

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

OT Survey Lesson 302—Eccl. 11:1-12:8

Introduction: This last section of Ecclesiastes in many ways constitutes an invitation to the life of faith the preacher has recommended. Through practical proverbs the preacher urges the reader in the direction of a productive and happy life with an awareness of his limitations. Since our ultimate happiness and sense of purpose is rooted in faith, he urges us to remember God in the days of youth while the enjoyment of life can be experienced.

Lesson aim: To show that the life of faith brings joy.

Encouragement to embrace the venture of faith—Eccl. 11:1-8

1. With what exhortation does the preacher begin this section? (v. 1) What do you think it means?

You will note a marked change in grammatical mood in this section. The preacher resorts to many imperative statements which are encouraged to practice the principles taught in the book. The section culminates by urging the ultimate commitment to “remember God” while there is time to enjoy life.

The section begins with an exhortation to the venture of faith. The imagine is drawn from sea commerce or perhaps philanthropy. What we send out comes backs to us. It manifests a commitment of one’s resources to God’s purposes.

2. What else is the reader encouraged to do? (v. 2) Why?

Here is principle illustrated is diversity or investing one’s resources to the extent he is able. This is to be done In view of an uncertain future.

3. What is the point of the statements in v. 3-4?

Perhaps the preacher is pointing out the unchangeable aspects of nature. Or perhaps he is encouraging industry by reminding us that staring that the heavens or thinking about the forest won’t get the job done. Instead we need to get busy with life’s work.

4. What does the preacher affirm we cannot know? (v. 5) Hence how should we approach life and its labors? (v. 6)

We cannot know what the future holds for us. Hence we should work without the assurance of success while

investing the smallest amount of work, instead we should anticipate failure and work so that we are unaffected by it.

5. How does the preacher impress upon us the joy of living? (v. 7) What does he encourage all to do? (v. 8)

We should enjoy life but remember that life will also have its dark days.

Reasons to embrace the life of faith—Eccl. 11:9-12:8

1. What advice does the preacher give to the young man? (v. 9) However what should he remember?

Rejoice, be pleasant, and follow impulses of your heart. Yet judgment is coming.

2. Consequently what does the preacher urge the young man to remove? (v. 10) Why?

Remove pain and vexation because childhood and prime of life are fleeting. Here the preacher anticipates the next exhortation and lays the groundwork for the final command. The unstated presumption behind these exhortations is that life yielded to the authority of God is the only way to happiness and satisfaction in life.

3. What else is he to remember? (12:1) What are the “evil days” of which the preacher speaks? Why should God be remembered before these “evil days” come?
4. Make a list of the figures that the preacher uses in describing “the evil days” (v. 2-6). To what do you think each one refers?

Various figures describe the loss of important functions that make life more enjoyable: hearing, sight, physical vigor and health, taste.

5. What then is the ultimate destiny of man on earth? (v. 6-7) Consequently, how does the preacher end his discourse (v. 8)? How had he begun the book?

Some of these seem to be simple metaphors for death.

6. The preacher’s discussion of life under the sun leads to what conclusion? (12:13-14)