

*These comments present one interpretation of today's readings; other interpretations may be possible. Comments are best read with the readings.*

[www.montreal.anglican.org/comments/](http://www.montreal.anglican.org/comments/)

© Chris Haslam

### 1 Kings 2:10-12,3:3-14

NRSV

As this book begins, David is an old and infirm man, with a circulatory disorder. The medical remedy of the day, receiving warmth from the body of a young maiden (Abishag) does not help. His days as king are over, for he is unable to “know her sexually” (1:4). A struggle for the throne erupts. Adonijah, his oldest living son, hopes to become king, but the choice of successor is David’s (1:20). Adonijah’s candidacy is backed by Abiathar (for the priesthood) and Joab (military commander). Perhaps Adonijah follows pagan ways (1:9). Solomon is supported by Nathan (prophet to David), the priest Zadok, and Benaiah (leader of the Philistine forces who served David). Bathsheba, David’s wife and mother of Solomon, tells David of Adonijah’s plot, sacrifices and revelry; Nathan confirms them (1:21-27). David announces that Solomon is his successor (after Bathsheba reminds him of his oath to make Solomon his successor). David orders Nathan and Zadok to make his choice visible to the people, and to anoint him king. Solomon declines to punish his opponents (1:28-48). David instructs Solomon to “keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways ... keeping ... his commandments” (2:3) per the “law of Moses”; if he does, David’s lineage under God will continue.

Now David dies and is buried in Jerusalem. He conquered the city in the seventh year of his reign as King of Judah (2:11). Solomon *firmly established* (2:12) his kingdom by killing or banishing Adonijah and his supporters (2:13-46). The era of Solomon begins. He walks in God’s ways, worshipping (before the Temple was built) at “high places” (3:3), on mountains. “Gibeon” (3:5) was 6 km (4 miles) north of Jerusalem. As elsewhere in the Old Testament, God appears to Solomon in a dream (3:6). Solomon shows humility (“only a little child”, 3:7): he needs God’s help in all that he does (as “go out or come in”, a Hebrew phrase, indicates.) He seeks judicial wisdom, as the final arbiter in disputes (3:9); he seeks to govern well, for the good of his people. God finds his request for “understanding to discern what is right” (3:11) fitting, so he grants him this (3:12), and also “riches and honour” (3:13) above other kings (something he did not ask). Further, if he follows God’s ways, he will enjoy a long life. In the ancient mind, these are all marks of wisdom.

### Psalm 111

NRSV

This is a hymn of praise to God for his great deeds, especially for making and keeping his covenant with Israel. The psalmist is a wise person, for whom holding the Lord in awe is the beginning of knowing him (v. 10a) and for whom wisdom comes from increasing knowledge of God. He speaks from his innermost being, his “whole heart” (v. 1), in the select group (“company of the upright”) and in

“the congregation”. He praises God for his “works” (v. 2) or “deeds” (v. 4). V. 4b is from Exodus 34:6, part of God’s proclamation after he replaced the stones bearing the Commandments – a symbol of renewal of the covenant. He nourishes those who hold him in awe. His works include the gift of Palestine (v. 6b), his interventions in the world (v. 6a) and his commandments. What he does lasts forever (v. 8a). His deeds show him to be “holy and awesome” (v. 9). Living by his commandments is the start of understanding of him.

### Ephesians 5:15-20

NRSV

The author has given his readers, apparently new converts, some points regarding conduct as members of the Church. He has told them not to harbour anger, to actively care for the poor, to emphasize people’s goodness in speaking to them, and thus to build up the community. They should cast aside vices, adopt virtuous ways, and forgive and love as Christ has showed them.

Now he tell them that wisdom is a characteristic of Christian living (because we are privileged to share in God’s wisdom and insight through Christ.) Jewish belief was that society would become extremely decadent (“evil”, v. 16) before the Messiah comes: we are to use this time wisely, effectively – to be alert to God’s will (v. 17). (Wisdom and foolishness, v. 17, are opposites.) Joyful fellowship arises from being filled with the Spirit, not drunkenness; show this joy liturgically (“among yourselves”, v. 19), prompted and assisted by the Spirit, “giving thanks” (v. 20) to the Father “at all times” for the whole of creation, in the name of Christ.

### John 6:51-58

NRSV

In 20:30-31, John tells us the purpose of the book: that we may believe in Jesus as Christ or Messiah. Thus far, Jesus has emphasized *belief* in him as divine and as *living bread*. But now he speaks of a *reality*. For John, the context is the Church. In v. 51, Jesus says: “the living bread ... that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh”; “whoever eats of this flesh will live forever”. This is how God will save the world: see 3:16-17. Jesus became flesh (1:14), i.e. assumed complete human nature. He offered himself to God in death, thus giving life, available to all. “The Jews” (v. 52, possibly some Jewish Christians) take him literally; that to *eat someone’s flesh* was a Semitic figure of speech for to *slander* did not make Jesus’ statement easier to understand!

Then v. 53: the only way to salvation (“life”) is through “eat[ing] the flesh ... and drink[ing] his blood”, i.e. just believing in Christ is insufficient. Sharing in the Eucharist provides “eternal life” (v. 54) and resurrection – to union with God. Why? Because it requires faith, trust, that the flesh and the blood are “true” (v. 55), real – the ultimate reality. It is through sharing in the Eucharist that we are joined to Christ. Note the word “abide” (v. 56): it involves *remaining in a relationship*. Believers  *dwell in Christ*, and he in them, through participating in the Eucharist. Then v. 58: both the Eucharist (Christ) and manna “came down from heaven”, but while manna nourished for a finite time, sharing in the Eucharist is the key to surviving the judgement at the end of time.