

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

OT Survey Lesson 300—Eccl. 8:2-9:10

Introduction: The preacher’s observations of “life under the sun” now concern various sources of vanity—misuse of power, rejection of righteousness, inability to control our destiny, and the inevitability of death. Yet, these also serve to encourage us to the life of faith that the preacher is recommending in this book.

Lesson aim: To show the vanity of life and how faith responds in wisdom to this vanity.

The vanity that comes from misuse of authority—Eccl. 8:2-9

(It is helpful to remember here that the duty of the king in Israelite society was to enforce obedience to the Law of God—to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.)

1. How does the preacher summarize the vanity to which he responds in this section? (v. 9)
2. What wisdom does the preacher offer those who serve under a king? (v. 2) Why? What two things does he discourage? (v. 3)
3. Why does he recommend this approach? (v. 4) Those who respect the king’s authority will avoid what experience? (v. 5) Why? This is in harmony with what larger principle of life mentioned earlier in the book? (v. 6)
4. What other thing about life makes it impossible to avoid life’s troubles? (v. 7) What things does the preacher say man has no authority to prevent? (v. 8)
5. The preacher saw the wicked being honored how? (v. 10) Though wicked~ what had they regularly done? But now that they are gone, how do people respond to their wicked life?
6. To what did the preacher attribute the tendency of man to be attracted to evil and hypocritically engage in it? (v. 11) Yet, was he prepared to encourage a life of sin? (v. 12-13) What did he affirm instead’?
7. In what other way did the preacher see vanity in life? (v. 14) What course of life did he consequently recommend again? (v. 15)

The vanity that comes from man's limitations and his ultimate destiny, death—Eccl. 8:16-9:10

(The difficulties that man faces under the authority of the king may have prompted this broader discussion of the limitations he experiences toward life as a whole).

1. Even as a wise king, what had Solomon discovered about life? (v. 16-17)
Solomon said this was true in spite of what two things?
2. What exactly had Solomon discovered? (9:1) Consequently, what did he affirm about the righteous man's future?
3. What one fact did the preacher affirm about all men? (v. 2-3) This fate awaits all regardless of what? This fate is not only for the righteous but also for what other kind of men?
4. What proverb underscores the value of being alive? (v. 4) Why is this true? (v. 5)
5. What things are the dead incapable of doing from the standpoint of life on earth? (v. 5-6) Is this a denial of consciousness of the spirit after death?
6. So then, what thing does the preacher urge the man of faith to do? (v. 7) Why?
7. What else is he urged to do? (v. 8)
8. What special reward belongs to man? (v. 9)
9. Rather than live in inactivity, what does the preacher urge the man of faith to do? (v. 10) Why?