

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

"Proverbs From Solomon"

Ecclesiastes 10:16-11:8

Introduction

1. Solomon has given his personal experiences and observations of the world as he sees them. All to him is vanity. It is a huge bubble. For him there is nothing of reality. It is his counsel to accept this and realize the mysteries of life.
2. Having provided all of his observations (chaps. 1-6), the final part of the book deals with a more philosophical approach to things (chaps. 7-12). One major part concerns proverbial statements.
3. Two major concerns occupy Solomon's comments here: kings and events in daily experience. It is true, he affirms that there are mysteries with God, but one must get on with his living. Here are some pertinent items to remember in this:

1. ABOUT KINGS 10:16-20.

a. The evil

A "woe" is pronounced upon the land which has a king who is a child. The word here means any young person. Unfortunately, this one acts childish. His counselors are those who apparently eat for eating sake. This is their sole object. Pleasures are the goal and concern of this young king and those who assist him (v. 16). This leads this man to conduct his affairs with idleness (v. 18). As a result, the building (which may mean the land) falls in or caves in. It becomes like a house which has a roof which allows the rain to come in. It leaks. The eating fostered idleness and the result is ruin. Slothfulness breeds feasting. Feasting brings laughter. This comes from wine which makes apparent merriness (v. 19). Sadly, however, this is all brought about by the presence of money which is readily available. Money answers to the demands of this evil king and his assistants.

b. The good

In contrast with the corruption of the evil king, Solomon affirms how blessed it is for the land which has a king who is of noble birth. This really means he is of noble character. Such is a true free man and not inhibited by false assistants and desires of pleasure. He eats at the right time, not for pleasure, but for strength. There is no drunkenness nor debauchery.

c. The warning

In view of the two possibilities of kings, it is important not to discuss openly one's concerns for one or another. One must exercise prudence and this in the light of religious concerns (cf. 8:2). The thought is that what takes place in one's secret areas may well get to the wrong ears (cf. 2 Kings 6:12). The Midrash has a proverb: "wells have ears."

2. ABOUT LIFE

a. Its uncertainties

An appeal is given for adventure here. Bread is to be cast on the waters knowing that it shall in a few days be found (v. 1). This may well concern commerce and the need to step out and become active in spite of the mysteries of God. In doing this, however, one must be careful about how it is done (v. 2). Division of one's goods should be made lest he find all is removed. It is the old adage: don't put all your eggs into one basket. Don't venture all on one card.

b. Its overcautiousness

The point to all of these verses is the same: God is in control. There is so much which is beyond the control of man. In fact, man knows little. All is done by fixed laws. This is illustrated by the clouds with rain (v. 3), how a tree falls (v. 3), the wind (v. 4), and by the growth of a child in the womb (v. 5). As a consequence of all these matters being in God's hands, it is best to be active and leave the results to God Who is the All-Working One.

c. Its enjoyment

A person should rejoice according to the arrangements which God has made. No matter how long a man may live he should continue to enjoy his sweet life, especially in view of the night which is coming. In any case, all that comes after this life is vanity--a bubble!

Conclusion This is more good counsel from Solomon concerning rulers and one's experience of life. It certainly may provide help to a searching man, but provides nothing for eternity. What a difference there is with the word of Paul (Phil. 1:21). In the light of such a conviction, he knows the thrill of other life-transforming experiences (Phil. 3:10-14). To God be the glory!