

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

"More Wise Counsel"

Ecclesiastes 10:4-15

Introduction

1. The Book of Ecclesiastes is the soundest wisdom possible by Solomon (2:12). It is not the information which God has given by divine unveiling (revelation). The Book, however, is inspired and therefore we have an accurate record of Solomon's thoughts on the matters discussed.

2. One item is sure: Solomon sees wisdom above folly. This is demonstrated on many occasions and in the present section. The tragedy, however, is that wisdom does not always carry the day. Folly often seems to prosper.

3. In view of the apparent triumph of folly, Solomon takes the opportunity to add several striking comments which illustrate his point. Note his counsel on these issues:

1. On Rulers and the World vv. 4-7.

a. Ruler and response vv. 4-5.

The question is raised here: what is to be done when a ruler breaks out in anger? The point is made that one who is wise will not leave his post. He will be patient. By so doing, he admits that he does not merit the ruler's displeasure and he does not renounce the concept of submission. If he yielded to the ruler, he would answer wrath with wrath and thus involve himself in sin. It is affirmed that rulers often do make errors and this works to the degradation of various persons.

b. World and perversion vv. 6-7.

This is a sketch of the world and its perverted situation. Folly is often placed in high degree, while the rich (wise) get a low station. This is illustrated by servants riding while princes walk (Prov. 19:10). The thought of these verses is clear: wisdom has not led the parade.

2. On Wisdom and Folly vv. 8-11.

a. Folly and dangers vv. 8-9.

The key word for the previous verses is "patience," while the catchword for these is "consideration" of the means towards one's goals. Four items are mentioned which suggest that whoever undertakes any of them also exposes himself to dangers:

1) Digging a pit. Wrong done to others often comes back on the perpetrator (Prov. 26:27; Esther 7:10).

2) Breaking a hedge. Serpents are mentioned because they often hide in the crevices and holes of walls.

3) Removing stones. Separating things in a quarry may well lead to injury to oneself with pain.

4) Splitting wood. This may in fact endanger life and limb.

NOTE: These items are mentioned to show that a wise man knows his dangers and guards against them.

b. Wisdom and goals v. 10. The basic contention here is that wisdom has the advantage in devising the means subservient to the end. Rather than the use of brute strength, wisdom employed brings in and with itself the serviceable end. A prosperous issue will come from wisdom.

c. Fool and success v. 11. A serpent may bite without enchantment. Hence, the charmer is of no consequence. His act is useless. So is a fool or babbler. The snake charmer has not made proper use of the snake's tongue. The babbler is the same. His tongue is not employed properly. What follows comes appropriately: the use of the tongue by the wise man and the misuse of it by the fool.

3. On Fools and Prating vv. 12-15.

a. Manner of speech v. 12. The words of a wise man and a fool are compared. The former is full of graciousness, while the latter leads to destruction. This is verified by the entire section.

b. Content of speech v. 14. The fool speaks much as if he knew all things. He does not express consciousness of ignorance. He employs a multitude of words. He uselessly fatigues himself. By all of this, he remains far behind what knowledge could bring to him.

c. Goal of speech vv. 13, 15. The words which come from a fool's mouth rise to madness. This compounds itself to all sorts of frenzy. In fact, though the fool handles himself as if he could enlighten the world, he, in fact, perplexes himself. He cannot do the simplest thing, e.g. get to the city. So, the ordinary affairs of life are beyond the fool.

Conclusion Wisdom again is extolled by Solomon as against folly and the fool. Yet, in this scheme of things which Solomon knew, even wisdom did not seem to gain the favor it deserved. Life has its dead ends and Solomon certainly knew this by observation and discussion. Thank God for the life that wins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). To be found in Him is to be complete (Col. 2:10).