of the earth ... he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses ... the king made silver (and gold) as common in Jerusalem as stones." (1 Kings 10:23-27)

There was so much silver and gold in the city, people used to pick up nuggets of gold to throw at stray dogs! Solomon's wealth today would make him the richest man alive. The wealth of the Sheik of Brunei or Bill Gates combined would pale in comparison. Consider the wealth displayed in his personal throne room:

"Then the king made a great throne inlaid with ivory and overlaid with pure gold. The throne had six steps, and a footstool of gold was attached to it. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom." (2 Chronicles 9:17-19)

Solomon was wealthy, but remember, One greater than Solomon is here!

Jesus owns it all. The Psalmist writes, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." (Psalm 24:1)

The wealth Jesus possessed and gives away has no price tag. His riches are more substantial and long lasting than those of Solomon. For instance, in Ephesians we discover, "In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ... And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms

in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 1:7; 2:6-7)

Look again at some of His “riches:” forgiveness of sins, redemption, grace, the kindness of God.. Can you buy any of those things for any price? All of the wealth of Solomon, combined with all the gold in Ft. Knox would not be sufficient for you to purchase the forgiveness of one simple sin in your life—yet Jesus offers His incomparable riches to us as a gift.

Solomon had a magnificent throne! Jesus also has a magnificent throne. But the difference is only a very few, highly favored VIP’s were allowed to come before the throne of Solomon. If you ever made it into the throne room you had to get past all the soldiers and face those fierce, fearsome lions! But the throne of Jesus is accessible to all of us who come in faith. “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:26)

Jesus is greater because He offers you a kind of wealth that is eternal. You may spend many years of your life accumulating worldly wealth, but when you die, you can’t take it with you. I’ve never seen a moving van or a U-Haul truck in a funeral procession. But the riches of Christ are yours forever!

Finally,

5. Jesus is greater in influence

Solomon was perhaps the most influential world leader of his generation. During his reign, Israel attained the pinnacle of world power and dominance: they were the super-power of the ancient world. Solomon controlled more territory than any king in Israel’s history: “Solomon ruled all the kings from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt.” (2 Chronicles 9:27)

Solomon controlled all the territory east of the Jordan all the way to the Euphrates. That would include Iraq, Jordan, Syria and parts of Saudi Arabia. To the north, he controlled all the way to Turkey. To the South, Israel controlled the territory to Egypt. He would have controlled Egypt, but the Egyptian king made a truce by giving Solomon one of his daughters to marry. In fact, Solomon sealed many political alliances with a marriage. That was one of his weaknesses. “Solomon had seven hundred wives of royal birth, and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods.” (1 Kings 11:3-4)

Although Solomon was wise and wealthy, he couldn’t buy happiness and he couldn’t conquer his lust. He wrote in Proverbs 18:22, “whoever finds a wife finds a good thing.” I’d say a thousand was “too much of a good thing!”

In his old age, Solomon became bitter as his wives turned his heart away from the One true God. That’s why he wrote in Ecclesiastes, “Vanity, vanity, all is vanity!” Solomon’s glory was like an exploding firework, but after a few years of brilliant glory, he faded into the ashes of mediocrity.

After ruling for 40 years, he died and was buried—and that’s the end of Solomon. For 3,000 years his bones have been disintegrating somewhere beneath Israel’s rocky soil. Archaeologists haven’t even found a tomb to mark his life and death. His spoiled son Rehoboam became king and within a few years, the great kingdom was divided into two kingdoms and in a matter of a few centuries, the glory of Israel disappeared from the earth. Solomon’s influence was only temporary.

One greater than Solomon is here because Jesus’ influence far outshines Solomon’s or any other person who walked this planet. Jesus only ministered for three years and then He was executed. He was so poor His body was laid in a borrowed tomb. It was borrowed because He wouldn’t need it for long—only three days. After three days, He arose from the dead and He is alive forevermore!

Jesus’ influence continues to grow. While Solomon, along with every other great man, is dead and buried, Jesus has received a position of honor and influence. The Bible says, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

So, when Jesus said, “One greater than Solomon is here” He was correct. His point was that the Queen of Sheba traveled a long distance and she recognized the greatness of Solomon. The generation that was alive when Jesus came *failed* to recognize just *who* Jesus was—so the Queen of Sheba would rise up in judgement against that generation. The same can be said of our generation. Everywhere you turn, Jesus is being preached and revealed. How can you spend your life without recognizing His greatness? Someone once wrote:

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter’s shop until he was thirty, and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book, He never held an office. He never owned a home and he never had a family. He never went to college. He never traveled more than 200 miles from the place where he was born. He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him, and he was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two common thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth while he was dying—and that was his coat. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed tomb through the pity of a friend. Such was his human life—but then He rose from the dead!

Twenty centuries have come and gone and today He is the centerpiece of the human race. All the armies that have ever marched, and all the navies that have ever sailed, and all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings that have ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life—Jesus. (*Author Unknown*)

CONCLUSION

Jesus is not just a great man. He wants to be your Savior. Dr. R.G. Lee used to tell the story about a tragic school fire in Camden, S.C. Seventy children died in this inferno. When one man ran to the school, he could see his son through the roaring flames. The boy stretched out his hands and cried, “Daddy, get me out of here! Daddy, can’t you save me?” The father rushed toward the fire to rescue his son, but calmer heads and stronger arms restrained him because it was obvious the man would perish in this fire as well. As he struggled to get out of the grip of those compassionate friends, he could hear his son crying, “Daddy, can’t you save me?” And soon the voice was silenced.

Dr. Lee said this man was haunted for many years by that unforgettable sight and sound. Then he said we live in a wicked, sick, sick world that’s in desperate trouble. Confused and desperate people reach out to science and cry, “Science, can’t you save me?” If science and technology were totally honest they would have to say, “No, I can make your life easier, but I can’t save you. I can tell you how far it is to the sun, but I can’t tell you how far God can remove your sins.” The world reaches out to education, “Education, can’t you save me?” Education says, “I can give you knowledge and information. I can give you answer to 2+2 but I can’t give you the answer for the sin and death problem.” The world reaches out to culture, to art, and music, “Culture, can’t you save me?” Culture says, “I can make life a more pleasant, but all I can do is make earth a little nicer place to go to hell from.”

Go ahead, look to the great people of history. Plato can’t save you, Confucius can’t save you, Mohammed can’t save you, Moses can’t save you; and Solomon can’t save you. But One greater than Solomon is here—and He can save you!

OUTLINE

1. Jesus is greater in wisdom
2. Jesus is greater in construction
3. Jesus is greater in sacrifice
4. Jesus is greater in wealth
5. Jesus is greater in influence



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes