

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE



The Books of Proverbs,
Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon

CHURCH OF  THE NAZARENE

CLT Bible Study

THE BOOKS OF PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SONG OF SOLOMON

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SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Welcome to the Continuing Lay Ministries series of Bible studies. You are engaged in a study venture that will be both helpful and enjoyable. Here are a few suggestions that will make this Bible study the most beneficial to you.

1. Since this is a Bible study, have your Bible near you at all times. This study outline is only designed to help you read the Bible.
2. The Bible version used for this study is the New International Version (NIV). The editor primarily used the language of the NIV to prepare the lessons. You may use other versions of the Bible if you choose. While the language may be different, the meaning will be the same.
3. Before you begin each section, read the entire Scripture passage. This is very important. The study outline will help you understand the particular Bible verses but does not tell what they say.
4. **IMPORTANT:** Note that scriptures from the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon may not have the book's name in sections dealing with them individually. In sections referring specifically to the Book of Proverbs, if the Bible reference is (1:4-6), you will find these verses (4-6) in the first chapter of Proverbs. Whereas other books of the Bible will include the name in the reference, for example, Isaiah 53:1 and John 17:1.
5. Go through the study outline carefully. Take time to look up all the Scripture verses in the outline.
6. You may want to mark your study Bible as you go. Marking your Bible will help the words become more and more your own. It will be well if you have colored pencils at hand to mark the Bible as you go along. A simple system is to mark promises in blue and warnings in red. But, however you do it, mark your Bible and it will become more and more your very own.
7. Finally, read the Bible passage again to better understand its meaning. Perhaps you may benefit from listening to the reading of the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
8. The editor has also included how to pronounce some of the more difficult proper names and other important words. The first time the word is introduced, the pronunciation will follow the word. At the end of each chapter, you will find a list of the words in the order in which they were introduced. Additionally, at the end of the document, all of the words and pronunciations will be listed alphabetically. For pronunciation of additional terms and their definitions, please refer to *A Dictionary of the Bible & Christian Doctrine in Everyday English* (Eby et al., 2004).

If a family or a few friends decide to take this study together, here are two suggestions.

1. Have one person read the Bible passage and another person read the Continuing Lay Training outline.
2. Then discuss the Scripture and outline. Ask questions of each other to help clarify the meaning of the Scripture.

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- D. Disappointments of Life (4:1-16)
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- B. The King's Second Proposal (4:1 - 5:1)

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon



NOTES

SECTION 1.1. INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

A. THE WISDOM LITERATURE

The Book of Proverbs, along with Job, Ecclesiastes [ee-KLEE-zee-as-teez], and the Song of Solomon, constitutes the major portion of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. A few psalms reflect the spirit of the sages (see 19; 37; 104; 107; 148). In the New Testament the Epistle of James is akin in spirit to that of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

In the wisdom writings the emphasis is upon the practical and ethical aspects of faith. Wisdom is applying the basic beliefs of a revealed religion to the tasks of everyday living. It is the outworking in one's life of the ethical principles inherent in the Law, in the message of the prophets, and in the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. Wisdom is doing the will of God in the daily routine of life (Deuteronomy 4:6). It is finding God's grace and living in harmony with his redemptive purposes for us.

B. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Israel thought of King Solomon as her sage par excellence. The Hebrew tradition ascribed the Book of Proverbs to Solomon just as it ascribed the Psalms to David. As the Psalms, however, were not all written by David, not all of the Book of Proverbs was the work of Solomon. A portion of the book is designated as "the words of the wise" (22:17 - 24:34). The last two chapters of the book contain the works of Agur [AH-goor], the son of Jakeh (30:1-33), and of Lemuel [LEM-oo-el], king of Massa (31:1-9). The beautiful acrostic poem on the virtuous wife and mother (31:10-31) was composed by an unknown writer. Conservative scholarship accepts the Solomonic authorship of the major part of the Book of Proverbs and its inclusion as a whole into the Old Testament canon.

While the major portions of Proverbs derive from the time of Solomon, the middle of the tenth century B.C., the completion of the work cannot be dated earlier than 700 B.C., about 250 years after his reign. One section contains the collection of proverbs that Hezekiah's scribes copied from earlier works of Solomon. Hezekiah reigned in Judah several hundred years after Solomon's death. Some scholars place the final editing of Proverbs later, but prior to the close of the Old Testament period - 400 B.C. Others place it even in the intertestamental period.



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C. DEFINITION AND LITERARY FORM

In our day, the word proverb means a short, pithy saying that expresses a valid or homely observation regarding human experience. For example, “A stitch in time saves nine.” Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanac* is a representative collection of modern proverbs. To the ancient Hebrew, however, the word proverb (*mashal*) had a much wider meaning. It was used not merely to express a maxim but to interpret the ethical teachings of the faith of Israel. It is derived from a verb that means “to be like or to compare.” Hence, in the Book of Proverbs, we find a variety of similes, contrasts, and parallelisms.

The Book of Proverbs is cast in poetic form, the sayings appearing usually in couplets. Many of the modern language translations and versions follow the poetic pattern of the original Hebrew. Outlining the major sections of the book is not difficult (see outline). The contents, however, within these sections often defy orderly arrangement. Many times, there is no logical connection between one proverb and another that follows it.

D. RELEVANT MESSAGE

Proverbs speaks to men of every era. Its teachings sweep the whole horizon of practical everyday interests, touching upon every facet of mankind’s existence. People are taught to be honest, industrious, self-reliant, good neighbors, ideal citizens, and model spouses and parents. Above all, the wise are to walk uprightly before the Lord.

The wisdom of Proverbs puts God at the center of a person’s life. This wisdom expressed by Solomon of the Old Testament finds its fuller revelation in Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31;). Paul spoke of Christ as “the wisdom of God” (Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:3). Wisdom is handling all of life’s affairs in accordance with the will of God.

SECTION 1.2. INTRODUCTION TO ECCLESIASTES

A. NAME

In the opening verse of Ecclesiastes, the author identifies himself as “the Preacher.” The word from which the original term comes means “to assemble” and thus probably indicates one who gathers an assembly to address it, hence a speaker or preacher. In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament), the term *Ecclesiastes* was used and has been brought over into our English translations as the name of the book.



B. AUTHORSHIP

Who was the author? The language of 1:1 and the description of chapter 2 seem to indicate King Solomon. However, to take these sections literally leaves other passages unexplained. Both Jewish and Christian scholars accepted Solomon's authorship down to comparatively recent times. Martin Luther seems to have been the first to deny it, and probably most Bible students of today would agree with Luther. But, if Solomon is not the author, we must say at least that much in the book reflects his life and experiences.

C. INTERPRETATION

How shall we interpret the message of this book? It certainly presents alternating positions between faith and pessimism. Such ups and downs may be a natural consequence of "half faith" and "half worldliness"? Do they portray Solomon himself or some other earth-centered life?

D. ORGANIZATION

Ecclesiastes is not a logically organized book. It is more like a diary in which a man has recorded his impressions from time to time. Often, it appears to express moods of the moment and emotional responses rather than a balanced philosophy of life. The mood of this book is skeptical more often than not. But, the Bible could hardly be a book for all people without dealing with the temptations that people may have to doubt the goodness of God.

If this book represents the struggle of a soul with dark doubts, it also reveals a man who came out on the positive side. Despite his pessimistic moods, life is as precious as a *golden bowl* (12:6), and the final answer to the quest for meaning is to *fear God and keep his commandments* (12:13).

SECTION 1.3. INTRODUCTION TO SONG OF SOLOMON

A. LITERARY FORM

The Song of Solomon and an alternate title, *Solomon's Song of Songs*, are both derived from the first verse of the book. However, the repetitive phrase "song of songs" suggests "Solomon's Greatest Song" is meant. The Song is an example of Hebrew lyric poetry. Hence, it is common in modern language translations to cast it in poetic form.



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B. INTERPRETATION

The NIV and the NIV Study Bible took an alternative view of this Song “distinct from more modern interpretations of the Song.” Nevertheless, “It views the Song as a linked chain of lyrics depicting love in all its spontaneity, beauty, power and exclusiveness – experienced in its varied moments of separation and intimacy, anguish and ecstasy, tension and contentment.”

However, there are several other interpretations, the last of which was held by A.F. Harper, the original composer of this portion of this study. (See also the “Introduction” to The Song of Solomon, pages 601-606 in volume 3 of the *Beacon Bible Commentary*.)

Allegorical. From the time of the Talmud (A.D. 150 to 500), it was common among the Jews to regard this book as an allegorical song of God’s love for his chosen people. Following this pattern Christians have seen in it a picture of Christ’s love for the Church. But, in spite of all that has been said in favor of an allegorical interpretation of the book, this view has a fatal flaw. Commentators such as Adam Clarke point out this weakness.

Allegory, metaphor, and figures in general, may be used to *illustrate* and more forcibly *apply* Divine truth. Nevertheless, this requires some clear indication, as done by other biblical writers. To force spiritual meanings from a *whole book*, where no such *indication* is given, is most certainly not the way to arrive at the knowledge of the true God. Thus, it does not portray a true picture of Jesus Christ whom God has sent.

Literal. Therefore, we only remain with methods that permit us to take a clear sense of the words as written to give us their meaning. On this basis, *The Song of Solomon* is talking about the human love of a man and a woman. It was this love that was missing from man’s life when God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

Three Characters. Many commentators agree that if the book is to be interpreted literally, there must be three characters - the king, a shepherd lover, and the girl. According to this interpretation, the young woman was the only daughter among several brothers belonging to a widowed mother living at Shunem. She fell in love with a handsome young shepherd, and they became engaged. Meanwhile, King Solomon, on a summer visit to the neighborhood, was attracted by the girl’s beauty and grace. She was abducted, or under an impulse of the moment (see 6:12), came of her own accord with the king’s servants to Solomon’s court. The king tried to dazzle her with his pomp and splendor, but she steadfastly declared her love for her country sweetheart. Finally, recognizing the depth and noble character of her



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love, Solomon released the girl. Accompanied by her beloved shepherd, she left the court and returned to her humble country home.

If this interpretation is accepted, the theme of the book is not exclusively conjugal love, as in any two-character explanation, but faithfulness in love.

C. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The traditional view, based on 1:1, is that the book was written by King Solomon. But, the language of the verse can be correctly understood to mean either *by* Solomon, *for* Solomon, or *about* Solomon. Conservative scholars disagree. If Solomon wrote the Song, it dates from the tenth century B.C. Those who hold to a different author date it from 700 B.C. to 300 B.C.

Ecclesiastes [ee-KLEE-zee-as-teez]

Agur [AH-goor]

Lemuel [LEM-oo-el]

CHAPTER 2

The Book of Proverbs



NOTES

SECTION 2.1. A TRIBUTE TO WISDOM (1:1 - 9:18)

A. TITLE AND PURPOSE (1:1-6)

When the Hebrew people thought of the law, their minds turned inevitably to Moses. When they expressed themselves in song, they used the compositions of David. And, when they recalled their proverbial sayings, they thought of Solomon. In 1:1 we probably have the editorial title for the entire Book of Proverbs as well as the caption for the first section of it. This title pays tribute to Solomon as Israel's peerless sage. It does not mean that all of Proverbs originated with him (see introduction).

The purpose of Proverbs is made clear by three words in 1:2 - *To know wisdom*. Solomon sought to do more than share his knowledge; he endeavored to show Israel the way of holiness. The proverbial sayings, however, are *dark sayings* (1:6), that is, riddles or other literary forms, requiring some interpretation. Their message is not as direct as the forthright utterances of Israel's prophets.

B. THE MAJOR THEME (1:7)

The writer expresses the major theme and the fundamental principle of revealed religion in 1:7. *The fear of the Lord* is not the slavish fear of torment but that of reverence or awe. It is the *beginning of knowledge*. It is the "starting point" (or first principle) of a person's walk with God. *Fools* are those who reject divine directives for life and walk in the way of ungodliness. The fool, in Proverbs, is one who is spiritually rebellious and indifferent to divine counsel. He is one who rejects the Lord (see Matthew 7:26-27).

C. WARNINGS AGAINST VIOLENCE (1:8-19)

In 1:8-9 Israel's sage urges the young man to be obedient to God and respectful to his parents. In this approach, youth will find the best safeguard against evil. No book in the Bible exceeds Proverbs in its encouragement to love and respect parents. In 1:10-19, the way of sinners is described. This passage might be entitled "Yield Not to Temptation."



D. WARNINGS AGAINST NEGLECTING WISDOM (1:20-33)

Here, *wisdom* is personified for the first of many times in the Book of Proverbs. Wisdom goes in the role of a prophet of God with an urgent message to *the head of noisy streets* (1:21) or to the busy street intersections. Here, “where the crowded ways of life cross,” wisdom makes her impassioned appeal. In 1:22, she uses three terms to describe those who reject the divine revelation: the *simple ones* (morally neutral), the *scorners* (defiant), and the *fools* (spiritually obstinate).

If you had responded to my rebuke (1:23) is a prophetic call to repentance (see Jeremiah 3:11-14, 22). To reject this call is tragic indeed (1:26). The judgment that shall come upon the rejectors shall be as sudden as a *whirlwind* (1:27). This judgment shall be a matter of reaping what they have sown (see Galatians 6:7-8). Those who listen to wisdom, however, need to have no fear of such disastrous calamities that come as the result of sinful folly (1:33).

E. REWARDS OF HEEDING WISDOM (2:1-22)

1. The Urgency of Wisdom’s Plea (2:1-4)

In this chapter the teacher speaks in the name of wisdom just as the prophets spoke in the name of God. The poem falls into six divisions. The opening lines (2:1-4) contain an urgent plea for the pupil to heed wisdom’s call.

2. The Five Fruits of Wisdom (2:5-22)

After the plea there follows the outcome, which describes five results or fruits of knowing God (2:5-22).

- a. The Seeker Shall Find God (2:5-8)
- b. Wisdom Gives Understanding and Freedom (2:9-11)
- c. Deliverance from the Evil Way Assured (2:12-15)
- d. Saved from the Unchaste Woman (2:16-19)
- e. Promised a Special Inheritance (2:20-22)

F. THE BLESSINGS OF WISDOM (3:1-35)

This third chapter continues the emphasis of the previous one on the blessings of wisdom. In Chapter 2, moral stability was the main fruit of wisdom. Here, happiness and security are the primary rewards. This chapter consists of three



distinct discourses, each beginning with the expression *My son*.

1. A Call to Complete Commitment (3:1-10)

The main thrust of the teacher in this section is the commitment to God's will. Human wisdom is inadequate, but divine wisdom is sufficient guidance for life. No person ever loses by taking the way of faith and obedience.

2. The Happiness of Trust in God (3:11-20)

The problem of human suffering, which is the theme of the Book of Job, is introduced in 3:11-12. But, the sage reminds us that adversity does not destroy the lasting happiness of the person of God. The word *blessed* (3:13) here is the "blessed" used in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. The person of wisdom has discovered treasures superior to earthly riches (3:14-15).

3. The Blessing of Security (3:21-35)

Walking with God brings a sense of security and delivers one from tormenting fears (3:24). Reliance upon God gives one a rewarding confidence (3:26). Only the person of wisdom is honored by God (3:33-35).

G. THE PRIMACY OF WISDOM (4:1-27)

In this section, we have an excellent portrayal of the primacy of wisdom. The chapter contains three distinct discourses.

1. A Father's Love for Wisdom (4:1-9)

The teacher here either assumes the role of a father or, more likely, recalls as a father his own valuable religious heritage. Certainly, ancient Israel believed that religion should be *taught* as well as *caught*.

2. A Choice of Two Ways (4:10-19)

The teacher sets forth the two ways of life - the way of wisdom and the way of the wicked. Of course, the way of wisdom is the better way.

3. A Plea for Purity of Heart and Life (4:20-27)

The secret of a holy life is given in this section. In this plea for purity, deep in the revelation of the Old Testament, is found the concept that Jesus emphasized more fully in the New Testament (see Matthew 5:8; 15:18-19; Mark 7:20-23).



H. INSTRUCTION ON MARRIAGE (5:1-23)

In chapter 5 we have the application of wisdom to the relationship between the sexes. After an introductory plea for strict attention to teaching (5:1-2), the sage has three messages.

1. A Warning against the Fascinations of Sin (5:1-6)

One will either be the servant of God or the slave of sin; one will either choose the chains of divine discipline or the fetters of evil. The *strange woman* (5:3), or the fraudulent adulteress, is representative of the allurements of sin - of self-will - as opposed to wisdom or God's will.

2. The High Cost of Infidelity (5:7-14)

In these verses, the destructiveness of immorality is graphically sketched. The dissolute man is not only foolish before God but also in the sight of people.

3. A plea for Faithfulness (5:13-23)

These verses contain a masterful plea for marital faithfulness. An honorable and happy marriage, described in verses 15-20, is seen as a safeguard against unfaithfulness.

I. A GROUP OF WARNINGS (6:1-19)

Proverbs are full of warning signals to alert one of danger and disaster ahead. In this section we have four such flashing red lights.

1. Against Suretyship (6:1-5)

Here the writer is dealing in a practical manner with the impulsive, inconsiderate, rash assumption of the debts of other people.

2. Against Indolence (6:6-11)

Warnings against indolence appear frequently in Proverbs (10:26; 13:4; 19:15; 24:30-34). The sage strongly stressed the virtues of diligence and industry.

3. Against Sowing Discord (6:12-15)

The wicked person was particularly troublesome in a primitive society. But, such a person is a nuisance to any society.



4. Against Seven Sins (6:16-19)

In this fourth warning the writer makes it clear that sin is not only disastrous to people but distasteful to God. The Hebrew idiomatic expression - there are six *things* the LORD hates, *seven* that are detestable to him (6:16) - should not be thought of as limiting evil to six or seven sins, nor of making a meaningful distinction between the first six and the seventh. However, several detestable sins, so offensive to God, are listed in 6:17-19.

J. WISDOM AND ADULTERY (6:20 - 7:27)

In this passage, the writer returns to the peril of adultery in a fashion similar to that of 2:16-19, 5:3-7, and 9:13-18. This entire section (6:20-7: 27) is the longest discourse in Proverbs dealing with the sin of adultery.

1. A Plea for Obedience to Parental Instruction (6:20-23)
2. The Peril of Adultery (6:24-35)
3. A Plea for the Way of Wisdom (7:1-5)
4. The Seductive Art of the Temptress (7:6-23)
 - a. The Object of Evil Design (7:6-9)
 - b. The Strategy of the Seductive (7:10-20)
 - c. The Tragic Outcome (7:21-23)
5. A Concluding Exhortation (7:24-27)

K. WISDOM'S FAME AND EXCELLENCE (8:1-36)

In the previous chapter, we had a revolting portrayal of seduction and sin. Here, we have a superb portrait of wisdom. In this eighth chapter, the Hebrew concept of wisdom reaches its zenith of expression in the Old Testament.

1. The Invitation of Wisdom (8:1-21)

Throughout chapter 8, wisdom is again personified. As in 1:20-33, she is a prophetic preacher. Here, she is also an evangelist, a herald of the good tidings of God's love and concern for all people.

- a. The Universal Call of Wisdom (8:1-5)



- b. The Character and Worth of Wisdom (8:6-16)
 - c. The Rewards of Wisdom (8:17-21)
2. The Eternity and Creativity of Wisdom (8:22-31)

Some scholars have considered this section as the greatest portion of the entire Book of Proverbs. It anticipates such significant New Testament passages as John 1:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; Colossians 1:15-18; and Hebrews 1:1-4.

- a. The Timelessness of Wisdom (8:22-23)
 - b. The Primacy of Wisdom (8:24-26)
 - c. The Role of Wisdom in Creation (8:27-31)
3. The Climactic Appeal of Wisdom (8:32-36)

Here is the sermon's challenging conclusion. Pupils must make their own decisions. They are not deciding on incidental matters. The ultimate consequences are again stated.

L. WISDOM AND FOLLY CONTRASTED (9:1-18)

This concluding chapter of the first major division of Proverbs presents the alternatives of life in two contrasting invitations of Wisdom (9:1-6) and Folly (9:13-18). Their invitations are separated by an interesting interlude (9:7-12).

1. The Invitation of Wisdom (9:1-6)

Previously, we have seen wisdom personified as a prophetic preacher (1:20-33; 8:1-21). In this passage, we see her as a gracious hostess. She prepares a lavish feast and invites all to attend.

2. The Interesting Interlude (9:7-12)

In these verses the writer treats the problem of dealing with those who reject the way of wisdom. The concept of individual responsibility is stressed. For one's ultimate destiny, one must bear full responsibility.

3. The Invitation of the Woman of Folly (9:13-18)

In contrast to the invitation to the banquet of life, we now have the invitation to the feast of folly. The *foolish woman* (9:13) has no respect for eternal values. Her invitation has been compared to the serpent's appeal in Eden (Genesis 3:4).



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SECTION 2.2. THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (10:1-22:16)

Here, we come to the longest division of Proverbs. We find in these chapters no lengthy discourses such as we encountered in the first nine chapters. This section consists of 375 couplets. They are brief, complete in themselves, and independent of one another.

In 10:1 - 15:33, the couplets are predominantly proverbs of contrast. In 16:1 - 22:16 they are largely parallel. In most of the couplets of this latter section we find a synonymous parallelism where the second line simply repeats in different words the first line.

The biblical text of this section is such that the topical arrangements that follow are neither fully definitive nor fully adequate. The overall purpose, however, is clear. Wisdom is challenging the uncommitted to take the way of the Lord the way of holy living.

A. PROVERBS OF CONTRAST (10:1 - 15:33)

1. The Righteous and the Wicked (10:1-22)

The words *righteousness* (10:2) and *righteous* (10:3) are key words in Proverbs. They describe the opposite of wickedness and wicked.

2. Outcomes of Right and Wrong Living (10:23-32)

A characteristic verse in this section is 27. Here, we see that *the fear of the Lord* brings the length of days but that *the life of the wicked shall be shortened* (see 2:18; 3:2).

3. The Upright and the Godless (11:1-11)

4. The Trustworthy and the Talebearer (11:12-23)

5. The Rewards and Punishments (11:24-31)

6. The Way of Discipline (12:1-8)

7. The Way of Diligence (12:9-14)

8. The Wise and Foolish (12:15-28)

9. The Way of True Riches (13:1-11)

10. The Source of True Hope (13:12-25)



11. Wisdom and Folly (14:1-19)

Typical of the proverbs of contrast, in verse 1, the constructive nature of wisdom is set alongside the destructive powers of folly.

12. The Rich and the Poor (14:20-35)

13. The Tongue of the Wise (15:1-20)

14. Secrets of a Cheerful Heart (15:21-33)

Those who are humble enough to accept God and his guidance shall be honored by him.

B. PROVERBS LARGELY PARALLEL (16:1 - 22:16)

1. The Lord of Life (16:1-11)

2. Wisdom as the Fountain of Life (16:12-24)

3. Man's Evil Designs (16:25-33)

4. God Refines Man's Character (17:1-12)

The refining pot, or "crucible," is used to refine silver as the furnace is for gold. Likewise, God uses trials to refine one's character (17:3; see Malachi 3:3).

5. The Cost of Wisdom (17:13-28)

There is a price to pay for wisdom. The fool is not willing to pay that price.

6. The Wise and the Foolish (18:1-24)

7. Couplets on Poverty and Wealth (19:1-17)

8. The Importance of Listening (19:18-29)

9. The Character of the Righteous (20:1-14)

10. Wisdom and Lasting Wealth (20:15-30)

11. The Wicked and Their Ways (21:1-12)

The characteristic emphasis here is that of the controlling hand of God in the affairs of people. It is God who brings the sinner to judgment.

12. The Treasures of the Wise (21:13-31)



13. The Worth of a Good Name (22:1-16)

A *good name* (21:1), reputation, or character (see Ecclesiastes 7:1; Luke 10:20; Acts 6: 3) is more desirable than perishable treasures. A familiar proverb on the training of children is found in verse 6. It expresses the concern of the Hebrew sage and his people for the moral training of their children in the formative years of life.

SECTION 2.3. THE WORDS OF THE WISE (22:17 - 24:34)

This portion of Proverbs consists of a collection of moral and religious teachings presented in an intimate manner by the teacher to his pupil or son. The section resembles the first part of Proverbs (chapters 1--9) in that it usually consists of units longer than the couplets of the preceding division (10:1 - 22:16).

A. INTRODUCTION (22:17-21)

With 22:17 we have the beginning of a distinct section of Proverbs entitled appropriately *the words of the wise*. In his prophecy (18:18), Jeremiah recognized three groups of teachers in Israel:

1. The priest, whose function was to give the Torah, which included both the written and the oral law;
2. The wise men who gave counsel; and
3. The prophet who proclaimed the word of God.

The words of Israel's wise men are recorded in this section of Proverbs (22:17 - 24: 4). Their words are not merely pious platitudes but voice the call of God.

B. FIRST COLLECTION (22:22 - 23:14)

The admonitions here treat such concerns as:

1. Protection for the poor (22:22-23);
2. Respect for property rights (22:28);
3. The importance of proper etiquette in the presence of kings (23:1-3);
4. The fact that godly wisdom has its price in acceptance and obedience (23:12) and
5. The truth that the faithful correction of children will yield its fruits unto eternal life (23:13-14).



C. SECOND GROUP (23:15 - 24:22)

1. Guidelines for Godly Living (23:15-28)

This section begins with a warm personal appeal - *my son* - so characteristic of the first major division of Proverbs (chapters 1-9). The teacher rejoices in the progress of his pupil (23:16). In 23:19-21, drunkenness and gluttony are cited as detrimental practices capable of reducing a person to rags. Parental guidance is stressed (23:22-25). Following this, the sage warns again regarding adultery (23:26-28).

2. Portrait of Drunkenness (23:29-35)

Here, the wise man paints with unforgettable strokes the portrait of a drunkard - immoral, insensible, and irresponsible. He says: *Do not gaze at wine when it is red* (23:31). These words suggest not moderation but abstinence. The sad condition of the intoxicated person should serve to induce others to leave the intoxicating beverage alone.

3. Wise Counsels to a Son (24: 1-22)

This chapter begins with a warning regarding the corrupting influence of evil associates (24:1-2). It continues with helpful counsel in other areas.

D. ADDITIONAL ADMONITIONS (24:23-34)

The further words from Israel's sages include counsel on impartiality in the administration of justice (24: 23-26), a warning to the false accuser (24:28), a denunciation of retaliation (24:29), and an indictment of the sluggard - the habitually lazy person (24:30-34).

SECTION 2.4. THE HEZEKIAH COLLECTION OF SOLOMON'S PROVERBS (25:1 - 29:27)

For this collection of 137 Solomonic proverbs, we are indebted to Hezekiah, perhaps the greatest of the reformer kings of Judah's history. Not only did Hezekiah lead his nation in spiritual renewal, but tradition ascribes to his reign a great literary revival. Doubtless, Hezekiah was a man of literary interests (see 2 Kings 18:18, 37; Isaiah 38:10-20). During his reign, he sought to preserve the literary treasures of his people, especially those of Israel's greatest sage.

According to the title verse (25:1), Hezekiah's scribes *copied out*, or literally "removed from one document to another" these proverbs of Solomon. They



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were taken from some previous anthology (see 1 Kings 4:32). The sayings in this collection are similar to those of the first major collection (10:1 - 22:16). We have here no lengthy discourse, no logical connection between many of the couplets, and no easy arrangement of contents.

A. FIRST COLLECTION (25:1 - 27:27)

1. Regarding Kings and the Court (25:1-10)
2. Four Beautiful Comparisons (25:11-14)
3. Varied Counsels on Conduct (25:15-28)
4. About Fools and Their Folly (26:1-12)

This section, with the exception of 26:2, has been termed the “Book of Fools.” It is a series of statements regarding the class of people most distasteful to Israel’s sages.

5. The Sluggard (26:13-16)

In these verses, we have a satirical portrait of those who are lazy - a favorite target of Israel’s wise men (see 6:6-11; 19:24; 22:13).

6. Various Scoundrels (26:17-28)

B. SECOND COLLECTION (28:1 - 29:27)

1. Further Contrasts of the Wicked and the Righteous (28:1-28)
2. God and the Reign of the Righteous (29:1-27)

In this chapter, the conflict between good and evil is again set forth, and the importance of moral choices is emphasized.

SECTION 2.5. THE WORDS OF AGUR (30:1-33)

Chapter 30 is normally entitled “The Words of Agur.” Nothing is known of Agur (30:1). He may have been, like Job and Baalim [BA-al-imm], a non-Israelite who had come to know the God of the Hebrew faith. He may have been one of the respected non-Jewish teachers (see 1 Kings 5:10-11) and possibly a contemporary of Solomon. Some have conjectured that Agur was simply another name for Solomon. More significant, however, than Agur’s exact identity is the fact that his words were considered worthy of inclusion in the Book of Proverbs.



A. PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS (30:1-9)

1. The Knowledge of God (30:1-4)

With five rhetorical questions, Agur contrasts the Creator and the creature (30:4). God is knowable, but he is also incomprehensibly great (see Job 11:7-8; Psalm 104:1-5; Isaiah 40:12; Romans 11:33-35). In the light of God's "majestic otherness," people are seen with all their finite limitations.

2. The Revelation of God (30: 5-6)

These verses provide the answer to the probing questions of 30:4. While the light of human intellect is inadequate to give us an understanding of God's being and his works, the inerrant self-disclosure of God through his Word is within reach of all who will trust him.

3. The Prayer of Agur (30:7-9)

The burden of Agur's prayer is twofold. He prays humbly, first of all, that he will be able to maintain his godly integrity - *before I die* - or literally "all the days of my life." *Keep falsehood and lies far from me* (30:8). He prays earnestly, in the second place, for the simple necessities of life - no more nor less. Such a petition anticipates the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6: 9-13). Agur wanted neither the dangers of prosperity nor the desperations of poverty.

B. NUMERICAL PROVERBS (30:10-33)

In this section we have the numerical proverbs, characteristic of the Hebrew wisdom literature. Israel's sages used devices such as numerical sequences, acrostic patterns, and various types of parallelisms to accentuate truths and aid in memorization.

1. Against Slandering and Evildoers (30:10-14)

In 30:10, we have a couplet that warns against gossiping (see Romans 14:4). In 30:11-14 there is a severe indictment of four classes of depraved persons.

2. Four Insatiable Things (30:15-16)

The leech of 30:15 is a fitting symbol with which to introduce the four examples of insatiable things: the grave, the barren womb, land which is never satisfied with water, and fire which never says "enough."

3. The Arrogant Son (30:17)

By this graphic portrait the sage emphasizes again the Hebrew's regard for



parental authority (see Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 23:22).

4. Four Incomprehensible Things (30:18-19)

Man can never fully understand the phenomena of the natural world, even in this age of knowledge explosion. In his prescientific day, the sage selected four examples of the mystery of nature.

5. The Shocking Adulteress (30:20)

Here, the sage describes the adulteress who is at ease in her sin and totally indifferent to her immorality.

6. Four Intolerable Things (30:21-23)

Here four unbearable persons are described who would bring chaos to any community or society.

7. Four Remarkable Little Things (30:24-28)

The wise teacher, not enamored with bigness, saw the significance of little things.

8. Four Stately Things (30:29-31)

In these verses, the sage cites four examples of majestic bearing and power.

9. A Concluding Challenge (30:32-33)

These concluding words deal with the virtue of humility.

SECTION 2.6. THE WORDS OF LEMUEL (31:1-9)

A. TITLE (31:1)

In 31:1 we have the title verse to this section that contains the instruction of a king's mother to her son. Lemuel and his mother were likely non-Israelites, although nothing is known definitely about them. The lessons of this passage, however, are definite and significant.

B. WARNINGS AGAINST LUST AND STRONG DRINK (31:2-7)

The construction of 31:2 suggests both earnestness and loving concern. Lemuel's mother warns him, first of all, against debauchery (31:3). In 31:4-5 she warns her son against the ravages of strong drink that perverts one's judgment.



C. RULE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (31:8-9)

The concluding counsel of the king's mother is beamed at motivating her son to reign in righteousness, giving special attention to the poor and underprivileged. She urged him to speak for those who could not speak for themselves (31:8). Reflected in such counsel is the concern for social justice so frequently voiced by Israel's prophets (see Isaiah 10:1-2; Amos 2:6-7; 4:1; 5:15).

SECTION 2.7. THE VIRTUOUS WIFE AND MOTHER (31:10-31)

In this final section, we have a beautiful acrostic poem that is an immortal tribute to the virtuous wife and mother. The poem has been called the "Golden ABC of Womanhood." It contains twenty-two stanzas or couplets, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Here is a fitting climax to the Book of Proverbs. First of all, much has been said about the contentious woman (see 19:13; 21:9; 25:24; 27:15), so the sage pays tribute to one truly noble.

Secondly, there are repeated condemnations of the adulteress and sinful woman (see chapters 1-9; 22:14; 23:27; 29:3; 31:3). Now, the sage presents a better portrait of commendable womanhood. Again, throughout Proverbs, the mother's place in the training of children has been noted (see 1:8-9; 10:1; 17:25; 18:22; 19:14; 23:25; 28:24). In closing words, the sage underscores this great truth of the Hebrew family tradition.

Finally, the purpose of Proverbs is to help people come to know wisdom or the way of the Lord (see 1:2-6). In the concluding poetical expression, the sage portrays more than a wife of strength and character in a general sense; she is one who exemplifies the way of the Lord. The poem is not simply a contrast to the contentious woman and the adulteress. It is more than a tribute to Hebrew womanhood. This wife and mother is an example of one who fulfills God's purpose for her life. It is in this respect that the ideal she exemplifies is within the reach of all.

A. HER CROWNING CHARACTERISTICS (31:10-29)

A wife so capable and strong in character is priceless (31:10). She is so unflinching in her devotion that her husband *lacks nothing of value* (31:11). All that she does contributes to the family's well-being, and she is unceasingly industrious (31:12-15). She has outstanding business ability (31:16-19). *She sets about her vigorously, and her arms are strong* (31:17). These phrases are to be understood as her efforts to fasten her skirt and sleeves so that she is unhampered in her work.



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Her lamp does not go out at night (31:18) does not mean that she works all night, but that there was plenty of oil in her house so that her lamp could burn through the night (see 13:9; Matthew 25:28).

This ideal wife is charitable and unselfish (31:20-22). All her household *is clothed in scarlet* (31:21). The word *scarlet* indicates articles of luxury (see Exodus 25:3; 2 Samuel 1:24; Jeremiah 4:30). It may also mean more than one garment. In either case, her family was well-clothed. This good wife is a benefit to her husband, who is a respected leader in the community (see 1:21; 24:7). Her industry results in profit (31:24).

This mother is strong, dignified, and confident regarding the future of her home (31:25). She is gracious and kind in her instructions to her children and in her directives to her servants (31:26). She is tireless in her devotion to her family (31:27). She is respected and loved by her children (31:28-29).

B. A CONCLUDING TRIBUTE (31:30-31)

In 31:30, we are reminded that charm and beauty are fleeting but that a godly character is of lasting value. The husband of this good wife is urged to give her due recognition for her work and also public acclaim (31:31). Not all may possess the unusual gifts and resources of this virtuous wife and mother. But, all may follow her as she followed the Lord. This mother is the exemplification of true wisdom (31:30). Thus, Proverbs ends as it begins (1:7) with the challenge to take the way of wisdom, which is to fear the Lord always and live according to his purposes.

Baalim [BA-al-imm]

CHAPTER 3

The Book of Ecclesiastes



NOTES

SECTION 3.1. THE QUEST FOR LIFE'S MEANING (1:1 - 2:26)

A. THEME OF THE BOOK (1:1-11)

In 1:2-11 the Preacher outlines the theme of his "sermon." The text is *Meaningless! Meaningless! and Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.* (1:2). This reflects the brevity of life, but the author means more. Life seems to be going nowhere, all is vain and useless.

In what sense does the Preacher make this declaration? There are, of course, hours when the theme of Ecclesiastes expresses the mood of every person's soul. But these are hours of depression. They occur in times of loss and discouragement. Such moods are temporary emotional reactions that, in time, give way to a truer understanding of life. They become life shaping attitudes only to the person whose whole life is *under the sun* (1:3), whose outlook is entirely worldly and secular. Such a person has ample reason to ask, *What does a man gain from all his labor?* (1:3)

1. Illustrations from Nature (1:4-8)

The writer lists several frustrating facts. In 1:4 the physical earth is more permanent than the earthly life of a person. The argument next turns to the cycles of the natural world, and the writer sees nothing but their monotony. *The sun* (1:5) rises only to set. *The wind* (1:6) blows *south*, and the wind blows *north*. *All the rivers* (1:7) run to *the sea*; evaporation and rainfall return the waters to the land. Nature moves in a circle, and when one can see only the circle, one goes mad.

But why should a person be pessimistic [peh-suh-MI-stuhk] about the world's recurring functions? When the sun shines, and the rain falls, conscious beings are blessed by them.

2. Sameness and Weariness (1:9-11)

One can scarcely contradict the facts that the writer points out. Most of life's basic activities have *been already of old time, which was before us* (1:10). But, so what? All of the old things are new to the new people who come into the world. Also, old experiences gain new meaning for persons who are somehow renewed with a fresh enthusiasm for life.



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B. THE VANITY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE (1:12 - 2:26)

In this section the writer tells of a personal search for life's meaning.

1. The Intellectual Quest (1:13-16)

Here is the inquiring mind - to *search out by wisdom concerning all things* (1:13). But, the intellectual venture is not fully satisfying. The writer turned from it, observing, "What a heavy burden God has laid on men!" (1:13). Ecclesiastes concludes that the intellectual efforts of life are *meaningless*, like *chasing after the wind* (1:14) because what is *twisted cannot be straightened* (1:15). All the things that are wrong *cannot be counted*. We must admit that we can always find more things wrong than we can correct. But, some things we can make right - and we can always try!

2. A Probe and a Discovery (1:17-18)

In verse 17, the "Preacher" tried to gain wisdom by understanding its opposites, madness, and *folly*. There is a serious truth in 1:18 that is discovered by a growing personality. The more knowledge one gains, the more gaps one discovers in what one knows and the less satisfied one is with one's development. But who would want to avoid the pains of knowledge at the cost of remaining ignorant?

3. A Test of Pleasure (2:1-3)

In his search for the highest good, many a person has tried the paths of *pleasure* (2:1), *laughter* (2:2), and the stimulation of *wine* (2:3). The "Preacher" admits his own experiment with these but quickly discovered that they are unworthy pursuits for a person.

4. A Test of Activity and Possessions (2:4-11)

Turning from entertainment to activity, the king built *houses* (2:4), planted *vineyards* (2:4), and "bought male and female slaves" (2:7). He had herds and flocks and *cattle* (2:7). The king was also a patron of the arts, surrounding himself with *men singers and women singers* (2:8). This was his possession - but it was not *enough* - *all was meaningless* like *chasing after the wind* (2:11). Self-centered activity will not stand up under reflection; the activity must have a satisfying purpose.

5. Wisdom and Folly Compared (2:12-17)

Can happiness be found by using the mind to its maximum? We know that *wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness* (2:13). But, here, the sandy foundation of all mere humanism becomes apparent. How much



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better is *the wise person* than *the fool* (2:16) when their lifespans are the same? The mind of the “Preacher” rebelled against this leveling of all the values that people hold most dear: *So I hated life* (2:17). He was neither the first nor the last to sense the rightness of mankind’s yearning for immortality [i-mor-TA-luh-tee].

6. The Vanity of Accumulated Wealth (2:18-23)

Here, the writer reflects on the worthwhileness of his years spent in getting and hoarding wealth. What bothers him most is that he must leave it *to the one who comes after me* (2:18).

If a person is so mad after money that one’s *mind does not rest* even at night, this is *meaningless* (2:23). A satisfying life is more important than a fortune.

7. The Blessings of Labor (2:24-26)

A person should have enough to eat and drink, but one should also enjoy oneself as one does one’s work (2:24). This is God’s plan for people. In the NIV 2:25 is translated, “Who can eat and find employment?” Such an interpretation connects 2:24 and 2:26 into a meaningful sequence. It is God who has given appetite, the ability to taste and the capacity to enjoy life.

In 2:26, the “Preacher” sums up what the Bible teaches about a moral universe: “To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness: but to the sinner, he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God.”

SECTION 3.2. COMING TO TERMS WITH LIFE (3:1 - 5:20)

Here, the philosopher-preacher probes the facts of life and relates them to his faith in God.

A. POEM OF AN ORDERLY WORLD (3:1-8)

In the poetry of this passage, the “Preacher” expounds his text found in 3:1. Here, we see a recognition of God’s sovereignty, paralleled by mankind’s freedom and the ability to adjust one’s life to the requirements of God. *A time to uproot* (3:2) probably means to harvest. *A time to kill* (3:3) may mean more generally to destroy. *A time to throw away* (3:6) could mean a time to share with others. *A time to love* (3:8) suggests expressing our love to God and for goodness. *A time to hate* would be to hate evil and oppose wrong.



B. FRUSTRATION AND FAITH (3:9-15)

“What does the worker gain from his toil?” (39) In 3:10 the writer declares that he has seen man’s labor, and in it he finds elements of value. God *has made everything beautiful in its time* (3:11).

The second clause of 3:11 has been translated: “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.” Perhaps this is one of God’s provisions to draw us to himself. And, it may lift us above the concerns of our material world.

In 3:12-13, we get the same earthly answer that was given in 2:24: people can eat and drink and find satisfaction (3:13). But faith also functions. People can *be happy and do good while they live* (3:12). God’s plan is dependable; *nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it* (v.14).

Verse 15 clearly declares the unchanging order of our universe. But what is the meaning of the last clause? May it not be understood as expressing the purpose of God’s universe - a parallel to the last clause of 3:14? If this is granted, we see God’s universe and his activity as designed to draw people to himself - even those who have somehow been passed by.

C. THE PROBLEM OF MORAL EVIL (3:16-22)

1. God Has the Answer (3:16-17)

How can we reconcile the presence of evil in a world ruled by a righteous God? The answer of faith is that *God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked* (3:17; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

2. Uncertainty of the Future Life (3:18-22)

That which befalls people also befalls animals: the same fate awaits both (3:19). Concerning the body, these are undeniable statements - but what of the spirit? It is the blight of feeble faith that leads to the time-serving conclusion that happiness is the thing to be sought after above all else.

D. DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LIFE (4:1-16)

1. Social Oppression (4:1-3)

This section discusses the injustices of life. There were *the tears* of the *oppressed* and *no comforter* for them. *Power* was on the side of the oppressor, and no one to stand with the oppressed. Crushed by these inequities, the heart cries, it is better to be *dead* than *alive* (4:2). Still better off is the one



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who has never been born (4:3). But, desperate as many oppressive conditions are, this solution must be considered as an emotional need of the moment - not a philosophy for life. The author himself contradicts his position in 9:4.

2. The Enigma of Effort (4:4-6)

Verse 4 sees “all labor and achievement” as springing “from man’s envy of his neighbor.” This assertion is only half true - if that much. Are we to forget the millions who toil to supply the necessities of life for themselves and for those whom they love, as well as to render a worthy stewardship to God?

Verse 6 contains the lovely phrase, *one handful with tranquility*. There is healing and sustaining power for those who can find a handful of quietness out of the stresses and strains of the world. We call it relaxation, but it is more than that. It is allowing life to immerse itself in that which is blessed and enduring, and thus finding rest. One quiets one’s agitated spirit and anticipates the ultimate healing when “the wicked cease from troubling” and the weary are at rest” (see Job 3:17).

3. The Evil of Aloneness (4:7-12)

Nearly any burden can be borne if there is a friend with whom to share it. One of life’s great evils occurs when *there is one alone* (4:8). Over against the evils of isolation, 4:9-12 set forth the values of working together. Human fellowship and cooperation bring mutual helpfulness (4:10), warmth (4:11), and defense (4:12).

4. The Brevity of Fame (4:13-16)

Some things are better than others - *a wise child* is better than *an old and foolish king*. Nevertheless, there is nothing not even the experiences of the wise young ruler - that is very good in the long run. “I saw all who lived and walked under the sun followed the youth, the king’s successor...But those who came later were not pleased with the successor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.” (15-16)

E. WORSHIPPING GOD RIGHTLY (5:1-7)

1. Be Reverent (5:1-3)

God is high and holy, therefore reverent awe is always becoming in his presence. It is always better to listen to the Holy Spirit than to be too intent on telling God what we want him to hear.



2. Keep Your Vows (5:4-7)

Vows made to God have power, if kept, to lift us to new levels of devotion and service, but a broken pledge to God jeopardizes our standing with him and undermines the very structure of character (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). *The messenger* (5:6) probably refers to the priest and, thus, to the pastor or any of God's human representatives. To *destroy the work of your hands* (5:6) would be to frustrate one's plans or to diminish the success of one's undertakings.

F. ADJUSTING TO ECONOMIC PROBLEMS (5:8-20)

1. Exacting Civil Authorities (5:8-9)

Verse 8 admonishes: "If you see the poor oppressed in a district and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one." This may mean only that there is always some official higher-up to be satisfied. However, a legitimate interpretation is that the phrase refers to God himself.

2. Wealth Is a Mixed Blessing (5:10-12)

Wealth is, at best, a mixed blessing. Jesus bids us to remember that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). Of what use is more money when it only demands more toil?

3. Wealth Is Often Lost (5:13-17)

The *evil* of these verses was riches which were kept for the owners own *hurt*. Having lost his wealth, the father had no legacy to leave to a son.

4. Hold Wealth Loosely (5:18-20)

This passage is as near as the pleasant-life formula of Ecclesiastes ever comes to being wholly true. A person had better enjoy one's work and the fruits of one's toil than to fret and worry about them.

SECTION 3.3. NO SATISFACTION IN EARTHLY GOODS (6:1 - 8:17)

A. DISAPPOINTMENTS FROM WEALTH AND FAMILY (6:1-12)

Chapter 6 continues the "Preacher's" reflections on the disappointments of wealth.



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1. Wealth Without Happiness (6:1-2)

Here the *evil* is the person who has wealth but has no satisfaction in it - this is the meaning of *God does not enable him to enjoy them* (6:2; see Isaiah 3:10; Jeremiah 15:16).

2. Family Without Appreciation (6:3-6)

A large family and a long life were regarded as great blessings among the Hebrews. The writer could see no value in a deeply disappointing earthly life because he had no high faith in life beyond. *Do not all go to one place* - the silent, final grave?

3. Some Further Frustrations (6:7-9)

Earthly goods cannot satisfy spiritual desire. In 6:9, the author again reaches his unsatisfying answer - make the best of it while you live. Because the wise man with his higher aims (*the roving of the appetite*) has nothing better than the pleasure-seeking fool, why make the effort?

4. Finite Man Against Fate (6:10-12)

Here, Ecclesiastes sums up his pessimistic view. People are finite creatures and cannot *contend with him* (God) *who is stronger than them* (6:10). Verse 12 is a concluding cry in the dark: "Who knows what is good for man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow? For who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?"

B. PRACTICAL WISDOM IN A SINFUL WORLD (7:1-29)

This chapter contains a group of proverbs and other brief observations. The series is evoked by the question of 6:12, "What is good for man in this life?"

1. A Basis for Wise Choices (7:1-4)

Verse 1 begins with a play on the Hebrew words: *Shem* (*name*) is better than *shemen* (*ointment*). In the East men often use perfume to make themselves socially more acceptable. But, for really significant acceptability, *a good name* is better than *ointment*.

A serious approach to life is better than a happy mood. It is better to visit the bereaved than to attend a birthday party. Sorrow is better than laughter (7:3) because times of sorrow cause us to think seriously.



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2. Some Pitfalls for Right Judgment (7:5-10)

The “Preacher” here points out some things that a wise person will avoid.

- a. Don’t take the wrong advice (7:5-6).
- b. Don’t let your judgment be warped by irrelevant circumstances (7: 7).
- c. Don’t decide on the basis of incidentals (7:8). *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof* says to us, make your decisions in view of basic purposes and goals; never mind about early and incidental reactions.
- d. Don’t be impatient (7:8). *Patience* here probably means to avoid being rash because one is in a hurry.
- e. Don’t be quickly provoked (7:9). Anger is always the enemy of clear thinking and sound judgment.
- f. Don’t complain about the times (7:10). To peevishly complain that *the former days were better than these* is beneath a wise person’s conduct. Even if true, it never contributes much to resolving today’s problems.

3. Seek Wisdom (7:11-12)

Perhaps some objector is imagined to be asking, “What good is wisdom without money?” Ecclesiastes 7:11-12 declares: *Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter...wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.*”

4. Count on God (7:13-14)

In the distribution of wealth (see 7:11-12), we are to consider *the work of God*. In his providence he puts money into the hands of few: but wisdom is within the reach of all.

5. Avoid Self-righteousness and Wickedness (7:15-18)

Just rewards for good and evil are not apparent in this life; “*a righteous man perishing*” and “*a wicked man living long*” (7:15). *Be not over righteous* (7:16) refers to the kind of pharisaical self-righteousness that our Lord so often condemned (see Matthew 5:20; Luke 5:32). The *over wise* are those who pretend an absolute knowledge that has no tolerance for any difference of opinion (7:16). Furthermore, *Be not over wicked* (7:17), by opposing godliness.

After all his counsels of caution, Ecclesiastes (7:18) knows that a person must take a stand for right and against wrong. *It is good to grasp the one* (righteousness).



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6. Be Wise, but Remember You Are Human (7:19-20)

These verses summarize and support the argument that wisdom is good, but no person is perfect. The translation of verse 20 in some translations seems to support the doctrine of the necessity of sinning, but such support is not present in Hebrew. The term *sins* may not refer here to sin in the sense of “a known violation of the will of God.” Perhaps what is meant is: “There is no such thing as an absolutely good person, one without fault.”

7. Ignore Unfair Criticism (7:21-22)

Don't get upset over everything you hear; you can be sure that some people will criticize what you say and do; remember that *you yourself have cursed others* (7:22).

8. Remember You Are Not All-wise (7:23-24)

In verse 23, the writer affirms, “I am determined to be wise, but this is beyond me.” Then, in verse 24, he asks, “Who can discover it?”

9. Remember the Evil in Men (7:25-29)

Though it is impossible to plumb the depths of ultimate reality (7:23-24), one may know assuredly that *wickedness is stupid* and *folly is insane* (7:26). The worst of life's wickedness is the woman who uses her charms to enslave a man. She is “more bitter even than death” (7:26).

The writer does not assert that all women are bad (see 9:9) but implies that the percentage is high!

Adding one to another (7:27) or, as we might say, “Putting two and two together,” he reached his conclusion. He found *one* (upright) *man among a thousand* but *not one* (upright) *woman among them all* (7:28). In verse 29, he softens his charges by recognizing that there is a serious bent to evil in both men and women – *men have gone in search of many schemes.*” This is one of the statements in the Bible regarding man's original innocence and his subsequent fall.

C. COMING TO TERMS WITH AN IMPERFECT WORLD (8:1-17)

1. Adjusting to the Inevitable (8:1-9)

This section discusses wise conduct for one who lives under an autocratic government.

a. An ode to wisdom (8:1).



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Who is like the wise man?

Who knows the explanation of things?

*Wisdom brightens a man's face, and
changes its hard appearance.*

- b. It is wise to obey the king (8:2-6).

Obey the king's command (8:2) anticipates Paul's guidance to Christians (see Romans 13:1-5).

In 8:3-4 we have a simple appeal on the basis of plain authority. *Do not stand up for a bad cause* perhaps means, "Do not engage in conflicting matters." In the face of impossible circumstances, one does well to compromise when moral issues are not involved.

- c. Life sometimes offers no choice (8:7-9).

2. The Struggle for Faith (8:10-17)

How does one reconcile the existence of evil with one's faith in a good and all-powerful God?

- a. An assertion of faith (8:10-13).

The NIV has preserved the words of the Hebrew in v. 10 and also the meaning of the context: "Then too, I saw the wicked buried - those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless." For the wicked to be buried in honor and the righteous to be forgotten in the city violates the moral order, but the writer's faith rises above the problem, at least momentarily.

Verse 11 notes that punishment for sin seems so long delayed that the ungodly go on sinning. But, the writer declares his own faith. *Although a wicked man commits a hundred times and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better for God-fearing men who are reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them.* (8:12-13; Psalm 1:1-6).

- b. When faith falters (8:14-15).

The writer again becomes frustrated because just people are "rewarded" according to the work of the wicked, and the wicked receive what the righteous deserve (8:14). The best he could advise was *nothing is better*



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for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and to be glad (8:15).

- c. We walk by faith - if we walk (8:16-17).

The conclusion reached here is true; and it is helpful, if one does not hold it as life's final truth. Ecclesiastes wisely rejects the conclusion of a person who thinks that human wisdom is enough.

SECTION 3.4. LIFE'S INJUSTICES IN GOD'S HANDS (9:1 - 10:20)

A. THOUGHTS ON DEATH (9:1-18)

1. Death Comes to All (9:1-3)

The "Preacher" recognizes that the lives of *the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands (9:1)*, but he cannot say whether this is for good or ill. His almost insane obsession with death is again the paralysis that destroys his faith. No matter what a person is or does, he dies. *This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: the same destiny overtakes all (9:3).*

2. Death Seems So Final! (9:4-6)

In a despondent moment, Ecclesiastes had said that death is better than life (4:1-3). But he doesn't really believe it. He now declares that *a live dog is better off than a dead lion (9:4)* because while a person lives, there is hope, and one also enjoys all the interests of conscious life.

3. Enjoy Life While You Can (9:7-10)

While Ecclesiastes' philosophy of life is earthbound, it is neither excessive nor sensual: it is simply the good neighbor existence of the average suburban home. By many, this is considered "the good life," but it has nagging limitations that compel one to label it *meaningless*.

There is serious truth in 9:10, even for the Christian who believes in immortality. Earthly life is a probation which offers some opportunities that end at the grave. The truth of Ecclesiastes is reflected in the words of Annie Coghill: *"Work, for the night is coming ... When man's work is o'er."*

4. Even the Wise Cannot Win (9:11-12)

Ecclesiastes declares that *the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong ... but time and chance happen to them all (9:11)*. He was right - but only half right. The swift win more races than the slow - but they don't win every race. There are elements affecting human destiny that God has reserved for his



own control.

5. Wisdom Is Better than Force (9:13-18)

Our political philosopher here recalls a historical incident in which the significance seemed great (9:13) to him (see 4:13-16). A *small city* (9:14) was saved from the attack of a powerful king because they found in it a poor but wise man. His wise suggestions commended themselves to his people and he *by his wisdom* saved the city (9:15).

But poor, pessimistic Ecclesiastes can't let a strong, optimistic fact stand untarnished; he must point out "a fly in the perfume" (see 10:1); *nobody remembered that poor man* (9:15). Nevertheless, *Wisdom is better than strength* (9:16). Verses 17-18 comprise a four-line poem:

*The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded
Than the shouts of a ruler of fools.
Wisdom is better than weapons of war,
But one sinner destroys much good.*

B. WISDOM AND FOLLY (10:1-20)

1. A Little Folly Can Ruin a Life (10:1-4)

a. The nature of folly (10:1-3).

He shows everyone how stupid he is may mean that a fool's actions and words advertise his foolishness. If so, the advertising is done by talking too much and thinking too little, by quick judgments without considering all the facts, by having quick and firm opinions on every subject, and by acting as though he is always right and others are always wrong.

b. The folly of a quick resignation (10:4).

This verse discusses a special instance where a little folly can quickly ruin a life.

2. Folly and Wisdom in High Places (10:5-20)

a. Appointment of incompetent leaders (10:5-7).

Folly (error) *that arises from a ruler* (10:5) is the evil of appointing incompetent people to responsible positions and keeping wise leaders from positions of influence (10:6; Proverbs 19:10; 30:21-22). The writer here equates *the rich* (10:6) and *princes* (10:7) with the wise.



- b. The wisdom of action (10:8-11).

There are dangers in any significant action that one takes. However, such dangers can be largely avoided through proper foresight - wisdom (skill) *will bring success* (10:10). However, such wisdom must be exercised before action is taken.

- c. The nature of folly - continued (10:12-15).

These verses continue a consideration of the destructive nature of folly (see 10:1-3). *Words from a wise man's mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.* (10:12)

Verse 13 seems to indicate a progressive deterioration. *At the beginning his words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness.*

- d. Unworthy leaders (10:16-19).

Ecclesiastes here turns to the tragedy of a people whose rulers are unworthy. *Whose king was a servant*, probably in contrast to 4:13, and includes irresponsible rulers who act like children.

- e. Even bad government has value (10:20).

This may be simply a caution of prudence - *Do not revile the king* or curse the *rich* (those with authority). But, there may be more than prudence here. Ecclesiastes elsewhere urges support for established government (8:1-5). This is in accord with NT teaching (Romans 13:1-7).

SECTION 3.5. HOW BEST TO INVEST LIFE (11:1-8)

The writer of Ecclesiastes has faced frequent frustration and often settled for pessimism or mediocrity, but his final conclusions are optimistic and worthy.

A. BE GENEROUS (11:1-3)

Life is uncertain and much of it is not subject to our control, nevertheless generosity and helpfulness are better than selfishness; therefore, *Cast your bread upon the waters* (11:1).

B. BE INDUSTRIOUS (11:4-6)

The good life requires decision and action. *Whoever watches the wind*, that is, waits until there is no wind to disturb the even scattering of his seed, *will not*



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plant (11:4). Also, *whoever looks at the clouds* - to be sure that his grain, when cut, will not get wet - *shall not reap*.

In 11:5 we are reminded that there are always factors known only to God in any decision that we make. The advice of 11:6 is a clear summary of both the conclusion and the reasoning: *"Sow your seed in the morning and at evening let not your hands be idle; for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well."*

C. BE JOYFUL (11:7-8)

A man should live joyfully all of his life, but he should remember that he will not live always. There comes an end of life here, and Ecclesiastes has little expectation of any life beyond the grave.

SECTION 3.6. SEEING LIFE WHOLE (11:9 - 12:14)

In the closing section, the author gives a summary of conclusions reached in his search for the meaning of life. He is still a pessimist, but at least he has all of the essential elements in view –

- (a) youth,
- (b) old age,
- (c) death, and
- (d) people's responsibility to *fear God and keep his commandments*.

A. EARTHLY LIFE IN PERSPECTIVE (11:9 - 12:8)

1. Youth, Death, and Accountability to God (11:9 - 12:1)

In youth, life's energies and joys are so real that it is difficult to take the other three elements into account; therefore, the "Preacher" must give God's counsel: *Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy* (11:9). Yet there is more: *But know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment*. Therefore, life's most important counsel is given: *Remember your Creator in the days of your youth* (12:1). The vanity of childhood and youth (11:10) is simply that they do not last for all of one's life. They are futile only in the sense that they are not final.

2. Old Age (12:1-5)

The *evil days* – of trouble (12:1) here refer to old age, not to death as in 11:8. Old age is pictured as a time of fading light and the dark days of winter. *The*



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clouds (12:2) suggest depression, and *the rain* may speak of tears. *The keepers of the house* (12:3) are the arms that grow weak and the hands that tremble. The strong men are the legs that are bent with age. *The grinder* is a figure of speech for the teeth. *The windows that grow dim* would be the eyes that no longer see well. *The doors* are the ears that, when closed, shut out the sounds of *the streets*. The sound of the *grinding* is the customary sound of life in the home. The *sound of birds* is the birdlike, high-pitched voice of the deaf.

In 12:5, the figure of the house is dropped, but the description of old age continues. *When men are afraid of heights* depicts fear of falling because of unsteadiness. *Dangers in the streets* suggest the dangers of walking due to lack of agility. The flourishing (white-blossomed) *almond tree* is a poetic figure for graying hair. *The grasshopper drags himself along* is usually understood to mean that even a small object is difficult to carry. Regarding *desire no longer is stirred*, may mean “Manly urge is gone.” *Then, man goes to his eternal home, and mourners go about the streets.*

But, we should remember some of the things that Ecclesiastes left out. As Glenn Atkins in *The Interpreter's Bible* (p. 84) reminds us, “If old age is unhaunted by too many regrets and fears, it may well be a gracious period of tranquility, with treasures of memory, the compensations of children’s children, blessed comradeship of mind and spirit - and rest. Like the late afternoon of a summer’s day, when the shadows have grown long, but the light lingers, and there are still bird notes in the treetops, and twilight is peace. It may indeed be more; it may be the season for reaping and storing the final harvest of life.”

3. Death Is a Part of Life (12:6-8)

Remember him - before (12:6) refers us back to 12:1. *Remember your Creator* “before the silver cord is severed” (12:6). The picture is of a golden bowl suspended by a silver cord. The cord breaks, the bowl falls and is broken (crushed). Life is a *pitcher* without which one cannot drink from a *fountain* or a *wheel* without which he cannot draw water from the *well*.

All of these figures represent earthly life as ending suddenly and without the possibility of being regained. For the last time, Ecclesiastes voices the verdict upon life that he believes to end at the grave, “Meaningless! Meaningless! ... Everything is meaningless” (12:8). Verse 7 clearly reflects the Bible record of mankind’s creation (see Genesis 2:7): *And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it* (12:7).



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B. LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY (12:9-14)

These closing verses are a commendation of the writer and a summation of his thoughts.

1. The Author as a Teacher (12:9-12)

The Preacher (12:9) was not only wise, but he also sought to be a teacher - to share his wisdom with others. His words were *as goads and as nails*, meaning, penetrating, and brief. The expression *one Shepherd* refers not to the writer but to God, who is the source of wisdom. Because these words were given under divine inspiration, the writer moves with full confidence to his exhortation: *Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them (12:12)*.

2. God's Answer to Man's Search (12:13-14)

The closing mood of Ecclesiastes is: What is already written is enough, so *here is the conclusion of the matter (12:13)*. That conclusion rings out clearly from the divine revelation. There is a God in heaven before whom people should fear. He has given us his commandments which we are expected to keep; *this is the whole duty of man (12:13)*.

God is a holy God, and he is concerned with ethical holiness in people. He shall *bring every deed into judgment (12:14)* - even every secretive thing or action. Every act and every thought of people shall be judged on the basis of whether it is good or evil.

Ecclesiastes presents a search for mankind's highest good. Again, and again its best answer, based on this world (*under the sun*) only, is, to live as comfortably as possible. But, even in this world achievement of worthy goals is better than mere comfort. "Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, is our destined end or way; but to act, that each tomorrow finds us farther than today." H.W. Longfellow.

Jesus tells us that both our comforts and our exertions find their meaning and their place as we submit our whole lives to God. "Seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

pessimistic [peh-suh-MI-stuhk]
immortality [i-mor-TA-luh-tee]

CHAPTER 4

The Book of Song of Solomon



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SECTION 4.1. AWAKENING TO REALITY (1:1-4)

The Shulamite [SHOO-la-might] (6:13) maiden is here presumed to be arriving at the summer home of the king. She has been abducted from her home or perhaps had consented while in a confused state of mind to accompany the king's chariot. See 6:12, which has been translated, *Before I realized it, my desire set me among the royal chariots of my people.*

As the chariot comes to a halt, Shulamite is surrounded by the daughters of Jerusalem, members of the king's harem at this summer home. As she realizes her situation, a great longing for her betrothed sweeps over her, and she cries out, *"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"* (1:2).

The maidens seek to reassure Shulamite that her charms assure her own future (1:2-3). But, in fear the girl calls after the departing charioteer, *"Take me away with you - let us hurry"* (1:4). The chariot moves on and the Shulamite is left to face what she must.

SECTION 4.2. THE KING'S FIRST VISIT (1:4 - 2:7)

This episode occurs in one of the apartments for women in the country residence of the king. Here, it has been planned for Solomon first to meet Shulamite.

A. SHULAMITE AND THE MAIDENS (1:4-8)

Shulamite and the *daughters of Jerusalem* (1:5) appear at first to be the only ones present. The girl exclaims, *Let the king bring me into his chambers* (1:4). To this her companions reply with the encouragement in the last part of verse 4. The conversation continues:

SHULAMITE: *Dark I am, yet lovely, O you daughters of Jerusalem* (1:5).

MAIDENS (interrupting): *"Dark like the tents of Kedar [KEE-dar], like the tent curtains of Solomon."*

In 1:6, the girl implores her companions not to stare at her because of her dark skin. *My own vineyard I have neglected* refers to her complexion and person.

Memories of the home surroundings awaken pangs of longing and in 1:7 the girl cries out in anguish for her distant lover. Disgusted that Shulamite should



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prefer a rustic shepherd to the attention of the king, one of the maidens speaks sharply and sarcastically in 1:8. One cannot predict what would have happened as a result of this beginning of a quarrel in the harem had not Solomon himself appeared on the scene.

B. SOLOMON AND SHULAMITE (1:9 - 2:7)

1. Compliments and Promises (1:9-11)

The king first pays the girl a high compliment on her beauty and grace, likening her to “a mare of chariots of Pharaoh” (1:9). This is hardly a compliment in western taste, but in eastern lands it would express the highest admiration. In 1:10 the king pays special attention to the girl’s facial features; and in 1:11 he promises costly jewels: “We will make you earrings of gold, studded with silver.”

2. A First Signal of Refusal (1:12-14)

This paragraph is Shulamite’s first reminder to the king that his attentions are not welcomed because her love has been pledged to another. The meaning seems to be that when the king was in his proper place at *his table*, and she was in her rightful situation with her betrothed, her physical charms were outgoing and inviting. But, under existing relationships, her *sachet* gave forth no perfume. In 1:13-14 the girl declares her love with abandon - but it is for another. She carries the thought of her beloved in her heart just as she wore on her bosom a sachet of myrrh.

3. Further Pursuit and Evasion (1:15 - 2:7)

a. Dialogue (1:15 - 2:2).

Enamored with Shulamite and refusing to accept her reluctance, the king presses his case in 1:15. But, the girl replies as though speaking to one far away, *How handsome you are, my darling! Oh, how charming!* (1:16). Verses 16-17 suggests the imagery of the open forest in which the bed is green grass, and the siding and roof of the house consist of the living trees. In 2:1 the girl again identifies herself with a simpler way of life than that to be found in a king’s court. But, the enamored royal suitor responds in 2:2, “*Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens.*”

In the older allegorical interpretations, 2:1 was applied to our Lord. In this setting the words gave inspiration for the gospel songs “Jesus, Rose of Sharon” and “The Lily of the Valley”.



b. Love with honor (2:3-7).

In 2:3-4, Shulamite again seeks to turn aside the king's ardor by telling of her love for *my beloved* (2:3). She chose *the apple tree* as a figure to suggest the pleasant surroundings of her first and true love. In 2:5-7, she bursts into an impassioned plea. Exhausted by the emotional strain, she asks for cakes of *raisins* and *apples* to strengthen her physically. *I am faint with love* may be better translated as "I am sick from love." In 2:6, there seems to be a clear reference to love's embrace (see 8:3). The sentiment is equivalent to, "My shepherd is the only one who shall touch me with a lover's freedom.

Verse 7 is may be better rendered impersonally such as, "... do not arouse or awaken love, until love itself is pleased to do so." God's warning is, Don't arouse passion until it is right to do so - accompanied by true love and within the bonds of marriage.

SECTION 4.3. A VISIT AND A DREAM (2:8 - 3:5)

A. THE BELOVED'S VISIT (2:8-17)

In 2:8-9 we have a description by Shulamite of a visit from her shepherd lover while she was held captive in the king's summer house. She describes the course of her beloved as he approaches the enclosure. It was not a wall but some sort of latticework.

1. The Beloved's Entreaty (2:10-14)

We have here a love song of sheer beauty, couched in the language of the awakening spring season. In the eyes of love, nature becomes all alive with significance. As a description of spring time the passage is unexcelled, and reflects the unique interest in nature found in the book. But, the new life in nature only creates the mood of the lover; his plea is for his beloved: *Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me* (2:13). *Let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely* (2:14).

2. Shulamite's Response (2:15-17)

In response to her beloved's entreaty, the girl turns her face toward him and sings two little songs.

a. The little foxes (2:15).

There may be here an oblique reference to some previous lovers' quarrel



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that had occurred between them. Perhaps it was even the occasion for Shulamite's momentary petulant willingness to leave her home and accompany the king's servants to his country residence.

But, here is a universal truth, and here is the source of the proverb, "It is the little foxes that spoil the vines." To despise little things in the relationships of love is to show oneself utterly ignorant of important facts of life. It is little things that often account for happiness or sorrow - a little remembrance or a little forgetfulness. What is true in our relations with each other is equally true in our relationships with God.

b. Pledge of love (2:16-17).

Now the quarrel is over, and there is no longer a barrier between the lovers: *My lover is mine, and I am his* (2:16). The expression he *browses among the lilies* means "he enjoys all of my affection." In 2:17, fearful for her lover's safety if he lingers, she bids him hurry away. But, she wishes him to return soon when evening comes - when the heat of the day breaks and the *shadows* lengthen.

B. FIRST DREAM OF THE BELOVED (3:1-5)

Here, Shulamite and the women are again together. She tells them how her love for her shepherd sweetheart fills her dreams. *All night on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him* (3:1).

In her dreams, Shulamite had expressed her determination: *I will get up now ... I will search for the one my heart loves* (3:2). She searches through the street intersections. In her dream she encountered the *watchmen* (3:3) who moved quietly about the city checking suspicious-looking persons.

This dream, like all such dreams of love, had a happy ending. Shulamite found her lover. She *would not let him go* (3:4) until she had brought him to her mother's house for the consummation of their marriage. In 3:5 Shulamite appeals to the women not to try further to arouse in her the passion of love for the king when there is only one for whom she has pure affection.



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SECTION 4.4. THE KING AGAIN A SUITOR (3:6 - 5:1)

A. THE ROYAL PROCESSION (3:6-11)

This paragraph describes a royal procession that brings Solomon and Shulamite together. Probably, Shulamite is riding in the royal convoy from the summer residence. She is on her way south to Jerusalem where she is again to meet the king. The whole procedure is designed to overwhelm the girl with the glory of Solomon. The speeches seem to have been made by the maidens who accompany Shulamite.

Verse 6 is perhaps a rhetorical question designed to impress the girl. Verses 7-8 give the reply from the maidens themselves. Perhaps the *carriage* (3:7) was a couch or chair carried by poles on the shoulders of bearers. It was Solomon's because he owned it. The girl and her companions were protected on the journey by *sixty warriors*. The *terrors of the night* (3:8) would be from Arab marauders who often attacked and robbed such processions.

Verses 9-10 are a further effort to glorify Solomon and to condition the girl to accept his proposal. The *wood* (3:9) was from Lebanon, her own northern Palestine - perhaps this carriage had been made especially for her and for this special journey. Reference to the work of love by the daughters of Jerusalem was probably intended to say to Shulamite: "Every woman loves the king; any girl who is brought to the palace joyfully accepts his proposal." Immediately after this appeal, the procession arrived at the palace. In 3:11 the attendant of the king calls upon the girl and her attendants to go forth and behold king Solomon.

B. THE KING'S SECOND PROPOSAL (4:1 - 5:1)

The scene is probably a room in the Jerusalem palace where the king is waiting for Shulamite.

1. Solomon's First Song (4:1-5)

The king speaks his appreciation for the girl's beauty: *How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!* (4:1). Her eyes are like *doves' eyes* - lustrous even behind her veil. The long dark tresses, flowing down across her neck and shoulders are beautiful *as a flock of (black) goats* lying along the slope of *mount Gilead*. Her *teeth* (4:2) are as white and perfect as a flock of sheep after being washed and shorn. The *twins* refer to the upper and lower teeth. *None of them is alone*, says that none are missing. *The tower of David* (4:4) to which the girl's neck is likened is not now known but was apparently well known at



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the time. The king compares the circular jewels of her necklace to the bright brass shields hung around the walls of the armory. The breasts are youthfully tender like the fawns of a gazelle. At this point (4:6), Shulamite looks away as if she desires to leave. She sighs for her mountain home and has no response to the king's admiration.

2. Solomon's Second Song (4:7-15)

The enamored king renews his suit, *All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you* (4:7). In a torrent of desire, the gifted Solomon continues to pour out his love song: *You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride ... How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice ... The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon.*

At 4:12, the torrential outpouring is checked by a gesture from Shulamite. She again looks away as if not hearing his words of love. But, the song is checked only momentarily. The king's ardor reasserts itself, and the song again rises to a crescendo. The figure of *a garden* in 4:12a is expanded in 4:13-14, and the figure of the fountain is carried further in 4:15.

3. Rejection and Invitation (4:16)

It is Shulamite who speaks. Her words and inflections are intended to close the door to the king's ardor. She uses the image of the garden to express delicately her desire to be only with her beloved from the north.

4. Inclined to Use Force (5:1)

Here, the king seems to become greatly excited. Impatient and presumptuous, he speaks as if to consummate his wishes by his own authority. But, despite this outburst, Solomon senses his rebuff and leaves.

SECTION 4.5. A SONG OF THE BELOVED (5:2 - 6:3)

Shulamite is still in Jerusalem at the palace. The women of the court are with her again.

A. SHULAMITE'S SECOND DREAM (5:2-8)

We have here the account of a dream from which Shulamite had recently awakened. She imagines that her absent lover had come seeking her in vain. Constantly yearning for the sound of that familiar voice, she heard it in her sleep: *Open to me, my sister, my darling* (5:2). Having travelled far through the night, his



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head is drenched with dew and he asks for warmth and shelter.

In 5:3, Shulamite is still blaming herself for their separation. The flimsy excuses in the dream that she gave for not admitting him may reflect her unjustifiable part in the lovers' quarrel alluded to in 2:15. Verse 4 reflects the continued effort of the beloved for reconciliation and Shulamite's tardy response to those efforts.

Verses 5-6 reflect the girl's true attitude toward her beloved. She rose up to open to him. The best proof a bride could give her lover of welcome was to anoint herself with perfumes. This was what Shulamite did, until from her hands the myrrh dripped upon the handles of the lock. But, her welcome came too late - her beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone.

In her dream Shulamite went so far in taking the initiative to recover her beloved that the watchmen (5:7) thought her an evil woman prowling the streets at night. They smote her and took away her veil. Here, the dream broke off - but not the heart-longing behind the dream. *O daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you, if you find my lover ... tell him I am faint with love.*

B. SHULAMITE'S SONG OF HER BELOVED (5:9 - 6:3)

The daughters of Jerusalem could not understand why any woman would reject the attentions of the king in preference for the love of a shepherd. They themselves had accepted Solomon's harem as a way of life. At first (1:8), they had been only scornful of Shulamite's loyalty. But, now, they sought to find out her reasons: *How is your beloved better than others?* (5:9)

1. The Perfect Human Form (5:10-16)

Love can see no wrong in its beloved, and Shulamite could see nothing but perfection in her shepherd lover. The description here is from head to toe in contrast to 7:1-5 which is from foot to head. *My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand.*

The *purest gold* (5:11) represents the nobility that radiates from his head and face. His hair is becoming curly and black as a raven. Twice before (1:15 and 4:1) we have seen this comparison to the eyes of doves (5:12). *Washed in milk, and mounted like jewels* refers to the dark brown iris and black pupil set against the white of the eyes.

The comparison of *cheeks to beds of spice* (5:13) refers to his perfumed beard. His lips were like the red lilies of Palestine and his breath was like sweet smelling myrrh. In 5:14-15, Shulamite moves on to describe other



features of her beloved's body. As in statuary to the artist, here, the partly undraped figure suggests only beauty, free from indelicacy. Verse 16 may be understood as Shulamite's personal reaction to her idealization of her beloved.

2. An Interested Inquiry (6:1-3)

The question, *Where has your lover gone?* (6:1) comes from one or more of the *daughters of Jerusalem*. It is related to 5:6 where the girl's dream told of her lost lover; and also, to 5:8 where the women were charged to give him a message if they found him. The women desire to help in the search, but Shulamite claims her beloved as exclusively her own.

In 4:12-15 and in 5:1, Shulamite has been called a garden. It seems reasonable therefore that 6:2 refers to the mutual love she and her beloved have already known, and to an expected reunion when their marriage will be consummated. *I am my lover's, and my lover is mine* (6:3), has overtones of the Christian wedding vow: "keep myself only unto you so long as we both shall live".

SECTION 4.6. THE KING'S SUPREME PROPOSAL (6:4 - 8:4)

A. FERVENT WOOING (6:4-10)

The scene changes, and Solomon visits Shulamite again, once more seeking to win her affection.

1. The King's Praise (6:4-7)

Solomon compliments the girl's beauty and expresses his affection: *You are beautiful, my darling* (6:4). The comparison was to Tirzah, a city of Shulamite's own beloved northern Palestine, and to Jerusalem.

It is difficult to understand 6:4-5 as part of a lover's suit, but in this particular situation, it appears natural. Shulamite's cool stare must have momentarily checked the king's ardor. Her integrity presented a formidable obstacle to him, but the royal suitor was not accustomed to being denied. He renews his excessive praise. Verses 5-7 repeat the king's earlier compliments. See comments on 4:1-3.

2. Be My Queen (6:8-10)

Apparently, the king sensed that he was getting nowhere in his customary invitation for the girl to join his court as one of the harem. He therefore



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offers her a special place. She had been *the only daughter of her mother* (6:9), and she should be the special one for the king.

B. EFFECTIVE REFUSAL (6:11-12)

The reference in 6:10 to her forced presence in Jerusalem stirs Shulamite to fear as she recalls in 6:11 the circumstances of her presence. She rejects the king's suit by reminding him that she is a captive subject of his attention. There appears to be a sarcastic rebuff for the enamored king in the translation: *Before I realized it, my desire set me in the chariot of my ardent lover* (6:12).

C. APPEAL OF THE MAIDENS (6:13 - 7:5)

The action here is difficult to trace, though it is clear that Shulamite is the one being addressed. Perhaps as the girl made her cynical thrust at the king, she started to leave the room in indignation. Again (see comment on 3:10), the maidens sought to intercede on behalf of their master and king: *Come back, come back, O Shulamite; come back, come back, that we may gaze on you* (6:13). The girl replied, *Why would you gaze on the Shulamite?*

It is probable that the last sentence of 6:13 is the answer of the maidens: *“as on the dance of Mahanaim”* [ma-ha-NA-im]. In accordance with that thought, the women at once proceed to say (or sing as a chorus) how admirable Shulamite's appearance in the dance would be.

Such uninhibited reveling in physical charms as 7:1-5 strikes the Western mind as indiscreet. And yet, our God, who created the magnificence of nature, with its almost infinite variety, also created the human body in such a way that it is a marvel of his handiwork. Physical beauty and the pure desire of husband and wife (and bridegroom and bride) for each other are God-given gifts to mankind. It is the perversion of these gifts that is improper (see Romans 1:26-27), and therefore to be condemned.

D. PASSION AFLAME (7:6-9)

Following the passion-kindling song of the women, the king makes a final approach to Shulamite. Solomon exclaims, *How beautiful you are and how pleasing, O love, with your delights!* (7:6). She was all that any man could desire. In 7:8 the king expresses his desire to embrace Shulamite and to fully enjoy her love and beauty. It seems apparent that he was perilously close to taking by force what he could not gain by consent.



E. A CRY FOR TRUE LOVE (7:10 - 8:4)

These wild emotions must be checked without destroying herself and the king. Again, the girl took recourse to her most effective strategy in turning aside the king's advances. She takes the words of the king and uses them as a reference to how she feels toward her lover.

The language of Shulamite in 7:10-13 is just as clear in its intent as was the infatuated outburst of the king. But, here it is pure and chaste because expressed within God's planned framework of true love and marriage. In moving words, she declares her devotion.

In 8:1-4 the verses seem to be a continuation of 7:10-13. In ancient Israel, as in the Arab world today, a public display of affection between lovers is severely condemned. Shulamite knew this, and says, *If only you were to me like a brother (8:1) ... I would kiss you* in public without arousing suspicion or giving offense. She desires to bring her beloved to her *mother's house (8:2)* who *has taught* her as to how she might best please him. *Spiced wine* and *the nectar of my pomegranates* are probably further metaphors for the girl's affection. Verses 3-4 are repeated from 2:6-7. See comments there.

Apparently, Solomon made no further advances. Convinced at last that he could not win Shulamite's affection, he released her from custody. Thus, God's Word makes it clear that the influence of a good and strong person can steady a weaker one and save an impulsive individual from low living.

SECTION 4.7. REUNION AND REFLECTION (8:5-14)

A. SHULAMITE'S EULOGY OF LOVE (8:5-7)

1. The Setting (8:5)

The closing scene of the Song is in a country place near the home of Shulamite. The question of 8:5 is, *Who is this coming?* was probably asked by one of the brothers. The phrase leaning on her lover permits us to assume that Shulamite and her beloved were reunited upon her release by Solomon and that he accompanied her from Jerusalem to her home.

Nearing her home, they pass the spot where love had first kindled between them. The beloved spoke gently: *"Under the apple tree, I roused you."* The spot was doubly sacred to Shulamite because there she had also been born.



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2. The Song (8:6-7)

The girl's response poured from her heart: *Love is strong as death, its jealousy (fervent love is) unyielding as the grave. It burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty flame (of the Lord). Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.*

B. A REMINDER AND A RESPONSE (8:8-12)

Verses 8-9 are the words of the brothers. Perhaps one asks the question in 8:8, and another replies in 8:9. The description *a young sister, and her breasts are not yet grown* (8:8) is clearly a suggestion that they consider her immature. *The day she is spoken for* would be the day of her marriage plans. In reply, a brother declares, *If she is a wall* (8:9) - that is, chaste and resisting all efforts of unworthy lovers - *we will build towers of silver on her* (arrange a worthy marriage). On the other hand, *if she is a door* (easily open to all offers of love), *we will enclose her* (build a protecting wall around her).

Shulamite replies with a justifiable spirit that her recent experiences are sufficient answers to every question her brothers have raised. All of her reply seems to refer to those experiences. Verses 11-12 speak of the many women in Solomon's court under the metaphor of *a vineyard* (8:11). The *keepers* would be Solomon's wives and concubines. Each one was obliged to bring to the king such *fruit* as was proper from her presence in his *vineyard*. The valuation which he and they placed upon the questionable privilege was high, *a thousand shekels of silver*.

In 8:12, Shulamite declares her joy at being free from Solomon's vineyard: *My own vineyard is mine to give.*

C. LOVE'S REWARD AT LAST (8:13-14)

In 8:13, Shulamite's beloved speaks. His salutation, *You who dwell in the gardens*, picks up her own figure, *My vineyard* (8:12). His request is the yearning of the newly married to be together alone on the wedding trip: *Let me hear your voice.*

Shulamite's reply reflects the true lover's equal eagerness for the long-awaited consummation, *"Come away, my lover, and be like a gazelle on the spice-laden mountains."*

And so closes this unusual book. It is different from any other in the Bible, but it is in the Bible. We believe that God inspired him who wrote it and those who



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gave it a place in the canon of Scripture. It is a book about love between a man and a woman - one of God's gracious gifts to us. With the hymn writer, F.S. Pierpont, we sing: *For the joy of human love ... Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.*

Shulamite [SHOO-la-might]

Kedar [KEE-dar]

Mahanaim [ma-ha-NA-im]

STUDY QUESTIONS



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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SONG OF SOLOMON

SECTION 1.1. INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

1. The Book of Proverbs is part of the hymnbook of the Bible.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. What is true of the wisdom literature?
 - A. The Book of Proverbs is one of the books of wisdom.
 - B. The Book of Job is one of the books of wisdom.
 - C. The Book of Ecclesiastes is one of the books of wisdom.
 - D. all of these are true
3. In the New Testament, the Epistle of James is akin in spirit to that of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. In the wisdom writings the emphasis is upon the practical and ethical aspects of faith.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. The Hebrew tradition ascribed the Book of Proverbs to David just as it ascribed the Psalms to David.
 - A. True
 - B. False
6. What is true of the literary form of the Book of Proverbs?
 - A. In the Book of Proverbs we find a variety of similes, contrasts and parallelisms.
 - B. The Book of Proverbs is cast in poetic form, the sayings appearing usually in couplets.
 - C. Many times, there is no logical connection between one proverb and another that follows it.
 - D. all of these are true



7. The wisdom of Proverbs puts God at the center of a person's life.
 - A. True
 - B. False

SECTION 1.2. INTRODUCTION TO ECCLESIASTES

8. In the opening verse of Ecclesiastes, the author identifies himself as “the King.”
 - A. True
 - B. False
9. What is true of the interpretation of Ecclesiastes?
 - A. It is cast in poetic form, the sayings appearing usually in couplets.
 - B. We find a variety of similes, contrasts, and parallelisms.
 - C. It presents alternating positions between faith and pessimism.
 - D. It is a very optimistic book.
10. Ecclesiastes is a very logically organized book.
 - A. True
 - B. False

SECTION 1.3. INTRODUCTION TO THE SONG OF SOLOMON

11. What is true of the literary form of the Song of Solomon?
 - A. An alternative title is Solomon's Song of Songs.
 - B. “Song of songs” suggests the title “Solomon's Greatest Song” is meant.
 - C. The Song is an example of Hebrew lyric poetry.
 - D. all of these are true
12. What is true of the interpretation of the Song of Solomon?
 - A. From the time of the Talmud (A.D. 150 to 500), it was common among the Jews to regard this book as an allegorical song of God's love for his chosen people.
 - B. It is talking about the human love of a man and a woman.
 - C. The Song as a linked chain of lyrics depicting love in all its spontaneity, beauty, power and exclusiveness.
 - D. all of these are true



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13. The language of Song of Solomon 1:1 can be correctly understood to mean either *by* Solomon, *for* Solomon, or *about* Solomon.
- A. True
 - B. False

CHAPTER 2. THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

14. When the Hebrew people thought of the law, their minds turned inevitably to Abraham.
- A. True
 - B. False
15. When the Hebrew people expressed themselves in song, they used the compositions of David.
- A. True
 - B. False
16. When the Hebrew people recalled their proverbial sayings, they thought of Moses.
- A. True
 - B. False
17. What is true of the purpose of the Book of Proverbs?
- A. The purpose of Proverbs is made clear by three words in 1:2 - *To know wisdom*.
 - B. The writer sought to do more than share his knowledge.
 - C. The writer endeavored to show Israel the way of holiness.
 - D. all of these are true
18. What is true of the major theme in the Book of Proverbs?
- A. The writer expresses the major theme in 1:7.
 - B. *The fear of the Lord* is not the slavish fear of torment.
 - C. *The fear of the Lord* is that of reverence or awe.
 - D. all of these are true
19. *Wisdom* is personified many times in the Book of Proverbs.
- A. True
 - B. False



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20. What is among the 5 fruits of wisdom in Chapter 2?
- A. The seeker of wisdom shall find God.
 - B. Deliverance from the evil way is assured.
 - C. Those who gain wisdom are promised a special inheritance.
 - D. all of these are true
21. What is among the blessings of wisdom in Chapter 3?
- A. Happiness and security are the primary rewards.
 - B. Commitment to God's will is necessary.
 - C. Adversity does not destroy the lasting happiness of the person of God.
 - D. all of these are true
22. What is true of the primacy of wisdom in Proverbs 4?
- A. Ancient Israel believed that religion should be taught as well as caught.
 - B. Two ways of life are contrasted: the way of wisdom and the way of the wicked.
 - C. Purity of heart and life are advocated.
 - D. all of these are true
23. Proverbs is full of warning signals to alert one of danger and disaster ahead.
- A. True
 - B. False
24. In Proverbs 8, the Hebrew concept of wisdom reaches its zenith of expression in the Old Testament.
- A. True
 - B. False
25. What is true of the contrast of wisdom and folly in Proverbs 9?
- A. Wisdom prepares a lavish feast and invites all to attend.
 - B. The concept of individual responsibility is stressed.
 - C. Folly's invitation has been compared to the serpent's appeal in Eden (Genesis 3:4).
 - D. all of these are true
26. The words *righteousness* and *righteous* are key words in Proverbs.
- A. True
 - B. False
27. According to Proverbs 21 - 22, a good name, reputation, or character is more desirable than perishable treasures.
- A. True
 - B. False



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28. In Proverbs 23, drunkenness and gluttony are cited as detrimental practices capable of reducing a person to rags.
- A. True
 - B. False
29. What is not true of the Hezekiah collection in Proverbs 25 - 29?
- A. It contains 137 Solomonic proverbs.
 - B. Hezekiah was a man of literary interests.
 - C. This collection provides us with an easy arrangement of its contents.
 - D. The sayings in this collection are similar to those of the first major collection (10:1 - 22:16).
30. What is not true of the Words of Agur in Proverbs 30?
- A. We learn the inerrant self-disclosure of God through his Word is within reach of all who will trust him.
 - B. With five rhetorical questions, Agur contrasts the Creator and the creature.
 - C. This chapter tells us much about who Agur is.
 - D. Agur desired neither the dangers of prosperity nor the desperations of poverty.
31. What is not true of the Words of Lemuel in Proverbs 31?
- A. Lemuel's mother warns him, first of all, against debauchery.
 - B. Lemuel's mother warns her son against the ravages of strong drink that perverts one's judgment.
 - C. Lemuel did not appreciate his mother's instruction.
 - D. Lemuel's mother urged him to speak for those who could not speak for themselves.
32. What is true of the section about the virtuous wife and mother in Chapter 31?
- A. We have a beautiful acrostic poem that is an immortal tribute to the virtuous wife and mother.
 - B. It pays tribute to a truly noble woman.
 - C. This woman exemplifies the way of the Lord.
 - D. all of these are true
33. Proverbs reminds us that charm and beauty are fleeting but that a godly character is of lasting value.
- A. true
 - B. false



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CHAPTER 3. THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

34. The text of the Book of Ecclesiastes is *Meaningless! Meaningless!* and *Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.*
- A. True
 - B. False
35. For the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes, life seems to be going nowhere; all is vain and useless.
- A. True
 - B. False
36. In Chapter 1, Ecclesiastes concludes that the intellectual efforts of life are *meaningless*, like *chasing after the wind*.
- A. True
 - B. False
37. In Chapter 2, Ecclesiastes assures us that happiness may be found by using the mind to its maximum.
- A. True
 - B. False
38. In Chapters 3 – 5, the philosopher-preacher probes the facts of life and relates them to his faith in God.
- A. true
 - B. false
39. What is not true of the poem of an orderly world in Chapter 3?
- A. We see a recognition of God's sovereignty.
 - B. We see mankind's freedom and the ability to adjust one's life to the requirements of God.
 - C. *A time to throw away* (3:6) means a time to discard our idols.
 - D. *A time to love* (3:8) suggests expressing our love to God and for goodness.
40. What is not true of the section on the disappointments of life in Chapter 4?
- A. There are some injustices in life.
 - B. There is healing and sustaining power for those who can find a handful of quietness out of the stresses and strains of the world.
 - C. "All labor and achievement" springs "from man's envy of his neighbor."
 - D. Nearly any burden can be borne if there is a friend with whom to share it.



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41. God is high and holy therefore reverent awe is always becoming in his presence.
 - A. True
 - B. False

42. It is always better to listen to the Holy Spirit than to be too intent on telling God what we want him to hear.
 - A. True
 - B. False

43. What is not true of the section on adjusting to economic problems in Chapter 5?
 - A. Wealth is a mixed blessing.
 - B. Wealth is often lost.
 - C. If we see the poor oppressed and justice and rights denied, we should be very surprised.
 - D. We should hold wealth loosely.

44. What is true of the section on the finite man against fate in Chapter 6?
 - A. The writer of Ecclesiastes sums up his pessimistic view.
 - B. People are finite creatures and cannot contend with him (God), who is stronger than them.
 - C. Who can tell one what will happen under the sun after one is gone?
 - D. all of these are true

45. In his providence God puts money into the hands of few: but wisdom is within the reach of all.
 - A. True
 - B. False

46. One may know assuredly that wickedness is stupid and folly is insane.
 - A. True
 - B. False

47. In Chapter 8, the writer urges us to come to terms with an imperfect world.
 - A. True
 - B. False

48. In Chapter 9, the writer establishes the goodness of the lives of the righteous and the wise, and what they do is in God's hands.
 - A. True
 - B. False



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49. The writer, in Chapter 10, assures us that a little folly cannot ruin one's life.
- A. True
 - B. False
50. The writer of Ecclesiastes has faced frequent frustrations and often settled for pessimism or mediocrity, and his final conclusion is pessimistic.
- A. True
 - B. False
51. What is true of generosity in Chapter 11?
- A. Life is uncertain and much of it is not subject to our control, nevertheless generosity and helpfulness are better than selfishness.
 - B. One's life is better served by hoarding wealth.
 - C. God gives us wealth merely for our personal enjoyment.
 - D. No one gains from our sharing of wealth with others.
52. What is true of the section on earthly life in perspective in Chapters 11 – 12?
- A. In youth, life's energies and joys are so real that it is difficult to take death and accountability to God into account.
 - B. Old age is pictured as a time of fading light and the dark days of winter.
 - C. Earthly life is ending suddenly and without the possibility of being regained.
 - D. all of these are true
53. *The Preacher* (12:9) was not only wise, but he also sought to be a teacher - to share his wisdom with others.
- A. True
 - B. False
54. The closing mood of Ecclesiastes is: "What is written is only the beginning."
- A. True
 - B. False



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CHAPTER 4. THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

55. What is true of our assumption about the setting in the Song of Solomon 1:1-4?
- A. The Shulamite maiden is here presumed to be arriving at the summer home of the king.
 - B. She may have been abducted from her home.
 - C. She may have consented while in a confused state of mind to accompany the king's chariot.
 - D. all of these are true
56. What is not true of our assumption about the setting in the Song of Solomon 1:1-4?
- A. As the chariot comes to a halt, Shulamite is surrounded by the daughters of Jerusalem.
 - B. Shulamite is with members of the king's harem at his summer home.
 - C. Joyfully, Shulamite calls after the departing charioteer, "Thanks for bringing me here safely!"
 - D. The chariot moves on, and the Shulamite is left to face what she must.
57. What is true of the king's first visit (1:4 - 2:7)?
- A. This episode occurs in one of the apartments for women in the country residence of the king.
 - B. Shulamite and the *daughters of Jerusalem* (1:5) appear at first to be the only ones present.
 - C. The king first pays the girl a high compliment on her beauty and grace.
 - D. all of these are true
58. In the older allegorical interpretations, 2:1 was applied to our Lord.
- A. True
 - B. False
59. In 2:8-9 we have a description by Shulamite of a visit from her shepherd lover while she was held captive in the king's summer house.
- A. True
 - B. False



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60. What is true about “the little foxes” in 2:15?
- A. It may be an oblique reference to some previous lovers’ quarrel that had occurred between them.
 - B. It may have been the occasion for Shulamite’s momentary willingness to leave her home and accompany the king’s servants to his country residence.
 - C. It is little things that often account for happiness or for sorrow.
 - D. all of these are true
61. In 3:1-5 Shulamite and the women are again together. She tells them how her love for her parents fills her dreams.
- A. True
 - B. False
62. What is true of the king’s second proposal in 4:1 – 5:1?
- A. The scene is probably a room in the Jerusalem palace where the king was waiting for Shulamite.
 - B. The king speaks his appreciation for the girl’s beauty.
 - C. Shulamite looks away, as if she desires to leave, and sighs for her mountain home and has no response for the king’s admiration.
 - D. all of these are true
63. In 4:16, Shulamite used the image of the garden to express delicately her desire to be only with her beloved from the north.
- A. True
 - B. False
64. What is not true of the account of Shulamite’s second dream (5:2-8)?
- A. Shulamite had remained in deep sleep.
 - B. She imagines that her absent lover had come seeking her in vain.
 - C. She has gone so far in taking the initiative to recover her beloved that the watchmen thought of her to be an evil woman prowling the streets at night.
 - D. Even though the dream broke off, the heart-longing behind the dream remained.
65. Love can see no wrong in its beloved, and in 5:10-16, Shulamite could see nothing but perfection in her shepherd lover.
- A. True
 - B. False



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66. What is not true of the king's fervent wooing in 6:4-10?
- A. Solomon visits Shulamite again, once more seeking to win her affection.
 - B. Solomon compliments the girl's beauty but expresses his reservations.
 - C. Shulamite's cool stare must have momentarily checked the king's ardor.
 - D. The king sensed that he was getting nowhere in his customary invitation for the girl to join his court as one of the harem.
67. Shulamite was very happy as she recalled in 6:11 the circumstances of her presence in Jerusalem.
- A. True
 - B. False
68. What is not true of the appeal of the maidens in 6:13 - 7:5?
- A. The action here is difficult to trace, but it is clear that Shulamite is the one being addressed.
 - B. The maidens sought to intercede with Shulamite on behalf of their master and king.
 - C. The maidens criticized Shulamite's appearance in the dance.
 - D. Perhaps as the girl made her cynical thrust at the king, she started to leave the room in indignation.
69. Physical beauty and the pure desire of husband and wife (and bridegroom and bride) for each other are God-given gifts to mankind.
- A. True
 - B. False
70. What is true of the "passion aflame" in 7:6-9?
- A. It follows the passion-kindling song of the women.
 - B. The king makes a final approach to Shulamite.
 - C. The king expresses his desire to embrace Shulamite and to fully enjoy her love and beauty.
 - D. all of these are true
71. In ancient Israel, a public display of affection between lovers was severely condemned.
- A. True
 - B. False



NOTES

72. What is true of the closing scene of the Song of Solomon?
- A. It is in a country place near the home of Shulamite.
 - B. The phrase *leaning on her lover* permits us to assume that Shulamite and her beloved were reunited upon her release by Solomon.
 - C. It is assumed that Shulamite was accompanied by her beloved to her home.
 - D. all of these are true
73. In 8:13-14 Shulamite's reply reflects the true lover's equal eagerness for the long-awaited consummation.
- A. True
 - B. False
74. The Song of Solomon is different from any other book in the Bible.
- A. True
 - B. False

METHODS OF STUDY

Have you enjoyed this study of the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon? Do you wish to study further? If so, here are a few more suggestions.

1. Examine the authorship of the Book of Proverbs.
2. Examine the authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes.
3. Examine the authorship of the Song of Solomon.
4. Compare the Book of Proverbs to other wisdom literature.
5. Compare the Book of Ecclesiastes to other wisdom literature.
6. Compare the Song of Solomon to other wisdom literature.

Allow God to examine your concept of wisdom as you study the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon!

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE



NOTES

Agur [AH-goor]

Baalim [BA-al-imm]

Ecclesiastes [ee-KLEE-zee-as-teez]

immortality [i-mor-TA-luh-tee]

Kedar [KEE-dar]

Lemuel [LEM-oo-el]

Mahanaim [ma-ha-NA-im]

pessimistic [peh-suh-MI-stuhk]

Shulamite [SHOO-la-might]