

Introduction

1. The conclusions of Solomon, after various observations and experiences in life, are given in the second half of this book (7-12). One would have hoped for a turn to God and the glories of His salvation. Rather, Solomon philosophizes about many subjects.
2. The immediate context of this chapter has led Solomon to conclude that there is little bright hope for humanity. All ends in the grave (v. 3) and there is such uncertainty about the future (v. 12).
3. Nonetheless, Solomon still exalts wisdom (v. 13). Although this is a repeated subject, wisdom still does not resolve everything--mysteries remain (7:23; 8:17). Notwithstanding, wisdom seems to become great. He clings to this thought with vigor.
4. With this view of wisdom, Solomon makes some very helpful notations. They are the thoughts of a natural man in view of his experiences and observations. They are given by:

1. ILLUSTRATION vv. 14, 15.

- a. The situation v. 14.

The account is given of a small city with few residents. A great king moved with hostility against the city (cf. Gen. 32:9 for similar Hebrew expression). As he besieged the city, the king also constructed siege towers from which he could spy out the city's weak spots so as to assail it. The word "bulwarks" is also rendered "snare" (7:26). The prospects for the city were hopeless.

- b. The solution v. 15.

The verb "found" suggests that the king had come up against his match for the first time. His plan was about to be shattered. The word "poor" means that the man was indeed wretched, a word which comes from a root meaning to "dwell."

This suggests that he was a virtual beggar as his circumstances were very meager. He was, however, a "wise man." The use of the Hebrew word for "male" person is significant, since the generic term for "man" is used later in the verse ("no man"). It was this poor wise man who effected deliverance for the city. The verb means that the city "slipped away" from the king.

## 2. REFLECTION v. 16.

The premise is that wisdom "seemed great" (v. 13). This was his observation, as indicated by the verb "I saw" (v. 13). However, Solomon's reflection is "I said" (v. 16) and it notes that wisdom is indeed better than strength. It has been shown in the illustration, but there is more. The poor wise man comes out in an evil place. Three items are given about him:

- a. He is forgotten (v. 15).
- b. He is despised (v. 16).
- c. He is not heard (v. 16).

It is interesting that wisdom does more than ten men (7:19), but when its source is a poor man, it sinks into disrespect to which the poverty has exposed the man. The estimate of the poor man's worth affects the outward respect in which he is held.

## 3. INSTRUCTION vv. 9:17-10:3.

### a. About words v. 17.

A wise man does not seek to gain esteem by means of a pompous violent deportment. He wants his words to be heard and trusts their inward power of conviction to gain this. The quiet presentation of the wise man is greater than the external expedients of the vociferous fool. An arch-fool trumpets forth his pretended wisdom and seeks to constrain his hearers, but the words of a truly wise man are of more value.

### b. About war v. 18.

Here it is shown that wisdom accomplishes more than weapons of warfare. The Hebrew uses a phrase meaning "the

apparatus belonging to the preparation of war" is less than wisdom. Yet, the sad commentary is that a single sinner by treachery may render vain or even destroy something by malicious pleasure through evil. So, although wisdom may accomplish something great, a single villain has far reaching influence also.

### c. About folly 10:1.

The "dead flies" would probably better be rendered "death bringing flies." These become executors of fermentation for the ointment of the perfumer. Instead of being what it was intended to be, the ointment now raises up small blisters. The point of comparison is this: the hurtfulness widely extended itself of a matter which in appearance was insignificant. So, a small foolish act can change into something just the opposite so that the wisdom and honor of a man destroys both as if they had never been. The dealer in ointments can do nothing with the perfume, so the wisdom which a man has can avail nothing. The verbs are singular and the noun for fly is plural suggesting that each of the flies causes a fermenting situation. Little inconsistencies may well undermine the entire character (cf. David, 2 Sam. 12:14; Solomon, 1 Kings 11; Jehosaphat, 2 Chron. 18, 19; Josiah, 2 Chron. 35:22).

### d. About fools 10:2, 3.

Figuratively, the right was related to wisdom and the left to folly (v. 2). The fool demonstrates his folly by taking steps which do not display understanding. Indeed, he prides himself in his folly and publicly declares himself to be a fool. All of this, of course, demeans folly and exalts wisdom.

Conclusion The battle of wits is a huge one. Although Solomon extols the virtues of wisdom, problems remain. Wisdom does not always triumph nor give its possessor the best. Wisdom is surely better than folly, but then fools certainly broadcast their wares. What seems to Solomon to be great is not always experienced to be. Life often does not have a reason. Without the input of the glory of a personal relationship with God through Christ, one will find himself in difficult straits. Oh, get to know the Lord Jesus now as your personal Lord and Savior.