

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

OT Survey Lesson 298—Eccl. 5:8-6:12

Introduction: In this section, the Preacher turns his attention to matters concerning poverty and wealth. He sees how the poor often suffer without justice. He sees many who are wealthy unable to enjoy what they have. He sees the futility of finding satisfaction in the accumulation of earthly wealth.

Lesson aim: To see the vanity of the quest for riches and the need to appreciate in faith what God has given us and empowered us to enjoy.

Observations about poverty and wealth—Eccl. 5:8-6:12

1. About what does the preacher urge the reader not to be shocked? (v. 8) To what does he attribute these misfortunes of government? Would the preacher consider anarchy or no government preferable to having a ruler over it? (v. 9)

Often bureaucratic bungling and red tape cause delays and neglect that bring suffering to men. Such is human nature and seems to be without remedy. It is part of life under the sun. Yet, the remedy to such misuse of government is not anarchy. Even if the king ‘~cultivates the field’ whether this is a literal statement or metaphor for developing the resources of his kingdom, people will benefit through jobs and commerce.

2. What vanity did the preacher see in the accumulation of wealth? (v. 10) What did he observe was often true with those whose “goods increase”? (v. 11)

The preacher sees three distinct drawbacks to wealth: 1) they do not satisfy the covetous; 2) they increase the circle of dependents; 3) they disturb one’s peace of mind.

3. How did one’s possessions affect the sleep of the working man in contradistinction to the rich man? (v. 12)
4. What grievous evil did the preacher observe? (v. 13) What else had he observed might also occur? (v. 14)
5. What truth should remind all of the vanity of the quest for riches? (v. 15-16) What else did the Preacher affirm may attend man’s life while seeking material gain? (v. 17)

When we leave life we do take something with us (our character, our record of works for God) but nothing we can carry in our hand”.

6. So then, what course does the Preacher recommend? (v. 18) How did he regard the ability to enjoy what one acquires? (v. 19) What blessings will this bring to the one who so lives? (v. 20)

The preacher shows that a life of faith will be lived with a sense of rapid time. Life’s hardships will seem to be for a moment in comparison with the overall effect of joy in one’s life.

Now the preacher turns to the inability of wealth to provide happiness or to prevent death.

7. What other evil did the preacher find prevalent among men? (6:1-2)
8. What did the preacher say about the man whose soul is not satisfied with good things? (v. 3-5) Yet, even if one were to live a thousand years twice and not enjoy good things, what is his destiny? (v. 6)
9. All of man’s labor is for what? (v. 7) Is there any ultimate advantage for the wise man over the fool in the matter of accumulation of wealth? (v. 8) What in the preacher’s mind is “better”? (v. 9)
10. Can man change the basic character of the world or his place in it? (v. 10) Can He overpower the providence of the Lord who made all things as they are? Will “many words” change things? (v. 11)
11. What three things point to the lack of a solution to the vanity of life except as lived by the principle of faith? (v. 12)