

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (37)

Well Driven Nails

Ecclesiastes 12:9-12

With this lesson we bring to a 2 part conclusion our 3 year ongoing study of the book of Ecclesiastes, (Examining the text I have decided to divide this into 2 lessons). In this book we have addressed Solomon's search for the meaning of life. In this search, it was determined that if you put your trust in ANYTHING of this world, it will ultimately let you down. Thus it is described as vanity. In the 2nd half of this book, Solomon has promoted the superiority of wise living over that of the fool. Continually in this book we have found warning about the brevity of life and its ending. And in our last lesson we discussed how the body wears down as you age. Today, we examine some observations about Solomon and the writing of this book. Next, we will see the conclusion of the whole matter.

I. Continued instruction (9-10)

- a. ***Because the preacher was wise*** – be reminded that this book (I believe) was written by Solomon, who had wisdom from God (recall 1 Kings 3:5-12). At least early in his reign, he applied this wisdom with great success and blessing from God.
- b. ***He still taught the people knowledge*** –
 - i. As he began his reign and as he built the temple, we find that wisdom. 1 Kings 8 records the completion of the work on the temple. Solomon in dedicating the temple showed great knowledge and wisdom. 1 Kings 8:14-61 record his speech, his prayer to God and his admonition to them as he sent them away. This is a powerful prayer and words of admonition. Vs. 59-61 says, *And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day.*"
 - ii. A study of his life shows he was a teacher. In fact, as noted in our text, he set in order many proverbs. 1 Kings 4:32 states that Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. See also Proverbs 1:1. As does the book of Ecclesiastes.
 - iii. **Lesson:** Will we share what we know with others? As Christians, we have a responsibility to share our faith with others.
 1. 1 Peter 3:15 calls for us to be ready to give a defense.
 2. Matthew 28:19-20 – the great commission involves converting souls and teaching them (which is what begin a disciple is about).
 3. This is especially true of leaders – 2 Timothy 2:2 – pass it on! 2 Timothy 4:2-3 Ephesians 4:11-14 – teaching leaders given to equip the saints for the building up of the body of Christ.
 4. Elders must be teachers – 1 Timothy 3:2 (able to teach), vs. 6 (not a novice); Titus 1:9-11 – he must be able to by sound doctrine both exhort and convict...
- c. ***He continued to ponder and set in order many proverbs*** –
 - i. Solomon pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. Because he was wise, he kept on learning. One source I consulted noted the order in which he did these things:
 1. He pondered – the thought about – carefully considered and evaluated what he was thinking about. This is a carefulness to ensure that what he said was correct.

2. Sought out – in this I see he kept researching. He carefully weighed his words to make sure they were what was needed.
3. He set in order – arranged them to be useful. This verb is only found in Ecclesiastes 3 times (Eccl. 1:15 – cannot be made straight; 7:13 – Who can make straight...?; 12:9). A preacher and teacher, to be effective, needs to be orderly in presentation. IF you are “all over the place”, it is likely your audience will not learn much. And even if you “hit the target” they won’t know it because you have failed to identify what the target is.

Much of Proverbs and all of Ecclesiastes show incredible order.

- ii. **Lesson:** Keep learning, it is NEVER too late.
 1. You will NEVER know it all. That is the wonderful thing about God’s word. It is designed for the novice and as you keep studying, the deeper your knowledge will be and the more there is to know.
 2. 2 Peter 3:18 – notice how Peter concludes his letter. Keep studying and keep growing.
 3. 2 Timothy 2:15 – be diligent... - PUT forth the effort to know God’s word so that you handle it accurately.

II. **Goads and nails (11)**

a. ***The words of the wise are like goads*** – a prodding.

- i. Jeremiah 23:29, as the Lord distinguishes between the true and false prophet He notes, “*Is not My word like a fire?*” says the Lord, “*And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*” Isaiah 55:11, *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*
- ii. Wise words need to be delivered first – as true wisdom.
They need to be the truth – cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 – you received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God...; John 17:17 – “Your word is truth”; Acts 17:11 – the Bereans received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures to see if these things were so.
- iii. Secondly, in a timely manner. A wise man knows WHEN to speak. This is one of the qualities of the teachings of Jesus. He not only knew WHAT to say, but WHEN to say it.
- iv. The truth ought to prick the heart.
 1. Acts 2:37 – they were cut to the heart.
 2. Hebrews 4:12-13 – the word of God is living and powerful...
 3. Proverbs 15:32, *He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.*
 4. Proverbs 25:12, *Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.*

b. ***The words of scholars are like well-driven nails*** –

- i. First scholars would be well taught teachers. The NASB says, “masters of these collections” , KJV, “masters of assemblies” – the point is here, one who knows well the teachings, and has put them in order.
- ii. Picture an attempt to hang drywall on the ceiling, and one randomly puts the nails wherever he wants. As a result, he misses the studs. What happens when he lets go? There is collapse. But well placed nails, in the studs, in adequate quantity and evenly spaced, will keep the drywall in place for years to come.
- iii. So it is with wise words – in the right place and at the right time – they last and make you better
 1. Proverbs 15:22, *Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.*

2. Proverbs 20:18, *Plans are established by counsel; By wise counsel wage war.*
- iv. Again, one source made the following observations about these “nails” as they applied to preachers and proclaiming the word¹. Again notice 2 Timothy 4:2-4
 1. We are not using just any “nail” – we are using the words of God.
 2. We have to know where the studs are – preachers need to know their audience – what they need. What is going on? What are the current struggles? Are they grounded? Etc. 1 Corinthians 3:9-10 as Paul speaks of being fellow workers, and a wise master builder, he notes: *But let each one take heed how he builds on it.*
 3. We have the responsibility to do it right. Is what is being taught the absolute truth of God’s word. Consider James 3:1 – teachers will receive a stricter judgment.
- c. **Given by one Shepherd** – likely a reference to God. See Proverbs 2:6, James 1:5.
Why should we consider the teachings of the Bible? Because they are from our divine author. Consider Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:37 – Paul’s challenge to these brethren.
- d. **Lesson:** What does the word of God do for me? Does it prick my heart? Is it making me stronger? Cf. Acts 20:32, as Paul concluded his admonition to the Ephesian Elders, *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*
- e. **My son, be admonished by these** – another time we find encouragement to listen.

III. Of making many books there is no end (12) –

- a. **Many books** – likely, this is ultimately a reference to the works of man, especially philosophies that lead men AWAY from the truth of the LORD.
 - i. We must beware of the philosophies of men. They are continually trying to come up with something new.
 - ii. Colossians 2:8 warns us, lest we cheated through philosophy and empty deceit.
 - iii. While we need to be continually learning, we need to limit our intake of worldly wisdom.
 - iv. NOTE: Concerning our apologetics class, it is good to take a break and get back into the Bible text. Then come back to these studies. Too much external studies leads to neglect of internal Biblical studies. Something to think about.
 - v. Others view this as tied to the book of Ecclesiastes itself where the author is basically saying, “I could go on with proverbs and application of wisdom forever, but what I have written is enough.’ It is certainly true that we can only retain so much. Some of us preachers need to weigh this carefully. BUT, then again, how much is too much? Especially if it is needed truth. (Wisdom calls for balance).
- b. **Much study is wearisome to the flesh** –
 - i. From time to time, we need to rest our minds.
 - ii. Ecclesiastes 1:18 noted, *For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*
 - iii. HOWEVER, in considering this, do NOT take too much of a break from studying the word of God. We should read and study His word VERY regularly.
As Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:20, *O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— KNOW THE WORD OF GOD was the point.*
 - iv. But also consider, there is always more to learn. And the more you know, the more wearisome it is. You will NEVER know it all!

And thus we see Solomon’s concluding personal admonition. We need the word of God and wisdom as we apply it. Are you studying His word as you ought to? OR where are your studies directed? Think about it!

¹ Petrillo, Denny, PhD. Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon, Truth for Today Commentaries. Resource Publications, Searcy, AR © 2016. Pg. 226.

IV. The grand conclusion (13-14)

- a. The conclusion of the WHOLE matter – EVERYTHING hinges on this
- b. Two main applications.
 - i. Fear God – the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
 - ii. Keep His commandments – HIS commandments, not ours. And do not forget they are commands (not mere suggestions)
- c. This is man's all – "the whole duty of man" (KJV), "this applies to every person" (NASB)
- d. Two reasons to fear God and obey Him
 - i. God will bring every work into judgment – we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give an accounting. Hebrews 9:27, 2 Corinthians 5:10
 - ii. Including every secret things – you CANNOT hide from Him.

NOTE: Concluding thoughts – after this final lesson, see pg. 227-228 – Our responsibilities in life: A Study of Ecclesiastes – Truth for Today Commentary.